

## MRS. KALYANI DE ZOYSA

Mrs Kalyani de Zoysa was the second principal of Devi Balika Vidyalaya. From the date the government Girls' College, Castle Street (later Devi Balika Vidyalaya) was found, she was there as a teacher and as a principal until she got retired, guiding and paving the path for a brighter future for thousands of girls.

Baby Kalyani Abeysiriwardhena was born on the 19<sup>th</sup> May, 1925 at Godagedara, closer to Balapitiya in Galle District. She was the fourth in a family of seven. Being a daughter of a wealthy and distinguished family, she received part of her education at home itself from teachers who came to teach the seven children. She had her primary education at Godagedara Primary School and at Sidhartha College, Balapitiya.

As a Buddhist Family, all members didn't forget to go to the temple and observe 'Sill' on every 'full moon Poya' day. They essentially listened to 'Dhamma Talk'.

After the untimely death of her mother, her father decided to shift to Maradana, Colombo, where they had a printing press. Then she was only nine years old. After a couple of years her beloved father was also passed away leaving the responsibilities of the family to the eldest son – Phelix. Even though it's a boys' school today, Miss Kalyani had her secondary education at Ananda College, Maradana. Several Girls were there with her in the class. The girls had their education in an environment where very strict disciplinary actions were practiced.

Kalyani got through the University Entrance examination with flying colours. Although everybody in her family was very happy with her results, no one wanted her to see going to a university. After a big struggle she received permission from her elders to enter the university. In 1948 Kalyani entered the University of Ceylon, Colombo to follow a bachelor's degree in Arts.

Having completed the university education in 1951, Miss Kalyani Abeysiriwardhena received her first appointment as a teacher at the Holy Family Convent, Kalutara. She was lucky enough to be amongst the five staff members of the Government Girls' College, Castle Street, when it was started in January, 1953. Being the deputy principal, a big responsibility was there with her towards the students for a proper education as well as the newly commenced school, for its operation.

The guidance she received from the founder principal of Devi Balika Vidyalaya, Mrs. Wimala de Silva was a blessing to her.

The support, co-operation and guidance of her beloved husband late Dr. R.J. de Zoysa was always with her in doing all these ventures.

In 1967 Mrs. Kalyani de Zoysa had been appointed as the principal of Devi Balika Vidyalaya and she was the successor to late Deshabandu Dr. (Mrs.) Wimala de Silva. With very limited facilities available at the school, she made a big effort to bring Devi Balika Vidyalaya up, which we all see today. She became the mother not only to her own three children but also to thousands of Devians who were under the shelter of Devi Balika Vidyalaya. She always wanted to see the students well disciplined and well mannered within the school premises as well as outside. She strongly believed it was much easy to educate such a crowd. She was very strict not only for students but also for the staff members on these aspects. She wanted to see all the staff members were very duty conscious. These high quality managerial skills of Mrs. Zoysa were

proven facts which paved the path for a brighter future for Devians in extra curricular activities such as sports, drama, music art etc as well as in academic activities.

During her 33 years of invaluable service,

- Commencing the classes for grade 6 and onwards was a bench-mark in the history of Devi Balika Vidyalaya which paved the way to thousands of girls who received very high marks at the grade 5 scholarship examination (in 1972).
- Commencing primary education (Grade 1 in 1978) at Devi Balika Vidyalaya (Later it was stopped due to lack of space in conducting academic activities for small children).
- Acquiring of the only block of land adjoining the school, to the school, that belonged to the Land Reform Commission, where the present Auditorium and Principal's bungalow are sited. It was a result of a long and arduous struggle by Mrs. Zoysa and a parent, the late Mr. Singhe Senanayake.
- She was able to add a laboratory complex with high quality facilities for Advanced Level Students, a well planned building with class rooms and a 'Siyawasa' library to the school. In all these endeavours, she never exerted any pressure/burden on students or parents in finding financial assistance.
- Establishing the national Trust Fund for Students, whose fathers had died in the war, in 1984 was another greate service done by Mrs. Zoysa. Since then thousands of students all over the island have been helped in continuing studies up to secondary education.

Mrs. Kalyani de Zoysa got retired from her government service as a Selection Grade – Class II Principal (Highest Position as a Principal) in 1985, May, keeping Devi Balika Vidyalaya in a topmost position among Sri Lankan Schools, academically as well as in extra curricular activities.

After her retirement, she has been serving as the managing director of Stafford International School and Atlas Hall Publications Ltd. which they own.

As a very experienced and well respected citizen, she served as a member of the council, University of Keleniya for several years. She held the position of honourable secretary of the society of principals of Sri Lanka for several years. She is the president of the society of retired teachers of Devi Balika Vidyalaya. Being a member of various advisory boards of the ministry of education, still she serves the nation with her wealth of knowledge and experience. In appreciation of her great service to the field of school education in Sri Lanka, Mrs. Kalyani de Zoysa had been honoured by the Lions Club with the Gold Medal.

Today she holds the position of honourable patron to the Past Pupils Association of Devi Balika Vidyalaya. Her guidance is always there with us in doing all its key activities.

Mrs. Kalyani de Zoysa had the courage, strength and ability to lead Devi Balika Vidyalaya and its pupils towards its goals. Dear Madam, as members of Devi PPA we wish you good health and long life.