

DESHABANDU DR. (MRS.) WIMALA DE SILVA

Dr. (Mrs) Wimala de Silva is the founder principal of Government Girls' College, Castle Street (Devi Balika Vidyalaya). Her great guidance and leadership paved the way for the current success of Devi Balika Vidyalaya.

She was born on the 2nd June, 1920 in Negombo. As her mother passed away when she was only five years old, she grew up with her father, who is a practising Buddhist, in their home in Negombo. She had her school education at Vidyalankara Buddhist Mixed School (VBMS), and at Newstead College, Negombo. After a brilliant academic performance at University College, Colombo, she started her career as a teacher at Dharmapala Vidyalaya, Pannipitiya in 1943. She moved on to become a grade II principal at Maliyadeva Balika Vidyalaya, Kurunegala in 1947, where she had a 3 year break for post graduate studies abroad. Her greatest challenge came in 1952 at a relatively young age to set up Government Girls' College at Castle Street, Borella. She devoted her time and energy to create one of the most prestigious schools in the island, which is Devi Balika Vidyalaya. In this venture the unstinting support she received from her husband late Dr. S.L. de Silva was remarkable, he was himself a renowned educationalist in that era.

As the representative of the Education Department, which founded it, Dr. Wimala de Silva's vision was to provide more opportunities, especially in science education for academically gifted girls and to make Devi Balika Vidyalaya (then Government Girls' College, Castle Street), a centre of excellence in science education.

Dr. Mrs. Silva inspired the young dedicated staff to give their best to get the best from the students. Since the giant leap forward taken by the students of her era, who are serving the country at the top of their chosen professions now, the school has grown in stature and esteem. The subsequent heads of school followed her example and added greater dimensions to the school activities to make it what it is today.

Her vision was to fashion an honourable, responsible and a gracious set of women who would be a credit to the national womanhood. She always considered that co-curricular activities have equal importance and encouraged her students to take part in extra curricular activities such as sports, eastern and western drama, dancing guiding etc.

After Devi Balika she was appointed a super grade principal to Princess of Wales Collage, Moratuwa which she left after a short period for fellowship studies abroad.

She spent the 1970's in research and serving on national committees and advisory boards in various ministries pertaining to education and advancement of science, one of such being the National Committee on Women as the chairperson – a Presidential appointment - on which that she continued to serve as a member till 2001.

In 1983 she was appointed the chancellor of the Sri Jayawardhanapura University, the first woman to hold the post until she resigned due to ill health in 2001. She was awarded the Presidential honour of Deshabandu in 1986 in recognition of her services to the country in the field of education and women's affairs.

In addition to the above she had won many scholarships here and abroad, awards and honours too numerous to mention individually. She also took part in many international forums one of which was the UN World Conference on Women, in Beijing 1995.

Although she is no more with us (passed away on the 15th April, 2007), her brain child Devi Balika Vidyalaya would play her role as a pioneering Girls' School in Sri Lanka.