

**Bhikkhu Saranapala,\*** Buddhist Chaplain to the University of Toronto is a young Buddhist monk living in the monastic community of the West End Buddhist Monastery in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. Born in Chittagong, Bangladesh, Bhikkhu Saranapala continued his secular and monastic education in the ancient sacred City of Kandy, the seat of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, joining the Primrose Gardens Branch of the Dharmayatanaya, one the leading Colleges for the Training of Buddhist Monks in Asia where he received his *Upasampada* or Higher Ordination under the Most Venerable Madihe Pannasiha Mahanayaka Thero, the Supreme Patriarch of the Amarapura Sector of Sri Lanka as his preceptor and the Most Venerable Ampitiye Sri Rahula Mahathero as his teacher. Having enrolled for undergraduate studies at the University of Peradeniya he studied Buddhism and Oriental Languages. He obtained a *summa cum laude* Royal Pundit Degree in Sinhalese, Pali and Sanskrit studies from the island's hallowed Oriental Languages Institute while studying for his B.A. in Buddhist studies. Abandoning his university studies, Bhikkhu Saranapala moved to Canada in obedience to his religious superiors accepting an assignment as a resident monk at the fledgling West End Buddhist Monastery in Mississauga, Canada. He enrolled at the University of Toronto and obtained his B.A. Honors Degree in Comparative Religions and Western Philosophy in 2000 and was appointed Chaplain to the University the same year. After obtaining a Masters Degree in Religious studies from Hamilton's McMaster University in 2002, Bhikkhu Saranapala returned to the University of Toronto as a Teaching Assistant, and pursued his Ph. D in Religious Studies at the Centre for the Study of Religion.

A veritable dynamo of activity at his Mississauga Buddhist Monastery, he is the Principal of its Sunday Dhamma School and the Director of its Youth Forum that conducts a Soup Kitchen Project, now in its 12<sup>th</sup> year, in collaboration with the Toronto Downtown's Good Shepherd Centre.

Acclaimed as a Buddhist monk for the modern times by a growing band of admirers, Bhikkhu Saranapala has earned an enviable reputation as a public speaker and a meditation teacher *par excellence*. Within a short period of time, his scholarly lectures expounding the Teaching of the Buddha began to attract the attention of the university academic circles and the Inter-faith community of Canada. Bhikkhu Saranapala soon became a popular guest speaker at many a prestigious parley. In 2004, he was invited to address the parliamentarians in Ottawa. In 2005 September, he was accorded the honor of officiating on behalf of all religious denominations at the induction ceremonies connected with the Order of Ontario Awards in the Ontario Legislature. He has conducted meditation retreats to the City Counselors in Brampton, the Peel Region and the Toronto District School Board Principals. His inspiring lectures at the Peel Region's District and Catholic Schools Boards' Secondary Schools have won him much praise making him one of the most sought after speakers on Buddhism. He conducts a free meditation class on Wednesdays and Sutra Study Class on Saturdays, now in its 11<sup>th</sup> year, at the West End Buddhist Monastery.

*\*(Excerpted from "Profile: A Monk in Motion" – by Aloy Perera, "Dhamma Wheel" - West End Buddhist Centre Journal)*