



OUR SINGAPORE:
ONE PEOPLE, MANY CULTURES.
Full Moon Puja at Sri Lankaramaya Buddhist Temple

This is a statue of the Buddha, the founder of Buddhism. A puja is a way of honouring the Buddha. On full moon nights, this temple observes a special puja. It's regarded as a time for Buddhists to learn more about their faith. Besides making offerings, the temple's devotees also attend talks and meditation sessions organised by the monks.

During a puja, symbolic offerings are made to the Buddha. Flowers represent the Buddhist teaching of impermanence: everything goes through the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Oil lamps symbolise enlightenment.

At the heart of this temple is a 60-year-old Bodhi tree. Its sapling was brought from Sri Lanka. It was beneath such a tree that the founder of Buddhism meditated and finally achieved enlightenment. During a puja at this temple, devotees walk around this tree chanting the "Triple Gem" – Buddha, Dharma (the teachings) and Sangha. (the community).

The devotees usually wear white to attend a puja, as the colour represents purity.

This temple was founded by Buddhists belonging to the Sinhalese community, who started arriving in Singapore in the 1860s. Sinhalese are the main ethnic group of Sri Lanka, the large island to the south of India. Today, many of the temple's devotees are Sinhalese, although it also receives Buddhists from other races. Sinhalese usually practise a form of Buddhism known as Theravada, which is also common in Thailand and other parts of Southeast Asia.

Picture and research: JUSTIN ZHUANG

This series by **WHAT'S UP** – Singapore's newspaper for students – takes a closer look at our country's many colourful cultures. Also online at <http://www.whatsup.sg> ► **'ONE PEOPLE'**.

The series is supported by OnePeople.sg, which promotes racial and religious harmony. Visit www.onepeople.sg to find out about OnePeople.sg and its programmes.



Rich, poor... or middle? Computer animation helps answer the riddle

Countries used to be divided into "developed" and "developing" but no longer.

These graphs from Gapminder show how countries have progressed between 1907 and 2007. Each circle represents a country. When a country moves up the graph, it shows that its people are living longer. All countries have moved up. A country moving to the right means that its people are getting richer. Most countries have become a lot richer, but some are as poor as they were a century ago.

When you read news about the world, you'll often find people talking about two types of countries: rich "developed" nations and poorer "developing" nations. Hans Rosling wants you to know that this way of thinking is wrong. "We need a completely new view of the world," he says. Yes, there used to be a time when there was a clear divide between two groups of nations, he says. This was in the 1960s, when he was still a university student in his home country of Sweden. Back then, only a few countries could be considered "developed". They were almost all located in North America, Europe



CHIN TUNG LEE / WIKIMEDIA

and Australia. These nations were far ahead of the "developing" nations of Asia, South America and Africa. Their citizens had more money and lived longer. In the "developing" world, people were poor – so poor that it was common for babies to fall ill and die before having a chance to grow up to your age.

What has changed

However, in recent decades, most "developing" nations have made amazing progress. China is now the second largest economy on the planet. Citizens of Chile in South America now live longer than Americans. Babies born in Malaysia

CHINA can now be considered a "middle-income" country.