Duruthu Full Moon Poya Day

Posted on



A traditional Buddhist mural at Kelani Viharaya depicting the Buddha surrounded by celestial beings and devotees, symbolizing reverence, enlightenment, and spiritual devotion.

Duruthu Poya Day is a significant Buddhist observance celebrated on the full moon day of the month of Duruthu, which usually falls in January. This auspicious day marks three significant events in Buddhist history, all of which are associated with the life of Lord Buddha.

This Poya Day is celebrated on the full moon in January and marks the Buddha’s first visit to Sri Lanka. According to the Mahavamsa and Dipavansa, ancient texts, the Buddha visited Mahiyangana to mediate peace between the two main tribes on

the Island, which occurred in his ninth month after attaining Enlightenment. After the Buddha preached the Dhamma to both Kings, two brothers named Kassapa, and after they were tamed, then He preached sermons to both Kings and the gatherings. The offering of the Hair Relic to God Sumana Saman was another significant event on this Duruthu Poya Day, honoring the Buddha.

On the other hand, Gautama Buddha's visit to Sri Lanka is the most significant event after the Rāma-Rāwnā war, which is said to have taken place in this country more than 9,300 years ago. According to history, it is believed that when Lord Buddha visited Sri Lanka, the inhabitants included tribes known as the Yakkha. These tribes were believed to be the descendants of Rāvana and his brother Vibhishana, as well as the Nāgas.

Yakkhas and Nāgās were constantly in confrontation, and it is believed that God Sumana Saman invited the Buddha to terminate the hostilities. The Enlightened One accepted the invitation to visit the Mahānāga Grove in Mahiyangana, located in the Uva province, East of Colombo, where the Yakkhas gathered for a meeting. Moreover, it is said in history that the Buddha stood in the Mahānāga Grove radiating clear, calm, and gentle light, which surprised those present and made them think of an invader of their ancestral land. Unprepared to listen to the Buddha, the Yakkha soldiers viewed him as an invader and took up arms to harm him.

The Buddha believed it was time to subjugate the Yakkha tribes. After this incident, they followed Lord Buddha's teachings. The Buddha then laid a piece of cloth (Pathkada), a carpet for hermitages, on the ground, and sitting on it, the Buddha called the Yakkhā and Nāgā and admonished them.

According to legend, with the Buddha's first visit to the country, our motherland became a suitable place for establishing Buddhism. Therefore, we, the present generation of this country, are fortunate to have pure and scientific Dharma, which is a blessing uniquely enjoyed by us. According to Buddhist history, the Devas and Nāgās assembled in large numbers at the Mahā Nāga Grove and took refuge in the Triple Gem: the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. Among them was God Sumana Saman, who was a member of the Deva tribe from the central hills of Sri Lanka. This God Saman, who had attained 'Sōwān' or the first of the four stages leading to Nibbāna,begged Lord Buddha for relics for worship, and the Buddha gave him a lock of His hair, in which he received a golden casket. The God had enshrined the casket with 'Kēsadhatu', the Buddha's Hair, in a Pagoda, Dāgaba, or chetiya that he built at a place where the Buddha sat and preached Dhamma to Yakkhas

and Devas in Mahiyangana.

The legend states that this is the first Chetiya, also known as Miyugunaseya, in Sri Lanka, and one of the shrines constructed during the time of the Buddha at the site of the Mahānāga Grove. Forty-five years later, the ‘Greevā-Dhāthu’, the collarbone relic of the Buddha, was enshrined in this Chetiya by Arahant Sarabhu, a disciple of Arahant Sāruputta Mahā Thero. Although this Chetiya was initially constructed by God Sumana Saman, it was later reconstructed by Arahant Sarabhu Thero to a height of twelve cubits. Again, the brother of Uddha Chulābha, King Dēvānampiyatissa, constructed a thirty-cubit Kanchuka Chetiya over the earlier twelve-cubit tall Chetiya. King Dutugemunu, who unified Sri Lanka, built an eighty-cubit chetiya covering the Mahiyangana Chetiya. Additionally, this Chetiya has been renovated over time by various kings, including Dhātusēna, Sirisangabō, and Agrabōdhi. It has been renovated by Chetiya committees time to time to its current magnificent state, where the country’s longest river, the Mahaweli Ganga, flows swiftly through the central hills and plains of the hinterland, creating a remarkable phenomenon. Its hidden name in Sinhala is ‘Miyugunaseya’, while in the Pāli language it is called ‘Bintenna’. Therefore, Mahiyangana, Bintenna, and Miyuguna refer to the same place in Uva province.

According to these historical details, and as one of the famous renovated places, a large number of devotees attend Mahiyangana Chetiya on every Duruthu Pōya, in January, as it is a place purified by the touch of the Buddha’s feet more than two thousand five hundred years ago. The Chetiya standing at the bank of the Mahaweli River, with a BO tree, is illustrated by the annual procession, Esala Perahera, which is immediately followed by the Sri Dalada Perahera in Kandy.

Another important incident in the character of the Buddha was leading one thousand Brahmins, including Jatila’s brother, Uruvela Kassapa, Nadi Kassapa, and Gayā Kadapa, to the truth and steadfastness before the Buddha proceeded to Sri Lanka. After listening to the sermon of the Buddha, all Jatila Brahmins ordained as Buddhist monks, and they were also sent by the Buddha to propagate the Dhamma. They were the second group sent by the Buddha to share with humanity and assist in their spiritual development. Before sending them to propagate the Dhamma, He accompanied them to the Kingdom of Magadha, in response to an invitation extended by King Bimbisāra of Magadha before the Buddha’s Enlightenment. In a joyful mood, King Bimbisāra and his people embraced Buddhism. The Buddha preached Dhamma to everyone who took refuge in the Triple Gem: The Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. As an offering, the King donated the Vēluwana garden to

the Buddha, where the Veluwanārāma Monastery was established. On this occasion, all monks were permitted to accept Ārāma or Temple. According to the ‘Buddha Charithaya’, the story of the Buddha, it is stated that King Bimbisāra of Magadha dreamed his deceased relatives were suffering as goblins.

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At this time, the King informed the Buddha about the pain of the mind caused by this dream. Then the Buddha advised the King to do merit and transfer them to the dead relatives, who were born as goblins. After this, by the King, the relatives have been released from the goblin’s soul. After 365 days, a new year has begun. Regardless of what happened last year, we can commit to practicing positive actions for ourselves and others in this new year.



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