New Life in a New Year

Posted on

Ancient calendar.

Everything in the world is changing; nothing is permanent. Everyone likes it if everything is endless because they can live happily ever after. No one wants to change. No one likes getting old. No one likes to decay. That is the nature of life and the world. You will get frustrated and anxious if you don’t want to face it. In such a situation, someone has to face distress. Whether we like it or not, time goes very fast from moment to moment. When we notice it, another year has dawned, and we call it a New Year, and on the other hand, another 365 days have gone by. In connection with this, we use a calendar consisting of days, weeks, and months.

On the other hand, it is a very entertaining and intelligent thing to review the

history of the calendar. But it takes more work to peruse the calendar's history. It is pretty hard, as it goes very far in human history. But I'll try my best with an introduction: what is a calendar, and who was the first to use a calendar in the world? Wikipedia explains it: "A calendar is a system of organizing days. This is done by naming periods, typically days, weeks, months, and years. A date is a single and specific day within such a system. A calendar is also a physical record (often paper) of such a system." They believe that the calendar is usually synchronized with the cycle of the sun or the moon, and the sun and the moon both. The usual calendar has 12 months and 29, 30, or 31 days in a month of a year in the present day. The term calendar applies not only to a given time or day but also to a specific record or device displaying a scheme, such as an appointment book, pocket calendar, personal organizer, desktop calendar, or wall calendar. Today, they use the calendar technologically on electronic devices such as computers, iPhones, PDAs, EDAs, and smartphones.

The most common pre-modern calendar was the lunisolar calendar, which has been used as a lunar calendar and a solar calendar. The solar calendar has a date for each solar day, while the lunar calendar has been designed for days with a lunar phase cycle.

According to its etymology, the term calendar has taken from the word 'kalendae,' and it has been called 'calendar' in Middle English. But now it's being used as a calendar. However, the sun and the moon had been the central themes for the formation of the calendar. Then, who was the first to invent the calendar? History says the Sumerians were the first to use the calendar in Mesopotamia.

According to human history, the Sumerian civilization in the Tigris valley was inhabited in 6000 BCE. It is said, "The Ubaid period (4100 BCE) saw the first settlement in southern Mesopotamia by farmers who brought irrigation agriculture. Distinctive, finely painted pottery was evident during this time." Therefore, after this era, we can see the history of the calendar. Some calendars were in the name of nationality, country, ethics, and religion, like Chinese, Hindu, Hebrew, and Thai. The traditional Chinese first calendar was developed in 700 BCE by the Eastern Zhou dynasty. The most essential thing in pre-modern calendars is the reservation of religious feast days. Various calendars in the Indian subcontinent were Nepali calendars, Bengali calendars, Malayalam calendars, Tamil calendars, and Vikram Samvat in North India. The Buddhist calendars used in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Thailand are based on the older version of ancient calendars. Most of the Hindu calendars are based on Vedānga and Jyotisha. Therefore, most Eastern

calendars depict Jotisha, or astrology, with or without religious norms. It is said that the Thai calendar is also known as the solar calendar and uses months and days according to Western style, but years based on the traditional Buddhist calendar.

In Sri Lanka, they also use the Western style, Buddhist tradition, and astrological perspective. It depicts special Buddhist religious occasions and other important religious details. There is a list of calendars worldwide, such as the Egypt calendar, Mesopotamian-Gezer calendar, Roman calendar, Attic calendar, Old Persian calendar, Chinese-Genesis calendar, Ptolemaic calendar, Kurdish calendar, Persian-Zoroastrian calendar, Japanese calendar, Armenian calendar, Bulgarian- Bulgar calendar, Kerala-Kollam Era, Nepal-Nepal Sambat Thailand-Thai lunar calendar: minimally, there is even one calendar in every country. Besides that, there's another unique calendar in Sri Lanka named Lita (litə), a lunisolar calendar that shines with the sun and moon on both sides. The specialty of this calendar is that it consists of the Western calendar system as well as the Buddhist calendar system. That means it depicts the significant days of Buddhist religious occasions, for example, Poya days and precept observation days. So, the devotees can also decide earlier on the Pōya precepts observation timeline. And except for these main Pōya days, there are another three standard Pōya days in this unique Lita calendar for the convenience of the devotees. Therefore, all these four Pōya days are called 'Sathara /s^tərə/ Pōya,' traditionally.

> The 'life calendar' page has been torn away; a new page has been turned on. Not only that, it ironically tells us that three hundred and sixty-five days have gone by, and only one page has been turned on, and that's January 1st.

There is a very remarkable occasion in all Sri Lankan calendars, and that's none other than the Sinhala and Tamil New Year in April annually. Unlike ordinary calendars, Lita has many procedures to fulfill on and before the Sinhala New Year. They were calculated according to the Astrological perspective. People who prepare for the New Year should have to peruse the calendar to follow the auspicious times, rituals, and customs. As it is a lunar calendar, they have mentioned the auspicious days for the view of the old moon and the new moon. They have also mentioned the auspicious time and directions regarding cooking fresh meals, consuming, engaging in work, and exchanging money. If we review this Buddhist lunar calendar, we can see it as an astrology guide and a traditional date calendar. This Sri Lankan lunar

calendar is sometimes used for auspicious guidance and Ayurvedic guidance for needy people. It predicts whether the next year will be fruitful or troublesome. For this, they use intelligence to inform you about the wrong directions which you should avoid. So, we can face the new year by doing good things and with religious blessings.

We can see some Ayurvedic and local medicinal plants for self-cure on the Ayurvedic calendar. So, we can understand that this local calendar is a guide for our whole lives. Then, the calendar talks to our heart taps into our brain, and tells us that time is going very fast, life is short, hurry up, and don't make mistakes by turning the last page of life on. The 'life calendar' page has been torn away; a new page has been turned on. Not only that, it ironically tells us that three hundred and sixty-five days have gone by, and only one page has been turned on, and that's January 1st. So, what do you plan to do in the new year? Do you drown in the same mud or try to come out of the water and blossom like a lotus in a lotus pond? I wish, all our readers, supporters, and the whole world: May enjoy good health, prosperity, happiness, peace, and long life.

Ven Diyapattugama Revatha Thero, Chief Incumbent of the Siriwardhanaramaya Temple, Kollupitiya.