

The Dawning of a Cool Season and a New Era



Arrival of 'Sanghamittā Arahat Bhikkhuni', bringing with her the revered right branch of the 'Jaya Sri Mahā Bodhi' from Buddhagaya, India.

The months of December and January are a vibrant time for Sri Lankans, marked by cool weather and a festive spirit, signaling the dawn of a new era. During this period, the climate in Sri Lanka remains pleasantly cool, creating the perfect backdrop for celebrations that last until the end of January.

This Pōya Day, known as 'Unduwap Pōya', holds significant importance for Sri Lankans as it marks the arrival of 'Sanghamittā Arahat Bhikkhuni' to our shores, bringing with her the revered right branch of the 'Jaya Sri Mahā Bodhi' from Buddhagaya, India. This day also commemorates the historic first ordination of females in Sri Lanka, where 500 women, alongside Queen Anulādevi, were empowered to take vows in this month. Additionally, it heralds the beginning of the sacred journey to Sri Pāda mountain, a revered site where the Footprint of The Lord Buddha is enshrined.

With the arrival of Jaya Sri Mahā Bodhi in Sri Lanka, communities across the

country embraced a profound new practice of worship dedicated to this sacred tree, offering their homage much like they do for the Lord Buddha. This practice has evolved into a widely celebrated religious event among all communities, where people seek solutions to various life challenges, from mental relief to a fulfilling life. However, it is essential to reflect on the true essence of these Pūja and offerings—whether they align with the core teachings of Buddhism or diverge from them. The significance of this is emphasized in the ‘Wakkhalee’ sutra, which clearly states that “Yō Dhammang passathi, so mung passathi”—whoever sees the Dhamma (the doctrine of the Buddha) truly sees The Buddha. This profound understanding invites us to explore the deeper meanings behind our practices.

If one wishes to truly see the Blessed One, it is essential to study His doctrine. This pursuit is fundamental for Buddhists eager to discover the Dhamma, and it requires unwavering commitment to following His teachings without hesitation, discouragement, or illusion until their goals are achieved. First and foremost, they must show deep respect for the Teacher— The Buddha—His Doctrine, and His followers (Bhikkhu) without any doubt. By wholeheartedly embracing the Dhamma, they embark on a powerful journey towards emancipation.

In this matter, the Blessed One clearly advises followers to embrace free thinking rather than succumbing to religious prejudice. The philosophy presented is profound and can easily be misunderstood by those who lack wisdom, so it is essential for seekers to approach it with clarity and open-mindedness.

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One can learn these ideas by concentrating the mind on the ‘Sabbāsava Sutra’ in Majjima Nikhāya, in the canon. “Only for him who understands, who comprehends, is there the destruction of cankers, so I say; not for him who does not understand, who does not comprehend. Monks, for one who wisely and intelligently realizes the fact that the unrisen cankers arise, and the arisen cankers increase: and, monks, for one who wisely realizes, the unrisen cankers do not overcome.” By these translations in the sutra, we can understand how profound the Blessed One and His great teachings are. So, He has enunciated the doctrine to people who can understand it - to wise followers not to unwise

followers. But it is not neglecting the unwise persons, they also can follow the rituals and become gradually to a higher position. Again, Blessed One has explained the method to overcome cankers as followings.

One can truly grasp these ideas by focusing on the ‘Sabbāsava Sutra’ in the Majjima Nikhāya of the canon. The teaching states, “Only for him who understands, who comprehends, is there the destruction of cankers; I assert this unequivocally; not for him who does not understand, who does not comprehend.” Monks, for those who wisely and intelligently recognize the reality that unrisen cankers arise and that the arisen cankers increase, the insight is clear: for those who wisely realize this truth, the unrisen cankers will not prevail. These teachings reveal the profound wisdom of the Blessed One and emphasize the depth of His great teachings. He expressly conveys this doctrine to those capable of understanding it—wise followers rather than unwise ones. However, this does not mean the unwise are neglected; they too can engage in the rituals and progressively elevate their understanding. Furthermore, the Blessed One provides clear methods to overcome cankers, which are essential for all practitioners.”

□ Monks, there are cankers that must be overcome through insight.

□ There are cankers that can be conquered with self-control.

□ There are cankers that require the judicious use of resources.

□ There are cankers that can only be overcome through endurance.

□ There are cankers that demand avoidance.

□ There are cankers that must be eliminated.

□ Finally, there are cankers that will be overcome through continuous development.

This concept is incredibly fascinating and deeply psychological, making it a valuable tool for any psychology counselor to utilize in psychotherapy for clients facing mental challenges. I view the teachings of the Buddha not as mere rituals or acts of worship, but as effective techniques for mind control and a powerful pathway to enlightenment.

When discussing meditation as a pathway to wisdom, it’s clear that today’s

Western practitioners approach it with greater fascination than many in Sri Lanka. However, their objectives differ significantly from those of Buddhists. In the West, meditation is primarily utilized as a tool to alleviate mental health issues like stress, anxiety, and depression. To foster societal development, it's essential to cultivate positive minds within the community.

Prioritizing mental growth will lay the groundwork for a more advanced and prosperous nation. Looking ahead to 2025, we can confidently envision a country transformed through rich mental and social development.

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