

# The First Peace Walk to Sri Lanka on Poson Pōya day

Posted on



Peace walks began in ancient times with the Buddha, according to Buddhist history, for the first time. After the first sermon, the group of monks grew to sixty. Then the Lord Buddha advised them to go for walks and to preach the Dharma very simply and clearly for the good of many people. It has been stated in Pāli as “Charatha Bhikkawe Bahujana hitāya, bahujana sukhāya attāya hitaya, deva manussānan`” which means, “O Bhikkhu, behave on the tour for the goodness of many people.”

Before King Ashoka sent missionaries to many countries, the Buddha started a peace walk to Sri Lanka. The Buddha’s first visit was to Mahiyangana, in Sri Lanka,

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to calm down a war between two Yakkha tribes near the River Mahaweli. Then his second visit was also to Nāgadīpa, in Sri Lanka, to settle down a war between two Nāga tribes for a gem throne.

The Buddha visited Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, for the third time to promote peace among the people by preaching Dharma. This Dharma aims to gain wisdom to understand the truth about human life, which can be attained through “The Noble Eightfold Path” (Ārya Atthangika Mārgaya), beginning with Sammā Ditthi, or Right Understanding, and culminating in Right Concentration.



Emperor Asoka — the great king who spread peace, compassion, and the teachings of the Buddha.

It is stated in ‘The Four Foundations of Mindfulness’ as: “And what, bhikkhus, is the

Noble truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering? It is simply this Noble Eightfold Path, namely, Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration,” (P156).

Without more details, we can understand that this ‘eight features way’ is very important for leading a good life and maintaining peace throughout life. In this way, the Buddha has taught an excellent technique for developing a fulfilling life and achieving mental peace and societal harmony.

The Great King Ashōka was the first missionary leader, sending missionaries to many countries to teach Dharma and promote peace worldwide without invading. King Ashōka has sent Buddhist missionaries across South India and beyond, from Myanmar to Sri Lanka, as well as from Kashmir to Central Asia, Western Asia, Egypt, Macedonia, East Africa, and Greece. “Central Asia consists of five independent former Soviet republics located in the heart of Eurasia, stretching from the Caspian Sea to western China. These nations are Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The region is known for its vast steppes, high mountains, deserts, and rich Silk Road history.”

Opening a new chapter in Sri Lankan society, venerable Arahāt Mahā Mahinda, the begotten son of the King, was sent to Sri Lanka on a Poson Pōya Day, during 277-236 B.C. Emperor Ashoka’s status and reputation were those of a supreme and unconquerable leader, sovereign of an empire encompassing a vast territory of India. This consisted of five great rivers named the Yamuna, the Ganges, the Sarabhu, the Achirawathi, and the Mahi, and 16 states named Anga, Magadha, Kāsi, Kosala, Vajji, Malla, Chethi, Vaccha, Kuru, Panchal, Maccha, Surasena, Assaka, Avanti, Gandhari, and Cambodia.

If we look back at his character, before conquering the 16 states, he was called King Ashōka, but after capturing the last state, Kālinga, his name was changed to Chandha Ashōka or Chandhāshōka (cruel Ashōka). Although Ashoka’s army succeeded in capturing and annexing the Kālinga, great devastation occurred, where thousands of soldiers on both sides were killed, and multitudes of people were plunged into suffering by the war’s destruction, prompting the monarch, who felt great remorse.

After listening to a talk, by chance given by a novice Buddhist monk, the King changed from being cruel to a sober person. After learning the Buddha Dharma,

King Dharmāshōka established a peaceful Dhamma common to all religions and all people worldwide. That is why he sent missionaries to many countries, and inscribed his Dhamma in rocks and pillars as follows. “All religious people should live with peace and harmony; there is no better work than promoting the welfare of all the people. And that my sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons might conform with it for the world’s welfare. Along the roads, I have planted banyan and mango trees to provide shade for people and animals.

I have had watering places made for the use of animals and men.” Furthermore, he has stated about human life as follows: “As human beings live, enjoying peace of mind and collective protection, self-control and purity of heart, I desire for the animals of the jungle in my kingdom also to enjoy equal survival,” (Bauddha Lōkaya: page 185/186). Besides that, a globally recognized philosopher, Patrick Goodness, says the following about Dharmāshōka in the context of ‘The Basic Buddhism’: “In the third century B.C.E., several ambitious people built the expansive Mauryan empire.

King Ashōka was troubled by what he saw with wartime destruction. He was a leader who had sent out his armies to kill and conquer, but he saw the result of war as destructive. He saw what happened to people when they were conquered and afterward, so he converted to Buddhism, adopted a code of nonviolence, renounced all warfare, and incorporated Buddhist principles into his rule. He was the reason why Buddhism spread worldwide and was highly accepted.”

King Ashoka’s conversion to Dharma brought peace to India and inspired peace movements in Sri Lanka and many other countries, promoting harmony in people’s minds. According to Dharmāshōka’s peace mission, as a peace walker, Arahat Mahā Mahinda arrived in Sri Lanka on Poson Pōya Day. At that time, there was a King in Sri Lanka, beloved by the Gods, named Dēvānampiyatissa. Just as King Ashōka in India, the wise and intelligent King in Sri Lanka, Dēvānampiyatissa, also listened to Dharma and understood the Buddha’s teaching well.

Having understood the Dhamma, the King, who had been killing innocent animals for pleasure, became a very innocent and peaceful person and followed these universal teachings, which tune our minds toward positive thinking. The mind and thoughts have no religion or race; hence, Arahat Mahinda’s sermon from Mihintalā that day remains a philosophy for uplifting one’s mind to a state of serenity. His teaching on Poson Pōya Day should go beyond merely observing its significance and deepen our knowledge of reality. Because, without good knowledge about the mind,

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we cannot reach the top of the reality of life.

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