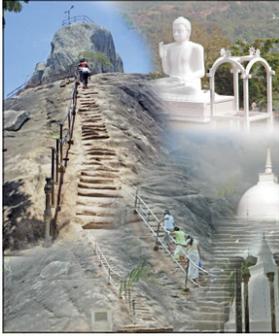


Poson poya – Jeṭṭhā uposatha (June)

The sun travels in the house of Gemini in the month of poson says the astrologer. But poson reminds us of Mihintale, Venerable arahat Mahinda and king Devanampiyathissa.



Even before the advent of venerable arahat Mahinda, the month of poson had been a season of celebration among kings and inhabitants of this country.

King Devanampiyathissa who went hunting to Mihintale with forty thousand followers met Venerable arahat Mahinda who is regarded as the second Buddha of the Sinhalese nation and also one who has altered the history of Sri Lanka.

This meeting in the bountiful month of Poson helped the spiritual and social upliftment and development of the inhabitants of Sri Lanka.

The full moon day of the month of Poson is as important as the poya of the month of Wesak to Sri Lankan Buddhists. On Poson poya day Buddhists in thousands gather at every temple to do religious observances in memory of venerable arahat Mahinda, their second Buddha. The largest number of Buddhist devotees can be seen at Mihintale and Anuradhapura.

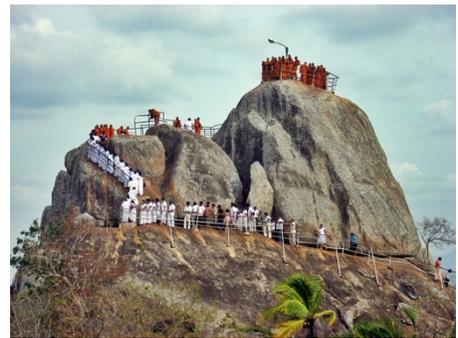
Every temple in the island is crowded with young and old devotees who observe eight precepts and offer merit to venerable arahat Mahinda. Anuradhapura is the most resplendent holy place with all devotees clad in pure white sil robes. The reason is that these devotees faithfully wish to come to the above places and observe eight precepts. The Buddha honoured Sri Lanka by his three visits and made this country the Buddha's land. In the same way venerable arahat Mahinda came to Mihintale in Anuradhapura on a Poson poya day and made Anuradhapura his land.

Venerable arahat Mahinda visited Sri Lanka bringing the Dhamma through the Buddhist mission of king Dharmasoka of India.

King Dharmasoka holds a unique place among the great kings who ruled the world. At first, he was known as Asoka, and was ambitious for power and conquering. He killed ninety-nine of his brothers and was named Chandasoka.

When king Asoka conquered the land of Kalingahesaw the great number of human bodies the battle killed and the river like blood flow that covered the land. He experienced the futility of war and he was disgusted and ashamed. Then he thought to conquer the neighbouring countries by Dhamma instead of conquering by war.

At that time king Devanampiyatissa ruled over Sri Lanka. These two kings were friends, but they had never met. (They were like modern pen friends).



King Dharmasoka who was devoted to Buddhist doctrine induced his son Mahinda to be a monk and his daughter Saṅghamittha to be a nun.

He wanted to protect the purity of Buddhist doctrine. He disrobed undisciplined monks and took steps to hold the third Council of Dhamma. He also sent Buddhist missions to nine countries.



The doctrine was brought to Sri Lanka by a mission headed by venerable arahat Mahā Mahinda. He was accompanied by Venerable arahat Itthiya, Utthiya and Sambala, Baddhasala and novice Sumana and a devotee named Bhanduka.

Even though venerable arahat Mahinda brought the Buddha's message here we must not think that there were no Buddhists in this country. The Buddha in his three visits to Sri Lanka travelled many places with the patronage of the royalty. These journeys were so important that this country was regarded as the Buddha's land. The Yaksha rulers of Mahiyangana offered their land to the Blessed One. To do such an offering, to offer their birthplace how extremely compassionate was the Buddha towards the Yakshas?

The dialogue between venerable arahat Mahinda and king Devanampiyatissa who ran deer hunting at Mihinthala might be the first intelligent test in the history of human race. While chasing after an innocent deer pointing his deadly arrows the king was seen by venerable arahat Mahinda, who called him, "TissaTissa."

The king wondered who could call him – the king - by his name 'Tissa'. Then he beheld venerable arahat Mahinda with his followers.

"O great king! We are the followers of the king of the doctrine - the Buddha. We came from India with compassion towards you" said venerable arahat Mahinda. He asked the king a few questions to test his intelligence.

"What is this tree O king?"

"It is a mango tree, reverend sir."

"Are there any other mango trees besides this one?"

"Yes reverend sir."

"Are there any other trees except those mango trees?"

" Yes sir there are"

"Are there any other trees besides those mango trees and other trees?"

"Yes sir, it is this mango tree."

Venerable Arahath Mahinda understood that the king was intelligent and proceeded to ask an-other set of questions.

"Have you any relatives O king?"

"Yes reverend sir, I have."

"Have you got any non-relatives O king?"



"Yes sir I have."

"Do you have any others besides relatives and non relatives O king?"

"Yes sir. It isme."

Venerable arahat Mahinda decided that the king was intelligent and delivered a sermon relating to 'Cūlahatthipadopama sutta.'

King Devanampiyatissa listened to the sermon and took refuge in the Triple Gem. He helped the mission with food and lodging and all other necessities and helped and assisted the arahat to propagate Dhamma in this island.

On this Poson poya day Upasaka Bhanduka was ordained. In the history of Buddha Sāsana reverend Bhanduka was the first Buddhist priest ordained in Sri Lanka.

Venerable arahat Mahā Mahinda from time to time delivered discourses relating to "suttas" like Aditthya pariyaya, Vimana vatththu, Prethavaththu, Deva Dutha and Asivasopama to the Sinhalese.

To facilitate spread of doctrine venerable arahat Mahinda resided at an abode built in Nandana garden at Anuradhapura. This garden was also known as Jothiya Uyana.

With the instruction given by arahat Mahinda thera, kind Devanampiyatissa rendered a great service to the Buddha Sāsana by enecting many Viharas and Dagebas like Thūparāma and Tissamahārāma.

Because of Buddhism, brought to Sri Lanka on a Poson poya day, the life of the Sri and culturally. The Sinhalese know that these developments have progressed thousands of years of their history. Therefore, they are indebted to Buddhists never forget to light a lamp in memory of this great arahat on Poson poya day.



Source: Duruthu pohoya; Soma Jayakody.