

Duruthu poya (January)

According to the world January is regarded as the first month of the year. It is *Duruthu* according to the Sinhala names of the months. There are many Buddhist events related to this month. *Duruthu* full moon day is a very important day for the Buddhists.

The sun travels in the house of Capricorn this month, according to astrology. As it is the beginning of a new year the whole world celebrates the new year in the month of *Duruthu* - January.

Seeds sown in the Maha season bring forth flowers in the month of *Duruthu*. It brings happiness. The meaning of *Duruthu* is - *Du* + *Irthu*, the change of the season. Crops flower in this month and farmers call it the nature's '*Malvara Masaya*.'

Among the most important events of Buddhist dispensation most specifics the noble Buddhas first advent to Sri Lanka. It is to prevent a war that the Buddha came here. At that time the rulers of Sri Lanka were *Yakkha*, *Nāga* and *Deva* clans. On the bank of the river *Mahaveli* two parties of Yakkhas stood face to face getting ready for a fierce battle in *Mahiyangana*.

The Compassionate Buddha sighted through his divine eyes, the great disaster that would take place and came to *Mahiyangana*. He explained to the *Yakkhas* 'the message of peace and the danger of war and the value of living together in peace and harmony. The Yakkhas who were a wise clan accepted the Buddhas message of peace faithfully and it is recorded in the religious books that the *Yakkhas* offered the island of Sri Lanka to the compassionate Buddha.



The Deva people dwelling in the hills too had come to see the Buddha at *Mahiyangana*. The Deva king Sumana became a Buddhist and begged the Buddha for a sacred souvenir to worship and revere in place of Buddha. Then the Buddha handed him a handful of hair from his head. It is said that king Sumana enshrined this sacred hair and built the *Mahiyangana Dageba*.

As recorded in the *Mahāvamsa* and other chronicles the *Mahiyangana Dageba* stands today in the place where the Buddha preached the Dhamma to the *Yakkhas*. This is the *Mahānāga Vana Uyana* in the colony of *Minipe*.

Besides these important occurrences related to Sri Lankan Buddhist history there are some other events too related to *Duruthu poya*. Nine months after attaining enlightenment on a *Duruthu poya* day, the Buddha convinced the three famous *Jatila* brothers, *Uruvelā Kassapa*, *Nadī Kassapa* and *Gayā Kassapa*.

The Buddha preached the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta* for their benefit and accompanied them on his way to *Rājagaha* to meet the king *Bimbisāra*. This event occurred in the month of *Duruthu*. King *Bimbisāra* offered the Buddha the abode Bamboo Grove - *Veluvana* - to offer merit to relatives, parents and friends became a custom in this occasion.



After Lord Buddha explained to the king *Bimbisāra* the value of doing wholesome deeds to offer merit to the dead, this custom became a religious practice. At present *Duruthu poya* celebrations are held in every temple.

As internationally accepted first month of the year in Sri Lanka too various religious festivals are held in January. The *Duruthu poya* perahera at *Kelaniya Vihāra* specially depicts the Sinhala Buddhist culture and the national feelings of the people.

Source: *Duruthu pohoya*; Soma Jayakody