

Il poya - Potṭhapāda uposatha

(November)

The Month of Il poya

Astrology says that the month in which the sun travels in the house of Scorpio is the month of Il. Il is an important month for the religious minded. The great service of religious missions expounding Dhamma in villages, countries and kingdoms began in the month of Il. In view of how Buddhism has spread throughout the world in the modern times, to people who are intelligent, Il is a month of special importance. It is the month which awakened the wisdom of the human race.



Our ancestors thought that the month of Il is a period of heavy rain and cold climate. Due to heavy rain most lakes, ponds and rivers tend to overflow. As recorded in the history of Buddhist dispensation Gotama Buddha's first disciples sixty monks started the great missionary work on this Il *poya* day. Travelling for the good and benefit of mankind. The first mission composed of *arahat*'s:

- Bhaddhiya, Vappa, Mahānāma, Assajī, Añña Kondañña, Pasvaga *thera*, Yasakula Putra - *Arahat* Yasa,
- Fifty four friends of *arahat* Yasa who became Buddhist monks.

The noble Buddha who directed these sixty monks for missionary work was on his way to Uruvela Danava. There he came across Princes Bhadda and Vaggiya and he proclaimed the Dhamma to them and showed the princes the way to *Nibbāna*.

Relating to the history of Buddhist religion the following outstanding events took place on Il *poya* day. This Il *poya* day related to all these important events is a month of wisdom to those who strive to awaken their *paññā*.

- The Bodhisatta Maitree received the *Niyata vivarana*¹ from supreme Lord Buddha.
- The Buddha's journey to convince the Jātīla brothers.
- Passing away of *arahat* Sāriputta.
- The last *poya* day for ending *vassa* and offering the *Kaṭhina cīvara*.



¹ *Niyata vivarana* means a proclamation done by a Great leader of the three worlds one who is extremely wise - a Buddha - says to a noble receiver (who is expecting to be a Buddha, who is gathering merit by following *Dasa paramita*): "In the future you will definitely be a Buddha."

The positive assurance or explanation to Maitreya *Bodhisattva* of becoming a Buddha

Maitreya *bodhisattva* who had completed the performance of Buddhist Ordinances as a prerequisite of becoming a Buddha i.e. *Pāramitā* during a period of ,*Solos asaṅkheyya-kappa*² *Lakshaya*’, was a celestial being. He had departed from heaven during Gautama Buddha’s period and was born in Sankassa pura about 48 miles away from Sāvattihī - Sewath Nuwara as the son of a rich nobleman named Sirivardhana.



He completed his studies under the great teacher “Disapamok” and inherited quite a lot of wealth from his parents. He had a large number of followers. He

had the occasion to see “Devarohanaya”³ *Mahā pūja* and listen to the discourse between the Buddha and Arahant Sāriputta. He was delighted and entered into priesthood under Buddha with his following numbering about one hundred. He attained the higher ordination, learnt the Dhamma and taught the others. This thera observed *vassa* and received a couple of valuable *Kaṭhina cīvara*. He knew the efficacy or the effect of *Kaṭhina cīvara pūja* and offered both to the Buddha. With one of them he made a canopy for Buddha’s fragrant house - *Gandha Kutiya*. He tore the other robe into strips and hung it at the edges of the canopy. Buddha explained the merits of offering cheewara and gave ,*Niyatha vivarana*’ – permission to or assurance of becoming a Buddha.



Buddha told the followers that Maitreya *Bodhisatta* would be born as the son of Sakwithi Rāja –universal king Sanka in the Kethumathi kingdom during this *Mahā Badra Kappa*. Brahmanī Badravathi will be his mother. Banyan -Nuga tree will be his Bodhi.

Maitreya *Bodhisatta* worshipped the Buddha and accepted the *Niyatha vivaranaya*. This happened on an Il full moon poya day such as this.

Sending Missionaries

By the first Il full moon poya day, after Buddha’s Enlightenment there were 61 *Arahants* including the Buddha Himself. There were the five Brahmin ascetics, Kondañña, Bhaddya, Vappa, Mahānāma and Assajī. Kondañña was the youngest of the eight

² **Solos-Asaṅkheyya kappa Lakshaya** : It can translate as 16 Asaṅkheyyas (incalculable ages) + 100 000 aeons (world cycles).

Kappa: The duration of a *kappa* cannot be calculated by the number of years. It is known only by inference. Suppose there is a big granary which is one *yojana* each in length, breadth and height and which is full of tiny mustard seeds. You throw out just one seed each century. One *Mahā-kappa* is made up of four *Asaṅkheyya-kappas*, namely, (a) the *kappa* in the process of dissolution (*saṁvaṭṭa-kappa*), (b) the *kappa* in the state of dissolution (*saṁvaṭṭaṭṭhāyi-kappa*). (c) the *kappa* in the process of evolution (*vivaṭṭa-kappa*) and (d) the *kappa* in the state of evolution (*vivaṭṭaṭṭhāyi-kappa*).

³ **Devarohanaya**: where the lord Buddha, had come to the earth, after preaching a ,Maha Patthāna Abhidhamma’ to the Devas in the Heaven ,Tāvatiṁsā.’

Brahmins who were invited for prince Siddhattha's naming ceremony. He foretold that prince Siddhattha would certainly become the Buddha. Together with Bhaddhya, Vappa, Mahānāma and Assajī who were the sons of four other Brahmins retired to the forest in anticipation of prince Siddhattha's renunciation. They attended to ascetic Siddhattha when he was striving to attain Buddhahood. After the enlightenment, Buddha expounded *Dhammachakkapavattana sutta* and they attained *arahantship*. Kondañña was the first to realize the four Noble Truths and the eightfold path to *Nibbāna*, He was followed by the other four.

Conversion of Yasa and his followers

Next to be converted was Yasa, son of a millionaire in Benares who met Buddha while going away from home after realizing the vanities of worldly life. When Buddha expounded Dhamma Yasa, attained *arahantship*. Venerable Yasa's father came across the Buddha while going in search of his missing son and became the first lay disciple to take refuge in the Triple Gem, Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. Venerable Yasa's mother and his former wife were the two female lay disciples of the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. Venerable Yasa had fifty four friends. Having heard of Venerable Yasa's conversion they too entered the Order and attained *arahantship*.



Sixty arahants to propagate Buddhism for the good and well being of humanity

Thus by the first Full Moon Poya day after the Enlightenment of the Exalted One there were sixty *arahants* excluding the Buddha Himself. Buddha dispatched them in various directions to propagate the sublime Dhamma. „*Caratha bhikkhave cārikaṃ bahujana-hitāya bahujana-sukhāya.*“ Buddha requested the first sixty *arahants* to go forth for the good and happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, benefit and happiness of gods and men and to preach Dhamma which is excellent in the beginning, in the middle and at the end. He told them that no two should go in a single direction so that they could be of assistance to as many as possible.

He said that there were some who had lust in them but there were many who could understand Dhamma. With this exhortation Buddha dispatched His first sixty disciples to various directions and He Himself went to Uruvela in Senaigama.



It is better to seek oneself rather than to seek a missing woman

On His way to Uruvela Buddha met thirty young men. Twenty nine of them were with their wives. They had gone to a grove for amusement. The thirtieth prince who was a bachelor had taken a courtesan and that woman had fled away with the valuables of the others. When the princes were going in search of that woman they met Buddha and He explained to them

that it was better to seek oneself rather than to seek a missing woman. They realized the truth and entered the Order and received the Higher Ordination.

Ordination of Jātīla brothers

Buddha proceeded to Uruvela to be of service to the Jātīla brothers who lived in *ārāmayas* along the river Nerāñjana. The eldest Uruvela Kassapa who was very proud and arrogant lived in the upper part of the river with five hundred followers. Nadi Kassapa who had three hundred followers lived in the middle part of the river and the youngest, Gaya Kassapa lived in the lowest part of the river basin with two hundred followers.

Buddha first went to Uruvela Kassapa's *ārāmaya* and subjugated him by displaying three thousand and sixteen miracles. Uruvela Kassapa who realized the truth entered the priesthood with his followers. Their crowns of matted hair were thrown into the river. Nadi Kassapa who saw his elder brother's matted hair floating in the river rushed to his *ārāmaya* to ascertain what had happened to his elder brother and followers. When he went there with his followers Buddha preached Dhamma and all of them entered the priesthood. Gaya Kassapa and his followers too entered the priesthood in the same manner.

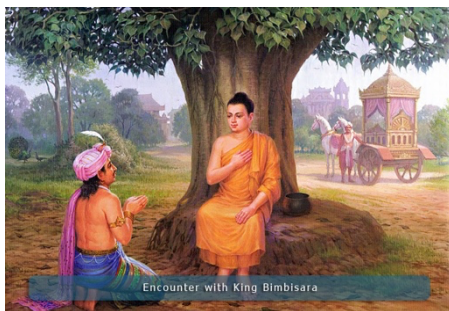


Āditta pariyaṅga sutta⁴- All inflames

Kassapa brothers and their followers had developed their own spiritual attainments and they could understand Buddha's doctrine without much difficulty. Buddha accompanied them to Gayasisa and preached the *Āditta pariyaṅga sutta* - all in flames hearing which all of them attained *arahantship*.

Buddha's visit to King Bimbisāra at Rājagaha Nuvara

In keeping with a promise made to King Bimbisāra, Buddha proceeded to Rājagaha Nuvara accompanied by one hundred and three *arahants* including Uruvela Kassapa, Nadi Kassapa and Gaya Kassapa. King Bimbisāra went with a large following to receive the Buddha and pay respects to Him. It was a difficult task for King Bimbisāra to realize whether Buddha was a disciple of *arahant* Kassapa or *arahant* Kassapa was a disciple of the Buddha. It so happened because *arahant* Kassapa was held with high esteem as an ascetic.



After reading the king's thoughts Buddha questioned fire worship. In order to clear the King's doubt *arahant* Kassapa explained why he had given up fire worship and said that Buddha was a Unique One and his teacher and that he was His disciple.

⁴ SN 35.28: Ādittasutta

Offering of Veluvanarāmaya - the Bamboo grove

The king and the people were happy about the clarification. In order to indicate that Buddha and Uruvela Kassapa were similarly converted in previous births too Buddha preached *Mahā Nārada Kassapa Jātakaya*⁵. Having understood the Dhamma King Bimbisāra attained *sottāpanna*, the first of the four paths to *Nibbāna*. He invited Buddha and His followers to his palace for *dāna* and after offering *dāna* he also offered the Bamboo Grove - Veluvanarāmaya for the use of the Buddha and His disciples.



Attainment of Arahant Sāriputta's Parinibbāna

It was on a subsequent II full moon poya day that Dhamma Senadhpathi and one of the Buddha's chief disciples, *arahant* Sāriputta attained *Parinibbāna*.

Arahant Sāriputta's assistance to his mother

His mother, Rūpasārī did not believe in the threefold refuge and remained heretic even in her old age. *Arahant* Sāriputta contemplated as to whether she possessed the virtues of attaining *Nibbāna* by the cessation of all desires and of re-existence realized that she could attain *sottāpanna*, the first of the four paths to *Nibbāna*.



Hence after obtaining permission from the Buddha to attain *Parinibbāna* *arahant* Sāriputta made an opportune visit to his mother followed by hundreds of thousands of weeping people who had heard about the *Mahā Thera's Parinibbāna*. *Mahā Thera* preached to his mother the virtuous properties of the Buddha such as the moral conduct, intelligence, sense of liberation knowledge of emancipation, and meditation vision and philosophy

and loving kindness to convince her that Buddha was a peerless teacher and the Unique One.

After listening to her son patiently Brahmanī Rūpasārī gave up her beliefs in heathenism and attained *sottāpanna*. *Arahant* Sāriputta *Mahā Thera* was happy that he could re-pay his mother for bringing him up.

After being of service to many including his own mother *Arahant* Sāriputta *Mahā Thera* attained *Parinibbāna* on an II Full Moon Poya Day.

Source: Buddharashmi

Edited by bhikkhunī Visuddhi

⁵ No. 544 Mahānāradakassapa jātaka