

Significance of VESAK POYA



- The birth of Prince Siddhartha at Lumbini Park under a Sal Tree.
- Enlightenment to be the fourth Buddha in this Aeon, which occurred at Buddha Gaya while seated with firm determination under a Pipal tree. The tree is venerated now as the Bodhi Tree (*Ficus Religiosa*), symbolizing Enlightenment.

- The final passing away or attaining *Parinibbana* of the Buddha lying down between two Sal trees at Kusinārā.
- The Buddha performed the Twin Miracle (*Yamaka Pāṭihāriya*) at Kapilavatthu to allay the pride of the Sākyaans. (See *BOSAT Medin - March Issue* for details.)
- The Buddha's third visit to Sri Lanka took place on the eighth year after Enlightenment. It was to Kelaniya and on the invitation of the Naga King, Maniakkhika, who had met the Buddha at Nagadeepa on the Buddha's second visit. The Buddha preached to the Naga King and his retinue seated on the gem-studded throne on the banks of the Kelaniya River. The stupa at Kelaniya Raja Maha Viharaya enshrines the gem-studded throne.
- According to the Mahavamsa all sixteen places of worship of the Sri Lankan Buddhists were hallowed by the Buddha by spending a few moments in deep meditation at each of the places. The footprint of the Buddha was placed on top of Sri Pada giving it its name.
- It was the Buddha Dīpankara who made the definite prediction (*niyata vivaraṇa*) that the sage Sumedha will become a Buddha, someday in the future. This happened on a Vesak Poya day.
- According to historical records Prince Vijaya with 700 Aryans landed safely in Sri Lanka on the same day as the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha, protected by God Sakra. It was a part of the expansion of the Aryans southwards. It marked the beginning of the Sinhala nation.

- The day of Vesak was a day of festivity from ancient times. Mahāvamsa records of Kings of old celebrating the day of Vesak. First such reference was in the reign of King Dutugemunu (161-137 BCE). King Bhatiya has held 28 Vesak festivals and King Vasabha has held 48. It was once considered the day of Coronation.
- Hoisting of the Buddhist flag for the first time was done on a Vesak Poya day at Dipaduttaramaya, Kotahena.
- The change of a year in the Buddhist Era happens on the Vesak Poya day. Henceforth it will be 2570 B.E.
- To the Sinhala Buddhists the most sacred day in the year's calendar is the day of Vesak. It enlivens the country's Buddhist core, viz., its Buddhist civilization, culture, art and creativity and values such as generosity, compassion etc.

