1. Significance of IL POYA

The IL Full Moon POYA usually falls in the month of November according to the solar-based Gregorian calendar.

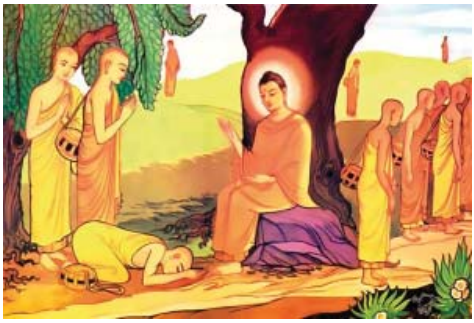
From the Buddhist ecclesiastical point of view, **it marks the end of the Rains Retreat *(vas)*** and accordingly, the seven-day restriction on travel ceases.

It is also the end of the offering of the *Kaṭhiṇa Robe (cīvara),* which is considered a very meritorious act due to certain unique features. It can be offered only once in one temple during a year. It is offered to the members of the Maha Sangha, who have observed *vas* on the full moon day of *Esala,* the recognized day for the observance of rains-retreat according to the *Vinaya,* the Rules of Discipline for monks. Those monks who have observed late *vas* are not eligible to accept the *Kaṭhiṇa Robe.* The *Kaṭhiṇa Robe* once offered and accepted is taken to a *sīmā.* All the monks who have duly observed *vas* in a particular temple or location assemble and jointly decide on the monk who will receive the *Kaṭhiṇa Robe* of that year. With his acceptance of the *Kaṭhiṇa Robe,* he is entitled to certain privileges for a specific period of time. That same night the monks again gather and individually rejoice in the merit with the monk, who received the *Kaṭhiṇa Robe.* It is a way of showing solidarity among all the monks. Anyone interested to learn more on this subject can refer to the *Kaṭhiṇavatthukkhanda* of the Mahāvaggapāli of the Vinaya Piṭaka.

Besides this, there are many other events that make IL Poya very significant. The IL Poya day has been observed as the end of *vas,* since the time of the Buddha. This means that **the *vas* witnessed this year was the 2,615th *vas* of Theravada monks as the *sangha* lineage from the time of the Buddha continues unbroken to this**

day. In the first 45 vas periods, the Buddha himself was present with all other monks, and there is a record of the locations where *vas* was observed by the Buddha.

The **first *Vas*** was observed by the Buddha with 60 other monks, including the first five disciples, at Sārnath. It was after the first *vas* that the Buddha instructed the 60 monks, who, under the Buddha's



tutelage, have realized and were enjoying Nibbanic bliss, to travel forth explaining the dhamma for the welfare and happiness of gods and humans. The Buddha also instructed that two monks should not go the same way. The Buddha himself travelled by foot to Uruvela, where the Buddha converted the three Kassapa brothers, and then to Rajagaha, keeping his promise to visit the king of Magadha after enlightenment. **Of greatest significance of IL Poya day is that it marks the beginning of Dhamma missions for peace and compassion, with the Buddha uttering the words *'Caratha bhikkave cārikaṃ caramāno bahujana hitāya bahujanasukhāya devamanussānaṃ. Mā ekena dve agamittha.*** *(Wander forth, O bhikkhus, for the welfare of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, welfare and happiness of devas and humans. Let not two go the same way).* That missionary spirit instilled by the Buddha continues to this day.

One of the basic teachings of the Buddha is the natural law of impermanence. Even the colour of the robe of a monk serves as a gentle reminder of this phenomenon. A leaf of a tree is tender and bright at the beginning. It matures and turns brown in its last stages

before falling to the ground. The robe is dyed to the colour of a falling leaf to remind us of the transience of life.

It is during the month of IL that Arahant Sāriputta *(the son of Sāri)*, the chief disciple on the right, took leave of the Buddha and left for Nālaka, his birthplace. He knew that the time to end samsaric life had come. However, he was keen to show his gratitude to his mother, *Sāri,* before attaining *Parinibbāna* by leading her onto the Path of Liberation. He was able to achieve this before his Parinibbana. This is a classic example of performing one's duties towards one's parents even at the last moments in life. **The passing away – the *Parinibbāna,* of Arahant Sāriputta is another noteworthy event that occurred in the month of IL.**

A full-moon day is traditionally considered an auspicious day to perform meritorious acts. **It was on a full-moon day of IL, that the foundation stone was laid for the construction of Thuparamaya dagaba in Anuradhapura. It is considered the first stupa to be constructed in Sri Lanka**. According to the Mahavamsa, this happened during the time of King Devanampiya Tissa, the first Buddhist king of Sri Lanka. The right collarbone of the Buddha is enshrined therein. It has many unique architectural features. The dome is of bell-shaped, which is one of the six shapes of stupa domes in Sri Lanka.



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