Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi Tree

Prelims – *Current events of International Importance*

Mains (GS II) – *Bilateral relations*

Why in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently visited the Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi temple at the historic city of Anuradhapura during his trip to Srilanka.

- Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi tree is considered the ***oldest living cultivated plant in the world.***
- It is believed to have grown from a branch that an Indian princess carried to ***Sri Lanka.***
- This Bo (Ficus religiosa, Pipal in Hindi) tree is believed to have grown from a branch of the tree in Bodhgaya (Bihar) under which Gautam Buddha attained enlightenment.
- The branch was carried to Sri Lanka by ***Sanghamitta*** (or Sanghamitra), the Mauryan king Ashoka's daughter and Buddhist nun.
- **Spread of Buddhism in Sri Lanka -** During the reign of Ashoka, the 3rd Buddhist Council was convened, where it was decided to send missionaries to various regions to propagate the teachings of Buddhism.
- As part of this mission, Mahinda, Ashoka's son, travelled to Sri Lanka.
- There, he met ***King Devanampiya Tissa***, who was the ruler of Anuradhapura, and successfully converted him to Buddhism.
- Sanghamitta had travelled to Sri Lanka in response to an invitation from King Devanampiya Tissa, as well as the request of her brother, Mahendra (or Mahinda).
- Her arrival in Sri Lanka with the tree is still celebrated as *Uduvapa Poya,* an annual festival observed on a full moon night in December.
- The tree, along with the other Buddhist shrines in the ancient city of Anuradhapura, is a major pilgrimage centre for Buddhists.
- **Anuradhapura** - It is a ***UNESCO World Heritage Site.***
- Anuradhapura was established around the 4th century BCE by King Pandukabhaya, the first King of Sri Lanka.
- Anuradhapura remained the capital of Lankan rulers from 377 BC to 1017 CE.
- It is known for its ancient monuments, monasteries, and palaces, which have drawn pilgrims and historians alike for centuries.
- **Other Buddhist sites in Anuradhapura -** Jetavanaramaya Stupa, Ruwanwelisaya Dagoba, Isurumuniya Temple, Ranmasu Uyana.

References

1. The Indian Express | Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi Tree

2. Times Now | Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi in Sri Lanka

