

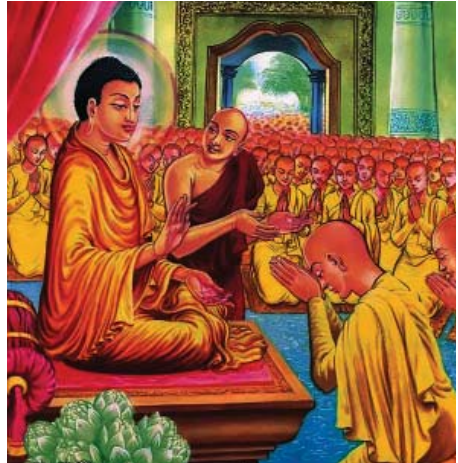
Significance of BINARA POYA

Binara full moon day usually falls in the month of September. It is at the middle of the four months' period of Rains Retreat (*vassāna*) that is observed compulsorily by all *upasampadā* (higher ordained) monks.

On the fifth year after enlightenment, the Buddha was spending the *vassana* at the *Kūṭāgara* (Pinnacle) Hall in the *Mahāvana* (Great Woods) near the city of Vesali. Two important events occurred during this *Vassāna* period.

First was the illness of King Suddhodana, the father of the Blessed One. The Buddha, when apprised travelled to Kapilavattu to see his father, and after preaching the Dhamma made him to gain the knowledge relating to the true nature of things i.e. to become an *arahant*, before his passing away.

Soon after the death of King Suddhodana, Mahāpajāpati Gotami, the foster mother of the Buddha, with 500 noble ladies walked all the way from Kapilawattu to *Kūṭāgara* Hall to meet the Buddha. It was a very tiring journey and there was no early warning of her coming. Mahāpajāpati



Gotami with her retinue, many of whom were single because of their husbands' becoming bhikkhus, went to where the Buddha was and after explaining their predicament requested that they be ordained in the Buddha's dispensation. Three times the Buddha put her off saying: "Do not be interested O, Gotami, about the entry of women into my order."

Venerable Ananda was around and with sorrowful eyes Mahāpajāpati Gotami went to him. When their plight was explained, Venerable Ananda decided to intervene and advocate their cause. The question was raised with the Buddha as to whether females are capable of becoming *Arahants*, to which the Buddha replied that gender has no bearing in attaining the highest bliss if they diligently follow the path to liberation as expounded. It was also admitted that the life of renunciation will facilitate such growth because of the encumbrances of a lay life. The Buddha finally gave his consent to admit Mahāpajāpati Gotami and others to the Buddha's dispensation subject to their agreeing to eight conditions, which are recorded as *aṭṭha-garudhamma*. Mahāpajāpati Gotami agreed and accordingly they were given the *pabbajjā* or ordination.

It was a momentous event in the Buddha's dispensation. Hence, the Binara full-moon Poya day is remembered in Buddhist history as the day the *Bhikkhuni Sāsana* was established.

Nāṇasiha

