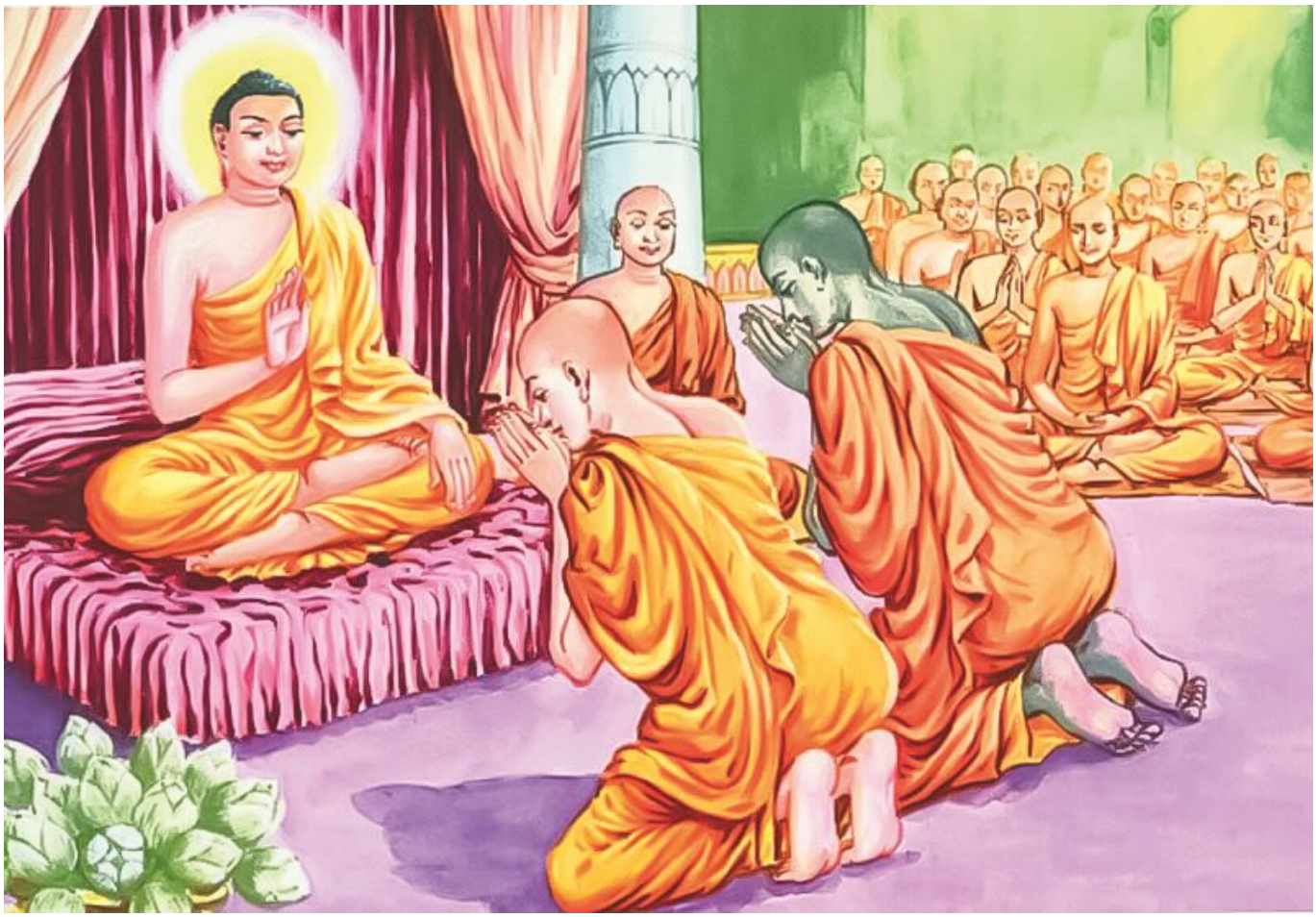
Navam Pōya Day

Posted on

Remarks on the Discipline Rules



An assembly of monks gather as the Buddha teaches the Dhamma.

Navam Full Moon Pōya Day occurs every February and marks two significant incidents. They are among Buddha’s two chief disciples, Sāriputta Thero and Moggallāna Thero. It was also on a Nawam Full Moon Pōya Day that Venerable Sāriputta, who sat fanning the Buddha while he expounded the ‘Vēdanā Pariggaha’ sutra to the wandering ascetic named ‘Dighanakha’ at the cave Sūkharanahka

situated in the mount of Gijjhakūta, and on having concentrated on the same discourse, attained Arahatship, the final stage of enlightenment, a fortnight after his ordainment. Understanding the life journey of Venerable Sāriputta and Moggallāna may be crucial as chief disciples.

In brief, there were two villages, known as Kōlitha and Upatissa, in Rajagaha, India, and two friends from these villages, also named Kōlitha and Upatissa. One day, when both of them were enjoying a hilltop festival called ‘Giragga Samajja’, they realized how vain and transient sensual pleasures were and decided to leave the secular world. They left home and went to ascetic Sanjaya, who had five hundred followers. Before long, they gained knowledge from the ascetic Sanjaya and realized that they could not attain the path of emancipation. They turned back to the village and agreed that whosoever first discovered the emancipation should inform the others.

On the day of the incident, Upatissa came across Arahant Assaji Thero, one of the first five disciples, while he was going for Pindapāta (collecting food from house to house). Having observed the deportments of Him, Upatissa realized that He was one of the Arahants.

Upatissa approached Arahant Assaji and inquired about Him. “Venerable Sir, for whose sake have you secluded yourself from the world? Whose doctrine do you profess?” Then Arahant Assaji replied,

“Yē Dhammā hētuppabha wā

Tēsaŋ hētu Tathāgō āha

Tēsaŋ ca yō nirōdhō

Evam vādi mahā samanō”

It normally means “Of things that proceed from cause, and their cause the Buddha had said. Also, their cessation thus teaches the great Buddha.” Hearing the first two lines (“Yē Dhammā hētuppabha wā – Tēsaŋ hētu Tathāgō āha”), Ascetic Upatissa realized the Sōwān (the first stage of enlightenment). He listened to the other two lines after becoming Sōwān.

After 20 years of enlightenment, the Buddha was invited by monks to

impose Vinaya (discipline rules) on monks for their safety.

In accordance with the agreement, Ascetic Upatissa went to see Ascetic Kōlitha and explained the stanza that was taught by Arahant Assaji. Hearing the whole stanza from Ascetic Upatissa, Kōlitha also realized the Sōwān. Under the guidance of Venerable Assaji, they both decided to approach Rajagaha Nuwara to visit the Lord Buddha. Before they left to visit the Buddha, they went to Ascetic Sanjaya's hermitage and invited him to accompany them. Declining the invitation, he remained behind, and his followers, 250 ascetics, decided to visit the Lord Buddha at Jēthavanārāmaya, Rajagaha Nuwara, in north India. In compliance with their request, the Lord Buddha gave them the Bhikkhu ordains.

Ascetic Upatissa, who was the son of Brahmini 'Sāri', was named Sāriputta, and Kōlitha was named Moggallāna after being ordained. A fortnight later, hearing the 'Vēdanā Pariggaha Sutra' which was expounding to the ascetic Dighanakha, but Venerable Moggallāna had attained the Arahat state a week before by meditating at Kallawāla village. Venerable Sāriputta realized the Arahat state. On the same Navam Pōya Day, the Buddha conferred the first and second exalted positions to Venerable Sāriputta and Moggallāna.

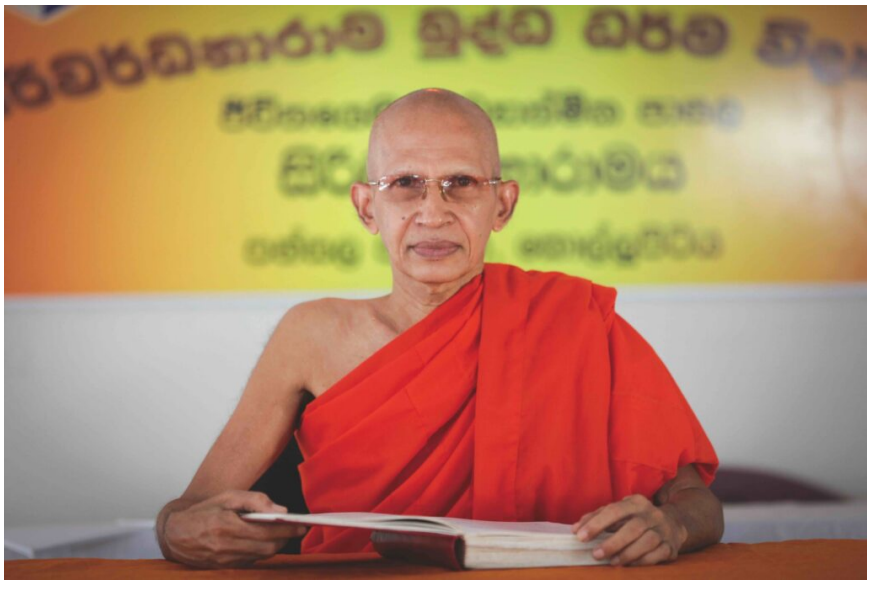
In conversation with the Buddha, Arahat Sāriputta and Arahat Moggallāna said that ascetic Sanjaya refused to accompany them to see the Buddha. Hearing about ascetic Sanjaya, The Enlightened one explained that there are two kinds of people in the world: those of right thinking and those of fallacious thinking. "Some people believe the wrong thing is right, while others think the right thing is wrong. As a result, neither group recognizes what is truly right or wrong. Having known the right thing as right and the wrong thing as wrong, they understand the true right thing."

The holding of the first-ever Buddhist Council meeting, also a significant event, on a full moon day of the Navam month, Pōya. After 20 years of enlightenment, the Buddha was invited by monks to impose Vinaya (discipline rules) on monks for their safety. After being requested three consecutive times by senior monks, the Buddha agreed, and then the Buddha asked all Bhikkhus to gather in one place. It also took place on Navam Pōya Day, at Pūrwārāmaya Temple in Sāwatthi, India. It was the largest congregation of that era in India, with 1,250 senior monks in attendance. After a brief discussion, the Buddha requested the monks to adhere to all Vinaya rules. Until that day, the Buddha used to remind the Bhikkhus of the rules, but from that day, He has requested the Bhikkhus to comply with the rules on their own.

However, over time, the Bhikkhu community increased in number, and its members came from diverse backgrounds with varying problems. Then they start to cause some problems in the Bhikkhu community. Then the Buddha, on this Navam Full Moon Pōya Day, enforced precepts not only to conduct modesty, religious obeisance, and fulfilment of duties of monkhood but also to protect the Bhikkhu community.

According to most of the problems in the world today, there may be a lack of adherence to relevant discipline rules and a lack of knowledge about life. Therefore, the leaders of the world have to spend countless wealth to control the world community, and they have to assassinate most of them, unfortunately. Therefore, if they abide by the Vinaya rules (discipline rules), the value cannot be determined.

According to the Vinaya rules, there are 220 Vinaya rules for Bhikkhus, while there are 304 rules for Bhikkhunis. However, the Buddha has allowed the Bhikkhu to modify some minimal discipline rules as needed. At the same time, the Buddha introduced the principles that allowed members of the Mahā Sangha to ordain new followers, enabling them to seek advice without traveling to see the Buddha. Besides that, His primary teaching was: “To avoid evil, to accumulate merit and to cleanse one’s mind. This is the advice of (all the) Buddhas,” which is the essence of Buddhism. So, it means that Buddhism is a Practical way of life philosophy, not a belief system.



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