

# Dhamma Sukha – Escorting the Sacred Relics of the First Bhikkhunī Arahant

What Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, signified in this practice varied and meandered in vague directions these past 14 years since my bhikkhunī ordination. Confidence in the founding mother of the Bhikkhunī Sangha receded behind a foreground of Sinhalese and Thai Forest masters for a good long while. Her story is draped in tales I simply can't believe as they are told. The disconnection ran deep. Accepting that, I stopped thinking so much of our Sangha founding mother here, and held on to the belief of other female archetypes, elsewhere: La Caridad del Cobre, Tara, Kwan Yin... The mere affirmation of her existence in nāmā and rūpā however - chanting her praise, escorting her sacred relics, walking in procession in her honor - opened a surge of empowering channels to recognition: Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, the first bhikkhunī arahantī.

A surprising affinity and gratitude arose when I first heard of the existence and presence of her sacred relics. The disconnect dissipated, like a window opening to the dawn after a long night, dissipates the darkness of the room. The empowering undertone supported by Arahant Therī Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī is like nothing I'd ever encountered with any woman role model. It had been a wounding absence without knowing it was a wounding, or an absence... records being what they are. Once kindled and we experience these spiritual connections and have fully awakened Sangha arahantīs in their rightful place in our practice and our altars, that knowing cannot again vanish from the heart (citta).

Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī centered in my life and practice in a peaceful glow one quiet day last September (2025). But escorting the sacred relics of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī across the Pacific Ocean into India and Nepal didn't start with brilliant lights and insights. It started with obstacles and hurdles.

For weeks before our pilgrimage, the travel-related dukkha had been in high gear. My first attempt applying for an Indian visa over a three -day period, filling out the same application several times (because the website was very glitchy and would randomly crash), then squeezing the application past an instruction word maze to express courier it to the wrong Indian mission office, the day before the Thanksgiving holiday... met with rejection.

The second attempt involved a five plus hour round trip to my closest Indian Consular Services office in Orlando, Florida. I was told the best bet for getting a paper visa back in such a tiny time frame was to take a same day flight to Atlanta, Georgia, room in a hotel overnight and hand carry the application to the Atlanta mission office in the morning... with an urgent supplication. The Indian Consular Services Office in Orlando is staffed with very kind people, I will say. Had there been any way to expedite the paper visa application from their office directly to the Indian Mission in Atlanta, they would have done it. I'm grateful for their kindness but left without submitting the application, or my passport.

The issue was, the inaugural "Footsteps of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī: Honoring Women in Dhamma" pilgrimage began in Kapilavastu, Nepal, the Buddha's home ground. Our route to Kapilavastu

was via international flights to Kathmandu followed by a local flight to Lumbini, the place of the Buddha's birth, not far from Kapilavastu. We were flying into Kathmandu, for welcoming ceremonies planned at Dharmakīrti Vihār and Charumati Stupa. From Kapilavastu, following the Great Renunciation Trail, the pilgrimage would cross the land border into India. Crossing a land border from Nepal into India required an old-style Indian paper visa which took longer to process, while an e-visa took only a couple days. The gracious Kaccāyana Bhikkhunī and faithful friend in Dhamma, Paula Snow, Dhammadharini International Ambassador for Bhikkhunīs, changed our departing flight to allow more time in Delhi so we could pass through Indian immigration with a dual-entry e-visa, get our passports stamped, and then be permitted a second Indian entry via the land border crossing.

We applied for the dual entry e-visas. The next day when Venerable Kaccāyana received theirs, I received a list of four questions. My application had been selected for random screening which implied a delayed approval process. Tangential long story, edited for brevity, I did finally receive the e-visa, literally mid-air, while on the plane to Delhi.

The Venerable Ayyā Tathālokā Mahā Therī, had suggested alternative plans had the e-visa not arrived in time. Most notably, I looked forward to spending more time at the Ramagrama Stupa in Nepal if I had to stay in Nepal for longer than the three days of the program. Now, with e-visa granted, the pilgrimage schedule could continue as planned, or so we thought.

The sacred relics of Arahant Therī Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī had returned, after how many hundreds of years, to Indian soil, borne by 21st century bhikkhunī disciples of the Buddha (just months after the Piprahwa Kapilavastu Buddha relics had been returned to New Delhi). As conditions would have it, we would not be departing New Delhi with Mahā Gotamī's sacred relics as quickly as the flight times on our boarding passes indicated. After passing immigration and getting the visa stamps we needed, we waited for our not-to-be-located luggage containing the generous donations of many. Monastic robes, alms bowls, 100 pairs of socks to protect feet from the cold, medicines, and other offerings for fellow bhikkhunī pilgrims and those receiving temporary sāmanerī ordination were not to be found. Leaving that as it was, with the thought the luggage had made it to Kathmandu on another flight, we made it to our departure gate.

At DEL, we met up with Anagārika Lázaro the first member of Theravada Cuba, our community in Havana, to follow his monastic life aspiration. He'd been my student for almost two years. Just weeks from his sāmanera pabbajjā (novice monk ordination), Thailand officially changed their visa requirements, and he had to leave Wat Pah Nanachat, the international forest monastery where he had been training for six months. Fortunately, his final day in Thailand would be the first day of the pilgrimage and Ayya Tathālokā found a volunteer helper sponsorship for him so he could join us on pilgrimage. The four of us waited at the departure gate, patiently enduring weather delay after delay for the departure of our flight to Kathmandu. Five hours later, heavily fogged in, the flight was cancelled.

Again, here, I'll cut out most of the activity occurring during the next 21 hours at Delhi International Airport, for the sake of brevity. Suffice to say it was 21 hours of confusion and disorder. It was 24 hours for Anagārika Lázaro, who had arrived earlier.

This historic event for the Bhikkhunī Sangha brought on a certain kind of ‘onslaught of Māra,’ as unusual and groundbreaking efforts and accomplishments sometimes do. There were times one could almost catch a glimpse of a dark shadow moving through. A thick veil would descend for moments over the airport when the darker impulses of humanity arose in the frustration of the travelers. We weren’t the only ones in the pilgrimage who encountered obstacles. The obstacles were many for others too. International flights for other participants were delayed or cancelled as well. International pilgrims travelling from Bodh Gaya in India across the land border into Nepal encountered hours of delays. Our small group managed well, but it was Paula and Anagārika Lázaro who bore the burdens of the battle with the rebooking-line māras, while Venerable Kaccāyana and I abided quietly nearby with the sacred relics.

At last, the fog cleared, and we arrived at Kathmandu around 3 am, having missed the welcoming ceremony and overnight stay at Dharmakīrti Vihār due to the flight cancellation. The sparsely populated airport was calm. Our hotel, booked at the last-minute, was a simple walk across a parking lot. We would have 90 minutes to rest before meeting the Nepal International Nuns Association welcoming committee and Bhikkhunī Ācariyās venerables Thitācārinī Therī and Dhammācārinī Therī, the supporting teachers and instructors for the temporary sāmanerī ordination being offered as part of the pilgrimage. As the cool, foggy morning began to emerge, Venerable Kaccāyana introduced the sacred relics from their clear ‘bubble’ travel reliquary into a larger reliquary stupa, where they would be carried and escorted, leading us throughout the entire pilgrimage. Prepared, we walked down to the lobby to greet Nepal.

I didn’t know what day it was.

As the elevator doors opened to reverential smiles with palms together in Anjali at the sight of the reliquary with sacred relics, all the weeks of spiritual dukkha vanished. Tiredness ceased. Spiritual sukha arose. Just like that.

At Dhammadharini Monastery in the San Francisco North Bay, the three small pearl-like relics were placed inside a small glass ‘bubble’ travel reliquary and into a soft saffron-brown pouch, strung to a Bodhi seed mala. This was placed around my neck and held inside my outer robe. Escorting the sacred relics of the arahant bhikkhunī Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, foremost in long-standing, the founder of the bhikkhunī lineage, we walked in procession from the “Bodhibojjhangā Uposathaghara” the Dhammadharini “Wings to Awakening” Uposatha Hall to the awaiting car. Whispering “sādhu, sādhu, sādhu” uninterruptedly, we were creating a space with Right Effort, where the mundane in the mind doesn’t arise, or at least, doesn’t arise as much.

Sitting in the car, still in the driveway, with the sacred relics near my heart chakra, a call came in from overseas that one of the three sacred relics should remain in the U.S., while two were blessed and requested to travel with our “Footsteps of Mahāpajāpatī” pilgrimage along the Great Renunciation Trail. At that moment, as I sat there waiting to walk in procession back to the Uposatha Hall, I felt and “heard” a fizzing sensation from inside the pouch. Inside again, one of the three sacred relics was removed from the small clear traveling reliquary inside the pouch to remain at Dhammadharini Monastery. Of the two sacred relics of Mahā Gotamī that traveled to their shared Nepalese-Indian homeland, one was always in view, and one was often hidden.

Now we were in Kathmandu. I was holding the reliquary stupa, escorting the sacred relics of Arahantī Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī Therī while seated in a white van organized by Dharmakirti Vihār, threading through the narrow, crowded streets of Nepal. Tears streamed down my face as the realization of what was actually happening arose. Holding high the sacred relics to the window so the Nepalese people on their day-to-day errands, in their day-to-day lives, people who had no idea what was passing by, if they turned to look our way would see the sacred relics of their ancient noble queen, the woman who raised the bodhisattva, the first bhikkhunī arahant, once again in their homeland. Overwhelmed with the joy of this gift, tears flowed like rivulets. This was both monumentally historic for the Bhikkhunī Sangha, and a grand homecoming, a spiritual reunion which had started with an unexpected message months earlier from a dear Dhamma friend. *The sacred relics of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī had been seen in Anuradhapura.*

From that message to this moment, sequential occurrences that some might call small miracles, created the way for this pilgrimage when the pilgrimage was in its wishing stage. The visionaries and organizers had worked selflessly for their plans and effort to come to fruition in this Inaugural “Footsteps of Mahāpajāpatī” cārika. Now here we were, in their coming home. I believe the sacred relics had opened the way for us. In that van, making way among motorcycles and people and cars, amidst the street noise and flurry of activity, the mind quieted and a vast act of dāna blanketed Kathmandu and beyond. No car, no street, no Mārajinā, no beings... only giving... giving.... In turn mettā, karunā, muditā arose in the heart (citta). Upekkhā would arise a few days later.

There is an energy that is unique to sacred relics. There is not so much to look at as to be with. The energy of the Buddha’s sacred relics experienced as they are in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka for instance, is different than the energy experienced in Nepal that day. It was a subtle, barely perceptible frequency, distinguished in its purity, and something we might call mahā dāna inseparable from mettā, being careful not to diminish the potential into a cultural understanding of “love”. One thing I’ve learned from this precious time experiencing the holy sites within a diverse and unified bhikkhunī sangha is that words confuse understanding.

We had experienced obstructions over and over. Conditions would arise and fall apart. Obstructions presented themselves seemingly around every corner and yet the Dhamma kept opening a way for this sacred, momentous reunion because it was right, it was good, and it is for the welfare and happiness of many, as the Buddha guided: bāhujana hitāya, bāhujana sukhāya.

What we carried was priceless and without description. This focused offering by so many was singularly monumental for the Bhikkhunī Sangha and Nepal (as it would be for India in a couple of days). The Nepalese people who lined the pathway toward the temple gently and faithfully reached out to touch the sacred reliquary in my hands. We walked in a short procession eight of us now plus the joyful Nepal gurumas (bhikkhunīs and anagārikās) who had met us when we arrived outside the Dharmakirti vihār to begin the ceremonial procession. At least five different countries, speaking different languages, we were and are just one family. We are the children of one spiritual father, the Mahā Sāmāna, the Arahant Sammasambuddha Gotama, and one spiritual mother, the Arahant Sāvīkābuddhā, Sāmānī Mahā Gotamī. And it was she who guided us.

Due to our 20+ hours delay in Delhi, our schedule left us less than a day in Kathmandu. We were required to reach Lumbini that evening. The smog in Nepal was heavy. It was hard to breathe through the mask but without the mask breathing created its own hardship. Within a couple of days, I'd developed asthmatic bronchitis and salmonella poisoning (which took weeks to resolve). Reaching the Pilgrim's Rest House, our small group met up with the pilgrimage group, that had arrived from Bodhgaya via a convoy of small buses. The sacred relics were warmly welcomed by representatives of both Nepal & Indian Bhikkhunī Sangha in Lumbini, and were now in the stewardship of the Bhikkhunī Mahāsaṅgha of our pilgrimage. The venerable Shakyā bhikkhunī Guruma Sujātā Mahā Therī of Nepal carried them at the head of our long cārika saṅgha line for most of the pilgrimage, devotedly and reverentially.

One hundred bhikkhunīs, gurumas and soon-to-be sāmanerīs walked in procession along the ruins of Kapilavastu, in the area now known as Tilaurakot, where the Buddha spent most of his life until his great renunciation at 29. In Tilaurakot, at the ruins near the eastern palace gate which was the site of two Great Renunciations, 32 women with freshly shaven heads, undertook temporary ordination as sāmanerīs and donned the saffron robes. United Theravāda Bhikkhunī Sangha International (UTBSI) the venerable Ayyā Santinī Mahā Therī, served as Bhikkhunī Pavattinī-Upajjhāyā (preceptor) with the support of venerable Bhikkhunī Ācārinīs Thiṭṭhācārinī Therī and Dhammācārinī Therī.

Anagārika Lazáro also received pabbajjā that day. His compassionate preceptor, Maitri Bhante, president of the All-Nepal Bhikkhu Mahasaṅgha Association offered this entrance into the Holy Life nearby beneath a Bodhi tree. From his preceptor he received the name Sāmanera Mettānanda; he is the first Cuban whose residence is in Cuba, to receive pabbajjā. It was a momentous pabbajjā for an entire country. Our group, Theravada Cuba, had persevered, working steadfastly for this moment. Literally starting with nothing but faith in the Buddha Sāsana and my family's financial support, we'd organized and drawn the attention of caring people who have supported the vision of the early Buddhist teachings taking root in Cuban soil.

We were offered lunch beside the Kapilavastu palace city eastern gate, the same gate the Bodhisattva used on the night he left his wife and newborn son on a quest for Awakening. It was also the gate that Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī with 500 Sakyan ladies used when they undertook their journey to request the higher ordination for women.

The long line formed when 100 bhikkhunīs and sāmanerīs (plus one sāmanera) is impressive and emotionally moving. Reliving a memory from a remote past, our procession filled narrow walkways, moved through village streets, much like Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and 500 Sakyan ladies had journeyed in their resolve for ordination from August to September over 2600 years ago (according to traditional textual sources). Except now it was December 2025 and we were escorting her sacred relics and a golden Nepali statue, prepared and offered just for this pilgrimage. We circumambulated stupas and chanted homage to the foremost bhikkhunī of long-standing:

“Rattaññūnaṃ\* bhikkhunīnaṃ Gotamī jinamātuchā  
Ṭhapitā aggaṭṭhānamhi sadā sotthim karotu no”

(Among bhikkhunīs of long standing\* is Gotamī, maternal aunt of the Buddha. Attained to the supreme state, may the power of her qualities always be a blessing to us.)

Before setting off on the Great Renunciation Trail, our pilgrimage took us to the Maya Devi Temple in Lumbini, where the mother of the Bodhisattva, Queen Maya Devi, the woman who sacrificed herself so the world could receive a Buddha, gave birth. We visited the Ramagrama Stupa, said to be the only stupa of the original eight stupas containing the Buddha's holy relics that King Asoka was unable to excavate. The Ramagrama Stupa is the end of the Buddha's Parinibbāna Trail.

The Great Renunciation Trail marks more than one great journey. The Great Renunciation Trail of the Buddha is shared with the Great Renunciation Trail of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and the Courageous 500. The Buddha travelled to Bodhgaya, his site of great awakening, while Mahā Gotamī and the 500 Sakyan women's renunciation trail ended in Vaishali (Vesali). This trail of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and the Courageous 500 to Vaishali is, in reverse, the Buddha's Parinibbāna Trail.

As we set out on the Trail, we visited the Anoma river, Anomaghat or Tharighat, where the Buddha crossed the river along with Kanthaka his faithful horse, and Chanda his charioteer. Following the directions left by Bodhisattva Xuanzang, with pilgrim, researcher and scholar Deepak Anand ji guiding, the pilgrimage ventured into the forest to uncover mounds of ancient bricks, visiting the long-lost Buddha's Haircutting Stupa, recently rediscovered. The Bhikkhunī Sangha created a sīma on the edge of the Anoma River to join together for the Amāvasī, the New Moon Uposatha and to listen to the Bhikkhunī Pātimokkha Pāli recitation together.

Along the pilgrimage trail we passed poverty, hardship and filth. Families housed in tiny grass huts very close to the road. Animals tethered by their noses to ropes that didn't allow a foot of movement in any direction. Women in the fields bent over with loads of harvest on their backs. Dogs with mange, hairless and scabbed. Families gathered around fires burning wood and garbage for heat and cooking. The air was smog-filled with poor visibility. Two lane roads filled with people, cattle, motorcycles, bicycles and trucks burdened with excessive loads, became four or five haphazard lanes in an instant.

I caught myself closing my eyes, overwhelmed by the suffering of these people, knowing this wasn't the correct response to what we were witnessing. Nothing arises without a cause. *We are the owners of our actions, heirs of our actions, born of our actions, related to our actions. Whatever actions we do, for good or for evil, of that we will be the heirs.* Seeing with upekkhā there is no pain in the heart. This was the correct response. From that point equanimity increased. The dukkha I was seeing was the First Noble Truth. This was a life in India that might very well represent what life was like in India all those years ago, minus the motor vehicles, the plastics and the mobile phones. Sights like these could have contributed to the Bodhisattva's inspiration to go forth to find that ancient way.

Upekkhā righted the apparent unevenness of what we were observing momentarily in our air-conditioned vans weaving through narrow lanes too fast for the road conditions. They lived on sacred land. The wish arose: may they find the way to the ultimate cessation of suffering.

Then joy arose for those who have found the Buddha's instruction and put it into practice to liberate themselves and help guide others by their own example. Joy that such a way is still open and possible. Joy that we were on this way and sharing this sacred land now.

The "Footsteps of Mahapajapati Gotami Honoring Women in Dhamma" pilgrimage spanned from December 16 – December 23. It began for some in Bodh Gaya and stopped at Kushinagar before joining the entire pilgrimage in Lumbini, Nepal. As a pilgrimage group, we first traveled to Tilaurakot in Kapilavastu. From Kapilavastu the pilgrimage proceeded to:

Ramagrama Stupa

Maya Devi Temple, the site of the birth of the Bodhisattva

Tharighat, the Anoma River

Daruabhari

Lauriya Nandagarh

Kesariya Stupa

Bhakhra (the remain of Amrapali Monastery)

and Birpur

The end of the Great Renunciation Trail was in northern Vaishali in the village of Bhakra, at the site of the ancient Kutagarasālā, where Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī received full acceptance, upasampadā, from the Buddha. The Courageous 500, at the Buddha's direction, received upasampadā from the Bhikkhu Sangha, with Mahā Gotamī as their preceptor. To the east, about 1.5 kms as the crow flies, lies the northern Vaishali area of Birpur, where per ancient pilgrims Faxian and Xuanzang, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and the 500 bhikkhunīs who followed her to ordination are said, forty years later, to have attained parinibbāna, final extinguishment. This was the end of "Walking in the Footsteps" pilgrimage for us. Here in the middle of a field, with the backdrop of the mound believed to be the parinibbāna stupa of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, we held our valedictory closing ceremony. The experience of the pilgrimage was a blur that would take time to sift through.

As a sacred postscript, before we boarded the vans to Bodh Gaya in what would be the final return ride of the pilgrimage, the group was offered the opportunity to view the sacred relics that had led their pilgrimage for the past eight days. I stood in the back observing the line of bhikkhunīs and sāmanerīs approach the sacred relics to pay respects. That in itself was deeply touching, but then I looked upward to the face of the giant statue whose gaze was watching over us. It was Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī. For the first time in memory, I was present with a united bhikkhunī sangha at the feet of – not the Buddha as has always been the case – but at the feet of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī. I lost the ability to speak.

The next day most of the sāmanerīs who had undertaken temporary ordination disrobed formally and undertook the eight lifetime precepts. The pilgrimage officially ended when we arrived at Bodh Gaya. Our small group with Venerable Kaccāyana, Sāmanera Mettānanda, and Paula reunited to visit the Maha Bodhi temple together with venerable Bhikkhunī Gotamī and venerable Bhikkhunī Averā.

We sat for a while beneath the Bodhi tree near the 'Bodhi Pallenke', the 'seat of awakening' also known as the 'Vajrāsana' or the 'Diamond Seat' after the Vajra Samādhi of the Buddha during

his full awakening or ‘Mahā Sambodhi.’ For more than a thousand years, this place was known as ‘The Sambodhi.’ I’d have liked to spend more time there to simply be there. Reflecting back, there is the wish that there had been more time and more opportunity to sit and be still in the sacred places we’d visited.

I write this more than one month later. This precious gift of escorting the sacred relics, like a dream, begins to fade in reckonings of time and space. And like a dream, it also illuminates waves of potentiality, not of becoming but of ceasing. It is in the ceasing that this practice can be of help to those wandering in darkness. To cease by giving, like Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī gave. Renouncing a lofty samsaric existence for robes much like these. Giving away the dust of jewels and fleeting pleasures for Right Freedom. To cease by ceasing.

So what does it signify now to have an Arahantī role model guiding this practice? The shift reveals the groundlessness which lies at the heart of our existence. She is there and not there. . . . Searching for words, I realize the words are not there. It is not correct, the Buddha said, to say that after Parinibbana an arahant exists, doesn’t exist, both exists and doesn’t exist, or neither exists nor doesn’t exist. . . . Truly there is no need for words at all. The Dhamma guides. I follow a living legacy of Awakening however imperfectly, carried by the Noble gifts borne of immeasurable generosity, virtue and sacrifice. . . . given thousands of years ago and still giving. There is still ceasing. In this my heart rejoices.

In gratitude:

Many offerings and many hands came together for this historic pilgrimage, this gift offered the Bhikkhunī Sangha. Among the early visionaries and organizers there is Ayyā Tathālokā Bhikkhunī Mahā Therī and Deepak Anand ji of the Retracing Bodhisattva Xuanzang project, who walked the length of the Great Renunciation Trail on foot during the pandemic and joined us as a pilgrim guide through all of it. Also joining is the Dhammadharini sangha, Ayyā Sakya Dhammadinna and the Bodhipakkhiya Dhamma family, Wangmo Dixey and LBDI (Light of the Buddha Dharma International) with Nava Nalanda, UTBSI (the United Theravada Bhikkhunī Sangha International) And finally the Tzu Chi Foundation, the Nepal International Nuns Association and the State of Bihar, and the many formal boons they bestowed on us.

The Tzu Chi Foundation sponsored 100 bhikkhunī and sāmanerī pilgrims and took up the work of recording the pilgrimage to produce a Dharma documentary. We were invited to the groundbreaking ceremony of the Tzi Chi Foundation’s Kapilavastu Great Love Village, which began in Tilaurakot in procession at the eastern gate of the ancient Kapilavastu palace city, walking through the local villages helped by Tzu Chi with disaster relief during severe floods, to the breaking ground ceremony a few kilometers away. Great Love Village is named “Great Love” after Mahāpajāpatī, whose name in Chinese passed down through the Gāndhārī traditions into China was “Mahāpriyapathī”, which was translated into Chinese as “Path of Great Love” or “She For Whom the Path is Most Dear.”

Many more faithful supporters, including the villagers themselves offered food. Medicines including half a suitcase full of supplements from Dr. Billy Tang our Traditional Chinese Medical doctor Dhamma friend, Bhikkhuni Socks Dana offered by Ayyā Tathālokā and friends,

shawls and shoes offered by Ayyā Sakya Dhammadinnā and the Bodhipakkhiya Dhamma family, robes and bowls offered by both Dhammadharini, Bodhipakkhiya and pilgrim supporters, Nepali Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī statues and engraved plaques offered by Dhammadharini with support from Ven. Bhikkhunī Ariyamangalā and Gurumas Nyanawati and Prasannawati on behalf of Nepal International Nuns Association. All came together with the sheer joy of giving and allowing this empowering pilgrimage to come to fruition.

Special mention is given to Dhammadharini Support Foundation president Supatra Chowchuvech, who spent eight days as the single kappiya for 100 monastics. Devika, the kappiya and upatthāka for Mahā Theri Venerable Sumeththa Bhikkhuni from Sri Lanka, who took care and kept watch over those around her with gentleness and devotion. Paula Snow (temporarily Sāmanerī Varamittā) who took up the uncommonly complex challenge of community kappiya-karika before and after her temporary ordination. Sister Bharti who immediately sought medical care and medicines for this one when she arrived in New Delhi with conjunctivitis. And the many individuals who dreamed it and helped bring this pilgrimage to fruition in large and small and many ways against the prevailing worldly cross currents of greed, hatred and delusion.

amhakam digharattam hitaya sukhaya  
for our long-term benefit and the happiness it gives us

\*From Ayyā Tathālokā- Rattaññunam” — “long standing” or “seniority” - The Pāli text commentary says very clearly this is because she was the first bhikkhunī arahant in our Gotama Buddha’s Sāsana.

With mahā gratitude to Ayyā Tathālokā for her instrumental guidance based on decades of scholarly study and research. Ayye’s review of earlier drafts of this reflection provided helpful suggestions and added and clarified important details.

Written by Mārajinā Bhikkhunī