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THE LIFE OF ĀNANDA AND HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BUDDHA'S SĀSANA

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ABSTRACT:



This article is an attempt to approach the life of the Venerable Ānanda and his contribution to the Buddha's Sāsana from the Pāli literature. Ananda was one of eighty great disciples of the Buddha among which he occupied a unique position in the Buddhist Order. Ananda played a vital role in the preservation and propagation of the Buddha's Sāsana. Ananda was known for his exceptional memory, compassion, and devoted service. Ananda served as the personal attendant of the Buddha for many years. His close association with the Buddha enabled him to learn and preserve numerous discourses that later became part of the Buddhist Canon. After the Buddha's Prinibbāna, Ānanda recited the Suttas at the first Buddhist Council, beginning with the famous phrase, "Thus have heard." He also contributed significantly to the establishment of the Bhikkhuni Sangha by supporting the ordination of women. This article examines the life of Ananda and evaluates his important contributions to the continuity, preservation, and spread of the Buddha's teachings.

KEYWORDS: *Ānanda, Buddha, Sāsana, Buddhist Saṇgha, First Buddhist council, Dhamma Preservation, Bhikkhuni Saṅgha, Disciple of the Buddha, Theravada Buddhism, Buddhist History, Thus I have heard (Evaṃ me sutaṃ)..*

INTRODUCTION

Among the many great disciples of the Buddha, Ananda occupies a unique and honored place in the Buddhist history. He was not only the personal attended of the Buddha for many years but also one of the most devoted and compassionated disciples in the Buddhist Sangha. His remarkable memory, kindness, humility, and dedication greatly contributed to the preservation and spread of the Buddha's teaching after the Parinibbāna of the Buddha. The major object of this article is to examine the life of Ananda and highlights his invaluable contributions to the Buddha's Sāsana.

The previous lives of Ānanda

According to Buddhist philosophy, as a living being has becoming in the realm of an animal, or a human, or a deva, or a brahma continuously in the cycle of existence as long as he does not attain the Nibbāna. It is called Samsāra or the cycle of continuity of the birth and death. So, Samyutta Commentary[1] mentioned as "Samsāro" appearing restless of aggregates, actuating, and elements. We often find prominent characters identified as earlier incarnations of Ānanda in the Jātaka stories. He was almost an intimate with Bodhisatta, the future Gptama Buddha. He was as the Bodhisatta's brother,

father, son, assistant, colleague and friend. Several time, he was born in heaven and mankind. Therefore, the Apādāna[2]

He is approved to Suriyakumāra in the Devadhamma Jātaka(6), the barber in the Maghadeva(9), Cūḷalohita in Munika(30) and Mātalisaṇgāhaka in the kulāvaka(31), Antevāsoka in the Asātamanta(61), the bandit-leader in the Takkapaṭita(63), Pujjunnadevarāzā in the Maccha(75), Kāḷakaṇṇī in the Kāḷakaṇṇi(83), the Brahmin in the Sāraṃbha(88), the tree-sprite in the Kusanāḷi(121), the elephant trainer in the Dummedha(122), and Rādha in the Rādha(145).

In the second chapter of Jātaka: Māṇava in the Satadhamma(179), the younger brother in the Asadisa(181), Poṭṭhapāda in the Rādha(198), Cūḷanandiya in the Cūḷanandiya(222), the younger brother of the Bodhisatta in the Maṇikaṇṭha(253), Gāmaṇicanda in the Gāmaṇicanda(257), Corarājā in the Seyya(282), and Cūḷalohita in the Sālūka(286).

In the third chapter of Jātaka: He is identified with the inhabitant of a frontier village in the Mahāassāroha(302), Dubbhisena in the Ekarāja(303), the Brahmin in the Palāsa(307), Poṭṭhapāda in the Kāḷabāhu(329), the millionaire of Bārāṇasī in the Piṭṭhi(337), the Bramin in the Sattubhasta(402), Vedeha priest in the Gandhāra(406), Purohita in the Parantapa(416), Sumangala in the Sumangala(420), Aḍḍhamāsakarājā in the Gsngsmṣla(421) and Anupiya in the Indriya(423).

In the fourth chapter: He was approved to the attendant in the Sankha(442), the Manṭhabya in the Kaṇhadīpāyana(444), Pottika in the Nigrodha(445), Pancasikha in the Bilārakosiya(450), Rohiṇeyya in the Ghaṭapaṇṭhita(454), Rājā in the Mātuposaka(455), Bramin in the Juṇha(456), Yudhiṭṭhila kumara in the Yudhaṅcaya(460), Bharata in the Dasaratha(461), Mātali in the Mahākaṇha(469), Kālinga Māṇavaka in the Kālingabodhi(479), Bramin in the Sālikedāra(484), One of the seven brothers in the Bhisa(488), Vissakamma in the Suruci(489), Mātali in the Sādhina(494), Sambhūtapaṇḍita in the Cittasambhūta(498), Physician Sīvaka in the Sivi(499), Cittamiga in the Rohaṇamiga(501), and Sumukha in the Cūḷahamsa(502).

In the fifth chapter of Jātaka: Anusissa in the Sarabhiṅga(522), Somaddattakumāra in the Cūḷasutasoma(525), Sunanda Sārathi in the Ummādantī(527), the younger brother of Kusa in the Kusa(531), Nanda in the Soṇa-Nanda(532), Sumukha in the Cūḷahamsa(533), and in the Mahāhamsa(534), Mātali in the Sudhābhojana)535, and the Brahmin Nanda in the Mahāsutasoma(537).

In the sixth and seventh chapters of Jātaka: Usukāra (the arrow-maker) in the Mahājanaka(539), Mātali in the Nimi(541), Somadatta in the Bhūridatta(543), and Dhanaṅcayakorabyarājā in the Vidhura(546).[3]

The Dhammapada Commentary[4] states that once when Ānanda was a blacksmith he committed with the wife of another man. As a result, he suffered in hell for a long time and was born for fourteen existences as some one's wife. It was seven existences more before the result of his evil deed were exhausted.

The Theragāthā Commentary[5] mentions that once he was the prince Sumana, step-brother to Padumuttara Buddha, who become the personal attendant of Gotama Buddha. His father was Ānanda, a Khatiya king of Hamsāvatī.

In the time of Kassapa Buddha, he gave his upper clothes to a monk for him to carry begging-bowl in it. As a result, he was born in heaven and become as king of Banāra. He built for eight Pacceka Buddhas eight monasteries in his royal park and for ten thousand years he looks after them.[6]

The Present life of Prince Ānanda and His Linneage

Thus, Ānanda did many good deeds for as long as a hundred thousand of the worlds. His last existence, before the personal attendant of Gotama Buddha, was in the Tusitā heaven together with the Bodhisatta then he passed away from there, and was reborn in the family of Sakkya Dynasty in Kapilavatthu.

Once upon a time, King Suddhodana ordered his ministers to fine a suitable wife for him, and they reported that the fairest of all was Māyā. He asked for her in marriage, and was told that she would be given to him when her six elders were married. Thereupon Suddhodana asked for all seven and received them. He placed Māyā and Mahāpajāpati as the principle queen in his royal palace and gave the

five others to his five brothers. According to Pāli text, he had two sons, Siddhattha with Mahāmāyādevī, Nanda with Mahāpajāpati Gotamī, and one daughter named Sundari Nanda with Mahāpajāpati Gotamī. Sukkhodana had also two sons, Mahānāma and Anuruddhā.

The History of Buddhism[7] mentioned that Ānanda and Devadatta were the sons of Sukkodana. Another two sons of king Sīhahanu are Dhotodana and Sakkodana and the Pāli version was silent about them. And Amita, daughter of Sīhahanu, has a son named Tissa. Pamita had two children Devadatta and Yasodharā. Prince Ānanda was the son of Amitidana, so mentioned in the Manoratthapūranī[8]

Another place of Manoratthapūranī, Mahānāma and Anuruddhā are also said to be the sons of Amitodana, in which case Ānanda was a brother of these two. However, nowhere in the Pāli Text has been mentioned as a brother of Mahānāma and Anuruddhā. But, according to Mahāyāna Buddhism Prince Ānanda was a son of Sukkodana, another brother of Suddhodana. The Tibetan Vinaya agrees with the Pāli version. According to mention above, Ānanda was first cousin of the Buddha. We have mentioned Prince Ānanda's genealogical table as follow:

Prince Ānanda's Genealogical Table

Lineage	Sones	Daughters
Sīhahanu + Kaccanādevī	(1) Suddhhodana (2) Sakkodana (3) Dotodana (4) Sukkodana (5) Amitodana	(1) Amita (2) Pamita
Suddhodana **+** (1) Mahāmāyā (2)MahāpajāpatiGotamī	(1)Siddhattha(Bodhisatta) (2) Nanda	Sundarinanda Or Rūpanandā
Sakkodana	----------	----------
Dotodana	----------	----------
Sukkodana	(1) Mahānāma (2) Anuruddhā	----------
Amitodana	Ānanda	----------
Amita	Tissa	----------
Pamita + Suppabuddha	Devadatta	Yasodharādevī

There is some confusion on the case of Ānanda's mother. TheThere is some confusion on the case of Ānanda's mother. The Pāli Canon did not show exactly anywhere the statement on this case. But we have found that in the Upassayasutta of Samyutta, it was a few indicative words on him such as "Ayyassa Ānandassa vedehamunino".[9] The Commentaries mentioned the word vedehamunino as "Vedehamuninoti Paṇḍiṭamunino, Paṇḍito hi ñāṇasaṅkhātena -vedena īhati sabbakiccāni karoti, Tasamā 'vedeho'ti vuccati".[10] In this case, the word 'Vedeha' means a wise, he who has done all the tasks association with the knowledge and the suffix word 'Muni' means monk. So, here it means a wise or intelligent monk. This is not support on the case of Ānanda's mother and just call him 'Vedehamuni' or intelligent monk. But another place in the Therāpadāna, it had indicated him only the word as follow;

Tathāgataṃ jetavane vasantaṃ,
Apucchi vadahamunī natango,
Sabbaññubuddhā kira nāma honti,
Bhavanti te hetubhi kehi vīra.[11]

In this verse, the word 'Vedehamuni' refers to Ānanda and the commentator explained this word as 'Vedehamuniti vedeharatthe jātā vedehi, vedehiyā putto vedehiputto. Monaṃ vuccati ñāṇaṃ, tena ito gato pavattoti muni. Vedehiputto ca so muni ceti 'Vedehiputtamunī' ti vattabbe 'vaṇṇāgamo'ti ādinā niruttinayana i-kārssa attam putta-saddassa ca lopam katvā 'Vedehamunī'ti vuttaṃ.[12] According to this explanation Ānanda was the son of Vedehi queen, therefore he would be called Vedehamuni.

Ānanda become permanent Attendant

One of the qualities of Ananda that established his reputation was his conduct as the Buddha's personal attendant that he was the best of all attendants, the foremost of all those monks who had ever filled this post. In the twentieth year he declared in the assembly of the monks that he wishes to have a permanent attendant.

On one occasion, while the Buddha was dwelling at Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthi he addressed the monks and told as "Monks, I am getting old now. Some of the monks service to me would take a different route from what I chose, some monk would even think of putting down my alms-bowl and robe on the ground. now you must appoint a monk who will attend to my permanent attendant.[13]

Them all the famous and senior disciples of the Buddha enthusiastically offered themselves for this respected assignment. Fist of all, the Venerable Sāriputta rose from seat, paid homage to the Buddha, and said, 'Venerable Sir, for noe hundred thousand world-cycles, I had fulfilled the perfections simple to become a disciple of the Buddha. May I be allowed to attend on the Buddha? The Buddha told him, 'you will not do, Sāriputta, wherever you are, there is the Dhamma, for you expound the Dhamma in the same way as the Tathāgata does. Therefore, you ought not to attend upon me.' Then Venerable Moggalāna offered himself for the post but was likewise rejected. So too, all the eighty great disciples of the Buddha, except Ānanda, offered to serve him, but were the same result.

When the Buddha himself had rejected one by one the proposed services offered by his eighty great disciples, Ānanda sat in silence. At the time the monks urged him, "Friend Ānanda, each member of the Saṅgha is offering himself for the privilege of attending on the Buddha. You should also offer yourself." His reply was that a position is not something to be asked for. Does the Buddha not notice me? If the Buddha so wishes, he will select me. Then the Buddha said to monks; "Monks, Ānanda does not need any body's advice to attend upon me. He will choose himself freely." The Venerable Ānanda rose from his seat and asked the Buddha "Venerable Sir, if the Buddha would agree to these eight advantages, I would become permanent attendant to you." They are as follow:

(1) If the Buddha refrains from giving me fine robes that you have received,
(2) If the Buddha refrains from letting me stay in the same dwelling place reserved for the Buddha,
(3) If the Buddha refrains from giving me fine food,
(4) If the Buddha refrains from taking me to invitations accepted by the Buddha, I will approve myself as permanent attendant.

These are four refraining conditions. For, if the Buddha did any of these things, someone would say that Ānanda's services to the Buddha were done in order to get clothes, good fare and lodging and be included in the invitations. Furthermore:

(1) If the Buddha would agree to go to the places I would invite,
(2) If the Buddha would allow me to bring those who came to see the Buddha form distance,
(3) If the Buddha would let me to approach as soon as I have any suspicion,
(4) If the Buddha would repeat to me any doctrine taught in my absence, I will approve myself as permanent attendant.

These are four special privileges. For, as regards former three things the people would say, "What is the meaning in Ānanda's personal attendance on the Buddha if he is devoid of even these things?" and as regards the fourth one some monks would ask me thus 'Ānanda, where was this stanza or this discourse given by the Buddha?' then if I could not respond them, they would say, 'Ānanda, you have been so close to the Buddha as his like shadow, but you do not know even this much'.[14] The Buddha granted his all those eight comprising the four refraining and the four favours and immediately,

approved his appointment as his personal attendant. So that, Ānanda become permanent attendant upon the Buddha.

The Buddha's Admirations to Ānanda

In the Buddha's Order was full of great disciples of the Buddha. Among them, the Buddha's admiration to Venerable Ānanda has been expressed on many occasions in the Pāli texts. In the Buddhist literature, Ānanda was praised as personal attendant or shadow of the Buddha, founder of Bhikkhunī Order, treasure of the Dhamma, solicitor of the Saṅgha, moreover and cornerstone of the Buddhist. First of all, for instance, I would like to mention on that which pay attribute to the four audiences by the Buddha with declaration of distinction reward. Among whom the Buddha declared pre-eminent, almost great disciples accept Venerable Cūlapantha and Venerable Subhūti, got in only one category according to their respected post. But the Venerable Ānanda gained the unique distinction of being pronounced preeminent in five qualities. In the Ekanipāta of Anguttara Nikāya[15], was record on his five-distinction feature as below;

> Etadaggam bhikkhave mama sāvakānam bhikkhūnam bahussutānam yadidam Ānando. "Monks, Ānanda is the foremost one among who have learned much of the Buddha's discourse."
> Etadaggam bhikkhave mama sāvakānam bhikkhūnam satimantānam yadidam Ānando. "Monks, Ānanda is the chief one among who have retentive memory."
> Etadaggam bhikkhave mama sāvakānam bhikkhūnam gatimantānam yadidam Ānando. "Monks, Ānanda is the mastery over the sequential structure of the teachings."
> Etadaggam bhikkhave mama sāvakānam bhikkhūnam dhitimantānam yadidam Ānando. "Monks, Ānanda is the foremost one who have steadfast in studied, learned, remembered and recited of the teachings.
> Etadaggam bhikkhave mama sāvakānam bhikkhūnam upaṭṭhakānam yadidam Ānando. "Monks, Ānanda is the foremost one who attend upon the Buddha."

As regards the five specific abilities of Ānanda, some explanation is given by the Commentator in his Volumes. The first of the five categories is named as "Bahusuta" or "heard much." In this case one can see that almost discourses the first four Nikāyas of Suttanta Piṭaka begins with words "Evam me sutam" or "Thus have I heard". The 'I' referring to Ānanda.

And the second quality is Satimanta or mindfulness; in this matter he has great mindfulness in his study of the Buddha other monks. Again, the third quality is Gatimanta or good behavior. It refers to the capacity to perceive in the mind the internal and coherence of a discourse. It is said that he could remember anything he had once heard up to fifteen thousand stanzas of sixty thousand lines.[16] So, he was called the foremost one in this quality. The fourth quality is Dhitimanta or steadfastness. In this case, his energy and unflagging dedication to the tasks of studying, memorizing, and reciting the Buddha's teachings and of personally attending on the Buddha was supreme. Therefore, he was called the foremost one in this post. The last and the fifth quality is Upāṭṭhāka or personal attendant. In this point, his service to the Master was the best than any other monks. So, he was called the foremost one in this title too.

Contributions to the Buddha's Sāsanā

Ānanda's greatest contribution was preserving the teachings of the Buddha. After the Buddha'a Parinibbāna, the first Buddhist Council was held at Rājagaha under the leadership of Mahākassapa Thera. During the first Buddhist council, Ānanda recited the discourses (Suttas) that he had heard directly from the Buddha. Most Buddhist discourses begin with the phrase: "Thus have I heard" (Evaṃ me sutaṃ), which reflects Ānanda's role as the main reciter of the Buddha's teachings.

Ānanda also played a major role in establishing the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha (Order of Nuns). When Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī requested permission for women to enter the monastic order, the Buddha initially hesitated. Out of compassion and fairness, Ānanda respectfully appealed to the Buddha and asked

whether women capable of attaining enlightenment. The Buddha confirmed that they were equally capable. As a result, women were allowed to join the Saṅgha. This contribution opened the path of liberation to countless women throughout Buddhist history.

Ānanda was loved by both monks and lay followers because of his friendly and compassionate nature. He helped people approach the Buddha and often explained teachings to those who had difficulty understanding them. He treated everyone with kindness regardless of social status, making the Dhamma more accessible to ordinary people.

Ānanda's Attainment of Arahantship

Although Ānanda had long served the Buddha and possessed vast knowledge of the Dhamma, he had not attained Arahantship during the Buddha's lifetime. Before the First Buddhist Council, he practiced meditation diligently and attained enlightenment on the night before the council began. His attainment demonstrated that wisdom and liberation are achieved through persistent effort and mindfulness.

CONCLUSION

Ānanda life was a shining example of devotion, service, compassion, and dedication to the Dhamma. His faithful service to the Buddha and his crucial role in preserving the teachings ensured the continuation of the Buddha's Sāsana for future generations. Today, Buddhists around the world remember Ānanda with deep gratitude and respect. His contributions remain an inspiration to all who seek to practice and preserve the teaching of the Buddha.

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