

A HISTORICAL STUDY OF LIFE AND WORK OF THERAĀNANDA

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The Venerable *Ānanda* was one of eighty great disciples of the Buddha, among which he occupied a unique position in the Buddha's Order. This topic relates to the fact that how he acted himself as a mediator between the Buddha and the monks and the general public as well as the understanding of *Ānanda's* life as the personal attendant of the Buddha and his lifelong carrier as the contributor to the Buddha *Sāsana*. The objective of this paper is the Social, Philosophical, and Historical approach, which will help us to focus on his life and also on what was the social situation, problems, and norms were during the lifetime of the Buddha. One feels that an analytical type of understanding of the subject is required for such an approach.

In his present life, he was born on the same day as the Buddha, and his father was *Amitodana*, a brother of *Suddhodana* who ruled over the kingdom of *Sākya*. Therefore, he has a blood relationship as a first cousin of the Buddha. And we have investigated a problem that the name of his mother had not been mentioned clearly in the *Pāli* text. And then, the time of his entering into the Order is also not evident among the different traditions. But, the commonly accepted view among Theravādin is that he was ordained along with the *Sākya* Princes, just after the Buddha's first visit to his native town in the second year after the Enlightenment.

At the age of fifty-five, i.e., in the twentieth year, he declared in the assembly of the monks that he wished to have a permanent attendant. Then all the famous and senior disciples of the Buddha enthusiastically offered themselves for this respected assignment. But the Buddha himself had rejected one by one the proposed services provided by his eighty great disciples. Then Venerable *Ānanda* rose from his seat and asked the Buddha, “Venerable Sir, if the Buddha agreed to these eight advantages, which are the four refrainings and the four favor, I would become permanent attendant to you.” The Buddha granted his all those eight advantages and immediately approved his appointment as his personal attendant. From that day onwards, he attended upon the Buddha for twenty-five years, from the twentieth rainy retreat to the last moment of the Buddha. Regarding his daily services to the Buddha, the Commentator describes in detail in his works.

During the time of his life, he was not only attended to the Buddha but also looked after the sickness for colleagues as well as the general public and the Buddha’s admirations to *Ānanda*. By being discussing his services with them.

And then, we have attempted to express how the Buddha permitted the Order of Nuns for the women-folk and how the Venerable *Ānanda* tried it to get permission from the Buddha. After the establishment of the *Bhikkhuni* Order, the Buddha said to the Venerable *Ānanda* that the *Saddhamma* or holy life would not last long as a consequence of allowing women-folk to enter into the Order. Regarding the Buddha’s prediction, we have attempted to present that the Commentator had responded in detail in his work.

In the *Digha Nikaya* narrates the last days of the Buddha, which has been mentioned in *MahāparinibbānaSutta*. The Venerable *Ānanda* was the most intimate companion of the Buddha during his last journey from *Rājagaha* to *Kusinagara*. While Buddha was dwelling on his last rainy retreat at *Veluvana* Village, He became seriously ill and was near to death. At that time, *Ānanda* attended upon the Buddha as soon as possible he could.

The next important event happened in the *Cāpāla* shrine. The Buddha said to *Ānanda*, “I have practiced four magic powers, and if I please, I can remain as long as I wish.” Unfortunately, *Ānanda* kept silent, and the greatest opportunity was lost. Later the Buddha informed *Ānanda* that he would go to *Mahāparinibbāna* within three months. At the time, *Ānanda* requested the Buddha to stay on earth for at least one more cycle.

But the Buddha said, “Enough, *Ānanda*. Do not implore the *Tathāgata* now. The time for such request is past”. In this case, the Buddha has said not only this time but for ten times

in different places of *Rājagaha* and for five times in different places of *Vesāli*. Therefore, *Ānanda*, this failure to request me then is your own fault, your own omission. All these cases of omission were pointed out here by the Buddha to attenuate the sorrow, *Ānanda* was feeling at that time. Of course, *Ānanda*'s failure on all those various occasions was due to Mara's mischief.

In *Digha Nikaya* we have examined his attempt at final deliverance, taking part in the First Great *Sangha* Council, and a situation of his last day or final extinction as mentioned in the *Dhammapada* commentary as well *Mahāyāna* tradition.

The *Sutta* or discourses taught by Venerable *Ānanda* were found in various kinds of volumes of the *Pāli* Canon. Of these, we have found twenty discourses in the *Pāli*, which made heading in his name as "*Ānanda*." Among them are the five discourses taught by him and the other discourses mentioned as a conversation with the Buddha and his eminent colleagues such as *Sāriputta*, *Moggalāna*, etc. Although he preached himself most of the discourses, the discourses such as '*GirimāĀnanda*' and '*Ānanda*' from the *KhandhaSamyutta* were repeated after the Buddha and Venerable *Puṇṇa* the son of *Mantānibrahmana*, respectively. Some few, however, contain references to particular events, which make it possible to assign them to a period in the Buddha's ministry. Some discourses were taught to his colleagues and lay devotees after the Buddha such as *SubhaSutta* from the *DīghaNikāya*, *Aṭṭhakanagara*, and *Gopakamoggallāna* from the *MajjhimaNikāya*, etc. The list of them, together with a brief description of the subject matter of each discourse from the original text and some explanatory notes in the Commentary and sub-commentary.

In this paper, we have discussed a glimpse of *Ānanda* and his aspects, which were mentioned in different kinds of *Pāli* texts, *Mahāyāna* tradition, and the books written by some scholars. The life story of *Ananda*, as given in the various sources of *Theravāda* tradition and *Mahāyāna* tradition, is certainly mixed with legend. It is not an easy task to unravel history from legend but the legends that have associated with his name are an indication of the fact that he was one of the greatest personalities in the history of Buddhism. He preserve and protect present day of Buddhist Pāli literature and also deals with how he has played a vital role for the upliftment of the life of women from the sociological standpoint. And it is important to throw light on the status of women-folk at the time of Buddha in ancient India, then mentioned on how did Bhikkhuni Sangha came into existence in the

Buddhist Order and how Venerable Ānanda acted in the First Great Sangha Council after mahāparinibbāna of the Buddha and situation of the last days of Ānanda.

Ānanda contributed to the Buddhist Order as well as Dhamma which is beneficial from his time to the present time. His contributions to the Buddha *Sasana* for welfare of the world.

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