


CHAPTER 9

THE BUDDHA AND HIS RELATIVES (*Continued*)

“Trustful are the best of relatives.”

— Dhṛp 204

The Buddha and his Stepbrother Nanda

 n the third day after the arrival of the Buddha at Kapilavatthu, Prince Nanda, the son of Queen Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī, was celebrating his consecration ceremony, marriage ceremony, and the house-warming ceremony. It was on the occasion of these three festivals when congratulations were being offered to the prince that the Buddha visited the palace. After the meal the Buddha handed the bowl to the prince, and uttering a blessing, rose to go without taking the bowl.

The prince followed him thinking that the Buddha would take the bowl from him at any moment. But the Buddha would not take it, and the prince out of reverence for him continued to follow the Teacher.

Janapada Kalyāṇi, to whom he was betrothed, hearing that the prince was following the Buddha with bowl in hand, with tears streaming down her cheeks and hair half-combed, ran after Prince Nanda as fast as she could and said to him: “Return quickly, O noble Lord.” These affectionate words penetrated his heart and he was deeply moved, but with deference to the Buddha he could not possibly return the bowl to him. So he accompanied the Buddha to the park, his temporary residence. On arrival there the Buddha questioned Nanda whether he would become a monk. So great was his reverence for him as the Buddha and as an elder brother of his that, with reluctance, he agreed to be admitted into the order.

But Nanda Bhikkhu enjoyed no spiritual happiness resulting from renunciation. He was greatly depressed, and was constantly thinking of his bride. He related his mental troubles to the bhikkhus, saying: “Brethren, I am dissatisfied. I am now living the religious life, but I cannot endure to lead the holy life any longer. I intend to abandon the higher precepts and return to the lower life, the life of a layman.”

Hearing this, the Buddha questioned Venerable Nanda whether such report was true. He admitted his weakness, and stated that he was worried about his bride.

The Buddha devised a means to set him on the right path. With the object of showing him celestial nymphs the Buddha, using his psychic powers, took him to the Tāvātīṃsa heaven. On the way the Venerable Nanda was shown a singed she-monkey who had lost her ears, nose, and tail in a fire, clinging to a burnt-up stump in a scorched field. Reaching heaven, the Buddha pointed to him celestial nymphs and asked him: "Nanda, which do you regard as being the more beautiful and fair to look upon and handsome, your noble wife Janapada Kalyāṇī or the celestial nymphs?"

"Venerable Sir, Janapada Kalyāṇī is like the singed-monkey when compared to those celestial nymphs, who are infinitely more beautiful and fair."

"Cheer up, Nanda. I guarantee that you will possess them if you persevere as I bid you."

"In that case I shall take the greatest pleasure in living the holy life," said Venerable Nanda, childishly.

Hearing that Venerable Nanda was living the holy life with the object of winning celestial nymphs, the bhikkhus ridiculed him calling him "hireling." Eventually he became ashamed of his base motive, and striving diligently, attained arahantship.

He thereupon, approached the Buddha and said: "Venerable Sir, I release the Exalted One from the promise that he made when he guaranteed that I should win celestial nymphs."

The Buddha replied: "When, Nanda, you ceased to cling to the things of the world, and your heart was released from the corruptions, at that moment I was released from that promise."

He then uttered the following paean of joy:

He that has crossed over the mud and crushed
the thorn of lust;

He that has destroyed delusion, such a man is unmoved
whether in pleasure or in pain.

When some monks doubted his attainment of arahantship the Buddha in explanation uttered the following stanzas:

Even as rain penetrates an ill-thatched house,
so does lust penetrate an undeveloped mind.

Even as rain does not penetrate a well-thatched house,
so does lust not penetrate a well-developed mind.

Dhp vv. 13-14.

Enjoying the bliss of emancipation, he praised the Teacher, saying: "O excellent is the method of the Master, whereby I was drawn out of the mire of rebirth and set on Nibbāna's strand!"

The following verses are attributed to him in the Theragāthā:

Through not reflecting rightly I was attached to outward
show. Overcome by passionate love, I was restless and fickle.
Because of the skilful means devised by the Buddha, the
'kinsman of the sun,' rightly I acted and drew out my mind
from existence.¹²⁸

Venerable Nanda Thera was placed chief amongst disciples in respect of self-control.

The Buddha and Ānanda

Ānanda, a cousin of Prince Siddhattha, was the son of Amitodana, a younger brother of King Suddhodana. As he was born bringing happiness to all his kinsfolk, he was named Ānanda.

In the second year of the Buddha's ministry Ānanda entered the order together with the Sākya Nobles—Anuruddha, Bhaddiya, Bhagu, Kimbila, and Devadatta. Not long after, hearing a sermon from Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta, he attained the first stage of sainthood (*sotāpatti*).

When the Buddha was fifty-five years old Venerable Ānanda became his chief attendant.

During the first twenty years after his enlightenment the Buddha had no permanent attendant. The few temporary attendants were not very dutiful and their behaviour was not highly commendable. One day while residing at Jetavana the Buddha addressed the bhikkhus and said: "Now I am old, O bhikkhus. When I say: 'Let us go this way,' some go by another way; some drop my bowl and robe on the ground. Choose one disciple to attend always upon me."¹²⁹ Forthwith all the bhikkhus, except the Venerable Ānanda, from Venerable Sāriputta downwards, volunteered their services. But the Buddha declined their kind offer. As the Venerable Ānanda was silent, he was advised by the bhikkhus to offer his services. He consented on condition the Buddha would grant the following eight boons:

- (i) The Buddha should not give him robes which he himself had received.

128. *Psalms of the Brethren*, p. 127 vs. 157, 158.

129. *Jātaka*, No. 456, *Jātaka Translation*, vol. iv. p. 61

- (ii) The Buddha should not give him food which he had received.
- (iii) The Buddha should not allow him to dwell in the same fragrant chamber.
- (iv) The Buddha should not take him with him wherever the Buddha is invited.
- (v) The Buddha should kindly go with him wherever he is invited.
- (vi) The Buddha should kindly give him permission to introduce visitors that come from afar to see the Buddha.
- (vii) The Buddha should kindly grant him permission to approach him whenever any doubt should arise.
- (viii) The Buddha should kindly repeat to him the discourses that were declared in his absence.

The Buddha granted these four negative and four positive boons. Thenceforth the Venerable Ānanda acted as his favourite attendant for twenty-five years till the Buddha's last moment. Like a shadow he followed him everywhere, attending to all his needs with great love and care. Both during day and night his services were always at the disposal of his master. At night it is stated that he used to go round the fragrant chamber nine times with staff and torch in hand to keep himself awake and to prevent the Buddha's sleep from being disturbed.

Ānanda Bodhi Tree

It was Venerable Ānanda who was responsible for the planting of the Ānanda bodhi tree. In the absence of the Buddha, devout followers who used to bring flowers and garlands, laid them at the entrance to the fragrant chamber and departed with much rejoicing. Anāthapiṇḍika came to hear of it and requested Venerable Ānanda to inquire of the Buddha whether there was a possibility of finding a place where his devotees might pay obeisance to the Buddha when he was away on his preaching tours. Venerable Ānanda approached the Buddha and asked:

"Lord, how many objects of reverence (*cetiyaṇi*) are there, may it please you?"

"There are three, Ānanda. They are objects of reverence appertaining to the body (*sārīrika*),¹³⁰ objects of reverence appertaining to personal use (*pāribhogika*) and objects of reverence reminiscent of the Buddha (*uddesika*)."

"Is it proper, Lord, to construct a *cetiya* while you are alive?"

130. Such as bodily relics of the Buddha.

“No, not an object of reverence appertaining to the body which it is proper to erect after the passing away of the Buddha. An object of reverence reminiscent of the Buddha has no physical basis; it is purely mental. But the great bodhi tree, used by the Buddha, whether he is alive or dead, is an object of reverence (*cetiya*).”

“Lord when you go on your preaching tours, the great monastery of Jetavana is without refuge, and people find no place of reverence. Lord, may I bring a seed from the great bodhi tree and plant it at the entrance to Jetavana?”

“Very well, Ānanda, plant it. It will then be as if I constantly abide in Jetavana.”

Venerable Ānanda mentioned this matter to Buddha’s principal lay attendants—Anāthapiṇḍika, Visākhā, and King Kosala—and requested the Venerable Moggallāna to secure a fruit from the great bodhi tree. Readily he consented and obtained a fruit that was falling from the tree and delivered it to Venerable Ānanda.

This he presented to the king who in turn handed it to Anāthapiṇḍika. Then he stirred up the fragrant soil and dropped it in the hole that was dug. The tree that sprang up in that place was known as the Ānanda-bodhi.¹³¹

Ānanda and Women

It was also Venerable Ānanda who persuaded the Buddha to admit women into the order. Had it not been for his intervention Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī would not have succeeded in becoming a bhikkhuṇī (nun). Bhikkhuṇīs held him in high esteem, and his sermons were greatly appreciated by them.

On one occasion he approached the Buddha and asked him:

“How are we to conduct ourselves, Lord, with regard to womankind?”

“As not seeing them, Ānanda.”

“But if we should see them, Lord, what are we to do?”

“Do not talk to them, Ānanda.”

“But if they should speak to us, Lord, what are we to do?”

“Be watchful, Ānanda.”

This general exhortation was given to bhikkhus so that they may constantly be watchful in their dealings with women.

131. This oldest historic sacred tree is still to be seen at modern Sahet Mahet (Sāvat-thī) in India.

As he possessed a powerfully retentive memory, and as he had the rare privilege of listening to all the discourses of the Buddha owing to his close association with him, he was later appointed the Custodian of the Dhamma (*dhamma-bhaṇḍāgārika*).

Referring to his own knowledge of the Dhamma, in reply to a question put by a brahmin, Venerable Ānanda said:

“Eighty-two thousand from the Buddha
and two thousand from the bhikkhus I received.
There exist eighty-four thousand texts in all.”¹³²

The Buddha ranked him foremost amongst his disciples in five respects: erudition (*bahussutānaṃ*), retentive memory (*satimantānaṃ*), good behaviour (*gatimantānaṃ*), steadfastness (*dhitimantānaṃ*), and ministering care (*upaṭṭhākānaṃ*).¹³³

Though a distinguished disciple, well-versed in the Dhamma, he lived as a “learner” (*sekha*), till the death of the Buddha. The Buddha’s final exhortation to him was “You have done merit in the past, Ānanda. Quickly be free from corruptions.”¹³⁴

It was only after the passing away of the Buddha that he attained arahantship. As he was expected to take a leading part in the first council, which was composed only of arahants, he made a strenuous effort and attained arahantship on the night preceding the convocation while he was about to lie down on his couch. It is stated that he was the only disciple who attained arahantship free from the postures of sitting, standing, walking, or sleeping.¹³⁵

Venerable Ānanda passed away at the age of one hundred and twenty. The Dhammapada commentary states that as people on both the sides of the river Rohiṇī were equally serviceable to him and as both sides vied with each other to possess his relics, he sat cross-legged in the air over the middle of the river, preached the Dhamma to the multitude and wished that his body would split in two and that one portion would fall on the near side and the other on the farther side. He then entered into the ecstatic meditation on the element of fire (*tejokasiṇa-samāpatti*). Instantly flames of fire issued from his body, and, as willed, one portion of the body fell on the near side and the other on the farther side.

132. *Psalms of the Brethren*, p. 354. Theragāthā vs. 1424.

133. *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, Vol. i, p. 24. *Gradual Sayings*, part I. p. 19

134. *Parinibbāna Sutta* (DN 16)

135. *Buddhist Legends*, vol. iii, p. 160.

The Theragāthā gives several stanzas uttered by him on various occasions. The following verse which deals with the frailty of this so-called beautiful body is particularly interesting:

“Behold this adorned body, a mass of sores, a lump infirm, much thought of, whereof nothing lasts, nothing persists.”¹³⁶

The Buddha and Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī

Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī was the youngest sister of King Suppabuddha. Her elder sister was Queen Mahā Maya. Both were married to King Sudhodana. She had a daughter named Nandā and a son named Nanda. Later, both of them entered the order. When Mahā Maya died she adopted her sister’s son, Prince Siddhattha, entrusting her own son Nanda to the charge of nurses.

Her family name was Gotamī, and she was named Mahā Pajāpati because soothsayers predicted that she would be the head of a large following.

When the Buddha visited the palace and preached the Dhammapāla Jātaka to his father she attained the first stage of sainthood.

After the death of King Sudhodana, as both princes Siddhattha and Nanda had renounced the world, she also decided to enter the noble order and lead the holy life. When the Buddha visited Kapilavatthu to settle a dispute between the Sākya and Koliya with regard to the irrigation channels from the river Rohiṇī and was residing at the Nigrodha park, Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī approached the Buddha and, begging him to grant permission for women to enter the order, pleaded thus:¹³⁷

“It would be well, Lord, if women should be allowed to renounce their homes and enter the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Tathāgata.”

Without stating his reasons, the Buddha straightaway refused, saying:

“Enough, O Gotamī, let it not please you that women should be allowed to do so.”

For the second and third time Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī repeated her request, and the Buddha gave the same reply.

Later, the Buddha having stayed at Kapilavatthu as long as he liked journeyed to Vesālī, and arriving there in due course, resided at the Mahāvana in the Kūṭāgāra Hall.

136. *Psalms of the Brethren*, p. 353. Theragāthā, v. 1020. Dhṛp v. 147.

137. Vinaya texts, part iii, p. 320. Aṅguttara Nikāya, Part iv, 274.

Resolute Pajāpati Gotamī, without being discouraged by her disappointment, got her hair cut off, donned yellow garments, and surrounded by a great number of Sākya ladies, walked from Kapilavatthu to Vesālī, a distance of about 150 miles, experiencing many a hardship. With swollen feet, her body covered with dust, she arrived at Vesālī and stood outside the porch of the Pinnacled Hall. Venerable Ānanda found her, weeping, and learning the cause of her grief, approached the Buddha and said:

“Behold, Lord, Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī is standing outside the porch, with swollen feet, body covered with dust, and sad. Please permit women to renounce home and enter the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Exalted One. It were well, Lord, if women should be allowed to renounce their homes and enter the homeless state.”

“Enough, Ānanda, let it not please you that women should be allowed to do so!” was the Buddha’s reply.

For the second and third time he interceded on their behalf, but the Buddha would not yield.

So Venerable Ānanda made a different approach and respectfully questioned the Buddha: “Are women, Lord, capable of realising the state of a stream-winner (*sotāpanna*), once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*) non-returner (*anāgāmi*) and an arahant, when they have gone forth from home to the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Exalted one?”

The Buddha replied that they were capable of realising saintship.

Encouraged by this favourable reply, Venerable Ānanda appealed again, saying: “If then Lord, they are capable of attaining saintship, since Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī had been of great service to the Exalted One, when as aunt and nurse she nourished him and gave him milk, and on the death of his mother suckled the Exalted One at her own breast, it were well, Lord, that women should be given permission to renounce the world and enter the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Tathāgata.”

“If, Ānanda, Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī accepts the eight chief rules, let that be reckoned by her as the form of her ordination,” said the Buddha, finally yielding to the entreaties of Venerable Ānanda. *The Eight chief rules*¹³⁸ are as follows:

1. A bhikkhunī, even of a hundred years’ standing by *upasampadā*,¹³⁹ should salute a bhikkhu, rise up before him, rev-

138. Some of these rules will not be intelligible to the lay readers as they pertain to Vinaya Discipline.

erence him, and perform all proper duties towards him though he had received the higher ordination that very day.

2. A bhikkhuṇī should not spend a retreat (*vassa*) in a place where there is no bhikkhu.
3. Every fortnight a bhikkhuṇī should ask from the order of bhikkhus the time of *uposatha*¹⁴⁰ meeting and when a bhikkhu would come to admonish them.
4. The *pavāraṇa*¹⁴¹ ceremony after the retreat should be held by a bhikkhuṇī in the presence of both bhikkhus and bhikkhuṇīs (to inquire whether through any of the three ways of seeing, hearing, or suspicion a wrong has been done.)
5. A bhikkhuṇī who has committed a major offence should undergo *mānatta*¹⁴² discipline in the presence of the order of both bhikkhus and bhikkhuṇīs.
6. A female novice (*sikkhamānā*), who is trained in the six rules for two years, should receive the higher ordination from the order of bhikkhus and bhikkhuṇīs.
7. A bhikkhuṇī should on no account rebuke or abuse a bhikkhu.
8. Henceforth bhikkhuṇīs should not give admonition to bhikkhus, but bhikkhus should admonish bhikkhuṇīs.

These rules are to be revered, revered, honoured and respected as long as life lasts and should not be transgressed.

When Venerable Ānanda mentioned them to Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī she gladly agreed to abide by those eight chief rules. By their acceptance she automatically received the higher ordination.

In founding this order of bhikkhuṇīs the Buddha, foreseeing the future repercussions, remarked: "If, Ānanda, women had not received permission to renounce the world and enter the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Tathāgata, the holy life would have lasted long and the Sublime Dhamma would have survived for thousand years. But since women have entered this homeless state, the holy life would not last long and the Sublime Dhamma would now remain only for five hundred years."¹⁴³

139. The higher ordination.

140. The full moon and new moon days when bhikkhus assemble to recite their Fundamental Rules.

141. The formal termination of the rainy season.

142. A form of disciplinary action.

143. See *Gradual Sayings*, iv, p. 184.

The Buddha added, “Just as, Ānanda, houses in which there are women and but few men are easily violated by burglars, even so, under whatsoever doctrine and discipline women are permitted to renounce the world and enter the homeless state, that Holy Life will not last long.

“And just as a man would in anticipation build an embankment to a great reservoir beyond which the water should not overpass, even so have I in anticipation laid down these eight chief rules for the bhikkhūṇīs, not to be transgressed throughout their lives.”¹⁴⁴ In making these comments, which may not generally be very palatable to woman-kind, the Buddha was not in any way making a wholesale condemnation of women but was only reckoning with the weaknesses of their sex.

Although for several valid reasons the Buddha reluctantly permitted women to enter the order, it should be stated that it was the Buddha who, for the first time in the history of the world, founded an order for women with rules and regulations. Just as he appointed two chief disciples, Venerable Sāriputta and Moggallāna for the order of monks, two chief female disciples—Venerable Khemā and Uppalavaṇṇā—were appointed for the order of nuns as well.

One day Bhikkhūṇī Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī approached the Buddha and invited him to deliver a discourse so that she might strive alone and achieve her goal.

The Buddha declared—“Of whatsoever doctrine you will know, Gotamī, that these things conduce to passion and not to peace, to pride and not to veneration, to wishing for much and not to wishing for little, to love of society and not to seclusion, to sloth and not to the exercise of zeal, to being hard to satisfy and not to contentment, verily you may then, Gotamī, bear in mind: that is not Dhamma, that is not Vinaya, that is not the teaching of the Master.

“But of whatsoever doctrine you will know, Gotamī, that these things conduce to peace and not to passion, to veneration and not to pride, to wishing for little and not to wishing for much, to seclusion and not to love of society, to the exercise of zeal and not to sloth, to contentment and not to querulousness, verily you may then bear in mind: that is Dhamma, and that is Vinaya, and that is the teaching of the Master.”¹⁴⁵

Before long she attained arahantship, accompanied by intuitive and analytical knowledge (*paññā*).¹⁴⁶

144. See *Gradual Sayings*, iv, p. 185.

145. Vinaya texts part III, pp. 329–330. See *Gradual Sayings*, iv, pp. 186, 187.

146. Analytical knowledge with regard to the meaning (*attha*), texts (*dhama*) etymology (*nirutti*), and the understanding of these three (*paññā*).

The other Sākya ladies, who received their ordination with her, also attained arahantship.

Amongst the female disciples Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī was assigned the foremost place in seniority and experience (*rattaññū*).

In the Therīgāthā appear several verses uttered by her after attaining arahantship.

