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## AN OVERVIEW OF THE ACCOUNTS OF BUDDHA'S DISCIPLES AND THEIR SUCCESSORS

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Introduction:

Shakyaputra Gautama after attaining *bodhi* came down to the people with a vow how to redress their suffering. The whirling of First Wheel of Truth *dharmacakrapravartana* was done at Sarnath in Koshala in the presence of his five learned colleagues namely Kodanna (Kaundinya), Bhaddiya (Bhadriya/Bhadra), Mahanama, Ashvajit and Vappa (Vaspa). The Vinayapitaka in Pali states that they could attain 'light' within *āloka* by their spiritual merits after hearing the speech of the Buddha.<sup>1</sup>

From the Buddhist literature namely *tripitaka* in Pali and Sanskrit with nine *dharmaparyās* texts of Buddhist religion, it is understood a large number of Buddha's disciples had associated him directly and became hearers *shrāvaka* of what he had pronounced. His articulation had been so significant that it could change the mind directly by listening to him, what he had pronounced. The *dharmacakra pravartana sutta* has described their psycho-spiritual experience of the first five disciples like Kodañña Kaudinya and others in the following lines.

Firstly: Their eyes aroused with knowledge as those had not been everheard before i.e. *cakku* (skt *cakṣu*) *udapādi*

Secondly: There spiritual Knowledge appears internally i.e. *ñānam* (skt *jñāna*) *udapādi*.

Thirdly: Their intuitive knowledge in the world of experience i.e. *pañña* (skt *prajñā*) *udapādi*.

Fourthly: the brilliance was achieved in the objective world of experience to reckon. i.e. *vijja* (skt *vidyā*) *udapādi*.

Lastly: The light of spirituality appeared i.e. *āloka udapādi*. That is regarded in the Buddha's teachings how to be enlighten as express in his famous saying *atta-dipa-bhava*.

Briefly speaking them the scholarship of Kaundinya and other four associate are occasionally met in course of deliberations of the Buddha as the *tripitaka* referred those five members were in touch of other contemporary eminent mendicants like Sanjaya Velatti putta, Purana Kashyapa, Maskari Goshayia, Niggantha Nathaputta, Keshakambali.(N.Datta-3) Those were known as *Agrashrāvakas*, foremost hearers to Buddha. They had been expert meditation practitioners and contemporary of Gautama Buddha before the awakened.

Among the disciples of Buddha like Sari putra, Maudgalyana who had been the disciple of Sanjaya Velatti Putta became the Mahāshrāvaka by their merit. It suggests that his contemporary eminent teachers were non Buddhist. During the life time of Buddha there was a good back ground in mendicancy and scholarship in various the pre-Buddhist systems. Magadha was then an important resident of *yati*(s) mendicants of different order with scholarship.

<sup>1</sup> Mahavagga pali Vinaya Pitaka: Viksu J. Kasyapa; P- 23.

A brief account of Pre-Buddhist Indian education system may be worthwhile to present here apart from the four Vedas, six *vedāṅga* i.e., six organs of the four Vedas developed in the ancient Indian *vaidika* education and these were *sikshā, kalpa, vyākaraṇa, chandas, jyotish* and *nirukta*.

Thus the *vaidika* mantras contributed in the education materials of those peoples. Among them, *brāhmaṇas* in particular, while Gautama Buddha was engaged in course of spreading his teaching many person among his disciple became well versed in Vedic education. Gautama did not leave any restriction to deprive from learning. As a result of that the scholarship since the life time of Buddha was not restricted to any particular group. Whether the above methods had been in vogue among the Magadhans it is difficult to determine.

However Buddhism has elaborately dealt in the *tripitaka* literature about the persons who had been associated them with the Buddha. His disciple either recluse with yellow robes with the vow as prescribed for them or bands of householders of both genders had been involved in the Buddhist education known as *trividyā*.

Among the close associates of Gautama Buddha, Shariputra and Maudgalyayan may be regarded eminent. In this respect many teachers are mentioned in the Tripitaka as the close followers to the Buddha. But all of them might not belong to Magadha though they were associated at Rajagriha (Rajir) on Graddha-Kuta peak along with the Gautama Buddha.

After the demise of Buddha multiple teachers of Magadha contributed their erudition in the growth of the Buddhist *sangha* origination and subsequent spread of the Buddhist thought. Those continued until the decline of Buddhism up to 13<sup>th</sup> century C.E.

According to the Tibetan records since the 8<sup>th</sup> century downwards places like Nalanda etc had been important seats of eruditions. It is to note that several Indian texts had been translated in those *mahāvihāras* in which the Magadhain teachers participated. Among them the following deserve mention.

At Vikramshila, Bhadanta Ratnakirti composed *Samagñlaguṇashālīni* and a commentary of the text had composed by Samantra Bhadrā with another *siddha* teacher of the *tantra* Viravajra. Viravajra was a *vajrayāna* teacher of the Magadha that shows the eminent of the Magadha erudite in *vajrayajna* practice from the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Harshavardhana of Kanauja had then administered the Eastern Magadha with Vaskara Varma of Pragjyotisa at present day Asham.

About Ratnakirti and Viravajra the Tibetan records are clear Ratnakirti is however an eminent teacher belonging to the Bengal, but flourished in Magadha.

Vikramshila was a seat of *herukatantra* practice. Chandra Kumar of Magadha was the author of the text *Shri Heruka Byuha a mahayogini tantraraja katipaya ksara pranjika*. It was translated by Tathagata Rakshita who had worked in Vikramashila monastery by the eleven century A.D. He belongs to the *kāyastha* family of Odivisi, present day Odishi while he flourished in Magadh. In this way several schools had been attached with Nalanda, Odantapuri etc.

Again from Nalanda, Abhayakara Gupta of Magadha composed *ammayamañjuri* a commentary of *Shrisamputa-Tantra-Rāja*. Buddha Kirti of Magadha translated this along with Sakya shri of Kashmir and the Tibetan scholar Chos Kyi Bzange (Dharma Bhadrā). The text was again revised in the line of Bhadanta Sthiramati By Siddha Shri Bhadrā with the assistance of Rin chen bzan po subsequently in the Western Himalayan area mostly named Vajra Dhvaja of Shong ston.

The above shows that the Nalanda teachers had been in contact of the Tibetan erudite in Buddhism since Shantirakshita had succeeded to establish the skill of *lo ca ba*'s translation culture in Tibet by ninth century down words.

About hundred years after the demise the Buddha, the *vinaya* rules as led down by Upāli in the first council had not been acceptable to the western *Shrāvakas* who had occasion also listen to the Buddha in person. There by some difference approaches among the Buddhist listener (*shrāvaka*) between the East and West *shrāvaks*.

In this regard N. Dutta refers to several groups of house holder Buddhists in those days as the *kalyāna-mitra*. Those were as follows.

- *Śaikṣas*: under training.
- *Aśaikṣas*: completed training, who has become *arhats*.
- *Traividya*s: possessing the three kinds of knowledge and which are *dukṣa*, *anitta* and *anātmā* (suffering, non-eternal and non-self).
- *Saḍhajñas*: Six higher Knowledge or power *divyacakṣu*, *divyaśrotra*, *paracittajñāna*, *purvenivasānusmṛiti*, *ṛddhi* and *cittaparyāya-jñāna*.
- *Balaprāpta*: acquire vigor.
- *Vaśibhutas*: controlling upon our five *skandhas* *egagreate*

*Shrāvakas* as a teacher:

A teacher is a person who provides educations for the learner. The word Teacher refers to a master who could enlighten a sleeping mind of a person. According to Buddhism a person used in a veil due to his or her latent bowness of ones mind. So here the word teacher is used a *guru* in a broad sense. The role of teacher is often formal and ongoing carried out a *āshram* or *guru graha* in the ancient education system of India. Later on 'biḥār' the residential place of the Buddhist monks and became a seat of learning. Two kinds of teachers had been referred and these are as follows.

One: The subject teacher is *upādhyāya*, in pali it is called *upājjāya* in the line of Vedic *āshramāyik* education.

Two: The conduct teacher is *ācharya* in pali it is called *ācāriya*.

*Ācarya* had been engaged to look after both disciplinary conduct and progress of learning in various subject matters, like logic, grammar, arts, crafts, health management and philosophy with religion.

Above division of teachers in the Buddhist *saṃgha* was after the introducing of Buddhist *mahā-vihāras* a series of *agrashrāvaka* and *mahāshrāvaka* are mentioned in the Buddhist Sanskrit and Pali literature as well as. They had been usually called *shrāvaka* in different categories such as *shrāvaka*, *agrashrāvaka* and *mahāshrāvaka*.

The word *shrāvaka* literally means those who had heard what Buddha had said in their association, in other words hearer *shrāvaka* claimed their special identity like the subsequent *upadhyaya* and *acariya* of a *mahāvihāra*. In the Buddhist literature in Pali and Sanskrit the *shravakas* are again distributed in three groups and these are *shrāvaka* in general, *agrashrāvaka* the leading hearer and *mahashrāvaka* the great hearer. They used to response to communicate the teaching of Buddha by their proper conduct *samyakshila* along with their through observance of the eight fold path prescribed by Buddha i.e. *aṣṭāṅgikamārga* in pali *aṭṭhāṅkamagga*.

Here *agra* means advance, referring to a hearer who could grass the teaching of the Buddha by his surf intellect then the other hearers i.e. *agrashrāvaka*. Again great hearer *mahāshrāvaka* is regarded to be advanced in the teaching of Buddha in application like four fold *brahma-vihāra*, thirty seven *bodhi-pakṣiya* etc. So a *mahāshrāvaka* therefore became capable to enter into the fourfold advancement to become an *arhat*. Those are *shrotāpattimārga* in pali *shroṭapattimagga* and *shrotāpattiphala* in pali *shroṭapattiphala* to be in the stream of the awaking Buddha and achieve the fruit of it. Again *sakrata-gāmimārga* and *sakrata-gāmiphala* in pali *sakadā-gāmimagga* and *sakadagamiphala* are in course of being born ones more and to achieve the fruit of it. Three *anāgāmi mārga* and *anāgāmi phala* in pali *anāgāmi magga* and *anagami phala*.to be in the course leading to the path are not being born in future and its result. Four *arhat mārga* and *arhat phala* in pali *arhat magga* and *arhat phala*. To be in the course of becoming the revered one and to achieve the fruit by become a revered.

Buddha's eminent disciples:

Ajñāta Kauṇḍinya:

Kauṇḍinya (Kondañña) is one of the epithet ancient Buddha's disciple among the *pañca-vagga bhikṣu*, first five disciple of Buddha. There by Kauṇḍinya was a famous family name during the life time of Buddha. Ajñāta Kauṇḍinya (Kondañña) was an eminent teacher and disciple of Buddha. He had been presented in the whirled the first wheel of the truth (*dharma cakṛa pravartana*) at Sarnath. According to the tradition he was probably senior to Buddha despite that he respected Buddha as a master, who delivered his *saddharma* the good way of life. By his time Magadha was not established with good moral conduct. According to the tradition Magadha was a land of *kikata* who had not been develop in culture treads. Ajñāta Kauṇḍinya was engaged in mendicant life at Urubimba present day Baudh-Gaya on the bank of river Anima. Ajñāta Kauṇḍinya therefore prefers to be the disciple of Buddha. He was born at Kapilavastu though he spent his life as mendicant in Magadha. Vāspa:

Vāspa

(Vappa) was also born in a Brahman family in the life time of the Gautama Buddha at Kapalavastu. He was senior to Buddha, but he was happy to meet young Siddhartha while he was in penance at Bodhgaya. According the tradition he was compassionate to take food from Sujata a milk-maid women. That was made him worried and left for Ṛṣipattana at Sarnath for penance. He was however pleased to undergo the teaching of Buddha while he whirled the first wheel of the truth (*dharma cakṛa prabartana*) at Sarnath.

By dint of his merit he was capable to be elevated to be Reared (arhart) achieve the fruit of under going to stream of perfection i.e. *srotāpanna-phala* and later on became a ravair *arhart* one. He was poetic inspire and composed *gāthā* verses. Note: *passati passo passantam, apassantañca passati I apassanto apassantam, passantañca na passati ti II* Vappo Thero-1

Mahanama:

Mahanama was born in Brahman family in the life time of the Gautama Buddha. He was also a participant with Ajñāta Kauṇḍinya and Vaspa at Urubimba at Boadhgaya. At that time Gautama Siddhartha underwent his experiment in penance hood. Later on he left to Sarnath Ṛṣipattana. He was also one of the participants of *dharma cakṛa pravartanasūtra* by the Gautama Buddha among the five *pañca vagga vikṣu*. He achieved *arhat* hood and has been regarded as *agrashrāvaka*.

Shariputra:

Shariputra was born in a village adjunct to the present day Nalanda. He was Brahmin by birth *mrigasarvāsti vādi vinaya* refers to an account of erudition of his mother Sarika. Sarika with reference to a learnt Brahman named Mathara from South India. The story goes that Sarika could defeat the learnt Brahman. Accordingly Sarika married the Brahman. Thereby Sariputra was born with excellence of mental discipline.

Sariputra was a disciple of *agradāna* mendicant of the jain tradition. In his young age he had an accession to meet Ashvajit who was one of the intimates of the group of the five. In due course he became the disciple of the Buddha and by dint of his excellence he became *mahāśravaka*. He was a close associate of the Gautama Buddha and intellectual associate with devote vows.

Sariputra as a monistic associate was always with the Buddha in discourse and in implementation of what the Gautama Buddha directed to apply. In this respect Maudgalyan a Brahmin of the *mudagala* family was equally an associate of Buddha. Eventually Sariputra's contribution was in the spread of Buddha.

In the Buddhist mediation Sariputra propounded the doctrine of impermanent of the *pudagala* an animate body made of five aggregates *pañchaskandha*. Also he elaborated that each aggregate like form, sensation, consciences, cognition and predetoration are also changeable and unsubstance. In Buddhist Sanskrit literature, that known as *dharmnairātma*. In this respect the Buddhist dialogs in *Majjhimi-nikāya* and *palli-sutta-pitakaand* some instance reference in the *Samyukta nikāya* are importance to be noted.

Maudgalyan:

As already referred Maudgalyan entered in the Buddhist *saṅgha* as an associate of Sariputra mendicant. Maudgalyan was a learned Brahman of the *mudgalagotra* of the Vedic decant. He is said to be an expert in *ṛiddhi* practice. There by he could associate Buddha not only in the doctrinal spread but also in the existence of Buddha origination among various section of the Magadha. Therefore in the Buddhist art trio of the Gautama Buddha with two *mahāshrāvakas* namely Sariputra and Maudgalyan may be regarded significant. The *Majjhiminikāya* occasionally refers to Maudgalyan while Buddha had been challenged by the *paribrājaka* and Jatila mendicants.

Mahakashyapa:

Mahakashyapa was born in a village Mahatirtha Brahmana in Magadha during the life time of the Gautama Buddha. His wife was Bhadrakapilani in the Shagala city of Maddha kingdom. He became sick of family life. The Siddhartha Gautama met Mahakashyapa under a nigradha tree between Rajagrha and Nalanda. The Gautama Buddha was happy with his intelligence and ordinate him. His life account has been published by the Buddhist Mission in Rengouon under the title Mahakashyapa Carita.

Mahakashyapa played an important role after the demise of the Buddha who left no heir-apparent. Mahakashyapa took the leadership to organise the First Buddhist Council at Rajagraha. He had been initiated *upasampada* there as stated above in appreciation of the endeavours by Mahakashyapa. It may be remarked that Mahakashyapa had actually laid function of Buddhist organization. He promulgated in preserving the Buddhist teaching in three dimensions namely *Vinaya-pitaka*, *Sutra-pitaka* and *Abhidharma-pitaka* in practice.

Ananda:

Ananda belong to *shakya* family of Kapilābvastu but he spent a major time in Magadha and also Saketa, Kaushala, Vatsya and other places as the associated of the Gautama Buddha. Several sutras in *majjhiminikāya* are referring to him. In course of journey he attended with the Gautama Buddha. Later on he had to be administrator of the Buddhist organization after the Buddha's demise. Buddha had been pleased to accept the service of Ananda as and when Anand had come in led down with certain terms to be a close attendant *siddhi vihārika*. He could meet Buddha at any time and could receive a quest of Buddha a the Buddha's desire. He used to move with Buddha while Buddha used to go out. He was also attained Buddha out of his chambers.

As a result of that he failed to cheque his tear when Buddha under went his demise. He was entrusted to recite *sutra-pitaka* in the first council organised by Mahakashyapa. It is interesting to note that all the sutras of the Buddhas as led down in the *sutra-pitaka* are introduced by Ananda this I heard “*evam mayā śrutam.*” That holds the authenticity of the Buddha saying on one hand and the humbleness of Ananda how to withdraw his ego identity being the speaker. Neither Upali nor Mahakashyapa used such humbleness to glorify the Buddha.

Upāli:

Upāli was an important personality who had been so expert in monastic rules that he was selected for reciting the *Vinaya-pitaka* in the first council of Rajagraha. He was born in a Brahman family of Magadha. The Gautama Buddha was in Anupriya mango grove.<sup>2</sup> It was located in the Malla ariea in between Kapilavastu and Magadha. In course of time Anand, Mahakashyapa along with Upali mate the Gautama Buddha. He pleased to see and initiated them in his doctrine.

Upāli was more serious among the group. He prised to Buddha about the measure of spirituality. Gautama Buddha was pleased with Upāli. He wanted to be a first dweller in such search of spiritual tranquility but Buddha advised him to be *vihār-vāsina*. Buddha advised him to be in the monastery complex in order to be acquainted with the monistice discipline as well as the practice of inward look pondering *bidarśanabhāvanā* in pali.

<sup>2</sup>. Pali Dictionary:edited by Bela Bhattacharya, Calcutta. Page-33

By dint of the Buddha's foresight Upāli became an *arhat* to delineate the monastic code of the *Vinaya-pitaka* on the occasion of the first council in Rājagraha. In that respect Upāli's contribution in the growth of Buddhist *saṅgha* is commendable.

As and when one goes through the *Vinaya-pitaka* in Pali belonging to the Theravada of Buddhist monastic regulations he seems that the modeling of the initiating are excellent. In this regard Durga Bhagawat has rightly remarked that the *vinaya* rules preserved the outline of Buddhist jurisprudence. In fact the *Vinaya-pitaka* recited by Upali may be regarded as the constitution of the Theravada lineage of the Buddhist religion. Academicians consider that one volume in this collection of the monastic rules must have been constituted during the life time of Buddha. From that time the Buddhist lineage *saṃghakāya* had been formed after one hundred years from the demise of the founder of the *samgha*.

Upasenā:

Upasana was born of a *brahmani* mother of Nalaka village a rebelled disciple of Buddha. Since he had been from a Brahman tradition he learned three Vedas. Despite this he preferred to accept Buddha's teaching with *upasampadā* as a monistic member. A few years past on, he thought he would please the Buddha if he could be made a disciple of the Buddha. The Gautama Buddha did so. He went to Buddha in order to please him with his disciple.

He advised him that unless and until you became capable to extend your wisdom thoroughly you must not allow making a disciple. It requires to the spiritual capability to extend spirituality to others. The poor fellow was disappointed. But he had a strong determination about how to please the master.

He devotedly practiced *dhūtāṅga* for a long time. There after he went to the Buddha and archived *arhatva*. He ought *dhūtāṅga* to others. The Gautama Buddha was pleased to him for this.

Devadatta:

In Pali resources, Devadatta was a cousin brother of Sakyaputra Gautama. He could not always appreciate the Buddha's leadership while he had been organizing his *samgha* with an emphasis on specific monistic discipline. During that time several monastic organized of the *Jatila* with matted hair members.

## Buddhist teachers after Buddha's lineage:

According to the Buddhist tradition India is more particular in preservation with them in series. It might be due to more awareness for teacher taught relation chronologically (*guru- shisya paramparā*). In that respect the *Upanisadik* model in preservation of educational columns appears not regular. There by the Buddhist educational tradition may be traceable with respect to separate monastic.

### Vinaya Ksudraka Srotra

1. Dhitaka
2. Bivaka
3. Buddhananda
4. Buddhamitra
5. Parshva
6. Sunasata
7. Ashvaghosa
8. Amirata
9. Nagarjuna
10. Arjadev
11. Rahula

### Theravadi Parampara

1. Mahakashyap
2. Ananda
3. Sanavasika
4. Upagupta
5. Dhitaka
6. Krasna
7. Sudrasena

12. Samghananda
13. Bhiksu Arhat
14. Thalasa
15. Kumarad
16. Shayanta
17. Vasubandhu
18. Manoda
19. Haklenayashasa
20. Bhiksu Simgha

Prior to the decline of Buddhism in Bihar flourished important monasteries like Nalanda, Vikramshila etc widely. There by some lineage of the eminent Buddhist teachers belonging to the separate monasteries. Among the Vikramshila monasteries' twenty six teachers deserve mention as follows.

1. Buddhajñāna-pāda 2. Laṃkājaya-bhadra 3. Shṛīdhara 4. Bhava-bhadra 5. Nīla Vajra 6. Durjaya-bhadra 7. Bhavya-kīrti 8. Kṛaṣṇasamara-vajra 9. Tathāgata Rakṣita 10. Bodhi-bhadra 11. Kamala Rakṣita 12. Ratnākara Shanti 13. Bāgishvar- kīrti 14. Nāḍa-pāda 15. Prabhākara-mati 16. Ratna Vajra 17. Jñānashri Mitra 18. Dipaṃkara Shrijñāna 19. Mahāvajrasana 20. Kamalakushila 21. Narendra Shrijñāna 22. Dānarakṣita 23. Abhayākara Gupta 24. Shubhākara Gupta 25. Sunāyakashri 26. Shākyashri.

Among them the tradition of *darapalapandit* developed. The Vikramshila monasteries had six doors and four are main doors and two are minor. It may be added that the Buddhist architecture flourished in *mandala* design. It is difficult to hold that weather the Buddhist architecture design since the olden days had promoted the tantric *mandala* concept with particular in necessity. The six *dāra-pāla* the following names are traceable in the late Pala period.

- North Door Ācārja Narda Pāda.
- South Door Ācārja Prajñākaramati.
- East Door Ācārja Ratnakara Shanti.
- West Door Ācārja Bāgishavar kīrti.
- First Middle Door Ācārja Ratna Vajra.
- Second Middle Door Ācārja Jñānashri Mitra.

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