

## DO MONKS NEED A LEADER OR LEADERSHIP? A STUDY BASED ON THERAVADA BUDDHIST ORDER

Dr. Ven. Kanumuldeniye Chandasoma<sup>1</sup>

Ven. Kirimetiya Dhammasiri<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

As far as concerning the religious institutions in the world, all most all religious institutions are maintained under the power of leader or leadership. Fortunately or unfortunately Theravada Buddhist institution has not appointed a leader or leadership from the time of Buddha. At the time of Buddha, leader or leadership was not much important due to the fact that Buddha was the instructor and guide.

The interesting point according to *Mahāparinibbāna sutta* is "If, Ānanda, it occurs to you; the doctrine is such that it is rendered teacherless; we are without a teacher, you should not consider it so. Ānanda, whatever the doctrine I have taught and the discipline I have instituted, that will be your teacher after my death". The above quotation is reported as to be some of last words of Buddha. Anyhow, at this stage Buddha has promulgated many *Vinaya* rules. On the other hand, Buddha was very much aware of his disciples' mentality and their behavior. Although the situation was this he did not appoint any leader or leadership. Now the question is that why Buddha did not appoint a leader? Is it possible to maintain monks' community only through *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*?

Moreover, during the Buddha's time, two incidents were reported about the misinterpretations of his teachings by Ariṭṭha and Sāti. At this, Buddha himself took steps to eradicate misinterpretations. These two examples are very much important to forecast what will really be happened in future. Having known this type of failures by the Buddha, he did not appoint a leader at least to maintain and protect his exact words. Why did not Buddha

---

<sup>1</sup> Senior Lecturer, Department of Languages, Bhiksu University of Sri Lanka, Anuradhapura

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer, Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya

appoint such a post? Did not he consider about the future of Buddhism or not?

Furthermore, a set of three *Sutta: Pāsādika sutta, Sangīti sutta* and *Sāmagāma sutta* refer to the demise of Jaina leader *Niganṭha Nātaputta* and after his death conflicts arose in the Jaina Order. This is the best example to reflect upon the future of Buddhist Order. Keeping away the appointment of leader for maintaining the Buddhist Order, the Buddha once advised to *Cunda* thus: rehearse all of you together on those doctrines and not to quarrel over them, but compare the meaning with meaning,...this was the ultimate clarification of Buddha about the future of his teaching and dispensation.

### Methods

The methodology of research depends on literary survey and its main content is taken from *Pali* Discourses.

### Discussion

When we compare Theravada Buddhist tradition with *Vajrayāna* and *Mahāyāna* religious institutions Theravadiyan institution was very much reluctant to fail and their organizational ability was uncompounded. For example, although there are three heads of *Sangha Nāyakas* or *Mahānāyakas* in Sri Lanka, majority of monks are reluctant to consider and regard those monks' Heads as their representatives or leaders. From historical point of view, Theravada monks do not depend on leader or leadership.

The tragedy behind this, can anyone do or act upon what way he likes? The research is with the idea that in order to sustain the Theravada Order there must be a leader or leadership. Otherwise is they do not have visible leadership, monks will surely fail to emerge as a firm and stable community under the unavoidable adverse circumstances of multi-religious world.

### Result

The researchers are with the view that it is extremely important to appoint a proper leadership or leader in order to survive future of Theravada Buddhist

Order. If it is fail to look for a leadership, the future of Theravada Buddhist tradition will not enough to face the pyrrhic power that comes from other religious institutions.

**Keywords:** Buddha, monks, discourse, leadership, Theravāda

### References

*Dīghanikāya*.(1890-1991) (ed). T.W. Rhys Davids and J.E. Carpenter, 3 vols., London,; tr. T. W. and C.A.F. Rhys Davids, (1956-1959) *Dialogues of the Buddha*. 3 parts. PTS: London.

*Majjhimanikāya*, (1948-1951) (ed) V.Trenckner and R.Chalmers, 3 vols. PTS: London; tr. I. B. Horner, (1954-1959) *Middle Length Sayings*, 3 vols. PTS: London.

*Majjhimanikāya Aṭṭhakathā (Papañcasūdanī)*, ed. J.H.Woods, D.Kosambi and I.B.Horner, 5 vols., 1976-1987

David j. Kalupahana. (1976) *Buddhist Philosophy*. A Historical Analysis, The University of Hawaii.

Rahula, Walpola. (1972) *What the Buddha Taught*. The Gordon Fraser Gallery Ltd.