Acchariya,abbhuta Sutta 3
The Third Discourse on the Wonderful and Marvellous  |  A 4.129
Ānanda Acchariya Sutta The Ānanda Discourse on the Wonderful
Theme: Ānanda’s 4 charismatic qualities
Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2018

1 Overview

1.1 The Acchariya,abbhuta Sutta 3 (A 4.129) is the 3rd of a series of 4 suttas in the Bhava Vagga (the chapter on existence) in the Book of Threes (Tika Nipāta) of the Aṅguttara Nikāya. The 4 suttas are as follows:¹

| Acchariya,abbhuta Sutta 1 | A 4.127/2:130 f | SD 52.2a | the Buddha’s 4 key life-events and radiance |
| Acchariya,abbhuta Sutta 2 | A 4.128/2:131 f | SD 52.2b | attachment, conceit, non-stillness, ignorance |
| Acchariya,abbhuta Sutta 3 | A 4.129/2:132 | SD 52.2c | Ānanda’s fourfold charisma |
| Acchariya,abbhuta Sutta 4 | A 4.130/2:133 | SD 52.2d | Ānanda’s charisma is like that of a world-monarch |

1.2 The Acchariya,abbhuta Sutta 3 is also called the Ānanda Acchariya Sutta, the Ānanda Discourse on the Wonderful, that is, it deals with Ānanda’s 4 charismatic qualities. This text is probably the source for the same passage in the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta (D 16).²

1.3 The Acchariya,abbhuta Sutta 3 is clearly an abridged version of the longer Acchariya,abbhuta Sutta 4 (SD 52.2d)—also called the Cakka,vatti Acchariya Sutta, the Wheel-turner Discourse on the Wonderful, where the whole of the former sutta appears as its closing half. Actually, the latter deals with the same topics—Ānanda’s 4 charismatic qualities [§§7-11]—but prefaces it by comparing him to a wheel-turning world monarch with similar qualities [§§1-6]. Hence, Acchariya,abbhuta Sutta 4 is the full version of the former.

1.4 It is highly probable that it is in this connection (A 1:25) that Ānanda is declared the foremost of the monks who are gatimantānaṁ. Based on this Sutta, we can translate gatimanta or gatimā as “one who knows the course of things,” that is, perspicacious in protocol (cf AA 1:287). On account of this, he is articulate and popular with the masses. The Commentaries, however, generally gloss gatima as “possessed of understanding,” thus, Ānanda is “accomplished in peerless understanding” (gatimantoṭi asadisāya ānāna, gatiyā samannāgato, ThaA 3:121,9); or, according to the Vinaya Commentary, he is “wise, meaning with wisdom, accomplished in understanding,” paṇḍitāṭi paṇḍiccena samannāgatā gatimātā (VA 552,24).³

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¹ See SD 52.2 (4.1).
² D 16,5,16/2:145 f (SD 9).
³ See DP sv.
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1 Bhikshus, there are these 4 wonderful and marvellous qualities about Ānanda. What are the four?

(1) The assembly of monks

1 If an assembly of monks comes to see Ānanda, and if Ānanda then talks on the Dharma to that assembly of monks, but when Ānanda is silent, they are pleased at the sight of him; they are pleased with the talk; they are disappointed.

(2) The assembly of nuns

3 If an assembly of nuns comes to see Ānanda, and if Ānanda then talks on the Dharma to that assembly of nuns, but when Ānanda is silent, they are pleased at the sight of him; they are pleased with the talk; they are disappointed.

(3) The assembly of men lay-followers

2 If an assembly of men lay-followers comes to see Ānanda, and if Ānanda then talks on the Dharma to that assembly of men lay-followers, but when Ānanda is silent, they are pleased at the sight of him; they are pleased with the talk; they are disappointed.

(4) The assembly of women lay-followers

3 If an assembly of women lay-followers comes to see Ānanda, and if Ānanda then talks on the Dharma to an assembly of women lay-followers, but when Ānanda is silent, they are pleased at the sight of him; they are pleased with the talk; they are disappointed.

4 These, bhikshus, are these 4 wonderful and marvellous qualities about Ānanda.

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4 Sace bhikkhave bhikkhu, parisā ānandam dassanāya upasankamati dassanena sā attamanā hoti.
5 Tattha ce ānando dhammaṁ bhāṣati bhāṣitenā pi sā attamanā hoti.
6 Atittā va bhikkhave bhikkhu, parisā hoti atha ānanda tūṁ hi bhavati.