Thag 17.3 — Ananda Thera: Ananda Alone

English translation by Andrew Olendzki.

Source: https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/thag/thag.17.03.olen.html

Source revision: sha256:7c411108530c04aafcca0ac43267ed12227cbb2653320e8ae0bb686e566bb783

License: Free redistribution with attribution and complete notice — https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/thag/thag.17.03.olen.html#F_termsOfUse

License URL: https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/thag/thag.17.03.olen.html#F_termsOfUse

Copyright: ©2005 Andrew Olendzki.

License notice: You may copy, reformat, reprint, republish, and redistribute this work in any medium whatsoever, provided that: (1) you only make such copies, etc. available free of charge; (2) you clearly indicate that any derivatives of this work (including translations) are derived from this source document; and (3) you include the full text of this license in any copies or derivatives of this work. Otherwise, all rights reserved. Documents linked from this page may be subject to other restrictions.

Attribution: ©2005 Andrew Olendzki. You may copy, reformat, reprint, republish, and redistribute this work in any medium whatsoever, provided that: (1) you only make such copies, etc. available free of charge; (2) you clearly indicate that any derivatives of this work (including translations) are derived from this source document; and (3) you include the full text of this license in any copies or derivatives of this work. Otherwise, all rights reserved. Documents linked from this page may be subject to other restrictions. Transcribed from a file provided by the translator. Last revised for Access to Insight on 2 November 2013. How to cite this document (a suggested style): "Ananda Thera: Ananda Alone" (Thag 17.3), translated from the Pali by Andrew Olendzki. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 2 November 2013, https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/thag/thag.17.03.olen.html .

Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: PARTIAL. Complete source excerpt preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure; source omits part of the canonical discourse.

Text

Translator's note

These mournful words were uttered by Ananda in the Theragatha, the Poems of the Elders, and reveal a very human side of one of the canon's most sensitive characters.

Ananda was the Buddha's cousin and personal attendant, and was always to be found at the master's side throughout the many years of wandering and teaching. As Ananda put it: "For twenty five years I served the Lord with loving deeds, loving words and loving thoughts — when the Buddha paced to and fro, I paced along behind." (Thag 1041-44)

It is Ananda who washed his feet at the end of the day, who arranged his interviews and protected his solitude as best he could, and who tended him lovingly during his final illness. It is Ananda also who we find weeping bitterly at the passing away of the Buddha, and being gently admonished for it by the teacher of non-attachment to changing phenomena (D16:5.14).

After the Buddha's final passing Ananda seems to have been treated somewhat badly by some of the other monks, who were jealous of his close relationship with the master. Poems like this one suggest that Ananda passed a lonely old age and never ceased mourning for his beloved teacher and friend.

1034. All the directions are obscure, The teachings are not clear to me; With our benevolent friend gone, It seems as if all is darkness. 1035. For one whose friend has passed away, One whose teacher is gone for good, There is no friend that can compare With mindfulness of the body. 1036. The old ones have all passed away; I do not fit in with the new. And so today I muse alone Like a bird who has gone to roost.