



***CANONS IN THE COMMENTARY:
AN INVESTIGATION ON A DISCOURSE APPEARS IN THE
AṄGUTTARANIKĀYA AṬṬHAKATHĀ***

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As in many religions, the term ‘canon’ here refers to tipīṭaka, which is the primary source of the Theravada Buddhism, preserved in Pāli language while the term ‘commentary’ stands for aṭṭhakathās, the works belong to the exegetical or hermeneutical literature that are composed in the same Indic language for the canon.

The aim of this paper is to examine nature, historicity and substantiality of three Pāli verses occur in Manotathapūraṇī [I 93], the commentary of Aṅguttara-nikāya, which is the fourth text of the ‘discourses of collection’ (sutta-pīṭaka) in the canon. As this commentary clearly remarks this is a complete discourse (*sutta*) even though it is concise. The conciseness is not, in any way, conducive to diminish a doctrinal or historical importance of a discourse since we possess constant references for number of smaller discourses of those contents limited only with for two verses and some time for a single verse.

However, arguably, this *sutta*, which emphasizes the indispensable efficacy of the canonical scriptures for the persistence of the Buddhism and attainability for the spiritual states such as complete emancipation, cannot be found in anywhere in the canon. Furthermore, no correspondent or parallel discourse is traceable in the canon that we currently possess. When considering the exactness of painstaking dedication, as illustrated in the commentaries and Pāli chronicles, done by the Sri Lankan Pali oral tradition in order to preserve the sacred teachings of the canon, it is hard to believe on a careless exclusion of this type of discourse from the Tipīṭaka, which is of worth significance to realize the mutual combination between canonical texts and the spiritual progress. On the other hand, the form of the phraseology of these three verses leads us to believe that it is a later composition of the commentator. The uncertainty of this *sutta* is reinforced since, as the commentary of Aṅguttara-nikāya records, it is presented by the members of dhamma-preachers in a doctrinal controversy to convince the inevitability of the scriptures to attain to the emancipation rather than fulfilling a virtuous conduct. Therefore, one may tend to believe this as an apocryphal discourse or an improvisation.

Although Buddhist scholarship has paid attention to these verses, no careful scrutiny is available, which scrupulously evaluate the nature of them. Thus, this study is intended to fill that deficiency.

Keywords: *canon, commentary, phraseology, Mahāvihāra, commentator*