

ĀNANDA'S HINDRANCE: FAITH (*SADDHĀ*)
IN EARLY BUDDHISM

Toward the end of the *Cullavagga* there is an account describing preparations for the so-called First Buddhist Council held during the rains in Rājagaha shortly after the Buddha's death.¹ At the suggestion of some of the monks, Mahākassapa invited Ānanda to be the five hundredth monk because, though still a learner (*sekha*), he had mastered much of the teaching and discipline while attending the Buddha. In this account, "although Ānanda is accepted as a council member in spite of the fact that he is not yet an arahant, when he comes to actually participate in the council, his arahant hood has been acquired."² Ānanda, it seems, felt it was not suitable for someone who was still only a learner to attend and, in the interval before his head touched the mattress and while his feet were still off the ground, achieved freedom from the taints and attachments which bound him to rebirth. Ānanda's newly acquired arahant hood "did not appear to have commanded much respect,"³ however, for he was questioned in detail at the council about his many previous offenses.⁴ Horner notes that such confession of pre-liberation offenses by an *arahant* was almost unheard of, and that the "episode . . . not only puts the accusing elders in a very dubious light, [but] it also indicates that [Ānanda's] offences of wrong-doing could . . . [have been] invented after Gotama's death."⁵

It has been suggested that the uneven characterization of Ānanda in the *Cullavagga* account is the result of conflicting tendencies during the compilation of the Canon: while each school felt free to render Ānanda in light of its own particular concerns, it also had to acknowledge a relatively stable tradition about Ānanda which had been handed down orally since the time of the Buddha.⁶ Within this process, it is argued, the stories of the rebuking of Ānanda reflect sectarian infighting about the relative importance of *dhamma* (for *bahuśrutas*, salvation derived from what had been heard) and the *vinaya* (for *śīladharas*, it derived from the observance of prohibitions),⁷ an infighting which is expressed narratively in Mahākassapa's

treatment of Ānanda. The Sarvāstivādins, for example, depict a Mahākassapa who is relatively open to Ānanda, while schools like the Mahīśāsakas and the Mahāsāṅghikas portray a Mahākassapa who is hostile to Ānanda.⁸ In particular, suggests Przymuski, since the *vinaya*-centered Theravāda tradition tended to emphasize disciplinary over doctrinal aspects of the Buddha's teaching, the censorship of Ānanda in the *Cullavagga* for forgetting to ask the Buddha about the lesser and minor rules reflects the Theravāda settling of the *dhamma/vinaya* debate in favor of Mahākassapa, whose name is traditionally linked with issues of behavior and morality.⁹ As Freedman notes, "Ānanda fails to pass the knowledge test [in this text] because it is to the benefit of the authors and/or compilers of the school(s) which they represent to have Ānanda fail."¹⁰ Moreover, Przymuski's hypothesis that the *gāthā* portions of the First Council accounts may be earlier than the prose materials around them would confirm the Ānanda rebukings as sectarian interpolation, for the

gāthās go back to an epoch during which the detractors of Ānanda had not yet set up against him the bill of indictment, which reappears in different forms in all the subsequent accounts of the Council.¹¹

Our concern here, however, is not primarily in the historical layering of the tradition which *Cullavagga* rebukings may reflect, but in the dhammic implications of the rebukings for Ānanda, and in particular in what they may imply about the religious attributes of his character as cast in some of the Pāli narratives. Likewise, our concern here is not with the overall quality of Ānanda's mind which, following Nāgārjuna, may have been great in wisdom (*paññā*; i.e., Ānanda as *bhussuta*) but weak in concentration of thought (*cittasamgraha*).¹² That Ānanda may have had trouble mastering *samādhi* is very important ultimately, to be sure, and it may well be that this general defect includes within it the various issues of *saddhā* addressed here.

At present, however, we confine our discussion to the stories in which Ānanda regularly suffers rebuke for missed opportunities, inappropriate desires, and lack of perception in the *Cullavagga* as well as in that most fertile collection of rebukes, the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*.¹³ Here, three famous rebuking stories belong to the events of the Buddha's last days and death: Ānanda's failure (at the right time)

to ask the Buddha to live out his appointed *kappa*, Ānanda's weeping at the doorpost of the *vihāra*, and the nature of Ānanda's understanding of the questioning and silence of the monks. Using these narratives, we will examine Ānanda's hindrance¹⁴ to spiritual progress in the light of current understandings of *saddhā* in early Buddhism.

I. THE REBUKING OF ĀNANDA

The *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* opens with a Buddha who is old and close to death. In the first story, he hints to Ānanda that, if asked, he could use his *iddhi* to remain for the duration of his appointed time.¹⁵ Incapable of comprehending, Ānanda does not ask, nor does he ask at the next two of the Buddha's hints.¹⁶ Some time later, after the most recent visit of Māra, Ānanda realizes that the death of the Buddha is close at hand, and beseeches him urgently to remain for the *kappa*.¹⁷ The Buddha tells him that it is now too late to ask, and when Ānanda begs two more times, two more times the Buddha refuses. On the third occasion the Buddha asks Ānanda if he has faith (*saddahasi*) in the wisdom of the Tathāgata, and Ānanda answers that he does indeed. The Buddha then rebukes Ānanda for two things: first, for having to ask the Buddha more than once when the Buddha has already said that it is too late, and, second, for not beseeching the Buddha to stay all those earlier times he hinted, for which he is now at fault (*dukkata*) and for which he has now committed an offense (*aparāddha*). The Buddha then proceeds to enumerate each occasion in detail and to cite on each occasion Ānanda's fault and offense in not taking the hint. Had Ānanda asked at any of those earlier times, the Buddha says, he would have refused the first two requests but would have granted the third. This rebuke of Ānanda, then, focuses on three issues: first, Ānanda's inability to comprehend or to understand the Buddha's initial suggestions about the use of *iddhi*; second, Ānanda's then not asking the Buddha to stay the *kappa*; and, finally, Ānanda's not having faith enough in the Buddha's initial refusal to stop asking then and there.¹⁸ The second of these faults carries with it Ānanda's lack of trust both in the implications of the Buddha's own words and in the strength of the Buddha's own *iddhi*.

In the next *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* incident, Ānanda is found by a

monk of the community leaning against a doorway into the *vihāra* and weeping at the thought of the Buddha's impending death. Ānanda, apparently, is worried that he is still a learner (*sekha*) who has yet to work out his own perfection (*parinibbāna*), and now faces the prospect of doing so without the Buddha. Brought before the Buddha, Ānanda is told not to weep or to be further troubled, and is encouraged to break all attachments: "For a long time, Ānanda, have you been very near to me by acts (or words or thoughts) of love, kind and good, that never varies, and is beyond all measure . . . You have done well, Ānanda! Be earnest in effort, and you too shall soon be free from the intoxications."¹⁹ Though not here expressly stated, Ānanda's fault is a lack of knowledge (an inability to comprehend the transitory nature of things) and an irresolution of his emotion (an inability to overcome attachment).²⁰ For these inner turmoils and tears, Ānanda is rebuked by the Buddha for what must be an overly zealous affective nature commensurate with the previous story's vision of Ānanda as one who has faith (*saddhā*).

In the third incident, the Buddha asks members of the community if there are any last doubts or misgivings about him, the doctrine, the path, or the method.²¹ The monks are silent. Three times they are asked and three times they are silent. In the final silence, Ānanda turns to the Buddha and says how wonderful it is that there are no doubts or misgivings, and receives in his turn a last rebuke. You have spoken, the Buddha says, "out of the fullness of faith" (*pasāda*) not out of the certainty of knowledge (*ñāṇa*). His fault, again, is that he is filled with affective emotion rather than with the much preferred rational thought and logically-held wisdom.

Turning back, finally, to the offenses (*dukkatā*) enumerated in the *Cullavagga* just after Ānanda has recited the *suttas*, we find that there are five main issues under discussion: that Ānanda did not ask the Buddha about the lesser or minor rules of training, that Ānanda sewed the Buddha's cloth for the rains after having stepped on it, that Ānanda had the Buddha's body honored first by women so that it became defiled by their tears, that Ānanda did not take the Buddha's broad hint to ask him to stay through the *kappa*, and that Ānanda worked hard on behalf of the going forth of women. In all five cases, Ananda defends himself by saying that he did not see the offense

(*dukkata*) in his actions; the elders each time, however, insist that he confess the offense of his wrong-doing, which Ānanda does. In each case, however, it is clear that Ānanda is doing so not because he now sees that he did anything wrong but out of some other motivation, to wit, "out of faith in the venerable ones" (*ayasmantānaṃ saddhāya*).²² Once again Ānanda responds in ways that are at cross-purpose to the mainline tradition. For the monks, Ānanda made mistakes of judgment, mistakes of the mind in which he did not properly discriminate or perceive; for Ānanda, however, the solution to these offenses against the community (which were made for whatever specific and situational reasons, and which even in the end he does not concede to be mistakes in any way), is a solution of the heart.

Why, then, is Ānanda rebuked? In each of these cases the answer is either given or implied. In the *kappa* incident, it is Ānanda's faith which is at fault (*saddhā*): it was too strong to allow Ānanda to see the wisdom of the Buddha's initial hint, not strong enough to believe in the Buddha's *iddhi* and to know that now was the time to ask him to stay on through the *kappa*, and, later, not strong enough to ask the Buddha only once. In the doorpost incident, it is Ānanda's attachment and inability to go it alone that are too great, having as he does a well-developed affective nature and a clear dependency on others. In the questions and silence incident, Ānanda's assessment of the silence is done out of the fullness of faith (*pasāda*) rather than out of knowledge (*ñāna*). And in the *Cullavagga* list Ānanda, now apparently an *arahant*, is willing to confess to each offense only because he has faith (*saddhā*) in the venerable ones. Whether too strong, or not strong enough, faith (however valued) seems to be an early Pāli attribute of Ānanda.

Of the several words for faith in the Pāli Canon (*saddhā*, "faith, belief"; *bhatti*, "devotion"; *pema*, "filial affection"; and *pasāda*, "mental appreciation"),²³ only two are used in the material here, and of these *saddhā* is used in two different settings. Working under the assumption that it may be *saddhā* which governs the general Pāli views, we now ask what elements in its ancient sacrificial and meditative background might help illuminate the use of *saddhā* in early Buddhism and especially in the context of these failings of Ānanda.

II. ŚRADDHĀ IN SELECTED EARLY PASSAGES

Although *śraddhā* is not a central Vedic concept, it is a fairly consistent notion which has recognizable thematic elements. These elements, moreover, undergo the expected transformation as religiosity moves from external ritual concerns in the Vedic *śrauta* system to the later internal more philosophical concerns of the Upaniṣadic era, which takes place around the time of the Buddha and which may well have been influential in the Ānanda material.

The first of the early elements of *śraddhā* is its focus on an other, its calling upon an other for blessings and prosperity. Ordinarily, this other is one of the Vedic gods: in the *R̥g Veda*, for example, *śraddhā* is almost always associated with the god Indra, who energetically responds to the petitioner's context of faith with the requisite rewards.²⁴ *Śraddhā* is next most often associated with Soma,²⁵ whose intoxications help produce the religious zeal basic to faith in both the god and the petitioner,²⁶ and occasionally with the Pitrs in an invocation that may well have set the tone for the later *śraddhā* offerings (the Pinḍapitryajñā) to the Vedic ancestral dead.²⁷ There is even a hymn to Faith herself (*RV* 10.151.1–5) in which *Śraddhā* personifies R̥gvedic belief in the gods and trust in the sacrifice as performed by knowledgeable priests and singers. This focus on an other which places faith in an external source also invests in that source a supernal authority which has power over the believer. Vedic faith can't work unless this other, Indra, for example, is seen as a more authoritative center than the believer and unless the believer operates with regard to that other out of respect for its authority. Although, as Das Gupta has argued,²⁸ this is not the bhaktic faith of later Hindu theism with its loving and often feverish devotion, Vedic *śraddhā* is, nevertheless, a faith in an other which is both dependent and beyond reason.

A second theme common to Vedic uses of *śraddhā* is its importance to the maintenance of the sacrificial system. Faith spans and drives the *śrauta* ritual and the *śrauta* ritual is tied together by faith: without faith this large machine "spread" (*tan*) among the three worlds would not function and could not produce the interconnections of cause and effect so important to Vedic lives. Soma is pressed with faith, ritual words are spoken with faith, offerings are given in faith,

and because of consistent faith the gods return with blessings to mankind.²⁹ Faith continues to be placed in god here, but in time faith in the effectiveness of the ritual system predominates for without faith the ritual system as conceived would fall apart: if we *believe* the world operates the way it does, the world *will* operate the way it does. Faith, thus, individualizes the worshipper's perception of the world and removes that perception from rational inquiry.

The sacrificial context for faith continues into the Upaniṣadic era. In the older prose Upaniṣads faith still links the ritual, its priestly operators, and the offerings they (not the gods) receive.³⁰ In time, however, when meditational practice replaces ritual as the preferred religious technique, *śraddhā* becomes coupled with two other older ideas which also weather this transformation: austerity (*tapas*) and chastity (*brahmacarya*).³¹ While *tapas* moves from the effective heat generated in the ritual to the effective heat of yoga and *brahmacarya* from studenthood which happens to carry celibacy to celibacy as a prerequisite for religious knowledge, faith (*śraddhā*) in the ritual system is redirected to faith (*śraddhā*) in the scheme of *Brahman-ātman*. Though newly oriented in this way, *śraddhā* retains its lynchpin status with regard to perceptual structures: the *Brahman-ātman* schema cannot be realized without initial faith in the workability of the system.

The third element characteristic of Vedic *śraddhā* is its description of a posture or attitude which fills the believer and makes him receptive to religious transformation. We find it early on, for example, in RV 6.26.6ab: "You, O Indra, inspired by his faithfulnesses and Soma offerings put the Cumuri to sleep for Dabhīti," *śraddhābhir* here referring either to the many faithful times the petitioner worshipped Indra with Soma, or, more significantly, to the faithful attitudes with which the petitioner often came to Indra and because of which Indra could successfully deal with the petitioner's enemy.³² In a note to his translation of *Atharva Veda* 5.7.5, Bloomfield defines *śraddhā* as the "faith, religious zeal, that makes the sacrificer liberal to the priests . . . This zeal is naturally bestowed by the brown soma . . . and through the inspiration that comes from the hymns . . . sung while drinking soma."³³ In addition to highlighting the sacrificial context of *śraddhā*, what this definition focuses on is the inner state of the

religious participant: his zeal, that is, his commitment to the religious system he is in, and his strenuous participation to make that system work.

śraddhā as religious posture also appears several times in the Upaniṣads,³⁴ but nowhere more conspicuously than in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* with the episode of Naciketas. Son of the orthodox Vājaśrava, Naciketas worries that his father's strict ritualism is not enough, and so searches in the realm of death for knowledge authentic enough to benefit his father. Naciketas' search is successful only because he is filled with *śraddhā*, which Radhakrishnan defines here as "not blind belief but the faith which asks whether the outer performance without the living spirit is enough."³⁵ Faith is an inner attitude which was synonymous with works in the early Vedic period but which has become separate from the unthinking performance of the ritual by the time of the Upaniṣads. It is about this time also that *śraddhā* is identified with the heart as the agent of its effectiveness,³⁶ an identification which will be important for later theistic and Tantric traditions.

By the time of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, compiled well after earliest Pāli *suttas*, but whose synthesis of Brahmanic and non-Brahmanic tendencies in Indian culture reflects some of the religious elements available to subsequent strata of the Canon, the nascent *bhakti* tradition has firmly implanted *śraddhā* as a necessary component of devotion. The "other-orientation" of the Vedic period is especially pronounced in the *Gītā* passages where the object of faith is Kṛṣṇa.³⁷ This faith in Kṛṣṇa or in some other *iṣṭadevatā* "other" is a prerequisite to religious wisdom in that the *Gītā*'s highest wisdom is precisely wisdom of the other, which cannot be developed without the affective, non-rational experience of *śraddhā*. Most interesting, however, in relation to both the maintenance of working perceptual systems and the religious posture of the devotee, is the *Gītā*'s theory about the centrality of faith in the make-up of the human being:

A person's faith conforms to his essential nature; each person is a believer: as his faith is, so is he.³⁸

Faith, then, is part of the *Gītā*'s definition of man. This is obvious if we remember that the *Gītā*'s great secret is the "Me-doctrine" of Kṛṣṇa: if faith is intricately tied to the knowledge of Kṛṣṇa, then faith

is equally intricately tied to the knower of Kṛṣṇa. Especially significant, however, is another implication of these verses (*Gītā* 17.1–3), that man is a believing animal: that, consonant with our discussion of the third element of *śraddhā*, man creates a vision of the world that first becomes his and then becomes real only through faith. These observations in the *Gītā* about the psychological adaptiveness of worldviews, then, may well reflect insights already present in the Pāli material.

III. THE NATURE OF ĀNANDA'S FAITH

How, then, do the conceptions of faith in the Pāli Ānanda material compare to those of their Vedic and Hindu environments? Concerning the first theme, there is no doubt that the issue of “other-orientation” belongs to the Pāli *saddhā*. In each of the above offenses committed by Ānanda some affection for or service to an “other” is involved: in the *kappa* incident, Ānanda’s sensitivity to and faith in an other (the Buddha) was first, too strong to see what the Buddha was hinting at and, second, not strong enough to believe what he said the first time through; in the doorpost incident, Ānanda weeps at the impending loss of an other (the Buddha); in the questions incident, Ānanda’s faith is in the rightness of the silence of others (the members of the community); and in the *Cullavagga* list, not only do Ānanda’s omissions and defilements concern an other (the Buddha and, in the case of the admission of women, Mahāpajāpatī), but his solution to these offenses is based on his trust in others (the 499 *arahants* at the council). That Ānanda is truly an “other-oriented” person is without doubt; his religious world is tied to the experience of others and acquires importance from a trustful faith in the authority of significant others within his tradition. Of him, as perhaps of no other monk in the Pāli narratives, can be said that *darśan* is central: a visual contact with an external religious authority commensurate with the best of the bhaktic tradition.

The problem with Ānanda’s other-orientation, of course, is that it conflicts with the *kaivalya* tendencies of the Pāli tradition. The *Dīgha Nikāya*, in particular, is explicit in its admonition to find authority only in the self and not in any other person or thing:

Therefore, O Ānanda, be ye lamps unto yourselves. Be ye a refuge to yourselves. Betake yourselves to no external refuge. Hold fast to the Truth as a lamp. Hold fast as a refuge to the Truth. Look not for refuge to any one besides yourselves.³⁹

This admonition to look inward and not outward for truth is developed further in a conversation Ānanda has with the Buddha on what it takes for monks to live comfortably. When Ānanda asks to what extent monks can live comfortably, the Buddha answers that they do so when they have achieved virtue by means of the self (*attanā*) alone and have not resorted to another (*param*) for more.⁴⁰

It may seem that this attempt to move Ānanda away from other-orientation and toward the more correct inwardly-directed authority is contradicted, for example, by the standard *tisaraṇam* verse by which a Buddhist takes refuge in the Buddha, the teaching, and the community: one might say that taking refuge in one of these three jewels is very much like putting faith in the authority of an other. The *Khuddakapāṭha* commentary explains that the going for refuge to each of the jewels

is the arising of cognizance with confidence therein and giving preponderance thereto, from which defilement is eliminated and eradicated, and which occurs in the mode of taking that as the highest value, whether or not someone else is a condition for so doing.⁴¹

Although there appears to be the attribution of authority to the refuges here (*esa me saraṇam esa me parāyanan*), all these refuges — remembering the parable of *dhamma* as a raft — are to be cast aside when they are no longer useful.

In his analysis of the Pāli treatment of *saddhā*, Jayatilleke points out the “dislike of authority on the part of the Buddha,”⁴² particularly as developed in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*. The Buddha, he says in his discussion of the *Kālāma Sutta*,

does not want his own statements accepted on his authority nor rejected but seems to demand that they be tested and accepted if they are found to be true and presumably rejected if they are found to be false.⁴³

Correct belief in the Buddha, then, is not attachment to his person but rather a belief “that what the Buddha says is true.”⁴⁴ To replace faith

in an other with faith in the truthfulness of the system taught by an other is, moreover, to make the Vedic move from *śraddhā* in Indra to *śraddhā* in the *śrauta* system at large. Consonant with our discussion of this second element, then, the dharmic system is seen not to work effectively for Ānanda because his faith is misdirected: not toward the teaching but toward the figure of the Buddha. An aberration of this, in fact, occurs in the *Cullavagga* incident where faith in the system of the Saṅgha is expressed as if it were the earlier faith in the ritual system (i.e., faith in the operative structure of one's life). The only problem is that for Ānanda this particular expression of *saddhā* in the system violates his own sense of the integrity of his earlier actions for which he is now being criticized. In Ānanda's case, however, there remains the hope that, as Hoffman has argued, "one consequence of sufficient faith in the *Tathāgata* . . . (may be eventual and thorough) faith in the doctrine."⁴⁵

More significant, perhaps, is the third element arising from the Vedic material, that of faith which opens the individual to transformation. Again, arguing for the correct view of the Pāli Canon as found in the *Kālāma Sutta*, Jayatilleke says:

. . . while we should not accept the statements of anyone as true on the grounds of authority, we should test the consequences of statements in the light of our own knowledge and experience in order to verify whether they are true or false.⁴⁶

In this light it seems helpful to understand *saddhā* as Warder does: "confidence in the enlightenment of the thus-gone," or a trust in the truthfulness of the *dhamma* that has not yet been confirmed by one's own experience.⁴⁷ This, in fact, is Hoffman's main argument about *saddhā* in early Buddhism, "that it involves an initial openness to test things religious for oneself by personal experience."⁴⁸ As with Naciketas, this understanding would certainly fit the Buddha's statement to Ānanda that a monk who is an unbeliever cannot grow in the teaching and discipline,⁴⁹ or the monk who says that earlier he was ignorant, but when he got faith in the Buddha he became a monk.⁵⁰

If we turn to the case of Ānanda himself, we find *saddhā* functioning in two ways. In the *Cullavagga* incident, *saddhā* can be interpreted as a trust or confidence in the wise authority of the *arahants* at the council. In the *kappa* incident, and by implication in the doorpost

incident, however, Ānanda's *saddhā* has a clear and distinct object, the Buddha, to which there is obvious and overt emotional attachment (much like the later hoped-for *śraddhā* of the *Gītā*). This faith belongs to Norman's second understanding of *saddhā*,

based upon the meaning "desire" which is attested for Sanskrit *śraddhā* from the late Vedic period and also for Prakrit *saddhā*, but has not hitherto been recognised in Pāli.⁵¹

While Norman sees this understanding of *saddhā* as preferable to the more traditional one when analyzing the context of *assaddha* ("without desire," *Dhammapada* 97), both understandings are probably operative in the Ānanda material. Moreover, the attached or desiring offenses of Ānanda's *saddhā* are unique in this way: they are non-repeatable, "historical offenses" which could happen only once and which are made specifically in relation to the person of this Buddha. Not only are there chronological limitations to the committing of Ānanda's offenses, but it seems that they are peculiar to the offender himself: only Ānanda could have done these specific things. This attaching *saddhā* is grounded, then, in Ānanda's own personal experience of this particular Buddha (again prefiguring Ārjuna's personal, one-time-only experience of Kṛṣṇa), but a personal experience that has not yet tested the truthfulness of the Buddha's *dhamma*, but is instead the very noose of Ānanda's attachment.⁵²

The highly charged emotional quality of this second kind of *saddhā* is clearly an issue in Ānanda's failings.⁵³ In the questioning and silence episode just before the Buddha's death, in particular, it is made explicit that Ānanda has rendered a judgment "out of the fullness of faith" (*pasāda*) rather than out of knowledge (*ñāṇa*),⁵⁴ thus highlighting the importance of emotion in his person.⁵⁵ In faith emotion is at a premium, so much so, in fact, that it tends to obscure truth rather than to reveal it. Not only do emotions hinder the spiritual quest more easily than reason, but they engage the seeker more tempestuously in the rise and fall of pleasure and pain. In a conversation on feelings, the Buddha describes to Ānanda the satisfaction and misery that feelings can bring and, in their rolling undulation, the overwhelming experience of impermanence.⁵⁶ By directing emotion towards an other, as Ānanda does, he is more likely than otherwise to be caught up in

the cycle of pleasure and pain. While the enormity of the extremes might, perhaps, ultimately work to break one of that attachment (as Tantric theory suggests), Ānanda at this point seems to have an expansive capacity for *dukkha*. What the Buddha has in fact understood about Ānanda in this incident is that rather than preparing him for truly understanding the intent of *dhamma* (as it does in a parallel fashion for Naciketas), faith has cast a deluding net over Ānanda which prevents rather than facilitates his search for, and ultimately experience of, wisdom. Faith has become for Ānanda a cognitive structure which falsely veils, a perception of the world so powerful that it becomes real. For the Buddha all such structures, like the *dhamma* itself, must be cast aside when as rafts they are no longer useful. This Ānanda has yet to do.

The *kappa* incident, however, remains the most complicated of all the rebuking stories. Here the double nature of Ānanda's faith is at work. On the one hand, Ānanda has too much of the emotionally attaching *saddhā* which precludes knowledge and which prevents Ānanda from comprehending the Buddha's many suggestions that he be asked to stay the *kappa*. On the other hand, Ānanda has too little of the traditionally accepted Buddhist *saddhā* which puts trust in the wise authority of the more spiritually advanced when he doesn't believe the Buddha the first time he said it was too late to ask. If we were to apply Hoffman's three levels of *saddhā* in action (i.e., 1. "in coming to hear the doctrine," 2. as "necessary for making progress on the path," and 3. as "realized faith . . . if one is to teach the doctrine effectively"),⁵⁷ we might place Ānanda between the first and the second: he has come to hear the doctrine, to be sure, but has not found a way to use *saddhā* fully for progress on the path.

Outside of the Ānanda material, *saddhā* often appears as a progressive virtue to be grown out of as wisdom advances. Primarily an admonition for lay men and women, *saddhā* is one of the five virtues recommended to householders (folks with a home, supported by a believing clan-chief, *saddham kulapatim nissāya antojano*) as part of their ethical and intellectual growth. One such list, among the many beginning with *saddhā* which Jayatilleke has gathered,⁵⁸ is given in the *Anguttara Nikāya* as follows: *saddhā, sila, suta, cāga, and paññā*.⁵⁹ That this list is a progressive list which begins with faith places faith in

a relatively humble position with regard to spiritual advancement: even brahmans, for example, place *saddhā* at the beginning of a list used for testing and discovering truth, to wit, faith, inclination, report, consideration of reasons, and reflection on the approval of an opinion.⁶⁰ The progressive quality of faith is apparent in another *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* story relating to the Buddha where it is a virtue discussed for lay and monks as a combined group. In responding to laments about the vacuum which will appear in the lives of ordinary followers when the Buddha dies, the Buddha says that there are four places which should be seen by and which create emotion in believing clansmen (*saddhassa kulaputtassa*): where the Tathāgata was born, where he attained supreme and perfect enlightenment, where he set the wheel of *dhamma* in motion, and where he finally passed away. "Ordinary people," Kalupahana argues here, "are generally [the ones to be] led by their emotions (*saṃvega*),"⁶¹ but the Pāli text goes on to say that visiting these four sites is likely to arouse emotions even when the visitors are monks and nuns (*bhikkhu-bhikkhuniyo*) or lay men and women (*upāsaka-upāsikāyo*), as well as simple people of faith (*saddhā*). Moreover, anyone who dies with a believing heart on a pilgrimage to one of these four places shall be reborn in the happy realms of heaven (*sugatiṃ saggam lokam*).⁶² Although there are admonitions to

Ānanda and the others not to bother themselves with worshipping the bodily relics of the Tathāgata since there were wise kṣatriyans, brahmans and householders who were devoted to the Tathāgata and who would perform such worship,⁶³

this particular passage clearly encourages and expects householders, lay men and women, *and* monks and nuns to engage in such worshipful activities.

One might wonder whether the proper location of *saddhā* is in the lay or in the monastic life. Saddhatissa, for example, consistently lists these five as virtues for the lay householder,⁶⁴ while others argue that they are faculties (*indriya*) or strengths (*bala*) which are unspecified as to their audience. Saddhatissa's view, for example, is supported by passages like the following from the *Āṅguttara Nikāya*. Here the Buddha tells a group of monks that there are five advantages for a clansman who believes (*saddhe kulaputte*): one's faith inspires compas-

sion towards one in others (i.e., monks); when visiting, others first approach the believer; when receiving, others accept first the alms of the believer; when teaching *dhamma*, others teach first the believer; and after death the believer goes to a heavenly world.⁶⁵ The great majority of passages, however, indicate that *saddhā* is a progressive virtue for all Buddhists, regardless of vocation, and though “not a necessary condition for the religious process”⁶⁶ certainly a potentially effective one.

As the tradition develops, interest in the variation among human types becomes stronger. Already in the *Majjhima* and *Aṅguttara Nikāyas*, for example, there are standard formulations for different religious personalities, classified according to the nature of each one’s peculiar spiritual quest. Among those enumerated is one known as “walking in faith” (*saddhānusārī*), one who reaches the first stage of sanctification because he moves by *saddhā*.⁶⁷ Different from the person who is “freed by faith” (*saddhāvimutto*), also included in the list, who understands the origin and cessation of suffering and is well on his way to winning full vision, the *saddhānusārī* is a stream-attainer (*paṭipanna*) in whom the believing faculty (*saddhindriya*) is well-developed, but who appears to be some distance from fruition.⁶⁸ Developed further in another Abhidhamma text, the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, the gloss on this faculty of faith (*saddhindriya*), i.e., a trusting in (*saddahanā*), a professing of confidence in (*okappanā*), and having a sense of assurance in (*abhippasāda*),⁶⁹ describes the kind of faith we presume the Buddha hoped for for Ānanda: a faith that was open in its trust of the world and yet confident enough of itself to be able to let go.

This is important to the Ānanda material in two ways. First, it indicates that “the *saddhānusārī* . . . is reckoned the last of those who have some spiritual attainment,”⁷⁰ a conclusion which is implied at least by the face-value of the many rebukings of Ānanda. Second, however, it indicates that Ānanda is an example of this early casting of types, someone who benefits from the increasingly well-delineated possibility of many ways to wisdom. For each type there is seen to be an *upāya*, an expedient means, related to the type that helps chart the specific path to wisdom; at least one of Ānanda’s means, then, is *saddhā*, which Hoffman has already shown to have pragmatic, that is,

soteriological, efficacy in early Buddhism. In the rebuking stories examined here, Ānanda is caught out for a variety of different failings and seems to be cast, at least in some cases, as a negative model, an example of how not to be. While he may appear to be a misfit in a tradition where spiritual independence is at a premium, who must wait until a later time before the *saddhindriya*, the faith faculty, and the tie to others is fully recognized,⁷¹ Ānanda's message from the Buddha is clear. Ānanda's hindrance is not that he has faith, but that he misunderstands and misuses his faith in the religious process. As an *upāya*, *saddhā* must be activated in the proper way to be beneficial in the search for peace.

If faith is, in fact, a progressive virtue, falling at the beginning of the process rather than at the end, questions can be raised about Ānanda's attainment of arahant hood, said to have preceded his statement of faith in the elders in the *Cullavagga* account. Rather than undermining the authenticity of the rebukes of Ānanda at the council, as both Horner and Przymusiński have argued (rebukes which, in fact, fit the pattern of those in the *Mahāparinibbana Sutta*), the nature of Ānanda's faith statement may undermine instead the experience of his arahant hood, an account which, in any event, is accompanied by extra-normal physical circumstances. If this is the case, then a different account of the First Council, like that of the Sarvāstivāda Vinaya,⁷² for example, in which there is no mention of Ānanda's arahant hood, may, in the end, be more plausible.

Of all the many lists of the Pāli Canon there are two very important ones from which faith is absent: the list of the five traditional hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) and the list of the seven factors (*aṅga*) of enlightenment. Faith is not, then, a consistently hindering element on the path, nor is it a consistently enabling element to enlightenment, but rather a more ambiguous element which depends on the holder's spiritual state for its evaluation. That the list faith does appear on is a progressive list which in application involves both lay and monastic life, shows even more clearly that faith is not a clear-cut element in early Buddhism. In the right person and used in the right way, faith can enhance religious transformation; used improperly it can hold one

back. In these stories, then, Ānanda is still a learner, working evermore to discover exactly how his faith can lead to wisdom.

NOTES

¹ *Vinaya Piṭakam* (VP) 2.284–293 (P = Pāli), 5.393–406 (E = English). All references to texts in the Pāli Canon are to publications in the Pali Text Society, London, series. The references are to volume and page.

² Michael Freedman, “The Characterization of Ānanda in the Pāli Canon of the Theravāda: A Hagiographic Study” (Ph.D. diss., McMaster University, 1977), pp. 492–93. Freedman discusses at length the various sectarian interpretations of Ānanda’s late arahant hood and its possible relationship to his attendance upon the Buddha. The questions of the openness of Mahākassapa to inviting Ānanda to the council, the receptivity of the other *arahants* to Ānanda’s coming even without attaining arahant hood, the instigation behind Ānanda’s meditation to become an *arahant* on the eve of the council, and the singly important category of *bahussuta* (“having heard much”) which made Ānanda a most desirable attendee are discussed at length in Freedman (pp. 447–484) as these issues are reflected in the often contradictory sources of early Buddhism.

³ I. B. Horner, trans., *Cullavagga*, vol. 5 of *The Book of the Discipline* (*Vinaya-Piṭaka*) (1952; Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 1988), p. xvii.

⁴ VP 2.288-89 (P), 5.400-401 (E).

⁵ Horner, *Cullavagga*, p. xvii.

⁶ Freedman, pp. 489–490.

⁷ Jean Przyluski, “Le parinirvāṇa et les funérailles du Buddha,” part 1, *Journal Asiatique XI Série*, Tome XII, No. 3 (Nov.–Dec. 1918): 452–54.

⁸ Jean Przyluski, *Le conciles de Rājagṛha* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1926), pp. 138–140, 208, for example.

⁹ Jean Przyluski, *The Legend of Emperor Aśoka in Indian and Chinese Texts*, trans. Dilip Kumar Biswas (orig. French 1923; Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1967), pp. 15, 29; Freedman, pp. 473–75, 487.

¹⁰ Freedman, p. 480

¹¹ Przyluski, *Aśoka*, p. 39.

¹² Etienne Lamotte, trans., *Le traité de la grande vertu de sagesse de Nāgārjuna* (*Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*), Tome I (Louvain: Université de Louvain, 1966), pp. 223–25.

¹³ Wilhelm Geiger, *Pāli Literature and Language*, trans. Balakrishna Ghosh (1943, Calcutta University; Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1968), p. 12.

¹⁴ We use hindrance (*nīvaraṇa*) here not in its technical sense of one of the five traditional barriers to progress in clear understanding (e.g., *kāmacchanda*, *vyāpāda*, *thīnamiddha*, *uddhaccakukkucca*, and *vicikicchā*), but in the looser sense of any obstacle on the spiritual quest.

¹⁵ As with the *Cullavagga* rebuking, the *kappa* incident is replete with problems. Historically, for example, the rebukes of Ānanda may reflect sectarian squabbling between the Theravādins and the Mūlasarvāstivādins over *dhamma/vinaya* issues:

... the view that the Buddha could prolong his life ... is not part of the 'early' tradition but ... [from] a period when the nature of the Buddha was undergoing development along docetic lines. Further, the implication that Ānanda was responsible for the premature death of the Buddha is merely a fabrication designed to ... explain the disappearance of the Buddha and to denigrate Ānanda (Freedman, p. 398).

Textually, there seems to be no other place in Sutta or Abhidhamma literature where *iddhi* can be used to extend one's life. Doctrinally, consideration of an arbitrary extension of one's life ignores the principle of *anicca* and raises multiple problems with the doctrine of *kamma*; moreover, as Freedman notes (p. 393), the Buddha (through his *iddhi*) should have known the nature of Ānanda's mind beforehand, that it was clouded by Mara and unable to comprehend hints, and not forced an unproductive issue. And, finally, in terms of the preservation of the tradition, this narrative raises what was apparently a substantial concern about the Buddha dying before his teaching had had time to spread sufficiently.

¹⁶ *Dīgha Nikāya (DN)* 2.103–104 (P), 2.110–112 (E); *Āṅguttara Nikāya (AN)* 4.308–310 (P), 4.205–206 (E); *Saṃyutta Nikāya (SN)* 5.258–260 (P), 5.230–232 (E); *Udāna (U)* pp. 62–63 (P), pp. 74–76 (E).

¹⁷ The *kappa* here is an *āyukappa* a full life-span, a fixed measure of time appropriate to the individual, not a *mahākalpa* of the traditional cosmological theories. See T. W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, eds., *The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary* (1921–25; rpt. Luzac & Company, Ltd., 1959), p. 187.

¹⁸ *DN* 2.112–15 (P), 2.120–22 (E).

¹⁹ T. W. and C. A. F. Rhys Davids, trans., *Dialogues of the Buddha*, part 2 (1910; 4th ed., Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 1989), p. 159.

²⁰ *DN* 2.143–44 (P), 2.157–59 (E).

²¹ *DN* 2.154–55 (P), 2.172–73 (E); see also *AN* 2.79–80 (P), 2.88–89 (E).

²² *VP* 2.288–89 (P), 5.400–401 (E).

²³ K. N. Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1963), p. 385; see *AN* 3.165 (P), 3.124 (E).

²⁴ E.g., Theodor Aufrecht, ed., *Die Hymnen des R̥gveda (RV)*, 2 vols. (Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1877) 1.102.2d, 1.104.6d, 1.108.6c, 6.26.6a, 7.32.14c, and 8.1.31b. All non-Pāli textual references are to verse numbers.

²⁵ E.g., *RV* 1.108.6c, 6.26.6a, and 9.113.2d, 4c.

²⁶ Maurice Bloomfield, trans., *Hymns of the Atharva-Veda*, vol. 1 (2nd Indian rpt., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971), p. 424.

²⁷ E.g., *RV* 2.26.3d.

²⁸ M. Das Gupta, "Śraddhā and Bhakti in the Vedic Literature," *Indian Historical Quarterly*, 6:322.

²⁹ E.g., *RV* 2.26.3; 6.26.6; 7.32.14; 8.1.31; 9.113.2, 4; and 10.151.1–5.

³⁰ S. Radhakrishnan, ed. and trans., *The Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd, 1953), *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (BU)* 3.9.21 and *Chāndogya Upaniṣad (CU)* 8.8.5.

³¹ *CŪ* 5.10.1; *Praśna Upaniṣad* 1.2, 1.10, 5.3; *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.2.11, 2.1.7, 3.2.10.

³² In discussing this verse Köhler says:

Ehe *śraddhā* in einer Epoche extremer Werkgerechtigkeit zu einem Zentralbegriff werden konnte, musste sich ein Prozess vollziehen, der *śraddhā* umdeutete von einem blossen, mehr oder minder starken Gefühl zu einer Herzensverfassung, die dazu drängt, dieses Vertrauen zu den Göttern auch in Opfer und Spenden zu manifestieren . . . Dabhīti bindet ein besonders enges Vertrauensverhältnis an Indra: er ist sein Schützling . . . Dabhīti hat immer wieder sein Vertrauen zu Indra bewiesen, indem er ihm Verehrung und Opfer darbrachte.

Hans-Werbin Köhler, *Śrad-dhā- in der vedischen und altbuddhistischen Literatur* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1973), p. 19

³³ Bloomfield, *Atharva-Veda*, p. 424.

³⁴ E.g., *BU* 3.9.21; *CU* 7.19.1.

³⁵ Radhakrishnan, *Upaniṣads*, p. 595; *KU* 1.1.2, 13.

³⁶ See *BU* 3.9.21.

³⁷ R. C. Zaehner, trans., *The Bhagavad-Gītā* (with transliterated text) (1966; London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 3.31; 6.37, 47; 7.21–22; 9.23; 12.2; 18.71.

³⁸ *Gītā*, p. 17.3.

³⁹ Rhys Davids, *Dialogues*, part 2, p. 108; see also *DN* 3.77 (P), 3.74–75 (E).

⁴⁰ *AN* 3.132–34 (P), 3.102–103 (E).

⁴¹ Bhikkhu Nānamoli, trans., *The Minor Readings (Khuddakapāṭha)* (1960; rpt. London: The Pali Text Society, 1978), pp. 8–9.

⁴² Jayatilleke, p. 401.

⁴³ Jayatilleke, p. 390.

⁴⁴ Jayatilleke, p. 389.

⁴⁵ Frank J. Hoffman, "The Pragmatic Efficacy of *Saddhā*," *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 15.4 (Dec. 1987): 402.

⁴⁶ Jayatilleke, p. 391.

⁴⁷ A. K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970), p. 90. Cf.

Köhler, p. 60. Norman notes this also as a traditionally acceptable understanding of *saddhā*: trusting in the words of others because one does not yet know by experience for oneself. K. R. Norman, "Dhammapada 97: A Misunderstood Paradox," *Indologica Taurinensia* 7 (1979): 326–29.

⁴⁸ Hoffman, p. 399.

⁴⁹ *AN* 5.152 (P), 5.103–104 (E).

⁵⁰ *MN* 3.33 (P).

⁵¹ Norman, p. 329; cf. Köhler, p. 3.

⁵² Note here the passage in the *Dīgha Nikāya*, for example, where the Buddha tells some other monks that just as other Buddhas in the past have had attendants (*upaṭṭhākā*) devoted to them (*eta-paramā*), so also does he have Ānanda in this birth (*DN* 2.144 (P), 2.159 (E)). Such attendance utilizes, perhaps, the peculiar nature of Ānanda's late arahanthood and his full-time attendance on the Buddha, see Freedman, pp. 71 ff., who unfortunately does not deal with Ānanda's *saddhā* within the parameters of his study.

The emotional and attaching quality of Ānanda's faith may well carry Dutt's first meaning of *saddhā* as a faith producing serene pleasure (*pīṭi*) as opposed to a faith producing energy (*virīya*). Jayatilleke identifies this as the affective aspect of faith (the

second as the conative, and a third, the cognitive, as the most helpful in illuminating early Buddhist theories of knowledge), and argues that any attachment, even attachment to the Buddha, is a hindrance to salvation. See Nalinaksha Dutt, "Place of Faith in Buddhism," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 16: 639; Jayatilleke, pp. 387–88; and Hoffman, p. 402.

Where Ānanda falls within Jayatilleke's three types of *saddhā* is not altogether clear, but we can say, perhaps, that while the affective and conative aspects appear, directed usually towards the figure of the Buddha, the cognitive is for the most part absent. The helpfulness of using these three aspects as soteriologically chronological or progressive in value in this instance is uncertain, but given the dynamic cultural context of these centuries, we can at least argue that Ānanda's affective *saddhā* is a posture whose time in textual Buddhism had not yet come. The existence of a cult of Ānanda at Mathura, as suggested in the *Aśokāvadāna* (Przyluski, *Aśoka*, pp. 28–30), however, raises interesting questions about the connections among Ānanda, *saddhā*, and local bhaktic practices.

⁵³ There may well be a connection between the differing casts of Ānanda's *saddhā* and the general unevenness of his treatment in the Pāli Canon. On the two versions of *saddhā*, see Köhler, pp. 61–62.

⁵⁴ Rhys Davids, *Dialogues*, part 2, p. 173; *DN* 2.155 (P).

⁵⁵ According to Childers: "The words *pasādo*, *cittapasādo*, and *manopasādo* are constantly used in the sense of faith in Buddha, lit. 'rejoicing,' because of the joy or peace of mind which belief in Buddha brings with it." Robert Caesar Childers, *A Dictionary of the Pāli Language* (1875, London: rpt. New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1979), pp. 352–53. In this context, note again Dutt's sense of *pasādo* bringing serene pleasure (p. 639).

⁵⁶ *SN* 4.219–221 (P), 4.148–49 (E).

⁵⁷ Hoffman, p. 405.

⁵⁸ Jayatilleke, pp. 396–398.

⁵⁹ *AN* 3.44 (P), 3.36 (E).

⁶⁰ *MN* 2.170 (P), 2.360 (E).

⁶¹ David J. Kalupahana, *Buddhist Philosophy, An Historical Analysis* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1976), p. 96.

⁶² *DN* 2.140–41 (P), 2.153–54 (E).

⁶³ Peter Masefield, *Divine Revelation in Pāli Buddhism* (Colombo: The Sri Lanka Institute of Traditional Studies; London: George Allen & Unwin, 1986), p. 32.

⁶⁴ H. Saddhatissa, *Buddhist Ethics: Essence of Buddhism* (New York: George Braziller, 1970), pp. 118, 141, 147.

⁶⁵ *AN* 3.42 (P), 3.34 (E).

⁶⁶ Jan Ergardt, *Faith and Knowledge in Early Buddhism: An analysis of the contextual structures of an arahant-formula in the Majjhima-Nikāya*. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), p. 145.

⁶⁷ *MN* 1.477 (P), 2.151 (E); *AN* 1.477 (P).

⁶⁸ See the *Puggalapaññatti*, p. 15 (P), p. 23(E).

⁶⁹ *Dhammasaṅgani*, pp. 10–11 (P), pp. 12–13 (E).

⁷⁰ Jayatilleke, p. 396.

⁷¹ See the discussion about later developments in *saddhā* in, for example, Jayatilleke,

p. 400; Edward Conze, "Buddhist Saviours," *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies: Selected Essays* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1968), pp. 40ff.

⁷² Cf. Przyluski, *conciles*, p. 225.

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