

Ānanda's Faults?¹

Author: Venerable Yinshun

Source text: Huayu Collection, Volume 3 《華雨集》第三冊〈阿難過在何處〉

Translated by Yinshun Cultural & Educational Foundation Translation Team

Table of Contents

1. BACKGROUND	2
2. FAULT RELATING TO MINOR PRECEPTS	7
3. FAULT RELATING TO WOMEN'S ORDINATION	17
4. OTHER FAULTS RELATING TO WOMEN	26
Fault of Allowing Women to Pay Respect First and Sullyng the Buddha's Feet With Tears	26
Fault of Allowing Women to See the Buddha's Private Parts	28
5. FAULTS RELATING TO FAILURE AS BUDDHA'S ATTENDANT	30
Fault of Not Requesting the Buddha to Remain in the World	30
Fault of Not Providing Buddha With Water When He Asked	34
Fault of Treading On the Buddha's Robe	36
6. OTHER FAULTS	37
Fault of Refusing to Be Buddha's Attendant	37
Fault of Excusing His Mistake Improperly	38
Fault of Still Having Some Defilements	39
7. CONCLUSION	40

¹ This article was originally published in the journal *Hāicháoyīn* (46.1: 10–15), 1965. Note that all headings and subheadings in this article have been added by the translator, based on direction given by Venerable Yinshun at the start of each section. The original Chinese text lists each section by number.

1. Background

Ānanda served as the Buddha's personal assistant for 25 years and was lauded as the most learned² among all the Buddha's disciples. Over many long years, he tirelessly and respectfully served the Tathāgata³ without complaint and instructed the fourfold community.⁴ Ānanda was smart, amiable, and adept at handling all kinds of tricky situations in accordance with the Dharma. Among the Buddha's great disciples he is certainly a sage worthy of reverence.

In records found mainly in the *vinaya* canon, there is general agreement, with minor variations, that Ānanda served the Tathāgata until his time at Kuśinagara, where Buddha entered *parinirvāṇa*. At that time, the elder Mahākāśyapa led a group of 500 disciples who were rushing from afar to Kuśinagara to attend the Buddha's cremation. At that time, Mahākāśyapa convened the First Council in the city of Rājagṛha. An assembly of 500 senior *bhikṣu* [who were selected by Mahākāśyapa] recited and formulated the canon of Dharma teachings. At the convening of the First Council, Mahākāśyapa practically rejected Ānanda. The *saṃgha* community, led by Mahākāśyapa, accused Ānanda of a series of faults. Although Ānanda did not admit that he had committed any faults, out of respect for the *saṃgha* and consideration for the community's unity, he intentionally repented to that *saṃgha* community.

When the Buddha was still alive, Ānanda had been exemplary in following the monastic code (only once being admonished by the Buddha in connection to Venerable Udāyin). Thus, accusing Ānanda of a series of faults shortly after

² Here, "learned" is a reference to the discipline of having heard and remembered the most Dharma teachings from the Buddha.

³ Tathāgata is another word used to refer to a buddha.

⁴ The fourfold community refers to the male and female monastic and lay followers.

the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* is anomalous and controversial. In my *Preface to the Guānbó Collected Works* (1941),⁵ I indicated that there was some friction between Ānanda and Mahākāśyapa. [Initially] I assumed [that the friction was due to] their dissimilar personalities, but now as I review this matter it is obvious there were many underlying issues. Ānanda was reprimanded but what exactly were his faults? After investigating the series of faults [leveled at Ānanda,] I fully understood the situation and discovered the real issue that was occurring within the *saṃgha* community. This is an important event in [understanding] the history of Buddhism. Do allow me to painstakingly present evidence and explain the matter.

The event of Ānanda being reprimanded is found in the records relating to the First Council, and the versions transmitted by the various Buddhist schools are largely in agreement, as follows.

- 1) In the *vinaya* of the Southern tradition, *Tāmraparṇīya Vinaya*,⁶ Ānanda is said to have committed five *dukkata* (literally meaning “bad action,” translated herein as a minor offense).
- 2) In the *vinaya* of the Mahīśāsaka school, *Mahīśāsaka Vinaya of Five Sections*,⁷ Ānanda is said to have committed six minor offenses.
- 3) In the earlier *vinaya* of the Sarvāstivāda school of Mathurā, *Ten-recitation Vinaya*,⁸ Ānanda is said to have committed six minor offenses.

⁵ This “preface” was not written as a preface. Rather, Venerable Yinshun provided some feedback on the manuscript and the author adopted this feedback as the preface to the published work.

⁶ *Tāmraparṇīya Vinaya*, Secondary section, Chapter 11 on the First Council of 500, 《銅鑠律·小品》之十一〈五百韃度〉 (CBETA 2023.Q1, N04, no. 2, pp. 385a4-387a9) Note that all Pali sources mentioned by Venerable Yinshun in this article is based on a Japanese Translation of the Pali Tipiṭaka. For readers' convenience, the reference to the parallel Chinese Translation of the Pali Tipiṭaka (漢譯南傳大藏經), which has been integrated into CBETA, is given in this article. See also Vin II 288–289.

⁷ *Mahīśāsaka Vinaya of Five Sections*, Section 5, Chapter 9 on the First Council of 500, fascicle 30 《彌沙塞部和醯五分律》卷 30 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T22, no. 1421, p. 191b3-c19)

⁸ *Ten-recitation Vinaya*, Chapter on the First Council of 500 Bhikṣu Compiling the Tripiṭaka, fascicle 60 《十誦律》卷 60 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T23, no. 1435, p. 449c17-18)

- 4) In the Mahāyāna Madhyamaka school's text, *Exegesis on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*,⁹ Ānanda is said to have committed six minor offenses. The exegesis details only five faults, and these are consistent with those in the *Ten-recitation Vinaya* but presented in a different order.
- 5) In the *vinaya* of the Mahāsāṃghika school, *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya*,¹⁰ Ānanda is said to have committed seven minor offenses.
- 6) In the *vinaya* of the Dharmaguptaka school, *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya of Four Sections*,¹¹ Ānanda is said to have committed seven minor offenses.
- 7) In the *Sūtra on the Vinaya-mātrkā*,¹² Ānanda is said to have committed seven faults, only two of which are detailed, namely neglecting to ask the Buddha about minor precepts [that could be discarded,] and imploring the Buddha to allow women to be ordained.
- 8) In the *Sūtra on Buddha's Parinirvāṇa*,¹³ translated by Bó Fǎzǔ, Ānanda is said to have committed seven faults but the discussion mentions only his neglecting to request the Buddha to remain in the world.

The information found in the reference sources relating to points 7 and 8 are generally consistent with that in points 5 and 6.

- 9) In the new, edited *vinaya* of the Kashmiri Sarvāstivāda school, *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters*,¹⁴ Ānanda is said to have committed eight minor offenses.

⁹ *Exegesis on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, fascicle 2 《大智度論》卷 2 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T25, no. 1509, p. 68a3-b17)

¹⁰ *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya*, Chapter on Miscellaneous Matters, fascicle 32 《摩訶僧祇律》卷 32 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T22, no. 1425, p. 492a20-b10)

¹¹ *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya of Four Sections*, Section 4, Chapter on the First Council of 500 Compiling the Dharma and *Vinaya*, fascicle 54 《四分律》卷 54 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T22, no. 1428, pp. 967b10-968a2)

¹² *Sūtra on the Vinaya-mātrkā*, fascicle 3 《毘尼母經》卷 3 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T24, no. 1463, p. 818b2-c9)

¹³ *Sūtra on Buddha's Parinirvāṇa*, fascicle 2 《佛般泥洹經》卷 2 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T01, no. 5, p. 175b19-23)

¹⁴ *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters*, fascicle 39 《根本說一切有部毘奈耶雜事》卷 39 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T24, no. 1451, pp. 404c21-405c8)

10) In the *Sūtra on Kāśyapa Convening the Buddhist Council*,¹⁵ Ānanda is said to have committed nine faults, and these are consistent with the faults in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters*.

Apart from the above texts, in the *Record on the Collection of the Tripiṭaka and the Kṣudrakapiṭaka*,¹⁶ translated by Ān Shìgāo, there is explanation concerning only the four most serious faults. The various numbers of offenses committed by Ānanda in these sources can be categorized into three types: 1) those relating to the *vinaya*, 2) those relating to women, and 3) those relating to failure of duty as Buddha's attendant. [Among the faults,] the significant ones are neglecting to ask the Buddha about the definition of minor precepts and to implore the Buddha to allow women to be ordained. Therefore, the *Sūtra on the Vinaya-māṭrkā* only discusses these two. Additionally, the *Tāmraparṇīya Vinaya*, *Mahīśāsaka Vinaya of Five Sections* and *Ten-recitation Vinaya* all take neglecting to ask the Buddha about the minor precepts as the first fault in the list. The other sources, such as the *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya of Four Sections*, present imploring the Buddha to allow women to be ordained as the first fault in the list. It is likely that when Ānanda relayed the Buddha's final words of minor precepts can be discarded, this event accordingly stirred up many past grievances among the practitioners of Mahākāśyapa's group. Such was the cause leading to the series of accusations leveled at Ānanda, and even some bygone issues from 20 years ago were brought to the fore.

¹⁵ *Sūtra on Kāśyapa Convening the Buddhist Council* 《迦葉結經》 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T49, no. 2027, pp. 5c12-6a29). Note that the ninth fault is that Ānanda still had not completely eliminated his defilements and attained arhatship. The remaining eight faults are the same as in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters*.

¹⁶ *Record on the Collection of the Tripiṭaka and the Kṣudrakapiṭaka* 《撰集三藏及雜藏傳》 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T49, no. 2026, p. 2a14-22)

The various numbers of faults are listed below. The only ones that occur in all the sources mentioned above are the first, second, fifth, and sixth.

1. Neglecting to ask the Buddha which are the minor precepts that could be discarded.
2. Imploring the Buddha to allow women to be ordained.
3. Allowing women to first pay respect to the Buddha's relics, resulting in the relics being defiled [with their tears]. The *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya of Four Sections* and *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya* describes this fault as failing to prevent women from paying their respects to the Buddha, who then sullied the Buddha's feet with their tears. The *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters* and the *Sūtra on Kāśyapa Convening the Buddhist Council* say [Ānanda] showed the Buddha's golden body to women, resulting in them weeping and defiling the Buddha's feet with their tears.
4. Allowing women to see the Buddha's private parts [one of the 32 physical marks of a buddha.]
5. Neglecting to ask the Buddha to remain in the world.
6. Not providing the Buddha with water when being requested to do so. The *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters* records this fault as providing the Buddha with turbid water.
7. Treading on the Buddha's robe while mending it. In the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters* the information states that this occurred while washing the robe and the *Ten-recitation Vinaya* says while folding the robe.
8. When the Buddha wanted to present a simile [to Ānanda], Ānanda had a different interpretation. Note that in the *Sūtra on Kāśyapa Convening the*

Buddhist Council, this record relates to Ānanda [rudely] responding to the Buddha that he took the blame for others' faults.¹⁷

9. Initially declining to be the Buddha's personal attendant when instructed to that task.

2. Fault Relating to Minor Precepts

The real cause of Ānanda being reprimanded was that at the assembly of the First Council, Ānanda relayed the Buddha's last instructions that "minor precepts can be discarded." It is said that because Ānanda failed to ask the Buddha what constitutes minor precepts, consequently the members of the First Council had many and varying opinions. In the end, Mahākāśyapa came forth and put an end to the debate by declaring: "What the Buddha had not regulated, then no [new] precepts should be set. What has already been regulated by precepts must not be violated. [One should] follow what the Buddha had taught and sincerely learn it."¹⁸ Given that [the members of the *saṃgha* in the First Council could not reach] a consensus on the definition of minor precepts, it would be better to uphold all of the precepts that the Buddha had set. This means what the Buddha had already set as a precept must not be removed and what has not been regulated must not be added. What an "absolute dedication" to the Buddha's regulations!

However, there is no denying that the Buddha's last instructions did say that "minor precepts can be discarded." Therefore, Mahākāśyapa's strict decision [to uphold all of the existing precepts] unavoidably contradicts the Buddha's

¹⁷ *Sūtra on Kāśyapa Convening the Buddhist Council*: "You [Ānanda] have another fault. When the World Honored One reprimanded you, at that time you responded with harsh words that you took the blame for others' faults. This is your third fault." 《迦葉結經》 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T49, no. 2027, p. 6a18-19)

¹⁸ For example, see *Mahīśāsaka Vinaya of Five Sections*, fascicle 30 《彌沙塞部和醯五分律》 卷 30 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T22, no. 1421, p. 191c16-18) and *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya of Four Sections*, fascicle 54 《四分律》 卷 54 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T22, no. 1428, p. 967b24-26)

intention. Due to this situation, Mahākāśyapa reprimanded Ānanda for not seeking clarification from the Buddha, and charged Ānanda with a minor offense. This incident was like lighting a fuse that led Mahākāśyapa to lay a series of other charges [against Ānanda.] Therefore, Ānanda’s reprimand [at the First Council] was not simply because he failed to seek clarification from the Buddha, but indicates that there were internal underlying issues [within the *saṃgha*.]

What is the definition of minor precepts? Minor precepts have been translated as lesser precepts, trivial precepts, trifling subprecepts, and prohibitions in accordance with trivial precepts. No definitive decision [on the meaning] was made at the First Council but clear indications as to what minor precepts are can be found in the respective *vinaya* texts of each school. They are that:

1. Minor precepts refers to all precepts. This explanation can be found in *Ten-recitation Vinaya*, *Vinaya* and the *Sarvāstivāda Vinaya Vibhāṣā*.¹⁹
2. Minor precepts means [all precepts], except for the four primary precepts (*pārājika*). This can be found in *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, *Sarvāstivāda*

¹⁹ *Ten-recitation Vinaya*, fascicle 60 《十誦律》卷 60 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T23, no. 1435, pp. 449c25-450a26) *Vinaya*, fascicle 7 《鼻奈耶》卷 7 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T24, no. 1464, p. 879b20-26). Note that the content related to minor precepts found in *Vinaya* fascicle 7 is parallel to one of the *pāyattika* precepts. In the precept, a certain *bhikṣu* complains about the precepts by asking, “why are these trivial precepts needed? Every half month when the precepts are recited, they cause *bhikṣu* to have doubts, regrets, vexations, worries, and become unsettled.” The trivial precepts in that context can mean all precepts. This precept can be found in all *vinayas* belonging to different schools. *Sarvāstivāda Vinaya Vibhāṣā*, fascicle 6 《薩婆多毘尼毘婆沙》卷 6 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T23, no. 1440, p. 543a16)

Vinaya-saṃgraha, and *Treatises on Clarifications of Vinaya with Twenty-two Verses*.²⁰

3. Minor precepts means all precepts excluding the four primary precepts (*pārājika*) and the thirteen secondary precepts (*saṃghāvaśeṣa*). This explanation can be found in the *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya* and the *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya of Four Sections*.²¹
4. Minor precepts refers to all precepts excluding the four primary precepts (*pārājika*), the thirteen secondary precepts (*saṃghāvaśeṣa*), and the two indefinite precepts. This definition is found in the *Mahīśāsaka Vinaya of Five Sections*.²²

Adopting the first explanation (from the *Ten-recitation Vinaya* etc), would not the Buddha's instruction that minor precepts can be discarded amount to permission to discard all the precepts? The interpretation [behind the first explanation] is certainly not possible. So why then would such an explanation exist? This explanation is used as an exaggerated reason to object to the notion that minor precepts can be discarded. In the view of the *vinaya* masters who put forth this explanation, the idea that minor precepts can be discarded equates to total abolition of the *vinaya* system. That is to say, they view those who agree with the notion that minor (trivial) precepts can be discarded as monastics who

²⁰ *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, fascicle 27 《根本說一切有部毘奈耶》卷 27 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T23, no. 1442, p. 775a21-b18)

Sarvāstivāda Vinaya-saṃgraha, fascicle 9 《根本薩婆多部律攝》卷 9 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T24, no. 1458, p. 576b21-c3) Note that according to the definition in this source text, the definition appears to correspond to the third dot point in the list rather than the second. However, in the story attached to this passage, the *bhikṣu* began to complain about having to recite minor precepts after the first set of primary precepts (*pārājika*) were recited, which implies he regards minor precepts to begin from the second set of precepts (*saṃghāvaśeṣa*).
Treatises on Clarifications of Vinaya with Twenty-two Verses 《二十二明了論》 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T24, no. 1461, p. 667b28-c3)

²¹ *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya*, fascicle 14 《摩訶僧祇律》卷 14 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T22, no. 1425, p. 338c21-22)
Dharmaguptaka Vinaya of Four Sections, fascicle 18 《四分律》卷 18 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T22, no. 1428, pp. 685c07-686a11)

²² *Mahīśāsaka Vinaya of Five Sections*, fascicle 6 《彌沙塞部和醯五分律》卷 6 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T22, no. 1421, p. 41b4-20)

do not value the *vinaya* nor uphold the precepts. There is ample basis for such an interpretation. When comparing the discussions concerning the First Council in the full version of *vinaya* texts belonging to different Buddhist schools, there are two different ways in which Ānanda's conveyance of Buddha's instruction is worded. Examples of the first way are as follows:

- *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya*, “I [Buddha] shall allow all *bhikṣu* to discard the minor precepts.”²³
- *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya of Four Sections*, “From now on all *bhikṣu* are allowed to discard the minor precepts.”²⁴
- *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters*, “All trifling subprecepts, I hereby allow for them to be discarded, for the sake of helping the *saṃgha* abide in peace.”²⁵

It appears that this matter of discarding minor precepts was to help the monastic community abide in peace, and so there were no limitations as to its application. But, in fact, this placed attention on the fault of discarding minor precepts and was used to portray the ugly side of those who promoted the notion of discarding minor precepts. The reason is that discarding minor precepts is regarded as a forbidden matter in the extant *vinaya* texts. [The background to this position arose] while Mahākāśyapa was on his way to Kuśinagara. He heard Venerable Upānanda say, “That elder (i.e. Buddha) always says one should do this and not do that (i.e. following the precepts). Now, we all are free from the suffering of such restrictions and can do as we please with no more obstructions.”²⁶ This comment about no longer having to uphold the precepts and having no more

²³ *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya*, fascicle 32 《摩訶僧祇律》卷 32 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T22, no. 1425, p. 492b5-6)

²⁴ *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya of Four Sections*, fascicle 54 《四分律》卷 54 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T22, no. 1428, p. 967b12-13)

²⁵ *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters*, fascicle 39 《根本說一切有部毘奈耶雜事》卷 39 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T24, no. 1451, p. 405b4-5)

²⁶ *Mahāsāsaka Vinaya of Five Sections*, fascicle 30 《彌沙塞部和醯五分律》卷 30 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T22, no. 1421, p. 190b24-26)

obstructions is exactly the meaning of discarding minor precepts to abide in peace, is it not? However, such an idea [that minor precepts can be discarded] is what Mahākāśyapa rejects and is the reason he initiated the First Council [to compile the Buddha’s teachings.]

Another example is found in the *pāyattika* group of precepts,²⁷ in which one rule concerns complaining about the precepts by asking, “Why are these trivial precepts needed? Every half month when the precepts are recited, they cause *bhikṣu* to have doubts, regrets, vexations, worries, and become unsettled.”²⁸ What this quote implies is that these trivial precepts cause *saṃgha* members to have worries and vexations, and so they are not necessary. Is this not consistent with the notion that discarding minor precepts brings peace to the *saṃgha*? Mahākāśyapa decided to convene an assembly to compile the *vinaya* [to avoid the problem of monastics discarding the precepts after Buddha’s *parinirvāṇa*]. Yet, Ānanda publicly conveyed the Tathāgata’s final instruction that “minor precepts can be discarded.” This message effectively placed Mahākāśyapa in a problematic position. Clearly, the view of Mahākāśyapa and the monastics who emphasized the *vinaya* was opposed to the idea of discarding minor precepts. Within this context, it is no surprise then that Ānanda was subsequently charged with a series of offenses [at the First Council].

The other way in which Ānanda conveyed the Buddha’s final instruction is represented by such statements as:

²⁷ The Buddhist monastic code is categorized into several groups of precepts based on their gravity and disciplinary results. In order of severity, they are *pārājika*, *saṃghāvaśeṣa*, *naihsargika prāyaścittika*, *pāyattika*, *pratideśanīya*. The monastic code also includes other subsets of regulations, but these five groups are the main sets of rules monastics uphold.

²⁸ For example see *Ten-recitation Vinaya*, fascicle 10 《十誦律》卷10 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T23, no. 1435, p. 74b25-26)

- *Ten-recitation Vinaya* says, “Following my *parinirvāṇa* minor precepts can be discard as long as the *saṅgha* makes a unanimous and harmonious decision [on this matter].”²⁹
- The Southern tradition’s *Tāmraparṇīya Vinaya* and the *Mahāparinibbāṇa Sutta* in the *Dīgha Nikāya* states, “Following my *parinibbāṇa*, should the *saṅgha* have the need, then it is permissible to discard the minor precepts.”³⁰
- *Sūtra on the Vinaya-māṭṛkā* says, “Following my *parinirvāṇa*, the *saṅgha* should be assembled to [carefully determine whether] minor precepts are to be discarded.”³¹

These passages show that discarding the minor precepts is no casual matter, nor does it mean that whole sets of training rules such as the *pāyattika* rules should be discarded without reason. The meaning in these passages indicates that the *saṅgha* community must unanimously agree on the decision to discard certain training rules so that the *saṅgha* community can adapt to some new situations, [namely] subject to time, place, and situation.

To clarify, let us consider the situations under which Śākyamuni Buddha laid down the monastic precepts. The Śākyamuni Buddha set new precepts because a fault was committed [by a monastic]. That means a situation arose and [the Buddha] gathered the *saṅgha* to set the new precept as part of the monastic training rules. Among the training rules, the primary precepts such as not engaging in sexual activity and not lying³² were established immediately once the

²⁹ *Ten-recitation Vinaya*, fascicle 60 《十誦律》卷 60 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T23, no. 1435, p. 449c21-29)

³⁰ *Tāmraparṇīya Vinaya* 《銅鑠律·小品》之十一〈五百犍度〉 (CBETA 2023.Q1, N04, no. 2, p. 385a4-5). See also Vin II 287.

Mahāparinibbāṇa Sutta in the *Dīgha Nikāya* 《長部經典》 (CBETA 2023.Q1, N07, no. 4, p. 109a8). See also DN II 154.

³¹ *Sūtra on the Vinaya-māṭṛkā*, fascicle 3 《毘尼母經》卷 3 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T24, no. 1463, p. 818b3-4)

³² Here, “lying” is specifically referring to major lies about one’s spiritual attainments, with the intention to deceive others.

first incident was reported and [all *saṃgha* members] were not permitted to commit such faults thereafter. Then there were situations whereby a monastic committed a fault and only received a reprimand at that time, but no new precept was laid down. However, at a later time when similar faults were repeated and [the Buddha] saw the need to prohibit this behavior, he gathered the *saṃgha* and set a new precept.

In the *Exegesis on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* it says, “The rules laid out in the *vinaya* are true in the context of this world.”³³ We should bear in mind such a point. Each precept was formulated in response to a particular time, place, and person, and mainly related to issues concerning clothing, food, travel, shelter, medicine and so forth. The purpose of establishing the precepts is to maintain the purity and harmony of the *saṃgha* as well as to encourage society to develop respect for and faith in [the *saṃgha*.] Therefore, as time, place, and people change, it is to be expected that some of the precepts need to be modified. Even when the Buddha was alive his approach to the training rules he personally set were to lay down a rule and then add further restraints, or make an exception to a rule and extend applicable conditions to that exception, or set a rule and then discard that rule, or having discarded a rule then reinstate that rule again. If such an approach were not adopted, then the monastic precept would be overly rigid and difficult to uphold. Therefore, if the monastic code (training rules) is fixed [without any flexibility], then undoubtedly it would not be able to cater to [changing situations] and the purpose of the training rules would be lost.

The Śākyamuni Buddha is an omniscient one who thoroughly understood the potential changing situations, and therefore the important responsibility of

³³ *Exegesis on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, fascicle 1 《大智度論》卷 1 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T25, no. 1509, p. 66a4-5)

deciding whether “minor precepts can be discarded” was placed in the hands of the *saṃgha*. This would allow the *saṃgha* to gather and address issues caused by minor precepts under a different time, place, and situation. Only in this way can the training rules cater to the reality of the world and not become rigid and obstructive. Nonetheless, those inclined to ascetic practices and who placed emphasis on the precepts thought that discarding minor precepts would destroy the *vinaya* altogether and cause the entire system of training rules to be discarded, which would merely satisfy certain individuals and allow them to do whatever they wanted with illegal matters. Such thoughts are poles apart from Śākyamuni Buddha’s intention behind the instruction, “minor precepts can be discarded,” and so it is no surprise that these practitioners vehemently opposed the position [that minor precepts can be discarded.]

According to the *Mahīśāsaka Vinaya of Five Sections* and others, the *saṃgha* are allowed to establish new precepts, such as the rules belonging to the *pāyattika*. However, the ascetic monk Upāseṇa was unwilling to recognize any precepts apart from those established by the Buddha himself.³⁴ In general, monastics who were inclined to asceticism and monastics who placed great emphasis on the *vinaya* firmly believed that the stricter the training rules the better for the *saṃgha* community. They believed that only by relying on the standards set by the precepts in such a strict way can one cultivate the path with purity. Therefore, the training rules the Buddha laid down and the practices the Buddha permitted (such as ascetic practices) were what these monastics practiced. Perhaps these practitioners felt that their way of cultivation was effective and so unavoidably placed greater weight on their approach. That is, they believed that this approach was the best and that this approach must be followed when learning the Buddha-

³⁴ *Mahīśāsaka Vinaya of Five Sections*, fascicle 4 《彌沙塞部和醯五分律》卷4 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T22, no. 1421, p. 26a26-b1)

dharma. With such thinking they concluded: “What the Buddha had not regulated then no [new] precepts should be set. What has already been regulated by precepts must not be violated.”

With this declaration, the *vinaya* was regarded as that which only the Buddha could set and that the *saṃgha* had no authority to make any revisions. In the view of the monastics who emphasized the precepts, the training rules are applicable at any time and can be practiced anywhere. Ever since such a declaration, there are no records of any *saṃgha* community permitting the discarding of certain precepts or establishing new precepts. If there were incidents whereby new precepts were established [by the *saṃgha*,] these would only be called “guidelines” and would be loathed by the monastics who emphasized the *vinaya*.

For over 2000 years, within the Buddhist circle [Buddhists] were only permitted to interpret the *vinaya* and [perhaps] privately change some parts of the *vinaya* (otherwise no one can explain where the discrepancies in the extant different *vinaya* texts of the various schools come from). Accordingly, the *saṃgha* communities in different areas cannot call a council and draw on the wisdom of members to reach broad consensus for revisions of rules in the *vinaya*. Over the passage of time, it has been obvious that many of the precepts have become impractical to uphold. However, Buddhists nominally continue to accept those precepts. When a precept is accepted but not upheld properly, this constitutes a breach, and monastics sadly fall into the situation of breaching the precepts. [Meanwhile,] some monastics view the *vinaya* as mere formality and thus place no value on the training rules at all. In summary, the *vinaya* established by Śākyamuni Buddha was meant to be flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances. But once it became inflexible and turned into rigid regulations, the *vinaya* had a stultifying effect on the application of the Buddha’s teachings.

Upon close inspection, undoubtedly, this situation stems from the rejection of the Buddha's permission to discard minor precepts after his *parinirvāṇa*.

When Ānanda conveyed the Buddha's final message [to the *saṃgha*,] not only was the notion rejected, but Ānanda was subsequently accused of a series of faults. This is a historical fact and need not be further debated. What does need to be further discussed is the precept with reference to disregarding and complaining about the *vinaya* (training rules), which is found in the *vinaya* texts of the various schools of Buddhism. [This precept was established] when Chandaka or the monks belonging to the Group of Six stated, "What is the use of these trivial precepts?" After this, the Tathāgata set this training rule, which belongs to the *pāyattika* set of offenses. When the Buddha was alive, he had formulated this training rule and such behavior was regarded as a fault. So why would the Śākyamuni Buddha then allow the minor precepts to be discarded as part of his final message?

It seems contradictory to the point of being unbelievable that the Buddha prohibited the monastics from saying minor precepts should be discarded, but then as part of his own final message allowed minor precepts to be discarded. [Concerning this contradiction,] could the situation be as follows? Ānanda's faction of monastics, who placed importance on the Dharma, would relay the Buddha's final message that minor precepts could be discarded. But this notion was rejected by the faction founded by Mahākāśyapa, Upāli and others who emphasized the *vinaya*. So the *vinaya* faction established the *pāyattika* offense in relation to disregarding and complaining about the training rules as a means to prevent the Dharma faction from raising the Buddha's final message again. Logically, this should not be the case, but the contradiction is a fact that is well worth further investigation and contemplation by the *vinaya* masters.

3. Fault Relating to Women's Ordination

[Among the series of faults Ānanda is accused of,] some relate to women, and the crucial accusation is that Ānanda implored the Buddha to allow women to be ordained. This matter is recorded in the section called *Bhikṣunī Skandha* in the full version of *vinaya* canon of each Buddhist school. This event is also found in the Southern tradition's *Gotamī Sutta* (AN 8.51)³⁵ in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* and in the *Gautamī Sūtra* (MA 116)³⁶ in the Chinese translation of the *Madhyama Āgama*. In the *vinaya* texts and treatises concerning the First Council, there are records of Mahākāśyapa accusing Ānanda of a minor offense because he requested the Buddha to allow women to be ordain.

The events concerning the request are as follows. Buddha's aunt, Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī [who raised him after the death of his mother, Queen Māya,] led a contingent of Śākya women who had traveled a great distance to seek ordination under the Buddha. Despite approaching the Buddha three times to make their request, the Buddha refused. Their intentions were sincere and pious but due to not being allowed to renounce, they were deeply saddened.

Ānanda saw how grief stricken the women were and subconsciously felt empathy for them. Consequently, Ānanda went to see the Buddha and made a request on their behalf. According to the *Bhikṣunī Skandha*, Ānanda presented the following arguments: 1) Mahāprajāpatī lovingly raised the Buddha as her own child, and the gratitude she showed to the Buddha equals that of his birth mother. To repay such kindness, please allow her to be ordained (this reason can only apply to Mahāprajāpatī herself). 2) Ānanda asked the Buddha whether, if women were

³⁵ *Gotamī Sutta* in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 《增支部經典》 (CBETA 2023.Q1, N23, no. 7, p. 168a4-174a6). See also AN IV 274–279.

³⁶ 《中阿含經》卷 28 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T01, no. 26, pp. 605a10-607b16)

ordained and cultivated the path, it would be possible for them to attain the first fruition and even up to the fourth fruition of arhatship. The Buddha answered that it was possible. Ānanda then requested the Buddha to allow women to be ordained because if they did not renounce, they would not be able to attain the final liberation (fourth fruition). Both reasons are consistently found in the *Tāmraparṇīya Vinaya*, *Mahīśāsaka Vinaya of Five Sections*, *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya of Four Sections*, *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya*, and the *Āgama* texts, so it can be concluded that these were the reasons Ānanda presented when he made the request on their behalf.

In addition, there are two other related narratives [concerning the reasons put forth by Ānanda]. The first is that all buddhas have a fourfold assembly of disciples and therefore the present Buddha should permit females to be ordained. This narrative is found in the texts belonging to the Sarvāstivāda school, such as the *Ten-recitation Vinaya* (as quoted in the *Exegesis on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*), *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, and the *Sūtra on Kāśyapa Convening the Buddhist Council*. In contrast, the *Mahīśāsaka Vinaya of Five Sections* states that none of the buddhas of the past allowed women to be ordained, and this was used as a basis for objection. The *Ten-recitation Vinaya* and the other [Sarvāstivāda] texts mention the fourfold assembly of disciples but do not mention the four fruitions of arhatship. This suggests that the narrative regarding the four fruitions may have been replaced by the narrative concerning the fourfold assembly of disciples as the accounts were passed down. The narrative that the buddhas of the past had a fourfold assembly of disciples is a questionable reason as there is a contradictory account. In addition, this line of argumentation could not have been a reason put forth, given Ānanda's position.

The second narrative is that Mahāprajāpatī and her contingent of women were from the Śākya clan, and Ānanda took pity on his fellow clan people, making the

request on their behalf. However, this narrative is only found in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters* and the *Sūtra on Kāśyapa Convening the Buddhist Council*, which belong to the Kashmiri Sarvāstivāda school. Such a reason is what they reasonably presumed.

Based on the reasons of repaying the immense kindness of Mahāprajāpatī and helping women to be able to attain the final liberation from cyclic existence, Ānanda made repeated requests to the Buddha to permit women to be ordained. Where exactly is there a fault concerning this action? Ānanda never admitted to any fault. However, it is clear that the assembly of monastics led by Mahākāśyapa had other reasons [supporting this accusation]. In texts such as the *Tāmraparṇīya Vinaya*, there is only mention of Ānanda being reprimanded for pleading to the Tathāgata [to permit women’s ordination] and no other details are provided. However, in the *Sūtra on the Vinaya-mātrkā, Exegesis on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* and the *Record on the Collection of the Tripitaka and the Kṣudrakapiṭaka*,³⁷ these texts state the following reason: “You committed the fault of causing the existence of the Buddha-dharma to become less than 1000 years.” What this means is that the Tathāgata originally did not permit women to be ordained, but due to Ānanda’s plea, the Buddha subsequently allowed women to enter the *saṃgha*. Consequently, the Buddha-dharma will decline earlier, which is an undesirable result.

In the *Sūtra on the Vinaya-mātrkā* there is a list of ten main reasons [that Ānanda is at fault.] In general, that allowing women to be ordained will cause the lay followers to reduce their respect and offerings [to the *saṃgha*], and the monks

³⁷ *Sūtra on the Vinaya-mātrkā*, fascicle 3 《毘尼母經》卷3 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T24, no. 1463, p. 818c4-6)
Exegesis on the Great Perfection of Wisdom, fascicle 2 《大智度論》卷2 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T25, no. 1509, p. 68a14-17)
Record on the Collection of the Tripitaka and the Kṣudrakapiṭaka 《撰集三藏及雜藏傳》 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T49, no. 2026, p. 2a13-16)

will appear less dignified. In addition, the righteous Dharma teachings will not remain long. From the *sūtra* and *vinaya* texts it is obvious that the [quality of the] *saṃgha* members, toward the Buddha's later years in life was not as wholesome as during Buddha's younger years.

Generally, what can be seen is that more and more precept rules were established while the practice of determination to attain enlightenment declined. Mahākāśyapa once asked the Buddha about this situation (see *Samyutta Nikāya* 16.13 and *Samyukta Āgama* 32.906).³⁸ The situation should be due to the gradual increase in Buddhism's popularity as it spreads and the ease of acquiring offerings from lay followers. As a result, some people join the *saṃgha* with improper motives, which leads to the state at which the *saṃgha* increases in number, but the quality of the members become impure. At the same time, allowing women to be ordained gives rise to various issues within the *saṃgha*, which also leads to quite a few undesirable effects. The senior monks inclined to ascetic practices and those who focused on the *vinaya* attributed these problems to allowing women to enter the *saṃgha*, and so placed the blame on Ānanda. For example, in texts such as the *Ten-recitation Vinaya*, Mahākāśyapa had said several times that "I do not blame you all (*bhikṣuṇī*), I blame Ānanda."³⁹ The meaning of this quote is that if it were not for Ānanda's plea to the Buddha women would not be allowed to enter the *saṃgha*, and thus all these related problems would not exist. Accordingly, is it not that [the *saṃgha*] would be able to practice in purity and the righteous Dharma would last longer? The quality of the *saṃgha* members became mixed and this then created a poor image of the *saṃgha* among the general public. The *saṃgha* led by Mahākāśyapa ascribed the

³⁸ *Samyutta Nikāya* (SN II, 223–225 [16.13]); *Samyukta Āgama*, fascicle 32 《雜阿含經》卷 32 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T02, no. 99, pp. 226b25-227a1)

³⁹ *Ten-recitation Vinaya*, fascicle 40 《十誦律》卷 40 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T23, no. 1435, pp. 291a21-294c8)

cause of these problems to the *bhikṣuṇī* assembly, and this was the reason Ānanda was reprimanded.

The full versions of *vinaya* texts from the various schools of Buddhism are consistent in stating that allowing women to be ordained will cause the Buddha's teachings to decline earlier. Moreover, such a narrative is described as a prediction ascribed to the Buddha himself. For example, in the *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya of Four Sections* says, "Ānanda! It is like this simile. In a householder's family where there are many women and few men, it is to be expected that the family will decline. ... Likewise, there is another simile. Someone has a good paddy field but all the crops get damaged by frost or hail. Similarly, Ānanda, now that women have gone forth into the Buddha-dharma and received the full monastic precepts, the true Dharma will not last as long."⁴⁰

The first simile is like the Chinese notion: when Yin flourishes then Yang declines. Perhaps it maybe undesirable when [the *saṃgha* has] more women than men. However, this should not be used as a reason for preventing women from being ordained. Simply pleading [with the Buddha] to allow women to be ordained does not equate to more women than men seeking renunciation. As for the second simile, the rice plants represent the monks, and the frost and hail represent the nuns (note the version of this story in the *Tāmraparṇīya Vinaya* uses pathogens). But are the monks really like strong and healthy seedlings, and women damaging frost, hail, or pathogens? [If we look at] the very severe offenses set for the monks, that is the four primary precepts (*pārājika*) and thirteen secondary precepts (*saṃghāvaśeṣa*), none of these are related to nuns or women, yet monks still contravene these precepts. Therefore, these two similes are merely

⁴⁰ *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya of Four Sections*, fascicle 48 《四分律》卷 48 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T22, no. 1428, p. 923a1-6)

a reflection of ancient societies in which women were generally regarded as inferior, or even as a source of problems, while men were given dominance.

The argument that the Buddha originally did not allow women to be ordained because he regarded women as pathogens is illogical. If the Buddha clearly knew [that women were like] pathogens, would he still have allowed such pathogens to be transmitted into a healthy paddy field? There is no denying that the ordination of women brought with it quite a few problems and, of course, the Buddha had to consider the matter thoroughly. In the society of that time, where men were considered superior and women inferior, women experienced discrimination. According to the records in the *vinaya* texts, the female *saṃgha* had a much harder time seeking alms and financial support compared to the male *saṃgha*. Moreover, when it comes to social interactions, lodgings, education, and personal safety, women faced more problems than men. In particular, the mental activity of affection in women (motherly love etc.) is stronger, and [generally] women are more emotional than rational. They also have less tolerance, and are physically weaker than men. Collectively, these general qualities [of women] unavoidably introduce challenges to the male *saṃgha*. Nevertheless, the Buddha did eventually agree to allow women to be ordained. This is because, where a problem arises, it should be resolved rather than cursing the problem. Under the Buddha's spirit of universal great compassion, women were allowed to be ordained and gained the equal opportunity to cultivate the path and attain liberation.

Regarding the statement that “allowing the ordination of women will reduce the duration of the righteous Dharma's existence by 500 years,” as the viewpoint held by the ascetically-oriented Mahākāśyapa and the *vinaya* masters such as Upāli, this is reasonable. That is, when they were confronted with the decline in the quality of the *saṃgha* members they attributed its cause to the ordination of

women, and then made the prediction that the Buddha-dharma would not exist for long. However, the *vinaya* masters ascribed this prediction to the Buddha himself. Consequently, [in hopes of making this Buddha's prediction logical,] the description of this matter has been subjected to confusion as the narratives were passed down. Based on *sūtra* and *vinaya* texts, there are three different narratives:

- 1) The first narrative is that Ānanda repeatedly pleaded with the Buddha [to allow women to be ordained] and the Buddha finally agreed. Ānanda then informed Mahāprajāpatī that the request to permit women to enter the *saṃgha* had been granted. At that time, the Buddha then predicted that with the ordination of women the duration of the righteous Dharma's presence would reduce by 500 years. Ānanda did not react to this message at all. This narrative is found in the *Tāmraparṇīya Vinaya* and the *Gotamī Sutta* of the *Āṅguttara Nikāya*, both belonging to the Southern tradition.
- 2) The second narrative is the same as the above; however, after Ānanda hears the Buddha's prediction he "addressed the Buddha with much pain and sorrow. Blessed One! Having never before heard such a prediction, I pleaded with you to allow women to renounce and take the full monastic precepts. Had I have known about this in advance, I surely would not have made such repeated requests." This version is found in the *Mahīśāsaka Vinaya of Five Sections*. [The last part is modified because] it is unlikely that Ānanda would have not reacted after hearing the prediction. But if the situation was as recorded in the *Mahīśāsaka Vinaya of Five Sections*, then at the First Council, Ānanda would have been at pains to admit his fault, but why [do the records say] he did not admit fault?
- 3) The third narrative is that when Ānanda pleaded with the Buddha, the Buddha informed him that allowing women to be ordained would result in the

righteous Dharma not lasting as long as anticipated. Further, the Buddha used two similes to explain. However, Ānanda disregarded this information and persisted with his plea. It was after this that the Buddha agreed. This version is found in the *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya of Four Sections* and *Gautamī Sūtra* of the *Madhyama Āgama*. Logically speaking, if after knowing the consequences Ānanda persisted in making his plea to the Buddha, then does this sound like the Ānanda we know, who respects and honors the Buddha and Dharma, the one who is most learned and sharpwitted? In fact, during the event where Ānanda pleaded to allow women to be ordained, if the Buddha did reveal the prediction at that time, no matter when the prediction was revealed [during that event], there are issues of logicity. It is for this reason that no matter where the *vinaya* masters placed the Buddha's prediction in the sequence of the narrative, it is out of place. But [they think] this piece must be included in the story. Consequently, regardless of whether it is placed, before or after [the Buddha's permission,] the contradiction remains.

Ānanda pleaded with the Buddha to permit women's ordination and was consequently reprimanded by Mahākāśyapa. The reason for the reprimand is not that straightforward. Here, let us look at another aspect that relates to Mahākāśyapa himself. Mahākāśyapa came from a wealthy and noble family, and his personality innately had no interest in women. Although he once reluctantly entered into a marriage, the relationship was merely in name and the marriage was never consummated. Eventually he renounced the home life. This information can be found in the texts such as the Southern tradition's *Minor Discourses (Khuddaka)* and *Discourses of the Senior Monks (Theragāthā)*, as well as the Northern School's *Bhikṣuṇī Vinaya*. [The Buddhist scriptures reveal that] within the Buddhist circle Mahākāśyapa's relationship with some *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha* was quite poor, and the reason may be due to his personal characteristics.

[For example,] some *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha* called him a heretic,⁴¹ a little inferior *bhikṣu* (meaning he is not great like an elephant [king].)⁴² Also those nuns compared his Dharma teachings to “a needle peddler trying to sell a needle to the needle maker” (meaning he was trying to show off in front of experts).⁴³ The *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha* [also] intentionally made things difficult for him such that he experienced innumerable hardships.⁴⁴ Facing these situations, Mahākāśyapa was helpless and could only say, “I do not blame you all (*bhikṣuṇī saṃgha*), I blame Ānanda.” [In general,] Mahākāśyapa’s relationship with the *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha* was strained. At the gathering of the First Council, when Ānanda relayed the instruction that minor precepts could be discarded, this unavoidably triggered the many grievances from the past that were collectively brought up, and charges were laid against Ānanda.

Ānanda did not admit to any fault but for the sake of the *saṃgha*’s harmony and not wanting to stir up unrest, he repented to that *saṃgha* [at the First Council]. If this situation befell someone else, they may have retorted and said, “On the matter of women’s ordination, I pleaded with the Buddha and the Buddha also agreed. All this happened some twenty years ago. If you thought I was at fault then why did you not report me to the *saṃgha* when the Buddha was alive? It is just a few months since the Buddha entered *parinirvāṇa* and you now choose to settle all your old scores?” If [Ānanda] really retorted along this line, then perhaps the

⁴¹ See *Saṃyutta Nikāya* (SN II 219 [16.11]); *Saṃyukta Āgama*, fascicle 41 《雜阿含經》卷 41 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T02, no. 99, p. 303a12-16); *Ten-recitation Vinaya*, fascicle 40 《十誦律》卷 40 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T23, no. 1435, p. 291a17-23).

⁴² See *Ten-recitation Vinaya*, fascicle 12 《十誦律》卷 12 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T23, no. 1435, p. 85b8-c3).

⁴³ See *Saṃyutta Nikāya* (SN II 215–216 [16.10]); *Saṃyukta Āgama*, fascicle 41 《雜阿含經》卷 41 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T02, no. 99, p. 302b12-22).

⁴⁴ Various examples can be found in the *Ten-recitation Vinaya* and *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*.

Translator’s notes: An example from the *Ten-recitation Vinaya* is of a *bhikṣuṇī* intentionally walking slowly in front of Mahākāśyapa. When he asked her to either walk faster or move aside, she scolded him by calling him a heretic and questioned why he was in such a rush. (CBETA 2023.Q1, T23, no. 1435, p. 291a17-23)

An example from the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters* is that a *bhikṣuṇī* sees Mahākāśyapa standing on a bridge over flood waters and then stomps on the bridge, causing him to fall into the water. (CBETA 2023.Q1, T24, no. 1451, p. 359b28-c7)

golden ascetic (Mahākāśyapa) would have had little choice but to flash a knowing smile of a different type.

4. Other Faults Relating to Women

The two other accusations leveled at Ānanda in relation to women also concern his failure to properly carry out his duties as the Buddha’s personal attendant.

Fault of Allowing Women to Pay Respect First and Sullyng the Buddha’s Feet With Tears

One accusation, according to the *Tāmrparṇīya Vinaya*, is that following the Buddha’s *parinibbāṇa*, Ānanda allowed women to pay respect to the Buddha’s relics first. [At that time] women were grieving and weeping, and their tears sullied the Buddha’s feet.⁴⁵ This narrative is also found in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, translated by Fāxiǎn.⁴⁶ This fault consists of two aspects and the other scriptural references concerning this incident have only one or the other aspect.

For example, the *Mahīśāsaka Vinaya of Five Sections* only states that “Ānanda allowed women to be the first to pay homage”;⁴⁷ while the *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya of Four Sections*, the *Sūtra on Buddha’s Final Journey* in the *Dīrgha Āgama*, and the *Parinirvāṇa Sūtra* all state that “he failed to prevent women from shedding tears on the Buddha’s feet.”⁴⁸ [The story of this incident is that] when

⁴⁵ *Tāmrparṇīya Vinaya* 《犍度》 (CBETA 2023.Q1, N04, no. 2, p. 386a12). See also Vin II 289.

⁴⁶ *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, fascicle 3 《大般涅槃經》卷3 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T01, no. 7, pp. 206c29-207a8)

⁴⁷ *Mahīśāsaka Vinaya of Five Sections*, fascicle 30 《彌沙塞部和醯五分律》卷30 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T22, no. 1421, p. 191c1-2)

⁴⁸ *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya of Four Sections*, fascicle 54 《四分律》卷54 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T22, no. 1428, p. 966c6-8)

Sūtra on Buddha’s Final Journey in the *Dīrgha Āgama*, fascicle 4 《長阿含經》卷4 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T01, no. 1, pp. 28c27-29a2)

Parinirvāṇa Sūtra, fascicle 2 《般泥洹經》卷2 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T01, no. 6, p. 189c4-7)

the Mallas tribe of Kuśinagara all came to pay their final respects to the Buddha, Ānanda had the men move backward so the women could pay their respects first. In the *Mahīśāsaka Vinaya of Five Sections*, it states that Ānanda’s explanation was that “he worried the women would not be able to return to the city before dark,”⁴⁹ and in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* the reason is that “women are weaker [than men and] so unlikely to get in line earlier.”⁵⁰ Therefore, Ānanda decided to call upon everyone to let women pay their respects first, which is similar to the modern-day spirit of “ladies first.”

In general, when facing danger the first to be moved out of harm’s way are women and children, in which case Ānanda’s thinking is quite reasonable. The crowd [wanting to pay their respects] was huge, so it would be difficult for the women to make their way forward. In addition, if the women returned home late due to waiting to pay their last respects to the Buddha, and the women’s children were crying for their mothers, what can be done about this situation? Moreover, it might not have been safe for women to travel late at night. With these considerations in mind, Ānanda’s decision to let the women pay their respects before the men was a wise choice. But Mahākāśyapa, representing the patriarchal thinking of the time, felt that such a decision was inappropriate, and therefore raised this issue to reprimand Ānanda.

The other aspect of this accusation concerns women paying respects to the Buddha (which usually involves touching the Buddha’s feet with one’s head), who then sullied the Buddha’s feet with their tears. According to texts such as the *Sūtra on Buddha’s Final Journey* in the *Dīrgha Āgama*, the story is that when Mahākāśyapa came to pay respects to the Buddha’s relics he saw blemishes on

⁴⁹ *Mahīśāsaka Vinaya of Five Sections*, fascicle 30 《彌沙塞部和醯五分律》卷 30 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T22, no. 1421, p. 191c2-4)

⁵⁰ *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, fascicle 3 《大般涅槃經》卷 3 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T01, no. 7, pp. 206c29-207a2)

the Buddha's feet and was very displeased at this sight. Although the cause may be due to the women being more emotional than men and their tears falling on the Buddha's feet, ultimately it can be argued that Ānanda, as the Buddha's personal attendant, failed in his duty. [However,] the grand ceremony of Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* was all managed by Ānanda, and so an instance of inattention is not unreasonable. This outcome is not perfect, but forgivable.

Fault of Allowing Women to See the Buddha's Private Parts

The other accusation is that Ānanda, after the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, allowed women to see the Buddha's private parts. This narrative is found in the *Ten-recitation Vinaya* (quoted in the *Exegesis on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*), the *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya*, the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters*, and the *Sūtra on Kāśyapa Convening the Buddhist Council*. This accusation is really the same event as the prior accusation, but just a different narrative.

In terms of the *vinaya* texts, the Sarvāstivāda school, centered around Mathurā in the upstream areas of the Ganges River, was dominant there. They adopted the *Ten-recitation Vinaya* as their base *vinaya* text, which records that Ānanda allowed women to see the Buddha's private parts but says nothing about women shedding tears on the Buddha's feet.⁵¹ The Sthavira school, centered around Pāṭaliputra in the downstream areas of the Ganges River, was popular there. They took the *Tāmraparṇīya Vinaya* or the *Mahīśāsaka Vinaya of Five Sections* as their base *vinaya* text. These texts mention women being allowed to pay respects first and their tears sullied the Buddha's feet but say nothing about Ānanda allowing women to see the Buddha's private parts. This evidence shows the two

⁵¹ *Ten-recitation Vinaya*, fascicle 60 《十誦律》卷 60 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T23, no. 1435, p. 449c12-16)

accusations were not separate events but rather different narratives adopted by different Buddhist schools.

Nonetheless, the two narratives were consulted in later scriptural texts. [For example] in the new edited *vinaya* texts of the (Kashmiri) Sarvāstivāda school, *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters*, it adopted both narratives and therefore two separate faults are presented.⁵² Logically speaking, it is indeed possible that Ānanda let women pay their respect first and that their tears sullied the Buddha's feet. However, the incident in which Ānanda allowed women to see the Buddha's private parts has gone too far. According to the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters*, Ānanda displayed the Buddha's golden body and private parts to women (note that the former action is described differently from some other narratives that say Ānanda did not prevent women from paying respects to the Buddha). Concerning the latter action, it is difficult to believe that Ānanda would have done this intentionally.

Concerning such narratives that display significant variations among the texts of the different schools, much care should be exercised. Though the scriptural texts present different narratives, within the content of the story there must be something true. The fact is likely to be that the women were allowed to pay their respects first and that their tears sullied the Buddha's feet. Allowing women to pay respects first would naturally have not gone down well with Mahākāśyapa and his followers.

⁵² *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters*, fascicle 39 《根本說一切有部毘奈耶雜事》卷 39 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T24, no. 1451, p. 405b25-c2)

5. Faults Relating to Failure as Buddha's Attendant

The next three faults for which Ānanda was censured relate to failure in his duties as the Buddha's attendant. Three months prior [to Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*,] the Buddha set off from Vaiśālī for Kuśinagara, where he entered *parinirvāṇa*, and in all this time Ānanda was by his side as his attendant. The Buddha entered *parinirvāṇa* at Kuśinagara, but how could this be! Although it is known that *parinirvāṇa* is inevitable, when faced with the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, many of the sages felt sorrow, and more or less blamed Ānanda for not taking good care of the Buddha. Therefore, concerning the following three accusations, whether Ānanda was at fault is another matter, but Mahākāśyapa's action to point out these incidents can be considered reasonable from the aspect of human sentiments.

Fault of Not Requesting the Buddha to Remain in the World

The first accusation is that Ānanda did not ask the Buddha to remain in the world. All the related scriptural texts are consistent in saying that when the Buddha was at Vaiśālī he and Ānanda went to the nearby Cāpāla Cave monastery and meditated there. The Buddha told Ānanda that in this world the location of Vaiśālī and its surrounding areas are very peaceful and comfortable. Anyone who skillfully cultivates and accomplishes the practice of the four meditative concentrations of supernatural power can prolong their lifespan by one eon or more. The Buddha then said that he had skillfully cultivated and accomplished the practice of the four meditative concentrations of supernatural power. These few sentences by the Buddha implied that this world is not like what those who loathe cyclical existence perceive, which is that one must leave this world as soon as possible.

Instead, the Buddha can remain in this world for a much longer time. Had Ānanda [understood the hint and] requested the Buddha to remain in the world, then the Buddha would have done so. Even though the Buddha repeated this message three times, Ānanda did not react accordingly, and said nothing at all. Shortly afterwards, Māra came to see the Buddha. In the past, Māra had several times requested the Buddha to enter *parinirvāṇa*. But the Buddha had not agreed, for the reason that he had to wait until the fourfold assembly of disciples was well established in their practices, and the Buddha-dharma had spread far and wide. Now, Māra again raised the matter and the Buddha agreed. Accordingly, the Buddha decided to relinquish his life force and set the time of his *parinirvāṇa* to be three months hence. Upon learning about this, Ānanda immediately implored the Buddha to remain in the world, but he was too late. The Buddha explained to Ānanda that he had already promised Māra and he had to hold true to his words. Why did Ānanda not make the request to the Buddha earlier? The Buddha explained that Ānanda's mind was obstructed by Māra such that he could not understand the hint in Buddha's message. This is the reason Ānanda did not know to request the Buddha to remain in this world. The sequence of events is recorded as such.

The meanings behind the events in this story have far-reaching and profound implications and influence. First, it implies that even the sages (let alone ordinary unenlightened practitioners) have aspects of contradiction between their rationality and emotions. In terms of manifested phenomena, all sages know that all conditioned things are impermanent, and that whatever comes into being will also pass away. But when facing the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, even the sages unavoidably experienced sorrow, despair, and presumedly felt that the Buddha should not have entered *parinirvāṇa* like that.

In terms of the absolute truth, entering *parinirvāṇa* is to transcend life and death, and to abide in cessation, and so there is no need to feel grief. But when facing this worldly factual situation, [the sages] still experienced sorrow. Such contradiction between rationality and emotions is clearly highlighted in the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, where Cunda again and again pleaded with the Buddha not to enter *parinirvāṇa*, even though he knew that the Buddha had the *vajra* body, which is permanent and fixed. Therefore, the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* caused complications in the minds of the disciples, whereby their emotions were mixed with rationality. [The situation] called to question: "Did the Buddha enter *parinirvāṇa* just like that? The Buddha should not have entered *parinirvāṇa* like that." The issue of the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* remains deeply in the minds of the disciples [and will have far-reaching influence].

Second, the practice of the four meditative concentrations of supernatural power are meditative states that can give rise to supernatural powers. The cultivation of this practice can extend one's lifespan, and this concept is generally accepted within the Buddhist community. Accordingly, we see teachings mentioning that "arhats enter the apex of concentration to extend their lifespan," and "attaining meditative concentration of cessation enables one to remain in this world." It is true that with the power of deep meditative concentration someone can extend their lifespan. Then the question becomes, why the Buddha entered *parinirvāṇa* instead of remaining in this world, given he had cultivated and accomplished the practice of the four meditative concentrations of supernatural power and possessed very profound meditative concentration?

Third, the narrative has the act of relinquishing lifeforce, which implies that the Buddha's lifespan originally was much longer and that he could have remained in this world and not enter *parinirvāṇa* so early. This idea [influenced] the belief

that Buddha's lifespan was eons long, and became a general belief held by Buddha's disciples.

Fourth, Māra has always been trying to hinder Buddha's cultivation of the path, to prevent him from attaining Buddhahood and to hamper his efforts to spread the Dharma. [Basically, Māra] is one who does not want Buddha and the Dharma to exist in this world. The narrative about how Māra obstructed the Buddha is as follows. The Buddha [originally] had a very long lifespan and possessed very profound meditative abilities, and so he could have remained in this world and should have remained in this world. On the contrary, he did not do so, and this can be said to have fulfilled Māra's long-cherished wish. Why would the Buddha grant Māra's wish? Ānanda was attending to the Buddha day and night, but what was he doing? The consensus among Buddha's disciples was that Ānanda did not request the Buddha to remain in this world and so the Tathāgata entered *parinirvāṇa*. Due to the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, this consensus immediately spread among the followers and became a fact.

This is similar to the situation in Christianity after Jesus died, when his disciples began to entertain the hope that he would be resurrected, and this soon became a fact. Originally [Buddha entering *parinirvāṇa*] only gave rise to the notion that, "Buddha should not have entered *parinirvāṇa* like that," and was merely a wish in the minds of Buddha's disciples. But once this became a common consensus, Ānanda's fault became a major issue. Because he did not request the Buddha to remain in this world, he must be held responsible for the Tathāgata's early entrance into *parinirvāṇa*; that is, the Buddha not staying longer. At the time, Ānanda refuted with the reason that he had been blinded by Māra and so did not admit to the fault. This effectively means that at the time [Buddha gave him the message] he was unable to get the hint. Why should this inability be a fault? The *Parinirvāṇa Sūtra* says it convincingly, "Ānanda rose from his seat and came

down. Then he said that the Buddha predicted Maitreya as the next buddha, and those who have already encountered the Dharma will [follow his teaching and] attain awakening. Should Śākyamuni Buddha remain in the world, what would be the point of Maitreya becoming a buddha?”⁵³ This is the unique way in which Ānanda retorted, which is found only in this scripture and provides a good reason for the Buddha’s entrance to *parinirvāṇa*. Perhaps, it suggests, as the narrative was passed down some felt that Mahākāśyapa accusing Ānanda of this fault was excessive.

Fault of Not Providing Buddha With Water When He Asked

The second fault is that [Ānanda] did not provide water when the Buddha asked for it. The *vinaya* texts, such as the *Mahīśāsaka Vinaya of Five Sections* (except for the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters*), all consistently state that Mahākāśyapa had scolded Ānanda: “Why did you not fetch water for the Buddha when he requested it three times?”⁵⁴ Amongst the list of accusations leveled at Ānanda, this is the most understandable.

According to the Southern tradition’s *Mahāparinibbana Sutta* in the *Dīgha Nikāya* and the Chinese translation of the *Sūtra on Buddha’s Final Journey* in the *Dīrgha Āgama*, this story is as follows. After the Buddha accepted the offering from Cunda (roughly the day prior to Buddha’s *parinirvāṇa*), the Buddha developed a gastrointestinal illness and was passing blood on the way to Kuśinagara. The weather was hot and the Buddha was thirsty and exhausted. They rested near a river. At that time, they were also near the Krakūṣṭha River. The Buddha then asked Ānanda to fetch him some water for drinking and for

⁵³ *Parinirvāṇa Sūtra*, fascicle 2 《般泥洹經》卷2 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T01, no. 6, p. 191a13-15)

⁵⁴ *Mahīśāsaka Vinaya of Five Sections*, fascicle 30 《彌沙塞部和醯五分律》卷30 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T22, no. 1421, p. 191b25-26)

washing (bathing is the best way to cool down). Because 500 carts were crossing the upstream stretch of that river, the water was turbid. Therefore, Ānanda told the Buddha to wait until they moved further to the Krakūṣṭha River, where the water was clean enough for drinking. When someone is sick and very thirsty, and is not given a drink when they need it, this action is highly inconsiderate toward the person who is sick.

Understandably this could be viewed as disrespect from the attendant and a failure in his duty. But Ānanda considered the water to be too dirty to consume, so how could he have offered such water to the Buddha for drinking? The Buddha was expected to enter *parinirvāṇa* soon, so ordinary people may think that regardless of the potability of the water, if the Buddha wanted a drink he should have been given a drink. Thus, no matter what, Ānanda was at fault.

According to the narrative in the *vinaya* texts, Ānanda's decision to not provide water at that time, and not even fetch water, was not right. The reason is that although there was no clean water, fetching some dirty water would be better than nothing, as “by the superpowers of the Buddha, or the blessings of the heavenly beings, that [dirty] water can be transformed into clean water.”⁵⁵ Over time, this incident about Ānanda not providing water has undergone some changes as the narrative has been passed down. In the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters*, *Sūtra on Buddha's Parinirvāṇa*, and the *Parinirvāṇa Sūtra*,⁵⁶ the narrative is that at the time Ānanda fetched some dirty water and the

⁵⁵ *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya of Four Sections*, fascicle 54 《四分律》卷 54 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T22, no. 1428, p. 967c20-22)

Exegesis on the Great Perfection of Wisdom, fascicle 2 《大智度論》卷 2 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T25, no. 1509, p. 68a23-25)

⁵⁶ *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters*, fascicle 39 《根本說一切有部毘奈耶雜事》卷 39 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T24, no. 1451, p. 405a25-28)

Sūtra on Buddha's Parinirvāṇa, fascicle 2 《佛般泥洹經》卷 2 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T01, no. 5, p. 168a21-25)
Parinirvāṇa Sūtra, fascicle 2 《般泥洹經》卷 2 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T01, no. 6, p. 183c8-10)

Buddha only used it for bathing. Nonetheless, offering dirty water [to the Buddha] was of course not right and Mahākāśyapa reprimanded [Ānanda] for this and said: “Why did you not take out the alms bowl and raise it to the sky, the heavenly beings would have poured the water of the eight virtues into the bowl?”⁵⁷ To sum up, this event was likely a matter of not bringing water or offering some turbid water for bathing. But from a different perspective, given the Buddha’s supernatural powers and the protection from the heavenly beings, how could it be possible that the Buddha would not receive clean water when he needed it? Therefore, the *Mahāparinibbāṇa Sutta* in the *Dīgha Nikāya* says that the Buddha requested water three times, after which Ānanda reluctantly fetched water, and when he saw that the river was extremely clean, he praised the Buddha’s powers.⁵⁸ The *Sūtra on Buddha’s Final Journey* in the *Dīrgha Āgama* says that when Ānanda failed to bring water, the spirits of the snowy mountains provided a bowl of clean water.⁵⁹ So, regardless of Ānanda’s failure to fetch water time and again, the Buddha was still able to drink clean water. This outcome should be more appealing to the wishes of the [Buddha’s] followers.

Fault of Treading On the Buddha’s Robe

The third accusation is the fault of treading on the Buddha’s robe. This incident is recounted with little difference in the texts of the various Buddhist schools. The issue here is straightforward and merely a situation of Ānanda being scolded for showing a lack of respect. The story is that Ānanda stepped on the Buddha’s outer robe (*saṃghāṭī*) or bathing robe while folding it (some versions say while stitching or washing it). Such an action is considered disrespectful. Ānanda

⁵⁷ *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters*, fascicle 39 《根本說一切有部毘奈耶雜事》卷 39 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T24, no. 1451, p. 405a29-b2)

⁵⁸ *Mahāparinibbāṇa Sutta in the Dīgha Nikāya* DN II 128–129.

⁵⁹ *Sūtra on Buddha’s Final Journey, Dīrgha Āgama* 《長阿含經》卷 3 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T01, no. 1, p. 19c17-18)

explains that at the time there was no one around to help him, and a gust of wind picked up the robe. Therefore, he had no option but to step on it [to prevent it from flying away]. Concerning the full narrative of this story, an exact source reference from scriptural texts is yet to be found. But this is a minor issue. Perhaps this incident took place shortly before the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* [and so was revealed at the First Council but not recorded in scriptures]. As for the task of folding the Buddha's robes, this is one of the ways in which Ānanda served the Buddha daily [and stepping on the Buddha's robe may have occurred before then but was not regarded as a fault when the Buddha was alive].

6. Other Faults

In the narratives passed down, there are a few more accusations against Ānanda but these appear only in the texts belonging to the tradition of a certain area and are thus less credible.

Fault of Refusing to Be Buddha's Attendant

First is that the Buddha wanted Ānanda to be his personal attendant but Ānanda initially declined. The *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya of Four Sections* says, "the World Honored One asked you three times to be his personal attendant yet you refused. Therefore, you are guilty of a minor offense."⁶⁰ This incident is also found in texts such as the *Attendant Sūtra* in the *Madhyama Āgama* and the

⁶⁰ *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya of Four Sections*, fascicle 54 《四分律》卷 54 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T22, no. 1428, p. 967c2-4)

Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on the Matter of Schism in the Saṃgha.⁶¹ The position of [Buddha’s] personal attendant is not an easy job. It is reasonable that Ānanda would have taken some time to consider this offer. In the end, Ānanda accepted the role only after the Buddha agreed to three conditions. The Buddha praised Ānanda for exercising thoughtful consideration, and so how could this be considered a fault?

Fault of Excusing His Mistake Improperly

The *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters*, states that “While the Buddha was still alive he presented a simile and you responded with a different interpretation. This is the third fault.”⁶² It is unclear what this event relates to. [However,] in the *Sūtra on Kāśyapa Convening the Buddhist Council*, there is a parallel account: “When the World Honored One reprimanded you, at that time you responded with harsh words that you took the blame for other’s fault. This is your third fault.”⁶³ This should be the incident recorded in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters*.

[The event in question is probably related to the incident in which] Udāyin and Śāriputra were debating about the concentration in which there is complete

⁶¹ *Madhyama Āgama, Attendant Sūtra*, fascicle 8 《中阿含經》卷 8 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T01, no. 26, p. 472b22-29)

Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on the Matter of Schism in the Saṃgha, fascicle 13 《根本說一切有部毘奈耶破僧事》卷 13 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T24, no. 1450, p. 167a1-3)

Translator’s note: the incident where Ānanda initially refused to be the Buddha’s attendant does not seem clear in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on the Matter of Schism in the Saṃgha*. What this text has is that Śāriputra and Mahāmaudgalyāyana persuaded and appealed to Ānanda to be the Buddha’s attendant, and after that persuasion and appeal, Ānanda accepted the task. Perhaps it is the description “persuaded and appealed” (勸請) that causes Venerable Yinshun to have the understanding that Ānanda initially refused to be the Buddha’s attendant. If Ānanda accepted the task immediately when Śāriputra and Mahāmaudgalyāyana first mentioned this matter, then they would not have had to persuade and appeal to Ānanda to accept the role of being the Buddha’s attendant.

⁶² *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters*, fascicle 39 《根本說一切有部毘奈耶雜事》卷 39 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T24, no. 1451, p. 405a20-21)

⁶³ *Sūtra on Kāśyapa Convening the Buddhist Council* 《迦葉結經》 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T49, no. 2027, p. 6a18-19)

extinction of sensation and thought. This was the one and only time Ānanda was reprimanded [by the Buddha]. According to the *Madhyama Āgama*, at the time, Ānanda said to Venerable Purity that “this was done by another, yet I am reprimanded”.⁶⁴ This incident is also found in a *sutta* of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (AN 5.166)⁶⁵ belonging to the Southern tradition, but here there is no mention of resentful speech [by Ānanda]. The Chinese translation of the *Madhyama Āgama*, records only that [Ānanda said to Venerable Purity that he] is blamed for somebody else’s mistake and is too embarrassed to ask the Buddha about it.

Fault of Still Having Some Defilements

The *Sūtra on Kāśyapa Convening the Buddhist Council* states, “The members of this assembly [in the First Council] are utterly free of lust, anger, and ignorance, and only you still possess three defilements ... this is the ninth fault.”⁶⁶ This account, found in the *Sūtra on Kāśyapa Convening the Buddhist Council*, is based on the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters*. In the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya on Miscellaneous Matters*, after the section detailing Ānanda’s eight faults, it states that Ānanda had yet to completely end all his defilements. For this reason, Ānanda was not permitted to participate in the assembly of the First Council and was asked to leave.

It seems that the compilers of the *Sūtra on Kāśyapa Convening the Buddhist Council* misunderstood the narrative and therefore counted this as another fault. In fact, if having not completely ended all defilements is considered a minor offense, that would mean all disciples who have yet to attain arhatship are guilty of this fault. Based on the records passed down, it may seem that the *vinaya*

⁶⁴ *Madhyama Āgama*, fascicle 5 《中阿含經》卷5 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T01, no. 26, p. 450a29-b5)

⁶⁵ *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (AN III 194 [5.166])

⁶⁶ *Sūtra on Kāśyapa Convening the Buddhist Council* 《迦葉結經》 (CBETA 2023.Q1, T49, no. 2027, p. 6a27-29)

masters from the Northern area singled out Ānanda [for whatever reason], and they are suspected of trying to gather as much information as they could to frame him. [I believe that] this does not align with the actual situation of that time [having compared other sources].

7. Conclusion

The *saṃgha* led by Mahākāśyapa accused Ānanda of a series of faults. The actual situation and underlying meanings of each fault are clearly detailed in the aforementioned discussions. [These faults] relate to none other than issues concerning the precepts, women, and failure of duty as an attendant.

In terms of the faults concerning the precepts, Ānanda's conveyance of Buddha's final instruction that minor precepts could be discarded represents the position of those who place emphasis on the fundamental spirit of precepts. As for the minor precepts, those supporting this position believe that there is a need for flexibility to cater to changing and different situations. [That means,] if after careful consideration the *saṃgha* harmoniously and unanimously agrees, then the minor precepts can be discarded. In contrast, Mahākāśyapa represents the position that primary and minor precepts should be upheld equally, and therefore the notion that minor precepts can be discarded is viewed as destroying the *vinaya*. Those holding this position deplore the notion that minor precepts can be discarded. Accordingly, their conclusion was that whatever precepts the Buddha had set cannot be discarded, while what was not set into rules should not be added. Consequently, this became to mean that only the Buddha can set the precepts and that all these precepts became permanent and fixed.

The opposing positions of the practitioners who emphasize the Dharma and those who emphasize the *vinaya* is as described above. The practitioners who

emphasize the Dharma are the Dharma preachers who focus on understanding the meaning [of the Dharma] and the meditation masters who focus on practical application (a majority of Ānanda's disciples focus on meditation practices). The practitioners who emphasize the *vinaya* are the *vinaya* masters who focus on discipline and, more strictly speaking, they are mainly the ascetic practitioners. The conflict between these two main types of practitioners is clearly reflected in the events surrounding the First and Second Council meetings of the Buddhist *saṃgha*.

In terms of the issues concerning women, Ānanda pleaded for the allowance of women's ordination, and the Buddha allowed women to be ordained. This reflects the view of gender equality on the path of cultivation and the attainment of liberation. In contrast, what Mahākāśyapa represented was the traditional, patriarchal value system in which women were seen as inferior and a source of trouble. Due to this position, all other aspects were ignored and only the *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha* was unfairly blamed for the shorter duration of the righteous Dharma's presence in the world. As for Ānanda allowing women to first pay respects to the Buddha's relics, this was also considered an act that defiled the Buddha's remains, and so he should be reprimanded. Ānanda's position in relation to these two aforementioned events concerning women was in full agreement with the Buddha's position.

As for the accusations that Ānanda failed to carry out his duties as an attendant, this was primarily due to the Buddha entering *parinirvāṇa*, which caused the Buddha's disciples to experience grief and sorrow. Inevitably [any grievances] were then taken out on Buddha's personal attendant. This is like the situation whereby parents, no matter how old, pass away. The children who are filial will still feel uneasy and blame the parent's death on each other for not extending medical assistance or care, which gives rise to disagreements. Therefore, after the

Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, when the disciples thought about Ānanda not providing water when asked, they felt he did not perform his duty well and that is why the Buddha was not able to stay longer.

Ascribing the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* to Ānanda's fault certainly is an aspect of human sentiment. However, at that time, Ānanda's faults were made out to be more serious [by the *saṃgha* led by Mahākāśyapa]. [They believed that] Ānanda pleaded for women's ordination and so the righteous Dharma will not last as long as expected, and failure to request the Buddha to remain meant that the Buddha did not stay longer. The early entrance into *parinirvāṇa* and the reduced duration of the righteous Dharma's presence in the world were both viewed as Ānanda's faults. The two events in themselves were ordinary, but after the causes and effects of these events were [biasedly] analyzed, [Ānanda's so-called] faults were regarded as extremely serious. Fortunately, Ānanda had been the Buddha's attendant for 25 years, with a glorious record of being faultless. In fact, the compilation of the Dharma canon [at the First Council] could not do without Ānanda. [Those accusations accordingly cannot undermine Ānanda's merits,] which is just like how the clouds cannot permanently cover the sun and moon, and so Ānanda will always be regarded as a great being with boundless honor.