

The Arahant Ideal in early Buddhism - The Case of Bakkula

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Introduction

The present article is the second of three articles dedicated to a study of the development of the concepts of a Buddha, of an arahant and of a bodhisattva in early Buddhism. The first part of this trilogy, published in the previous issue of this journal (Anālayo, 2006: 1-20), examined the attribution of omniscience to the Buddha, concluding that this attribution was the outcome of a later development during which the concept of what constitutes a Buddha assumed ever more divine features.

The beginnings of this development can already be traced in a relatively early stratum of Buddhist literature. One example is a verse in the *Theragāthā*, where a monk refers to the Buddha as his omniscient teacher.¹ Another example is the *Madhyama-āgama* version of the conversion of King Bimbisāra, according to which Uruvela Kassapa declared that his new teacher, the Buddha, was omniscient.² Parallel versions of this discourse in Chinese, Sanskrit and Tibetan,³ as well as in the Dharmaguptaka, Mahāsāṅghika, Mahīśāsaka, (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda and Theravāda Vinayas,⁴ do not attribute omniscience to the Buddha. This makes it highly probable that the *Madhyama-āgama* passage was influenced by later developments.

That the first traces of such later developments should already manifest in the discourses collected in the Pāli *Nikāyas* and the Chinese *Āgamas* is perhaps not too surprising, given that these discourses are products of a long period of oral transmission.

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¹ Th 722: *sabbaññū sabbadassāvī ... ācariyo mama*.

² MĀ 62 at T I 497c29: 佛一切智.

³ T 41 at T I 825c26; cat. no. 399 folio 106 V2-3 in Waldschmidt (1932: 17), cf. also Waldschmidt (1952: 20); and Skilling (1994: 80,7).

⁴ T 1428 at T XXII 797c22 (Dharmaguptaka Vinaya); Basak (2004: 267,19) or Senart (1897: 446,3) (*Mahāvastu* of the Mahāsāṅghika Vinaya); T 1421 at T XXII 110a18 (Mahīśāsaka Vinaya); Gnoli (1977: 156,22) (*Saṅghabheda-vastu* of the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda Vinaya); and Vin I 36,32 (Theravāda Vinaya); for a listing of further parallels cf. Skilling (1997: 267-275).

Similar to the development that can be discerned in the concept of the nature of a Buddha, the Buddhist notions of the praiseworthy qualities of an arahant appear to have, to some degree, also gone through a process of development. This development appears to have led to a shift of emphasis that already manifests in the discourses.⁵

The early stages of this shift of emphasis can best be traced with the help of the *Bakkula-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*, which depicts in detail the qualities and conduct of the arahant monk Bakkula.⁶ The *Bakkula-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya* has a counterpart in the *Madhyama-āgama* collection translated into Chinese towards the end of the fourth century of the present era by the Kashmiri Gautama Saṅghadeva from what appears to have been a Prākṛit original transmitted by a Sarvāstivāda tradition.⁷

As a basis for studying the arahant concept in these two versions of the *Bakkula-sutta*, the present article will first offer a translation of the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse, followed by a comparison of the Pāli and Chinese versions. Based on this translation and comparison, the way these two discourses depict the arahant Bakkula will be analysed, comparing the image they depict with descriptions of arahant monks in other discourses in order to discern the beginnings of a shift of emphasis in the conception of the conduct and qualities of an arahant.

Translation⁸

The discourse to Bakkula

1. Thus have I heard. At one time, when the Buddha had recently

⁵ Another aspect in the development of the *Arahant* ideal is examined by Bond (1984: 228), who points out that "the *Arahant* concept seems to have developed from an ideal readily attainable in this life ... into an ideal considered remote and impossible to achieve in one or even many lifetimes".

⁶ MN 124 at MN III 124-128.

⁷ On the language of the *Madhyama-āgama* manuscript cf. Bapat (1969: 5); Enomoto (1986: 20) and von Hinüber (1982: 250); on its school affiliation cf. Enomoto (1984); Lü (1963: 242); Mayeda (1985: 98); Minh Chau (1991: 27); Waldschmidt (1980: 136); and Yin-shun (1983: 703).

⁸ In order to facilitate comparing the present translation of the 薄拘羅經, MĀ 34 at T I 475a-c, with the English translation of its Pāli counterpart, I have adopted the same paragraph numbering as used in Ñāṇamoli (2005: 985-988). For the same reason I adopt Pāli terminology throughout, without thereby intending to take a position on the language of the original *Madhyama-āgama* manuscript.

passed away, the venerable Bakkula was living at Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove at the Squirrel's Feeding Ground.

2. At that time there was a heterodox wanderer, a close friend of the venerable Bakkula from the time before [Bakkula] had gone forth. While roaming around, he came to where the venerable Bakkula was staying, exchanged greetings, and sat down to one side.

3-8. The heterodox wanderer said: “Friend Bakkula, I would like to ask a question, would you listen to it?”

The venerable Bakkula answered: “Heterodox wanderer, having heard what you are asking about, I will consider it.”

The heterodox wanderer said: “Friend Bakkula, how long have you been practising the path in this good teaching and discipline?”

The venerable Bakkula answered: “Heterodox wanderer, I have been practising the path in this good teaching and discipline for eighty years.”

The heterodox wanderer said: “Friend Bakkula, during the eighty years that you have been practising the path in this good teaching and discipline, how many times do you recall having engaged in sexual intercourse?”

The venerable Bakkula said to the heterodox wanderer: “You should not ask such a question. Instead [you should] ask in another way: 'Friend Bakkula, during the eighty years that you have been practising the path in this good teaching and discipline, how many times do you recall having had a perception related to sensuality?' Heterodox wanderer, you should ask a question like this.”

Then, the heterodox wanderer instead spoke like this: “I now ask friend Bakkula again, during the eighty years that you have been practising the path in this good teaching and discipline, how many times do you recall having had a perception related to sensuality?”

Then, in relation to this question by the heterodox wanderer, the venerable Bakkula addressed the monks: “Friends, I have been practising the path in this good teaching and discipline for eighty years, but that on that account conceit would arise [in me], [you] all should not think [like this].” - That the venerable Bakkula made such a declaration, this [we] reckon a wonderful and marvellous quality of the venerable Bakkula.

Again, the venerable Bakkula declared: “Friends, during the eighty years that I have been practising the path in this good teaching and discipline, I never had a perception related to sensuality.” - That the venerable Bakkula made such a declaration, this [we] reckon a

wonderful and marvellous quality of the venerable Bakkula.

9-15. Again, the venerable Bakkula declared: “Friends, I have been wearing rag robes for eighty years, but that on that account conceit would arise [in me], [you] all should not think [like this].” - That the venerable Bakkula made such a declaration, this [we] reckon a wonderful and marvellous quality of the venerable Bakkula.

Again, the venerable Bakkula declared: “Friends, during the eighty years that I have been wearing rag robes, I do not recall having ever accepted a robe given by householders, having ever cut up [robe material] and made a robe [by myself], having ever employed another monk to get a robe made [for me], having ever used a needle to sew a robe, or having ever taken a needle to sew a bag, not even a single stitch.” - That the venerable Bakkula made such a declaration, this [we] reckon a wonderful and marvellous quality of the venerable Bakkula.

16-19. Again, the venerable Bakkula declared: “Friends, I have been begging alms for eighty years, but that on that account conceit would arise [in me], [you] all should not think [like this].” - That the venerable Bakkula made such a declaration, this [we] reckon a wonderful and marvellous quality of the venerable Bakkula.

Again, the venerable Bakkula declared: “Friends, during the eighty years that I have been begging alms, I do not recall having ever accepted an invitation by householders, having ever skipped [a house when] begging for alms, or having ever begged alms from a great household so as to obtain pure, subtle, supremely excellent and rich food to bite, put into the mouth and digest.

20-25. I never looked at a woman's face, nor do I recall having ever entered a nunnery. I do not recall having ever exchanged greetings with a nun, not even speaking [to a nun when meeting her] on the road.” - That the venerable Bakkula made such a declaration, this [we] reckon a wonderful and marvellous quality of the venerable Bakkula.

26-29. Again, the venerable Bakkula declared: “Friends, during the eighty years that I have been practising the path in this good teaching and discipline, I do not recall having ever kept a novice as attendant, nor do I recall having ever taught the Dhamma to lay people, even to the extent of speaking a phrase of four words.” - That the venerable Bakkula made such a declaration, this [we] reckon a wonderful and marvellous quality of the venerable Bakkula.

30-37. Again, the venerable Bakkula declared: “Friends, during the eighty years that I have been practising the path in this good teaching and discipline, I have never been sick, not even to the extent of having a headache for a short moment. I do not recall having ever taken medicine, not even a single piece of gallnut.” - That the venerable Bakkula made such a declaration, this [we] reckon a wonderful and marvellous quality of the venerable Bakkula.

Again, the venerable Bakkula declared: “Friends, when sitting down cross legged, during these eighty years I never leaned against a wall or a tree.”⁹ - That the venerable Bakkula made such a declaration, this [we] reckon a wonderful and marvellous quality of the venerable Bakkula.

38. Again, the venerable Bakkula declared: “Friends, within three days and nights [after my ordination] I attained the threefold realization.” - That the venerable Bakkula made such a declaration, this [we] reckon a wonderful and marvellous quality of the venerable Bakkula.

40-41. Again, the venerable Bakkula declared: “Friends, seated cross-legged I will attain final Nibbāna.” The venerable Bakkula then attained final Nibbāna while seated cross-legged. - That the venerable Bakkula attained final Nibbāna while seated cross-legged, this [we] reckon a wonderful and marvellous quality of the venerable Bakkula.

[After] the venerable Bakkula had made declarations in this manner, at that time the heterodox wanderer and the monks, having heard these declarations, rejoiced in it and put it into practice.

Comparison

A comparison of the Pāli and Chinese versions of the *Bakkula Sutta* shows that, though the main thrust of the two discourses is similar, in relation to details several differences can be found. One difference involves the narrative framework of the discourse. The *Majjhima-nikāya* version gives the name of Bakkula's visitor as Acela Kassapa and reports that Bakkula's declarations had such an impact on Acela Kassapa that he decided to go forth and eventually became an arahant.¹⁰ The *Madhyama-*

⁹ Adopting the 宋, 元 and 明 variant 倚 instead of 倚.

¹⁰ MN 124 at MN III 127,13.

āgama version, in contrast, neither gives the visitor's name nor reports that he went forth and became an arahant.

The Pāli version's identification of Bakkula's visitor is to some extent problematic, as other Pāli discourses also report that Acela Kassapa went forth and eventually became an arahant, though according to them this happened after hearing quite a different discourse by another speaker.

The *Kassapasihanāda-sutta* records that an exposition on asceticism by the Buddha inspired Acela Kassapa to go forth and become an arahant.¹¹ A discourse in the *Samyutta-nikāya* reports that Acela Kassapa ordained and became an arahant after meeting a former friend, the householder Citta, and finding out that as a householder Citta had progressed further than Acela Kassapa had been able to do as a wanderer.¹² Another discourse in the *Samyutta-nikāya* records an exposition by the Buddha to Acela Kassapa on whether pleasure and pain are caused by oneself, others, both, or neither, an exposition that so inspired Acela Kassapa that he went forth and eventually became an arahant.¹³

Unless one were to assume that the name Acela Kassapa refers to four different persons, the above Pāli passages contradict one another. The Chinese parallels to the above-mentioned discourse do not associate these different events with the same person. The *Dīrgha-āgama* parallel to the *Kassapasihanāda-sutta* introduces its protagonist just as a Kassapa;¹⁴ and the *Samyukta-āgama* version of the meeting of the householder Citta with his former friend refers to the latter just as a naked ascetic (*acela*) and heterodox wanderer, without giving his name.¹⁵ Only the Chinese and Sanskrit fragment parallels to the discourse on the causation of pleasure and pain introduce the wanderer that heard this exposition as Acela Kassapa,¹⁶ though according to them he became only a stream-enterer during the discourse and was afterwards killed by a cow. Since the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel to the Bakkula-sutta does not identify Bakkula's visitor (nor reports that he became an

¹¹ DN 8 at DN I 177,1.

¹² SN 41:9 at SN IV 302,10; cf. also von Hinüber (1997: 68).

¹³ SN 12:17 at SN II 22,6.

¹⁴ DĀ 25 at T I 104c12: 迦葉.

¹⁵ SĀ 573 at T II 152a24: 阿耨毘外道.

¹⁶ SĀ 302 at T II 86b3; T 499 at T XIV 768c20; and fragment S 474 folio 14 R2 in Tripāṭhī (1962: 47); cf. also SHT V 1133 aA3 in Sander (1985: 128).

arahant), the presentations in these different *Āgama* discourses do not conflict with one another.

In addition to differing in the extent to which they identify Bakkula's visitor and describe his reaction, the Pāli and Chinese versions of the *Bakkula-sutta* also differ to some extent in regard to the qualities they ascribe to Bakkula.

The two versions report in similar terms how Bakkula reacted to his visitor's inquiry about sexual intercourse by reformulating the question. Once his former friend asked the more appropriate question about having sensual perceptions, according to the *Madhyama-āgama* version Bakkula first clarified that he had no conceit about having been ordained for eighty years, and then pointed out that during this whole time he had never experienced a perception related to sensual desire.¹⁷ In the Pāli version, Bakkula does not make any statement about conceit, but then treats the issue of his perceptions and thoughts during the eighty years of his monkhood in additional detail by pointing out that he also never had a perception of ill will or cruelty, and also no thought related to sensuality, ill will or cruelty, (see the summary below).¹⁸

MĀ 34:	MN 124:
no conceit	-
no sensual perception	no sensual perception
-	no perception of ill will
-	no perception of cruelty
-	no sensual thought
-	no thought of ill will
-	no thought of cruelty

The next two topics discussed in both versions relate to the requisites of a monk. According to the *Madhyama-āgama* version, Bakkula clarified that he had no conceit in regard to his ascetic observance of wearing rag robes for eight years. As a strict wearer of rag robes, according to both versions Bakkula never accepted a new robe given by householders. While according to the *Madhyama-āgama* account he never got a robe made by another

¹⁷ MĀ 34 at T I 475b4.

¹⁸ MN 124 at MN III 125,21.

and never sewed a bag, according to the Pāli version he never sewed a *kaṭhina* robe,¹⁹ and he never made robes for others.²⁰ The Pāli discourse also notes that he never dyed a robe.

MĀ 34:	MN 124:
no conceit	-
never robes from householders	never robes from householders
never cut robe material	never cut robe material
never got robe made by others	-
never sewed a robe	never sewed a robe
-	never dyed a robe
never sewed a bag	never sewed a <i>kaṭhina</i> robe
-	never made robes for others

In regard to food, Bakkula had adopted another of the ascetic observances, which is to depend only on begging alms for one's sustenance and not accept invitations. The *Madhyama-āgama* version again notes that Bakkula did not feel any conceit on account of his conduct, and then reports that Bakkula had undertaken the practice of continuous begging for food and never went to superior households in order to get exquisite food. The Pāli version instead highlights that he never desired to be invited, and never sat or ate inside a house.

MĀ 34:	MN 124:
no conceit	-
never accepted invitation	never accepted invitation
-	never wished for invitation
never skipped alms round	-
-	never sat down in a house
never begged at superior house	-
-	never ate in a house

¹⁹ The *kaṭhina* robe is to be offered to a selected monk at the *kaṭhina* ceremony held at the end of a rainy season retreat.

²⁰ The PTS edition at MN III 126,29 and C^c-MN III 298,11 read *sabrahmacārī cīvarakamme byāpāritā*; while B^c-MN III 167,12 reads *sabrahmacārīnaṃ cīvarakamme vicāritā* and S^c-MN III 256,19 reads *sabrahmacārīnaṃ cīvarakammaṃ vicāritā*.

The next theme is Bakkula's conduct towards women. The two versions agree that Bakkula did not look at women and never entered a nunnery. While the *Madhyama-āgama* version states that he would not even greet nuns, the Pāli version reports that he never taught any type of woman, not even a nun, a female probationer or a female novice.²¹

MĀ 34:	MN 124:
never looked at woman's face	never grasped sign of woman
-	never taught woman
never entered nunnery	never entered nunnery
-	never taught nun
never greeted nun	-
-	never taught female probationer
-	never taught female novice

Bakkula also did not act as a teacher in regard to male monastics. According to the *Madhyama-āgama* account he never had a novice as his attendant, while according to the Pāli version he never gave the going forth or higher ordination and never gave dependence.²² The *Madhyama-āgama* version also notes that Bakkula never taught the Dhamma to the laity.

MĀ 34:	MN 124:
-	never gave going forth
-	never gave ordination
-	never gave dependence
never had novice attendant	never had novice attendant
never taught laity	-

Both versions state that Bakkula never got sick,²³ and there-

²¹ A female probationer, *sikkhamānā*, is preparing herself during a two years period for taking the higher ordination as a *bhikkhunī*.

²² Dependence, *nissaya*, involves a tutelage relationship between a *bhikkhu* of at least ten years standing and a junior *bhikkhu*.

²³ Bakkula's freedom from disease is also recorded in the *Karma-vibhaṅga*, cf. Kudo (2004: 166,4 / 167,4) or Lévi (1932: 76,11); in the (*Mūla-*) *Sarvāstivāda Vinaya*, T 1448 at T XXIV 82c25, and in T 199 at T IV 194c5. AN 1:14 at AN I 25,6 reckons Bakkula as foremost in health; cf. also the *Aśokarājāvadāna* in Cowell (1886: 396,5) or in Vaidya (1999: 253,21), in

fore never used medicine or carried it around,²⁴ and also never allowed himself the comfort of leaning against a support. The Pāli version additionally records that he never bathed in a bathroom, never used bathing powder and never had a massage;²⁵ and that he never lay down and never spent a rainy season retreat in a village.

MĀ 34:	MN 124:
-	never bathed in bathroom
-	never used bath powder
-	never received a massage
never got sick	never got sick
never took medicine	never carried medicine
never leaned against support	never used a support
-	never lay down
-	never spent rains in village

The final topic covered in both versions is Bakkula's declaration that he became an arahant soon after his ordination. While in the *Madhyama-āgama* account Bakkula proclaims that he attained the three higher knowledges within three days,²⁶ in the Pāli discourse he declares that he became an arahant within a week. The two versions conclude by reporting that Bakkula passed away seated, after having announced his impending *parinibbāna* to his fellow monks.

SĀ 604 at T II 168a22 and in T 2043 at T L 138c5. Other references to his health can be found in T 1544 at T XXVI 1018b11; T 1545 at T XXVII 121c5; T 2058 at T L 308a22; T 2122 at T LIII 615b27 and T 2123 at T LIV 44c13. The list of eminent disciples in EĀ 4.5 at T II 557c16 introduces him as foremost in longevity.

²⁴ The PTS edition at MN III 127,2, C^c-MN III 300,10 and S^c-MN III 257,12 read *bhesajjam pariharitā*; while B^c-MN III 167,24 reads *bhesajjam upaharitā*.

²⁵ The PTS edition at MN III 126,29 reads *sabrahmacārīgattaparikamme byāpajjitā*; while B^c-MN III 167,23 reads *sabrahmacārī gattapari-kamme vicāritā*; C^c-MN III 300,5 *sabrahmacārī gattaparikamme vyāpāritā* and S^c-MN III 257,10 *sabrahmacārīgattaparikammaṃ sādītā*.

²⁶ MĀ 34 at T I 475c7. His attainment of the three higher knowledges recurs in the Chinese, Sanskrit and Tibetan versions of the verses attributed to him, cf. T 199 at T IV 194c1; Bechert (1961: 145,10); Dutt (1984: 193,12) and Hofinger (1954: 81,11); but is absent from the Pāli version of his verses at Th 225-227.

Analysis

Looking back on the *Madhyama-āgama* and *Majjhima-nikāya* versions of the *Bakkula-sutta*, it is particularly noteworthy that each version follows its descriptions with repeated acclamations by the reciters of the discourse, praising the wonderful and marvellous character of the qualities of the arahant Bakkula. This form of presentation is rather unusual for discourses found in the *Āgamas* or *Nikāyas*. Usually the remarks by the reciters specify locations and identify speakers, or provide transitions from one event to another and background narrations, but do not make explicit proclamations of approval. These repeated acclamations reveal that, from the perspective of the reciters, Bakkula's mode of conduct was considered highly praiseworthy, that for them he was a model arahant.

Another noteworthy point is that this depiction of Bakkula as a model arahant does not belong to the earliest stages of the history of the Buddhist order. The two versions agree that by the time of meeting his former friend, Bakkula had been ordained for eighty years. Hence, even if he had taken ordination soon after the Buddha started to teach, the meeting described in the present discourse would nevertheless have to be placed several decades after the Buddha's passing away, at least thirty-five years later than the forty-five year period of the Buddha's teaching activities. Thus the remark at the beginning of the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse, according to which the meeting between Bakkula and his friend took place “when the Buddha had recently passed away”, appears to be a case of applying a standard pericope without proper consideration of the context.²⁷

From the circumstance that Bakkula had been a monk for eighty years by the time of the events described in both versions of the *Bakkula-sutta* it would also follow that the present discourse could not have been part of the recital of discourses that according to the traditional account took place at the so-called first Council held soon after the Buddha's demise.²⁸ In fact, the commentary to

²⁷ MĀ 34 at T I 475a13: 佛般涅槃後不久。

²⁸ This account can be found in the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya in T 1428 at T XXII 968b15; in the Mahāsāṅghika Vinaya in T 1425 at XXII 491c2; in the Mahīśāsaka Vinaya in T 1421 at T XXII 191a19; in the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda Vinaya in T 1451 at T XXIV 407a3; in the Sarvāstivāda Vinaya in T 1435 at

the *Bakkula-sutta* explains that the *Bakkula-sutta* was included in the canonical collections only at the second Council or communal recitation.²⁹

In sum, then, the occurrence of the relatively unusual feature of repeated acclamation shows that, from the perspective of the reciters, the conduct and qualities of Bakkula represented an important ideal. At the same time, the lateness of the two versions indicates that this ideal stems from a time when the Buddha had already attained final Nibbāna for several decades at least.

Revisiting the conduct and qualities of Bakkula from this perspective, it is noteworthy that according to both versions he never sewed robes with a needle. Even if he wore only rag robes, these would have needed to be mended from time to time. According to the Pāli version, he also never dyed his robe, a task that would similarly be difficult to avoid in the hot and humid climate of India, where the natural dye used for robes requires periodical renewal. From this it would follow that someone else must have undertaken this work on his behalf.

The Pāli commentary explains that Bakkula's relatives would get rag robes made and dyed for him, leaving them out for him when he went to bathe. Bakkula then dressed in those new robes and gave his old robes to other monks, so that a need to mend his robes never arose.³⁰ This would explain how he managed to wear robes without doing any mending or dying himself, though the commentarial account is to some extent difficult to reconcile with the explicit statement in the *Bakkula-sutta* that he never accepted a robe from a householder.³¹ Even though, according to the commentarial explanation, these were rag robes, they had nevertheless been prepared by householders and the fact that he put them on after bathing would mean that he accepted them. Be that as it may, in order to avail himself of dyed and stitched rag robes he evidently had to rely on the help of others, yet, according to both versions of the *Bakkula-sutta*, he does not seem to have reciprocated in this respect.

T XXIII 449a20; and in the Theravāda Vinaya at Vin II 287,12; for a comparative study of these and other accounts of this event cf. Przyłuski (1926).

²⁹ Ps IV 197: *idaṃ pana suttaṃ dutiyasaṅgāhe saṅgītaṃ.*

³⁰ Ps IV 193.

³¹ MN 124 at MN III 126,1: *nābhijānāmi gahapaticīvaraṃ sādītā.*

Such lack of reciprocation was apparently not confined only to robes. Though Bakkula himself must have received ordination and training as a novice, he did not train novices according to the *Madhyama-āgama* account, nor did he give the going forth, ordination or dependence according to the Pāli version. Judging from the *Madhyama-āgama* version, he never even gave any teachings to the laity.³²

Such conduct might perhaps be understandable if Bakkula were living the life of a hermit. Yet, in both discourses he readily addressed other monks during his discussion with his visitor and also announced his impending passing away to other monks. This shows that he was living in the midst of a monastic community. That is, the description in the two versions of the *Bakkula-sutta* does not refer to a monk who dwells in solitude, but to a monk who appears to live amidst other monks. If Bakkula's fellow monks had adopted a type of conduct similar to his, the monastic order would not have stood much chance of survival.

Now, if this were just an isolated instance of a monk who is rather withdrawn and introverted, then this would perhaps not be worth further comment. What makes the case of Bakkula noteworthy, however, is the circumstance that the reciters treat his conduct as praiseworthy to the extent of acclaiming each aspect of his behaviour as wonderful and marvellous. They praise qualities that, had he not been an arahant, could even be mistaken for selfishness.

Another aspect of his conduct that the reciters consider worth extolling is his refraining from any interaction with nuns. This too is puzzling, since once Bakkula had become an arahant soon after his ordination, whether within three days (according to the *Madhyama-āgama* account) or within a week (according to the Pāli version), one might wonder what problem he saw in teaching nuns or greeting them. According to the Pāli commentary, Bakkula had been eighty years old at the time of his going forth, a circumstance also reported in the *Puṇyavibhaṅga-śāstra*.³³ This makes it even more difficult to understand why it is praiseworthy

³² According to EĀ 23.2 at T II 611c4, this unwillingness to teach even motivated Sakka to visit Bakkula in order to find out why Bakkula, though being an *Arahant* and endowed with deep insight into the true nature of reality, was nevertheless unwilling to share his insight with others; cf. also T 2122 at T LIII 470a1.

³³ Ps IV 192 and T 1507 at T XXV 45c22.

when a monk who is an arahant and well over eighty shuns any contact with nuns.

According to the *Nandakovāda-sutta* and its Chinese parallel, the Buddha expected his monk disciples to take their turn at teaching nuns.³⁴ The Pāli Vinaya even considers it an offence if a monk does not teach nuns when it is his turn.³⁵ The same Vinaya also reports that the Buddha sent Ānanda to give teachings to the harem of King Pasenadi.³⁶ If even young Ānanda, who only became an arahant after the Buddha had passed away, was sent to teach the charming wives of the king,³⁷ there seems little reason to consider it praiseworthy when an apparently considerably older monk who is an arahant will not even speak to nuns.

A description in the *Āṅguttara-nikāya* of seven qualities that prevent a monk from decline makes a point of combining each of these qualities with the need to also encourage the development of the same qualities in others.³⁸ In fact, according to the *Mahā-gopālaka-sutta* and its parallels to teach others is an integral aspect of being a praiseworthy monk.³⁹ These discourses treat as a serious defect what the two versions of the *Bakkula-sutta* consider wonderful and marvellous.

A discourse in the *Āṅguttara-nikāya* compares those who are concerned only with their own welfare to those who are concerned with their own welfare and the welfare of others, making it clear that the latter are more praiseworthy.⁴⁰ The importance of concern for others can also be seen in the depiction of other arahant monks. The *Rathavinīta-sutta* and its Chinese parallels, for example, highlight that Puṇṇa Mantāṇiputta was praiseworthy not only because he

³⁴ MN 146 at MN III 270,18 and SĀ 276 at T II 73c25.

³⁵ Vin II 264,35.

³⁶ Vin IV 158,30.

³⁷ The attractiveness of the wives in King Pasenadi's harem is described in SN 55: 6 at SN V 351,8.

³⁸ AN 7:34 at AN IV 30,12.

³⁹ MN 33 at MN I 221,18; AN 11:8 at AN V 349,11; SĀ 1249 at T II 343a5; EĀ 49.1 at T II 794b8 and T 123 at T II 546b15. According to Katz (1989: 196), "it is natural for an *Arahant* to teach". Witanachchi (2005: 582) adds that "an ideal Buddhist monk would not be contented only with ... [his] own welfare. He is also expected to impart the knowledge of the Dhamma ... to others".

⁴⁰ AN 7:64 at AN IV 116,22, a comparative study of this discourse and its Chinese parallels can be found in Schmithausen (2004).

possessed various good qualities himself, but also because he taught others how to develop the same qualities.⁴¹ Even a monk like Revata who, unlike Bakkula, was renowned for his secluded and solitary life style,⁴² would still make a point of proclaiming that he feels himself a friend and comrade to all, being compassionate towards all beings.⁴³

Admittedly, not everyone is capable of teaching others, but at least some cooperation in monastic affairs would be possible for anyone. To assist other monks in their tasks is according to other discourses a praiseworthy quality and will lead to communal harmony and concord.⁴⁴ An example of what from the perspective of these discourses constitutes praiseworthy conduct would be the case of Dabba Mallaputta, depicted in the Pāli Vinaya. According to the Vinaya account, when Dabba had become an arahant at a young age, he reflected in what way he could render service to the monastic community. Eventually he decided to act as a distributor of lodgings and meals for his monk companions, a decision that met with the Buddha's explicit approval.⁴⁵

Another passage in the Vinaya records that on one occasion the Buddha chanced upon a sick monk that had not been properly cared for. With Ānanda's help, the Buddha himself washed the monk and afterwards admonished the other monks, explaining that it was their duty to look after a sick fellow.⁴⁶ For the Buddha to set an example in this way makes it unmistakably clear that such lack of concern among monks was something he disapproved of, and that he wished instead to inculcate in them an attitude of mutual concern and compassion.

⁴¹ MN 24 at MN I 145,19 and its parallels MĀ 9 at T I 430a10 and EĀ 39.10 at T II 734a9; on the importance given to benefiting others among the early disciples cf. also Aronson (1986: 11-23).

⁴² AN 1:14 at AN I 24,10 reckons Revata as foremost among those who live in forests; cf. also MN 32 at MN I 213,15 and its parallels MĀ 184 at T I 727b3; EĀ 37.3 at T II 710c24; and T 154 at T III 81a27, which record his praises in favour of living in seclusion.

⁴³ Th 648: *sabbamitto sabbasakho sabbabhūtānukampako*, Johanson (1969: 122) comments that "as the *Arahants* are completely without egotism ... they are friendly towards everybody".

⁴⁴ DN 33 at DN III 267,20 and AN 10:50 at AN V 90,17.

⁴⁵ Vin III 158,9.

⁴⁶ Vin I 302,3. De Silva (1993: 29) notes that "the Buddha not only advocated the importance of looking after the sick, he also set a noble example by himself administering to the helplessly sick".

In the light of the above passages, it seems that the image of the arahant Bakkula praised in the two versions of the *Bakkula-sutta* differs considerably from the ideal conduct of an arahant, or even of a monk in general, depicted in other discourses. Whereas the ideal arahant monk in other discourses is one who helps others and is willing to teach and guide, the arahant eulogized in the Pāli and Chinese versions of the present discourse is concerned only with himself. Apart from his claim to having reached final liberation within a very short time after ordination, neither the Pāli nor the Chinese version devotes any space to Bakkula's meditative development or to his insight and wisdom. The emphasis in both versions is instead on a display of externally flawless and ascetic conduct.

As the *Bakkula-sutta* and its parallel are evidently later discourses, they testify to a stage in the development of the conception of an arahant where the earlier more altruistic ideal was gradually being replaced by a growing emphasis on austere external conduct,⁴⁷ a shift of perspective during which the arahant's detachment becomes increasingly understood as a form of indifference.⁴⁸ Perhaps it is no wonder that such an ideal did not offer a lasting inspiration to the growing Buddhist community in ancient India and that eventually the search for a different ideal began, an ideal that instead emphasized altruism and concern for others.⁴⁹

Abbreviations:

AN	<i>Aṅguttara-nikāya</i>
B ^c	Burmese edition
C ^c	Ceylonese edition
DĀ	<i>Dirgha-āgama</i>

⁴⁷ Horner (1979: 191) comments that "it seems that the seeds of altruism, planted with foresight by Gotama at the beginning of his ministry ... smothered during the passage of time".

⁴⁸ Katz (1979: 56) explains that in the early discourses "the detachment of the *Arahant* ... is not a bland neutrality or indifference ... Buddhist detachment means the non-reference of feeling to self, not merely the cultivation of a hedonic or emotively banal neutrality".

⁴⁹ Har Dayal (1970: 3) suggests that when the originally more altruistic *Arahant* ideal came to be neglected in favour of an increasing self-centredness, "the *bodhisattva* doctrine was promulgated ... as a protest against this lack of ... altruism among the monks of that period".

DN	<i>Dīgha-nikāya</i>
EĀ	<i>Ekottarika-āgama</i>
MĀ	<i>Madhyama-āgama</i>
MN	<i>Majjhima-nikāya</i>
Ps	<i>Papañcasūdanī</i>
SĀ	<i>Samyukta-āgama</i>
S ^c	Siamese edition
SN	<i>Samyutta-nikāya</i>
T	Taishō
Th	<i>Theragāthā</i>
Vin	Vinaya

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