AN 3.86 — Paṭhama Sikkhā Sutta (Mastering the Trainings – Part 1)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

85. Paṭhama Sikkhā Sutta (Mastering the Trainings – Part 1) Bhikkhus, every fortnight, good sons of families who have come seeking their benefit and wellbeing, gather together in order to recite the Pātimokkha rules which number one hundred and fifty, while continuing to develop their growth within the Training.

There are, after all, these three trainings.

And what are these three?

The training in the Higher Virtues; the training in the Higher Mind; and the training in the Higher Wisdom. Bhikkhus, these are the three tasks for a recluse.

a. Here, Bhikkhus, think of a Bhikkhu who, although is well-trained and accomplished in his development of virtuous behavior, having mastered it, yet is still only moderately developed in his meditation (samādhi), as well as in his wisdom, wherein his understanding is relatively limited.

Now, such a practitioner might still break his minor and lesser significant training rules, and thus engage in wrong behavior. However, soon he can recover and regain his former balance.

And why is this so?

Because, while it is still quite possible for such a person to break his training rules and commit a wrongdoing, in terms of those minor and lesser rules, yet given that he is well-structured in his dedication to the rules, treating them as his core and fundamental basis, he can therefore regain his balance by continuing his work, undertaking and keeping those rules, which benefits him greatly in completing the task of the Holy Life. Thus, his firmness in virtuous behavior and his reliance on the training in the monastic rules helps him greatly.

And through diligent practice, when he is able to shatter the first three fetters, he then becomes a “Stream Winner” (someone who has entered The Stream of Dhamma), hence, no longer being subject to ever falling back into any of the lower and miserable realms. Thus, he becomes firmly established on his direct and inevitable course to Full Awakening.

b. Next, Bhikkhus, think of another Bhikkhu who, although is also well-trained and accomplished in his development of virtuous behavior, having mastered it, yet is still only moderately developed in his meditation (samādhi), as well as in his wisdom, wherein his understanding is relatively limited. Now, such a practitioner might still break his minor and lesser significant training rules, and thus engage in wrong behavior. However, soon he can recover and regain his former balance.

And why is this so?

Because, while it is still quite possible for such a person to break his training rules and commit a wrongdoing, in terms of those minor and lesser rules, yet given that he is well-structured in his dedication to the rules, treating them as his core and fundamental basis, he can therefore regain his balance by continuing his work, undertaking and keeping those rules, which benefits him greatly in completing the task of the Holy Life. Thus, his firmness in virtuous behavior and reliance on the training in the monastic rules helps him greatly.

And through diligent practice, having already shattered the first three fetters, he strongly weakens the defilements of lust, hatred, and delusion, and as a result, he becomes a “Once Returner,” one who is bound to return back only once more, prior to attaining Full Awakening, being already firmly established on his direct and inevitable course to Nibbāna.

c. Next, Bhikkhus, think of another Bhikkhu who, although is well-trained and accomplished in his development of virtuous behavior, as well as his meditation (samādhi), having mastered them both, yet is still only moderately developed in his wisdom, wherein his understanding is still relatively limited. Now, such a practitioner might still break his minor and lesser significant training rules, and thus engage in wrong behavior. However, soon he can recover and regain his former balance.

And why is this so?

Because, while it is still quite possible for such a person to break his training rules and commit a wrongdoing, in terms of those minor and lesser rules, yet given that he is well-structured in his dedication to the rules, treating them as his core and fundamental basis, he can therefore regain his balance by continuing his work, undertaking and keeping those rules, which benefits him greatly in completing the task of the Holy Life. Thus, his firmness in virtuous behavior and reliance on the training in the monastic rules helps him greatly.

And through diligent practice, having already shattered all of the five lower fetters, at the end of life, which will be his very last one here in this world, at death, he is immediately reborn into The Pure Abodes, whence there is no more return, and where he will attain Full Awakening.

d. Next, Bhikkhus, think of another Bhikkhu who is well-trained and accomplished in his development of virtuous behavior, accomplished in his development in meditation (samādhi), and fully accomplished in his development in wisdom and understanding, having mastered them all. Now, it might so happen that such a practitioner breaks his minor and lesser significant training rules. However, soon he can recover and regain his former balance.

And why is this so?

Because, while it is still quite possible for such a person to break his training rules and commit a wrongdoing, in terms of those minor and lesser rules, yet given that he is well-structured in his dedication to the rules, treating them as his core and fundamental basis, he can therefore regain his balance by continuing his work, undertaking and keeping those rules, which benefits him

greatly, in completing the task of the Holy Life. Thus, his firmness in virtuous behavior and reliance on the training in the monastic rules helps him greatly.

Through diligent practice, he attains the Release of the Heart, that is the dustless Freedom through Wisdom, in this very life, having destroyed all the contaminants of the heart through his own effort and direct realization. And thus, he attains to the Supreme Goal of the Holy Life, whereby he dwells in that state, while living out the rest of his days.

So, Bhikkhus, it depends on the maturity of your development in the Training, whereby if you have only partially developed yourself in it, then your success too will be partial and limited. But those of you who become fully accomplished in your development within the Training, by mastering all its levels, then you are assured the success it certainly brings.

Therefore, Bhikkhus, I declare that your serious commitment and genuine effort with which you apply yourselves in this Training are never in vain.