AN 3.91 — Paṅkadhā Sutta (Acknowledging a Mistake)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

90. Paṅkadhā Sutta (Acknowledging a Mistake) At one time, The Blessed One was wandering in the country of Kosala with a large Saṅgha of Bhikkhus, as he entered the town of Paṅkadhā, where He decided to stay for some time.

It was during this time, that a Bhikkhu by the name of Kassapagotta also lived in Paṅkadhā.

While residing there, The Blessed One kept instructing, advising, encouraging, inspiring and gladdening the hearts and minds of the Bhikkhus, with a talk on the training rules.

Upon hearing The Blessed One's talk on upholding the training rules, the Bhikkhu Kassapagotta became bitter and discontented with the teachings that were being given to the Bhikkhus, as he kept thinking to himself that The Teacher was being too stringent in establishing those rules. Then, after The Blessed One had stayed in Paṅkadhā for as long as He had pleased, He set out on a journey toward Rājagaha, where He reached gradually and began living at the Gijjha Cillfs (Vulture's Peak), in Rājagaha.

Meanwhile, soon after The Blessed One had left, the Bhikkhu Kassapagotta became remorseful and regretful given his earlier thoughts, as he reflected:

'This state of affairs has not helped me one bit, for instead, I have truly lost much, wasting valuable time being bitter and discontented with the teachings The Holy One was giving us Bhikkhus, on the training rules. It surely does not benefit me or anyone else, to go on ruminating or thinking that The Teacher was being too strict and stringent with the rules, while The Blessed One kept instructing, advising, encouraging, inspiring and gladdening the hearts and minds of us Bhikkhus, with a talk on the training rules. Now, let me head out to find The Blessed One wherever He may be dwelling, and ask His forgiveness for my wrongdoing, in committing that offence!'

Then, having put his dwelling in order, the Bhikkhu Kassapagotta took his alms bowl and outer robes and headed to Rājagaha, where he eventually arrived at the Vultures' Peak. And in approaching The Blessed One, he paid homage to The Teacher, and then sat to one side and said: "Bhante, when The Blessed Lord was in the Kosalan country, living in

Paṅkadhā, The Blessed One instructed, advised, encouraged, inspired and gladdened the hearts and minds of us Bhikkhus, with a talk on the training rules. But, on listening to The Blessed One's talk on upholding the rules, I became bitter and discontented with the teachings given to us, Bhikkhus, while ruminating and thinking to myself that The Teacher was being too stringent with the rules."

"Then, Bhante, after The Blessed One had left Paṅkadhā and set out on His journey toward Rājagaha, I became remorseful and regretted my actions, given my earlier thoughts, and thereby reflected to myself:

'This state of affairs has not helped me one bit, for instead, I have truly lost much, wasting valuable time being bitter and discontented with the teachings The Holy One was giving us Bhikkhus, on the training rules. It surely does not benefit me or anyone else, to go on ruminating

or thinking that The Teacher was being too strict and stringent with the rules, while The Blessed One kept instructing, advising, encouraging, inspiring and gladdening the hearts and minds of us Bhikkhus, with a talk on the training rules. Now, let me head out to find The Blessed One wherever He may be dwelling, and ask His forgiveness for my wrongdoing, in committing that offence!'

"Therefore, Bhante, I have committed an offence by my wrongdoing, for as The Blessed One was instructing, advising, encouraging, inspiring and gladdening the hearts and minds of the Bhikkhus with a talk on the training rules, I, on the other hand, while listening to The Blessed One's talk, became bitter and discontented with the teachings given to us, Bhikkhus, on the training rules, thinking to myself that The Teacher was being too stringent with so many rules.

"Blessed Lord, I was utterly foolish as it was ignorant of me and damaging, in fact, to become so bitter and discontented with my thoughts about The Blessed One being too stringent with the rules.

"Bhante, may The Blessed One please forgive me for my offence, as this wrongdoing of mine was based on foolishness and ignorance, and may this be seen as an offence that I promise never to engage in again, in the future, through maintaining wise restraint!"

And The Blessed One said:

"Indeed, Kassapa, you have committed an offence, for while I was instructing, advising, encouraging, inspiring and gladdening the hearts and minds of the Bhikkhus with a talk on the training rules, you became bitter and discontented with the teachings given to the Bhikkhus, as you were listening to My talk on upholding the rules, thinking to yourself that I, The Teacher, was being too stringent with the rules.

"However, Kassapa, since you ask for pardon while seeing your own fault in this offence, and seek to make amends according to The Dhamma, I pardon you and accept your

apology, given your promise to not repeat it again, by maintaining wise restraint in the future. For, it indicates growth in The Noble One's Discipline when someone sees their own offence as an offence, and therefore seeks to make amends according to The Dhamma, while ensuring restraint in the future.

"Kassapa, there may be an elder Bhikkhu who, not liking the training himself, does not talk in praise of the training, and consequently does not encourage other Bhikkhus to follow and observe the training rules, either. Furthermore, such a Bhikkhu would not praise other Bhikkhus genuinely, truthfully, and in a timely manner, who unlike him, do like the training and therefore observe it carefully.

"Now, Kassapa, I do not speak in praise of such an elder Bhikkhu. And why is that?

"Because in hearing The Teacher praise such a person, other Bhikkhus would start to associate with him and consequently behave in like manner by following his example, and as a result, they

would fall into much harm and suffering, for a very long time. Hence, Kassapa, I do not speak in praise of such an elder Bhikkhu.

"Kassapa, there may be another Bhikkhu, one of a middle standing who, also not liking the training rules, does not talk in praise of the training, and consequently, does not encourage other Bhikkhus to follow or observe the training rules, either.

"Furthermore, such a Bhikkhu would not praise other Bhikkhus genuinely, truthfully, and in a timely manner, who unlike him, do in fact like to follow the training rules, while observing them carefully.

"Here too, Kassapa, I do not speak in praise of such a Bhikkhu of middle standing. And why is that?

"Because in hearing The Teacher praise such a person, other Bhikkhus would start to associate with him and behave in like manner by following his example, and as a result, they would fall into much harm and suffering, for a very long time. Therefore, Kassapa, I do not speak in praise of such a Bhikkhu of middle standing, either.

"Kassapa, there may be a junior Bhikkhu who, because of not liking the training himself, does not talk in praise of the training, and consequently does not encourage other Bhikkhus to follow or observe the training rules, either.

"Furthermore, such a Bhikkhu would not praise other Bhikkhus genuinely, truthfully, and in a timely manner, who unlike him, do in fact, like to adhere to the training rules, by observing them carefully.

"Kassapa, I do not speak in praise of such a junior Bhikkhu, either. And why is that?

“Because in hearing The Teacher praise such a person, other Bhikkhus would start to associate with him and behave in like manner by following his example, and as a result, they would fall into much harm and suffering, for a very long time. Therefore, Kassapa, I do not speak in praise of such a junior Bhikkhu either.

“But, Kassapa, if there may be an elder Bhikkhu who, while adhering to the training himself, speaks in praise of the training, and consequently encourages other Bhikkhus to follow and observe the training as well; and if such a Bhikkhu praises genuinely, truthfully, and in a timely manner other Bhikkhus who, like him, do like the training rules, while observing them carefully, then, Kassapa, I do indeed, speak in praise of such an elder Bhikkhu. And why is that?

“Because, Kassapa, in hearing The Teacher praise such a person, other Bhikkhus would start to associate with him more and behave in like manner by following his example, and as a result, they too would gain much benefit and happiness, for a very long time. Therefore, Kassapa, I do speak in praise of such an elder Bhikkhu.

“Furthermore, Kassapa, if there may be a Bhikkhu of middle standing who, while adhering to the training rules himself, also speaks in praise of the training, and consequently encourages other Bhikkhus to follow and observe the training; and if such a Bhikkhu praises genuinely, truthfully, and in a timely manner those other Bhikkhus who, like him, also adhere to the training rules while observing them carefully, then, Kassapa, I do speak in praise of such a Bhikkhu of middle standing. And why is that?

“Because in hearing The Teacher praise such a person, other Bhikkhus would start to associate with him more, and thus behave in like manner by following his example, and as a result, they too would gain much benefit and happiness, for a very long time. Therefore, Kassapa, I do speak in praise of such a Bhikkhu of middle standing.

“Further, Kassapa, if there may be a junior Bhikkhu who also adheres to the training himself and speaks in praise of the training, and consequently encourages other Bhikkhus to also follow and observe the training; and if such a Bhikkhu praises genuinely, truthfully, and in a timely manner those other Bhikkhus who, like him, also adhere to the training rules while observing them carefully, then, Kassapa, I do speak in praise of such a junior Bhikkhu. And why is that?

“Because in hearing The Teacher praise such a person, other Bhikkhus would start to associate with him more and behave in like manner by following his example, and as a result, they too would gain much benefit and happiness, for a very long time. Therefore, Kassapa, I do speak in praise of such a junior Bhikkhu, too.”