MN 104 — At Sāmagāma

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Text

Middle Discourses 104

At Sāmagāma

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Sakyans near the village of Sāma.

Now at that time the Jain ascetic of the Ñātika clan had recently passed away at Pāvā. With his passing the Jain ascetics split, dividing into two factions, fighting, quarreling, and disputing, continually wounding each other with barbed words: “You don’t understand this teaching and training. I understand this teaching and training. What, you understand this teaching and training? You’re practicing wrong. I’m practicing right. I stay on topic, you don’t. You said last what you should have said first. You said first what you should have said last. What you’ve thought so much about has been disproved. Your doctrine is refuted. Go on, save your doctrine! You’re trapped; get yourself out of this—if you can!” You’d think there was nothing but slaughter going on among the Jain ascetics. And the Jain Ñātika’s white-clothed lay disciples were disillusioned, dismayed, and disappointed in the Jain ascetics. They were equally disappointed with a teaching and training so poorly explained and poorly propounded, not emancipating, not leading to peace, proclaimed by someone who is not a fully awakened Buddha, with broken monument and without a refuge.

And then, after completing the rainy season residence near Pāvā, the novice Cunda went to see Venerable Ānanda at Sāma village. He bowed, sat down to one side, and told him what had happened.

Ānanda said to him, “Reverend Cunda, we should see the Buddha about this matter. Come, let’s go to the Buddha and inform him about this.”

“Yes, sir,” replied Cunda.

Then Ānanda and Cunda went to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and Ānanda informed him of what Cunda had said. He went on to say, “Sir, it occurs to me: ‘When the Buddha has passed away, let no dispute arise in the Saṅgha. For such a dispute would be for the detriment and unhappiness of the people, against the people, for the harm, detriment, and suffering of gods and humans.’”

“What do you think, Ānanda? Do you see even two mendicants whose opinion differs regarding the things I have taught from my direct knowledge, that is, the four kinds of mindfulness meditation, the four right efforts, the four bases of psychic power, the five

faculties, the five powers, the seven awakening factors, and the noble eightfold path?"

"No, sir, I do not. Nevertheless, there are some individuals who appear to live obedient to the Buddha, but when the Buddha has passed away they might create a dispute in the Saṅgha regarding livelihood or the monastic code. Such a dispute would be for the detriment and unhappiness of the people, against the people, for the harm, detriment, and suffering of gods and humans."

"Ānanda, dispute about livelihood or the monastic code is a minor matter. But should a dispute arise in the Saṅgha concerning the path or the practice, that would be for the detriment and unhappiness of the people, against the people, for the harm, detriment, and suffering of gods and humans.

Ānanda, there are these six roots of dispute. What six? Firstly, a mendicant is irritable and acrimonious. Such a mendicant lacks respect and reverence for the Teacher, the teaching, and the Saṅgha, and they don't fulfill the training. They create a dispute in the Saṅgha, which is for the detriment and unhappiness of the people, against the people, for the harm, detriment, and suffering of gods and humans. If you see such a root of dispute in yourselves or others, you should try to give up this bad thing. If you don't see it, you should practice so that it doesn't come up in the future. That's how to give up this bad root of dispute, so it doesn't come up in the future.

Furthermore, a mendicant is offensive and contemptuous … They're jealous and stingy … They're devious and deceitful … They have corrupt wishes and wrong view … They're attached to their own views, holding them tight, and refusing to let go. Such a mendicant lacks respect and reverence for the Teacher, the teaching, and the Saṅgha, and they don't fulfill the training. They create a dispute in the Saṅgha, which is for the detriment and unhappiness of the people, against the people, for the harm, detriment, and suffering of gods and humans. If you see such a root of dispute in yourselves or others, you should try to give up this bad thing. If you don't see it, you should practice so that it doesn't come up in the future. That's how to give up this bad root of dispute, so it doesn't come up in the future. These are the six roots of dispute.

There are four kinds of disciplinary issues. What four? Disciplinary issues due to disputes, accusations, offenses, or business. These are the four kinds of disciplinary issues. There are these seven means of settling any disciplinary issues that might arise. Resolution face-to-face to be applied. Resolution through recollection to be granted. Resolution because of past insanity to be granted. Acting according to what has been admitted. Majority decision. Further penalty. Covering over as if with grass.

And how is there resolution face-to-face? It's when mendicants are disputing: 'This is the teaching,' 'This is not the teaching,' 'This is the monastic law,' 'This is not the monastic law.' Those mendicants should all sit together in harmony and thoroughly go over the guidelines of the teaching. They should settle that disciplinary issue in agreement with the guidelines. That's how there is resolution face-to-face. And that's how certain disciplinary issues are settled, that is, by resolution face-to-face.

And how is there majority decision? If those mendicants are not able to settle that issue in that monastery, they should go to another monastery with more mendicants. There they

should all sit together in harmony and thoroughly go over the guidelines of the teaching. They should settle that disciplinary issue in agreement with the guidelines. That's how there is majority decision. And that's how certain disciplinary issues are settled, that is, by majority decision.

And how is there resolution through recollection? It's when a mendicant accuses a mendicant of a heavy offense; one entailing expulsion, or close to it: 'Venerable, do you recall committing the kind of serious offense that entails expulsion or close to it?' They say: 'No, reverend, I don't recall committing such an offense.' The resolution through recollection should be granted to them. That's how there is the resolution through recollection. And that's how certain disciplinary issues are settled, that is, by resolution through recollection.

And how is there resolution because of past insanity? It's when a mendicant accuses a mendicant of the kind of serious offense that entails expulsion, or close to it: 'Venerable, do you recall committing the kind of serious offense that entails expulsion or close to it?' They say: 'No, reverend, I don't recall committing such an offense.' But though they try to get out of it, the mendicant pursues the issue: 'Surely the venerable must know perfectly well if you recall committing an offense that entails expulsion or close to it!' They say: 'Reverend, I had gone mad, I was out of my mind. And while I was mad I did and said many things that are not proper for an ascetic. I don't remember any of that, I was mad when I did it.' The resolution because of past insanity should be granted to them. That's how there is resolution because of past insanity. And that's how certain disciplinary issues are settled, that is, by resolution because of past insanity.

And how is there acting according to what has been admitted? It's when a mendicant, whether accused or not, recalls an offense and clarifies it and reveals it. After approaching a more senior mendicant, that mendicant should arrange his robe over one shoulder, bow to that mendicant's feet, squat on their heels, raise their cupped palms, and say: 'Sir, I have fallen into such-and-such an offense. I confess it.' The senior mendicant says: 'Do you see it?' 'Yes, I see it.' 'Then restrain yourself in future.' 'I shall restrain myself.' That's how there is acting according to what has been admitted. And that's how certain disciplinary issues are settled, that is, by acting according to what has been admitted.

And how is there a verdict of further penalty? It's when a mendicant accuses a mendicant of the kind of heavy offense that entails expulsion, or close to it: 'Venerable, do you recall committing the kind of heavy offense that entails expulsion or close to it?' They say: 'No, reverend, I don't recall committing such an offense.' But though they try to get out of it, the mendicant pursues the issue: 'Surely the venerable must know perfectly well if you recall committing an offense that entails expulsion or close to it!' They say: 'Reverend, I don't recall committing a heavy offense of that nature. But I do recall committing a light offense.' But though they try to get out of it, the mendicant pursues the issue: 'Surely the venerable must know perfectly well if you recall committing an offense that entails expulsion or close to it!' They say: 'Reverend, I'll go so far as to admit this light offense even when not asked. Why wouldn't I admit a heavy offense when asked?' They say: 'You wouldn't have admitted that light offense without being asked, so why would you admit a heavy offense? Surely the venerable must know perfectly well if you recall committing an

offense that entails expulsion or close to it!' They say: 'Reverend, I do recall committing the kind of heavy offense that entails expulsion or close to it. I spoke too hastily when I said that I didn't recall it.' That's how there is further penalty. And that's how certain disciplinary issues are settled, that is, by further penalty.

And how is there the covering over as if with grass? It's when the mendicants continually fight, quarrel, and dispute, doing and saying many things that are not proper for an ascetic. Those mendicants should all sit together in harmony. A competent mendicant of one party, having risen from their seat, arranged their robe over one shoulder, and raised their cupped palms, should inform the Saṅgha:

'Sir, let the Saṅgha listen to me. We have been continually fighting, quarreling, and disputing, doing and saying many things that are not proper for an ascetic. If it seems appropriate to the Saṅgha, then—for the benefit of these venerables and myself—I disclose in the middle of the Saṅgha by means of covering over as if with grass any offenses committed by these venerables and by myself, excepting only those that are gravely blameworthy and those connected with laypeople.'

Then a competent mendicant of the other party, having risen from their seat, arranged their robe over one shoulder, and raising their cupped palms, should inform the Saṅgha:

'Sir, let the Saṅgha listen to me. We have been continually fighting, quarreling, and disputing, doing and saying many things that are not proper for an ascetic. If it seems appropriate to the Saṅgha, then—for the benefit of these venerables and myself—I disclose in the middle of the Saṅgha by means of covering over as if with grass any offenses committed by these venerables and by myself, excepting only those that are gravely blameworthy and those connected with laypeople.'

That's how there is the covering over as if with grass. And that's how certain disciplinary issues are settled, that is, by covering over as if with grass.

Ānanda, these six warm-hearted qualities make for fondness and respect, conducing to inclusion, harmony, and unity, without quarreling. What six? Firstly, a mendicant consistently treats their spiritual companions with bodily kindness, both in public and in private. This warm-hearted quality makes for fondness and respect, conducing to inclusion, harmony, and unity, without dispute.

Furthermore, a mendicant consistently treats their spiritual companions with verbal kindness … This too is a warm-hearted quality.

Furthermore, a mendicant consistently treats their spiritual companions with mental kindness … This too is a warm-hearted quality.

Furthermore, a mendicant shares without reservation any material things they have gained by legitimate means, even the food placed in the alms-bowl, using them in common with their ethical spiritual companions. This too is a warm-hearted quality.

Furthermore, a mendicant lives according to the precepts shared with their spiritual companions, both in public and in private. Those precepts are intact, impeccable, spotless, and unmarred, liberating, praised by sensible people, not mistaken, and leading to

immersion. This too is a warm-hearted quality.

Furthermore, a mendicant lives according to the view shared with their spiritual companions, both in public and in private. That view is noble and emancipating, and delivers one who applies it to the complete ending of suffering. This too is a warm-hearted quality.

These six warm-hearted qualities make for fondness and respect, conducing to inclusion, harmony, and unity, without dispute.

If you should proceed having undertaken these six warm-hearted qualities, do you see any criticism, large or small, that you could not endure?"

"No, sir."

"That's why, Ānanda, you should proceed having undertaken these six warm-hearted qualities. That will be for your lasting welfare and happiness."

That is what the Buddha said. Satisfied, Venerable Ānanda approved what the Buddha said.