

Pācittiya #51: Ingesting Alcohol

On this occasion the Buddha, the Blessed One, while traveling among the Cetiya, went towards Bhaddavatikā⁵⁹⁰. Ox-herders, cow-herders, farmers, and travelers saw the Blessed One coming from afar. After seeing the Blessed One, they said [to him], “Bhante, may the Blessed One not go to Ambatittha⁵⁹¹. Bhante, a dragon⁵⁹² lives at Ambatittha, in the hermitage of the matted-hair ascetic; it is a serpent with psychic powers and terrible venom. May he not harm the Blessed One.” When this was said the Blessed One was silent. A second time... a third time the ox-herders, cow-herders, farmers, and travelers said to the Blessed One, “Bhante, may the Blessed One not go to Ambatittha. Bhante, a dragon lives at Ambatittha, in the hermitage of the matted-hair ascetic; it is a serpent with psychic powers and terrible venom. May he not harm the Blessed One.” A third time the Blessed One was silent.

Then the Blessed One, traveling gradually, arrived at Bhaddavatikā. There the Blessed One dwelled at Bhaddavatikā. Then Venerable Sāgata approached the hermitage of the matted-hair ascetic at Ambatittha; after approaching, entering the fire-house, and preparing a grass mat, he sat cross-legged, his body upright, mindless established in the forefront. The dragon saw that Venerable Sāgata had entered. Seeing this, he was upset⁵⁹³ and emitted smoke. Venerable Sāgata also emitted smoke. Not tolerating deprecation, the dragon erupted in flame. Venerable Sāgata, after attaining the fire-element, also erupted in flame. Then Venerable Sāgata, after overpowering the dragon's fire with his [own] fire, approached Bhaddavatikā. Then the Blessed One, having dwelt at Bhaddavatikā as long as he wished, left on a journey to Kosambī. The lay disciples of Kosambī heard, “It seems that Sir Sāgata has fought with the dragon of Ambatittha.”

Then the Blessed One, traveling gradually, arrived at Kosambī. Then the lay disciples of Kosambī, after going out to the Blessed One, approached Venerable Sāgata; after approaching and paying respects to Venerable Sāgata, they sat to one side. Seated to one side, the lay disciples from Kosambī said to Venerable Sāgata, “Bhante, what is hard to get and pleasing to the gentleman; what [can we] prepare?” When this was said [some] group-of-six monks said to the lay disciples of Kosambī, “Sirs, there is a liquor called Kāpotikā; it is hard to get and pleasing to monks. You can prepare that.” Then the lay disciples of Kosambī prepared Kāpotikā liquor in house after house. After seeing that Venerable Sāgata had entered for alms, they said to Venerable Sāgata, “Bhante, let Sir Sāgata drink Kāpotikā liquor; Bhante, let Sir Sāgata drink Kāpotikā liquor.” Then Venerable Sāgata, while walking out from the city after drinking Kāpotikā liquor in house after house, fell down at the city gate.

⁵⁹⁰ Lit. “Lucky choice.”

⁵⁹¹ Lit. “Mango ford.”

⁵⁹² *Nāga*.

⁵⁹³ *Dummana*. Lit. “bad (*dur*) mind/heart (*manas*).” In other contexts this means “depressed” or “sorrowful”; here it appears to mean angry.

Then the Blessed One along with many monks saw Venerable Sāgata falling down at the city gate while walking out from the city. When he saw this he addressed the monks, “Monks, get Sāgata.” “Yes, Bhante,” those monks replied to the Blessed One; after taking Venerable Sāgata to the monastery, they set him down with his head towards the Blessed One. Then Venerable Sāgata turned around and slept with his feet towards the Blessed One. Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, “Monks, is it not so that previously Sāgata was respectful and courteous to the Blessed One?” “Yes, Bhante.” “Monks, is Sāgata currently respectful and courteous to the Blessed One?” “Definitely not, Bhante.”⁵⁹⁴ “Monks, is it not Sāgata that fought with the dragon of Ambatittha?” “Yes, Bhante.” “Monks, is Sāgata currently capable of fighting with a dragon?” “Definitely not, Bhante.” “Monks, should one drink something that causes the loss of perception⁵⁹⁵?” “Definitely not, Bhante.” “It is inappropriate, monks; unsuitable, improper, not like a contemplative, not allowable, not to be done. How is it, monks, that Sāgata will drink alcohol! This is not, monks, for the faith of the faithless... And thus, monks, you may recite this training-rule:

“In drinking alcohol or liquor: a Pācittiya.”

Alcohol: Wheat-alcohol; barley-alcohol; rice-alcohol; that which is fermented; mixed with ingredients.

Liquor: Flower-spirits; fruit-spirits; honey-spirits; molasses-spirits; mixed with ingredients.

Drinks: One drinks even as much as the tip of a blade of grass: a Pācittiya offense.

Perceiving it as an intoxicant when it is an intoxicant, one drinks: a Pācittiya.

In doubt when it is an intoxicant, one drinks: a Pācittiya.

Perceiving it as not an intoxicant when it is an intoxicant, one drinks: a Pācittiya.

Perceiving it as an intoxicant when it is not an intoxicant: a Dukkaṭa offense.

In doubt when it is not an intoxicant: a Dukkaṭa offense.

Perceiving it as not an intoxicant when it is not an intoxicant: non-offense.

Non-offense[s]: One drinks that which is not an intoxicant but has the appearance, smell, [and/or] taste of an intoxicant; when it is cooked in a broth⁵⁹⁶; when it is cooked in meat; when it is cooked in oil; when it is myrobalan-sugar⁵⁹⁷; one drinks non-intoxicating *ariṭṭha*; for one who is crazy; and for the first offender.

⁵⁹⁴ *No h'etaṃ Bhante.*

⁵⁹⁵ This is a somewhat freeform rendering. A literal translation might read “Is that to be drunk which, after drinking, one is no longer perceptive?”

⁵⁹⁶ *Sūpa*. The resemblance of this word to the English word “soup” is striking.

⁵⁹⁷ *Āmalaka-phāṇita*.