

*The Exhortation to Rāhula at Mango Stone*  
*Ambalaṭṭhikā Rāhulovāda Sutta (MN 61)*

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Abridged by G.P. for the SSZC Sit & Study group on 2 May 2021

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha, in the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrels' Sanctuary.

At that time Ven. Rāhula<sup>1</sup> was staying at the Mango Stone. Then the Blessed One, emerging from his seclusion in the evening, went to where Ven. Rāhula was staying at the Mango Stone. Ven. Rāhula saw him coming from afar and, on seeing him, set out a seat & water for washing the feet. The Blessed One sat down on the seat set out and, having sat down, washed his feet. Ven. Rāhula, bowing down to the Blessed One, sat to one side.

[...]

“What do you think, Rāhula? What is a mirror for?”

“For reflection, sir.”

“In the same way, Rāhula, bodily actions, verbal actions, & mental actions are to be done with repeated reflection.

“Whenever you want to do a bodily action, you should reflect on it: ‘This bodily action I want to do—would it lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? Would it be an unskillful bodily action, with painful consequences, painful results?’ If, on reflection, you know that it would lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both; it would be an unskillful bodily action with painful consequences, painful results, then any bodily action of that sort is absolutely unfit for you to do. But if on reflection you know that it would not cause affliction... it would be a skillful bodily action with pleasant consequences, pleasant results, then any bodily action of that sort is fit for you to do.

“While you are doing a bodily action, you should reflect on it: ‘This bodily action I am doing—is it leading to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? Is it an unskillful bodily action, with painful consequences, painful

results?’ If, on reflection, you know that it is leading to self-affliction, to affliction of others, or both... you should give it up. But if on reflection you know that it is not... you may continue with it.

“Having done a bodily action, you should reflect on it: ‘This bodily action I have done—did it lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? Was it an unskillful bodily action, with painful consequences, painful results?’ If, on reflection, you know that it led to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both; it was an unskillful bodily action with painful consequences, painful results, then you should confess it, reveal it, lay it open to the Teacher or to an observant companion in the holy life. Having confessed it... you should exercise restraint in the future. But if on reflection you know that it did not lead to affliction... it was a skillful bodily action with pleasant consequences, pleasant results, then you should stay mentally refreshed & joyful, training day & night in skillful qualities.

*The Buddha then gives the same instructions regarding verbal and mental actions, with a slight change for past mental actions:*

“Having done a mental action, you should reflect on it: ‘This mental action I have done—did it lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? Was it an unskillful mental action, with painful consequences, painful results?’ If, on reflection, you know that it led to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both; it was an unskillful mental action with painful consequences, painful results, then you should feel distressed, ashamed, & disgusted with it. Feeling distressed... you should exercise restraint in the future. But if on reflection you know that it did not lead to affliction... it was a skillful mental action with pleasant consequences, pleasant results, then you should stay mentally refreshed & joyful, training day & night in skillful qualities.

“Rāhula, all those contemplatives & brahmans in the course of the past who purified their bodily actions, verbal actions, & mental actions, did it through repeated reflection on their bodily actions, verbal actions, & mental actions in just this way.

“All those contemplatives & brahmans in the course of the future who will purify their bodily actions, verbal actions, & mental actions, will do it through repeated reflection on their bodily actions, verbal actions, & mental actions in just this way.

“All those contemplatives & brahmans at present who purify their bodily actions, verbal actions, & mental actions, do it through repeated reflection on their bodily actions, verbal actions, & mental actions in just this way.

“Thus, Rāhula, you should train yourself: ‘I will purify my bodily actions through repeated reflection. I will purify my verbal actions through repeated reflection. I will purify my mental actions through repeated reflection.’ That’s how you should train yourself.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Ven. Rāhula delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

## Notes

1. Rāhula: the Buddha’s son, who according to the Commentary was seven years old when this discourse was delivered to him.