AN 2.48 — AN 2.48

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

48. “Bhikkhus, there are two types of gatherings. What two?

“First, you have the gathering that venerates and pursues worldly things and those that bring physical pleasure and gratification, meanwhile giving up the pursuit and veneration of The True and Good Dhamma. Secondly, there is the gathering that venerates and pursues The True and Good Dhamma, meanwhile giving up the pursuit and veneration of worldly things and those that pertain to physical pleasure.

“Now what, Bhikkhus, is the gathering that venerates and pursues worldly things and those that bring physical pleasure and gratification, meanwhile giving up the pursuit and veneration of The True and Good Dhamma?

“Here, Bhikkhus, in a gathering the Bhikkhus go on praising each other for their attainments, but do so, in the presence of the lay people wearing white clothes. Thus, seeking to impress, they go on shamelessly making declarations about themselves and each other:

‘Such and such a Bhikkhu is liberated by both methods; that other Bhikkhu is liberated through wisdom; the other one is a ‘body witness;’ whereas that other Bhikkhu has attained to Right View; the other one over there, is liberated through Faith; that one with such and such a name, is a Dhamma follower; the other Bhikkhu follows through his faith; meanwhile, that one over there is virtuous, and of good behavior; the other Bhikkhu there is without any virtue, an immoral man, possessing a bad and evil character!’

“Thus, in their scheme, they go on making such empty claims and declarations about themselves and each other, as a strategy for them to receive more support. So, in their lust for gain, power, prestige, recognition, and carnal pleasures and their gratification, they come to worship and venerate whatever they are offered; swooned with their lust to have and hold, becoming infatuated and obsessed by them, not realizing the terrifying danger hidden in them, and therefore, not recognizing the value and importance of stepping out and escape from all such nonsense. In this manner, Bhikkhus, such a gathering of Bhikkhus is one that venerates and pursues worldly things and those that bring physical pleasure and gratification, meanwhile giving up the pursuit and veneration of The True

and Good Dhamma.

“And what, Bhikkhus, is the gathering that venerates and pursues The True and Good Dhamma, meanwhile giving up the pursuit and veneration of worldly things and those that pertain to physical pleasure?

“Here, Bhikkhus, in such a gathering the Bhikkhus do not praise each other for their attainments, in the presence of the lay people wearing white clothes. For they are beyond the infantile need to impress, hence, they do not shamelessly make any declarations about themselves or each other, such as:

‘Such and such a Bhikkhu is liberated by both methods; that other Bhikkhu is liberated through wisdom; the other one is a ‘body witness;’ whereas that other Bhikkhu has attained to Right View; the other one over there, is liberated through Faith; that one with such and such a name, is a Dhamma follower; the other Bhikkhu follows through his faith; meanwhile, that one over there is virtuous, and of good behavior; the other Bhikkhu there is without any virtue, an immoral man, possessing a bad and evil character!’

“Thus, they do not scheme, nor go on making such empty claims or declarations either about themselves or each other, as some kind of a strategy for them to receive more support. They do no such thing! This, because they do not possess any lust in their hearts for gain, power, prestige, or recognition, and especially no desire for carnal pleasures nor their gratification. In this way, they simply view whatever they receive as no more than mere utilitarian in their value; neither holding on to them, nor becoming infatuated or obsessed by them, for they clearly see the terrifying danger hidden in them, and therefore, have already recognized the value and importance of stepping out and the very escape from all such nonsense. In this manner, Bhikkhus, such a gathering of Bhikkhus is one that venerates and pursues The True and Good Dhamma, meanwhile giving up the pursuit and veneration of worldly things and those that pertain to physical pleasure.

“Bhikkhus, these are the two types of gatherings. And out of these two, the gathering that venerates and pursues The True and Good Dhamma, meanwhile gives up the pursuit and veneration of worldly things and those that pertain to physical pleasure, is indeed, the gathering that is the greatest.”