AN 2.62 — AN 2.62

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

62. “Bhikkhus, I will speak to you on living while being surrounded by unsafe and evil people; and on living while being surrounded by safe and good people. Now, listen and attend carefully to what I shall say.”

“Yes, Bhante!” The Bhikkhus replied.

The Blessed One then continued by saying:

“Bhikkhus, what is meant by ‘living while being surrounded by unsafe and evil people?’ Also, how do unsafe and evil people live and associate with each other?

“Here, an elder Bhikkhu keeps reflecting:

‘No senior Bhikkhu, nor one of an average seniority and especially a junior Bhikkhu, could dare say anything critical about me or try to scold me on something!

‘Similarly, I will not say anything critical to any Bhikkhu, whether they are senior, of an average seniority, or even junior Bhikkhus! It is better to keep out of each other’s business, and that way we can keep the ‘peace.’

‘It’s better this way, anyhow. I will not say anything to them that would make them upset or uncomfortable, so that they do not become cross or angry with me, and they also will not say anything to me that would make me upset or uncomfortable, wherein I might become cross or angry with them!

‘This way, we would be out of each other’s business, and still remain cordial and harmonious.

‘Otherwise, if any senior Bhikkhu, or one of average seniority, or a junior Bhikkhu, were to indeed scold me, even if they meant well, then I know I would return the gesture and scold them back in turn, because they do not have the right to do so! And even if they were to be in the right, I find it absolutely unacceptable for someone to attack me or my character in any way, at all!’

“Similarly, a Bhikkhu with average seniority keeps reflecting:

‘No senior Bhikkhu, or one of average seniority and especially a junior Bhikkhu, could dare say anything critical to me or try to scold me on something!

‘Similarly, I will not say anything critical to any Bhikkhu, whether they are seniors, or of average seniority, or even junior Bhikkhus! It is better to keep out of each other’s business, and that way we can keep the ‘peace.’

‘It is better this way, anyhow. I will not say anything to them that would make them upset or uncomfortable, so that they don’t become cross or angry with me, and they also will not say anything to me that would make me upset or uncomfortable, whereby I might become cross or angry with them!

‘This way, we would be out of each other’s business, and still remain cordial and harmonious.

‘Otherwise, if any senior Bhikkhu, or one of average seniority or a junior Bhikkhu, were to indeed scold me, even if they meant well, then I know I would return the gesture and scold them back in turn, because they do not have the right to do so! And even if they were to be in the right, I find it absolutely unacceptable for someone to attack me or my character in any way, at all!’

“Similarly, a junior Bhikkhu keeps reflecting:

‘No senior Bhikkhu, or one of average seniority and especially a junior Bhikkhu, could dare say anything critical to me or try to scold me on something!

‘Similarly, I will not say anything critical to any Bhikkhu, whether they are seniors, or of average seniority, or even junior Bhikkhus! It’s better to keep out of each other’s business, and that way we can keep the ‘peace.’

‘It’s better this way, anyhow. I will not say anything to them that would make them upset or uncomfortable, so that they don’t become cross or angry with me, and they too will not say anything to me that would make me upset or uncomfortable, whereby I might become cross or angry with them!

‘This way, we would be out of each other’s business, and still remain cordial and harmonious.

‘Otherwise, if any senior Bhikkhu, or one of average seniority or a junior Bhikkhu, were to indeed scold me, even if they meant well, then I know I would return the favor and scold them back in turn, because they do not have the right to do so! And even if they were to be in the right, I find it absolutely unacceptable for someone to attack me or my character in any way, at all!’

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, this is what is meant by ‘living while being surrounded by unsafe and evil people,’ for this is how unsafe and evil people live and associate with each other.

“And what, Bhikkhus, was meant by ‘living while being surrounded by safe and good people?’ Also, how do safe and good people live and associate with each other?

“Here, Bhikkhus, an elder Bhikkhu keeps reflecting:

‘Any Bhikkhu, whether senior, one of average seniority, or even a junior Bhikkhu, while having a valid reason to do so, should feel comfortable and at ease to approach me to say anything critical about me or to try and admonish me on something!

‘Similarly, I too have the duty, when the need arises, to be critical of any Bhikkhu, whether they are seniors, of an average seniority, or junior Bhikkhus! It is better to be honest and face difficult situations in order to keep The Sangha pure and in check, unafraid of being honest, instead of pretending to be peaceful at the cost of losing the faith of the people!

‘Therefore, we all must be candid, kind and considerate, but without sacrificing speaking and saying what needs to be said, instead of worrying whether what I say might offend or make them upset or uncomfortable. So, I welcome any well-intentioned constructive admonishment that comes from a good place in one’s heart, which seeks my welfare, as well as those of others within the community! And I totally welcome and accept any such compassionate critique from my fellow Sangha brothers, towards modifying or amending any flaws seen in my conduct. That way, we can all work to maintain the health of the Sāsana, and the happiness of so many beings.’

“Similarly, a Bhikkhu with average seniority keeps reflecting:

‘Any Bhikkhu, whether senior, one of average seniority, or even a junior Bhikkhu, while having a valid reason to do so, should feel comfortable and at ease to approach me to say anything critical about me or to try and admonish me on something!

‘Similarly, I too have the duty, when the need arises, to be critical of any Bhikkhu, whether they are seniors, of an average seniority, or junior Bhikkhus! It is better to be honest and face difficult situations in order to keep The Sangha pure and in check, unafraid of being honest, instead of pretending to be peaceful at the cost of losing the faith of the people!

‘Therefore, we all must be candid, kind and considerate, but without sacrificing speaking and saying what needs to be said, instead of worrying whether what I say might offend or make them upset or uncomfortable. So, I welcome any well-intentioned constructive admonishment that comes from a good place in one’s heart, which seeks my welfare, as well as those of others within the community! And I totally welcome and accept any such compassionate critique from my fellow Sangha brothers, towards modifying or amending any flaws seen in my conduct. That way, we can all work to maintain the health of the Sāsana, and the happiness of so many beings.’

“Similarly, a junior Bhikkhu keeps reflecting:

‘Any Bhikkhu, whether senior, one of average seniority, or even a junior Bhikkhu, while having a valid reason to do so, should feel comfortable and at ease to approach me to say anything critical about me or to try and admonish me on something!

‘Similarly, I too have the duty, when the need arises, to be critical of any Bhikkhu, whether they are seniors, of an average seniority, or junior Bhikkhus! It is better to be honest and face difficult situations in order to keep The Sangha pure and in check, unafraid of being honest, instead of pretending to be peaceful at the cost of losing the faith of the people!

‘Therefore, we all must be candid, kind and considerate, but without sacrificing speaking and saying what needs to be said, instead of worrying whether what I say might offend or make them upset or uncomfortable. So, I welcome any well-intentioned constructive admonishment that comes from a good place in one’s heart, which seeks my welfare, as well as those of others within the community! And I totally welcome and accept any such compassionate critique from my fellow Sangha brothers, towards modifying or amending any flaws seen in my conduct. That way, we can all work to maintain the health of the Sāsana, and the happiness of so many beings.’

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, this is what is meant by ‘living while being surrounded by safe and good people,’ for this is how safe and good people live and associate with each other.”