AN 3.26 — Sevitabba Sutta (One to Associate With)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

26. Sevitabba Sutta (One to Associate With) Bhikkhus, there are these three types of beings found in existence. What three?

The one who is not to be engaged or associated with, nor attended to; the one who is to be engaged or associated with, and attended to; and finally, the one to be engaged or associated with and attended to with much honor and reverence.

And who, Bhikkhus, is the person who is not to be engaged or associated with, nor attended to?

Here, someone is found to be inferior to oneself in conduct, having an immoral character, lacking in virtue (sīla), mental cultivation (samādhi), and wisdom (paññā).

This person is one not to be engaged or associated with, but only attended to as a result of one’s loving-kindness, Universal Compassion, and common courtesy.

And who, Bhikkhus, is the person who is to be engaged or associated with, as well as attended to?

Here, someone is found to be of similar or equal conduct to oneself and with a moral character, supported by a genuinely virtuous behavior (sīla), mental cultivation (samādhi), and wisdom (paññā).

This person, therefore, is one to be engaged or associated with, as well as attended to. And why is that?

It is because one considers the following in relation to such a person:

“This person is of a similar conduct to mine and with a moral character, supported by a genuinely virtuous behavior, and as a result, this interaction will have a beneficial effect on both of us by making us feel congruently happy, as we discuss virtue. Also, our mutual dedication to mental cultivation will have a beneficial effect on both of us by making us feel congruently happy, as we discuss mental cultivation (samādhi). Also, our mutual

appreciation and application of wisdom will have a beneficial effect on both of us, while making us feel congruently happy, as we discuss wisdom!"

To this end, such a person is to be engaged or associated with, as well as attended to.

And who, Bhikkhus, is the person to be engaged or associated with, as well as attended to, with much honor and reverence?

Here, someone is found to be of superior conduct to oneself and with a solid moral character, supported by a genuinely virtuous behavior (sīla), mental cultivation (samādhi), and wisdom (paññā).

This person, therefore, is one to be engaged or associated with, as well as attended to with much honor and reverence. And why is that?

It is because one considers the following in relation to such a person:

"Through my interaction with this person, whatever aggregate associated with virtue in me that is unfulfilled, will become fulfilled, whereby through wisely interacting with this person, the aggregate of virtuous conduct will come to complete fruition in me. Further, through my interaction with this person, whatever aggregate associated with mental cultivation in me that is unfulfilled, will become fulfilled, whereby through wisely interacting with this person, the aggregate of mental cultivation will come to complete fruition in me. Further, through my interaction with this person, whatever aggregate associated with wisdom in me that is unfulfilled, will become fulfilled, hence through wisely interacting with this person, the aggregate of wisdom will come to complete fruition in me!"

To this end, such a person is to be engaged or associated with, as well as attended to with much honor and reverence.

Bhikkhus, these are the three types of beings found in existence.

'By associating with the inferior person, you regress; By associating with an equal person, you don't regress; But it is by attending to a superior person, that you advance quickly. So, follow the one superior to you, And never look back!'