AN 3.95 — Parissa Sutta (Gatherings)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

93. Parissa Sutta (Gatherings) Bhikkhus, there are these three types of gatherings. What three?

The foremost gathering; the divided gathering; and the harmonious gathering.

And what, Bhikkhus, is the foremost gathering?

Here, Bhikkhus, in this type of gathering, the elder Bhikkhus do not live in luxury, as they are not given to being careless nor falling behind in their spiritual practice. They focus their attention on seclusion as they put forth the effort to attain that which has not yet been attained, and to realize that which has not yet been realized.

As a result, the next generation of Bhikkhus emulates and follows their example, as they too adopt the lifestyle of not living in luxury, nor being given to carelessness or falling behind in their spiritual practice. Thus, just like their predecessors, they will also focus their attention on seclusion, while putting forth the effort to attain that which has not yet been attained, and to realize that which has not yet been realized.

Now, Bhikkhus, this is what is called the ‘foremost gathering.’

And what, Bhikkhus, is the divided gathering?

Here, Bhikkhus, in this type of gathering, the Bhikkhus quarrel and argue, being inconsiderate towards each other, disputing amongst themselves, while stabbing each other with verbal daggers.

This, Bhikkhus, is called the divided gathering.

And what, Bhikkhus, is the harmonious gathering?

Here, Bhikkhus, in this type of gathering, the Bhikkhus live in harmony, blending like milk and water, united and without any disputes amongst each other, as they dwell while looking at each other with kindly and warm eyes, abiding with caring consideration

towards one another.

This, Bhikkhus, is called the harmonious gathering.

Bhikkhus, when Bhikkhus truly live in harmony, blending like milk and water, united and without any disputes amongst each other, looking at each other with kindly and warm eyes, abiding with caring consideration towards one another, then, because of this precious and lovely atmosphere, they generate much merit.

It is truly at such times, that the Bhikkhus are said to be abiding in divine company, due to the Universal Altruistic Joy vibrating within, creating yet another lovely condition and atmosphere that leads to the Release of the Heart (Cetovimutti).

a. Thus, in being greatly pleased, joy arises in the mind, and because of it, the body naturally becomes relaxed and at ease, experiencing the softly spreading fullness of appeasement.

b. And as the body becomes more tranquil and relaxed, there spreads a soothing and lovely feeling throughout, wherein the heart becomes quietly pleased and happy.

c. The mind thus naturally drops into silent stillness, and then, without any difficulty, it slides into samādhi, becoming truly collected and unified in its stability.

For, just like when large raindrops fall on the higher altitudes of the mountain, the water from all that rainfall starts sloping down into the valleys, filling up the small streams and the bigger streams and in turn accumulating into small ponds, which come to flow and gather into the larger ponds and the rivulets, which then come together and form into rivers, and later those great rivers go flowing down and pouring all the way to the seas, filling up the great ocean;

In the same manner, Bhikkhus, whenever the Bhikkhus truly live in harmony, blending like milk and water, united and without any disputes amongst each other, looking at each other with kindly and warm eyes, abiding with caring consideration towards one another, then, because of this precious and lovely atmosphere, they generate much merit.

It is truly at such times, that the Bhikkhus are said to be abiding in divine company, due to the Universal Altruistic Joy vibrating within, creating yet another lovely condition and atmosphere that leads to the Release of the Heart (Cetovimutti).

a. Thus, in being greatly pleased, joy arises in the mind, and because of it, the body naturally becomes relaxed and at ease, experiencing the softly spreading fullness of appeasement.

b. And as the body becomes more tranquil and relaxed, there spreads a soothing and lovely feeling throughout, wherein the heart becomes quietly pleased and happy.

c. The mind thus naturally drops into silent stillness, and then, without any difficulty, it slides into samādhi, becoming truly collected and unified in its stability.

These, therefore, Bhikkhus, are the three types of gatherings.