AN 4.53 — AN 4:53 Ways of Living Together | Saṁvāsa Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

Source: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/AN/AN4_53.html

Source revision: sha256:06db98f11dbe5b66e3b290b0f8bcaa44ec5f2fe3d1e1b74062fcf0baea044036

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Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

Ways of Living Together

Saṁvāsa Sutta (AN 4:53)

On one occasion the Blessed One was traveling along the highway between Madhurā and Verañjā. And many male & female householders were also traveling along the highway between Madhurā and Verañjā.

Then the Blessed One, coming down from the highway, sat at the root of a tree. The male & female householders saw him sitting at the root of the tree and, on seeing him, approached him. On arrival, having bowed down to him, they sat to one side.

As they were sitting there, he said to them, “Householders, there are four ways of living together. Which four? A corpse lives together with a corpse. A corpse lives together with a female deva. A male deva lives together with a corpse. A male deva lives together with a female deva.

“And how does a corpse live together with a corpse? There is the case where a husband is one who takes life, takes what is not given (steals), engages in sexual misconduct, tells lies, and drinks liquor, wine, & spirits that are a cause for heedlessness. He is unvirtuous, of bad character, one who lives at home obsessed with the stain of stinginess and who insults & verbally abuses brahmans & contemplatives. And his wife is one who takes life, takes what is not given, engages in sexual misconduct, tells lies, and drinks liquor, wine, & spirits that are a cause for heedlessness. She is unvirtuous, of bad character, one who lives at home obsessed with the stain of stinginess and who insults & verbally abuses brahmans & contemplatives.

“That, householders, is how a corpse lives together with a corpse.

“And how does a corpse live together with a female deva? There is the case where a husband is one who takes life … and who insults & verbally abuses brahmans & contemplatives. But his wife is one who refrains from taking life, refrains from taking what is not given, refrains from engaging in sexual misconduct, refrains from telling lies, and refrains from drinking liquor, wine, & spirits that are a cause for heedlessness. She is virtuous, of admirable character, one who lives at home devoid of the stain of stinginess and who doesn’t insult or verbally abuse brahmans & contemplatives.

“That, householders, is how a corpse lives together with a female deva.

“And how does a male deva live together with a corpse? There is the case where a husband is one who refrains from taking life, refrains from taking what is not given, refrains from engaging in sexual misconduct, refrains from telling lies, and refrains from drinking liquor, wine, & spirits that are a cause for heedlessness. He is virtuous, of admirable character, one who lives at home devoid of the stain of stinginess and who doesn’t insult or verbally abuse brahmans & contemplatives. But his wife is one who takes life, takes what is not given, engages in sexual misconduct, tells lies, and drinks liquor, wine, & spirits that are a cause for heedlessness. She is unvirtuous, of bad character, one who lives at home obsessed with the stain of stinginess and who insults & verbally abuses brahmans & contemplatives.

“That, householders, is how a male deva lives together with a corpse.

“And how does a male deva live together with a female deva? There is the case where a husband is one who refrains from taking life, refrains from taking what is not given, refrains from engaging in sexual misconduct, refrains from telling lies, and refrains from drinking liquor, wine, & spirits that are a cause for heedlessness. He is virtuous, of admirable character, one who lives at home devoid of the stain of stinginess and who doesn’t insult or verbally abuse brahmans & contemplatives. And his wife is one who

refrains from taking life, refrains from taking what is not given, refrains from engaging in sexual misconduct, refrains from telling lies, and refrains from drinking liquor, wine, & spirits that are a cause for heedlessness. She is virtuous, of admirable character, one who lives at home devoid of the stain of stinginess and who doesn't insult or verbally abuse brahmans & contemplatives.

"That, householders, is how a male deva lives together with a female deva.

"And these, householders, are the four ways of living together."

When both are unvirtuous,

miserly, abusive,

they, husband & wife,

live together as corpses.

When the husband is unvirtuous,

miserly, abusive,

but the wife is virtuous,

responsive, free from stinginess,

they live together

as a female deva

with a corpse for a husband.

When the husband is virtuous,

responsive, free from stinginess,

but the wife is unvirtuous,

miserly, abusive,

they live together

as a female corpse

with a male deva for a husband.

When both have conviction

and are responsive,

restrained, living the Dhamma,

they, husband & wife,

speak endearingly to each other.

Many benefits come to them

and comfort appears.

Their enemies are disheartened,

as both have virtue in tune.1

Having practiced the Dhamma here,

both with habits & practices in tune,

delighting (after death)

in the world of the devas,

they rejoice, enjoying sensual pleasures.

Note

1. Sama, which means, “even,” “equal,” “on pitch,” or “in tune.” Throughout ancient cultures, the terminology of music was used to describe the moral quality of people and acts. Discordant intervals or poorly-tuned musical instruments were metaphors for evil; harmonious intervals and well-tuned instruments, for good.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: AN 4:55; AN 6:16; Dhp 246–248; Dhp 309–310; Sn 2:14