

AN 4.53
Paṭhamasaṃvāsa Sutta
“On Living Together” (Part 1)

Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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Once, The Blessed One was on his way from Madhurā to Verañjā, and along the way many householders and their wives were also heading from Madhurā to Verañjā. Then, The Blessed One, by leaving the path, came and sat on a seat at the foot of a tree. The householders and their wives, seeing The Blessed One seated under a tree, decided to approach The Blessed One, and after paying their respect, they sat at one side.

Then, The Blessed One addressed them thus:

“Householders, there are four ways of living together. What four?

“A male wretch living with a female wretch, both of whom live as if already dead; a male wretch who lives with a female Deva, a goddess; a male Deva living with a female wretch; and a male Deva living with a female Deva.

“And how householders, does a male wretch live with a female wretch (both of whom live as if already dead)?

“Here, householders, the husband destroys living beings, takes what is not freely given, engages in sexual misconduct, tells lies, takes intoxicants and fermented drinks, is one who does not have a virtuous character, who entertains evil thoughts, lives with stinginess and is selfish, as he enjoys insulting and abusing recluses and Brahmins.

“The wife, similarly, is one who destroys living beings, takes what is not freely given, engages in sexual misconduct, tells lies, takes intoxicants and fermented drinks, is one who does not have a virtuous character, who entertains evil thoughts, lives with stinginess and is selfish, as she too enjoys insulting and abusing recluses and brahmins. Householders, this is how a male wretch lives with a female wretch (both of whom live as if already dead).

“And how householders, does a male wretch live with a female Deva?

“Here, householders, the husband destroys living beings, takes what is not freely given, engages in sexual misconduct, tells lies, takes intoxicants and fermented drinks, is one who does not have a virtuous character, who entertains evil thoughts, lives with stinginess and is selfish, as he enjoys insulting and abusing recluses and Brahmins.

“On the other hand, the wife abstains from destroying living beings; from taking what is not freely given; she does not engage in sexual misconduct, not even in thought, she does not tell lies, does not take intoxicants nor fermented drinks; she possesses a virtuous character, and never entertains evil thoughts, living with generosity and selflessness, as she enjoys respecting and honoring recluses and Brahmins.
Householders, this is how a male wretch lives with a female Deva.

“And how, householders, does a male Deva live with a female wretch?

“Here, householders, the husband abstains from destroying living beings, from taking what is not freely given, he does not engage in sexual misconduct not even in thought, he does not tell lies, does not take intoxicants nor fermented drinks; he possesses a virtuous character, and never entertains evil thoughts, living with generosity and selflessness, as he enjoys respecting and honoring recluses and Brahmins.

“On the other hand, the wife destroys living beings, takes what is not freely given, engages in sexual misconduct, tells lies, takes intoxicants and fermented drinks, is one who does not have a virtuous character, who entertains evil thoughts, lives with stinginess and is selfish, as she enjoys insulting and abusing recluses and brahmins.
Householders, this is how a male deva lives with a female wretch.

“And how, householders, does a male Deva live with a female Deva?

“Here, householders, the husband abstains from destroying living beings, from taking what is not freely given, does not engage in sexual misconduct, not even in thought, he does not tell lies, does not take intoxicants nor fermented drinks; he possesses a virtuous character, and never entertains evil thoughts, living with generosity and selflessness, as he enjoys respecting and honoring recluses and Brahmins.

“Similarly, the wife also abstains from destroying living beings, from taking what is not freely given; she does not engage in sexual misconduct, not even in thought, she does not tell lies, does not take intoxicants nor fermented drinks; she possesses a virtuous character, and never entertains evil thoughts, living with generosity and selflessness, as she enjoys respecting and honoring recluses and Brahmins.
Householders, in this manner a male Deva lives with a female Deva.

“Householders, these are the four ways of living together.

*“When a couple lives without virtue,
Stingy and abusive, the husband is a wretch and so is the wife
Although both may be living,
Here, a dead husband is living with a dead wife.*

*When the husband is without virtue,
Stingy and abusive, but his wife is one of virtuous character
Selfless and with a generous heart
Here, a female Deva is living with a dead husband.*

*When the husband is of a virtuous character,
A generous man, who is not envious or jealous,
But lives with a wife who is without virtue,
Stingy, selfish, and abusive,
Here, a male Deva is living with a dead wife.*

*When both husband and wife live with virtuous character
Generous, restrained and with consideration towards each other
Be in thought, speech, or actions
This becomes a source of abundant merits, as they dwell at ease.
In seeing them live together in virtue, their enemies become sad and vanquished
Having lived life according to the True Dhamma
While observing precepts and developing purity of character
They lead a happy life, here and now,
And enjoy heavenly sensual bliss, hereafter.”*

Sādhu Sādhu Sādhu