

Anguttara Nikāya

The Numerical Discourses

Navakanipāta
(Book of the Nines)

AN 9.6

Sevanā Sutta

“Companionships”

Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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Once, the Venerable Sāriputta addressed the Bhikkhus and said:

“Friends, Bhikkhus!”

“Yes, Friend,” those Bhikkhus replied.

And the Venerable Sāriputta continued by saying:

“Friends, there are two kinds of people that you must recognize: those you must associate with and those you must avoid and never associate with at all.

“Friends, there are two kinds of robes that you must recognize: those you could wear, and those that you must not wear at all.

“Friends, there are two kinds of alms food that may be offered: those that you could accept and eat, and those that you must avoid and not touch at all.

“Friends, there are these two kinds of housing you may be offered: those that you can use and stay in, and those that you must avoid and not set foot in.

“Friends, there are these two kinds of towns or villages that are resorted to for support: those that you can approach and visit, and those that you must avoid and not set foot in.

“Friends, there are these two kinds of countries or regions: those that you could visit and stay in, and those that you must avoid and not go near.

1. “Now, what was meant by the statement: *‘Friends, there are two kinds of people that you must recognize: those you must associate with and those you must avoid and never associate with at all?’*

1a. “You might come to know someone, about whom you reflect thus:

‘Every time I associate with this person, I notice that unwholesome and bad merit-making qualities seem to arise and increase within me, whereas wholesome and good merit-making qualities diminish and just vanish. Also, as a result of my association with this person, I notice how the monastic requisites, which I need as a recluse to sustain myself, such as the robes I use, the alms food I eat, the housing, and medical necessities for me to use also, all become difficult to acquire and very hard to come by, with resources dwindling.’

‘Furthermore, the main objective and goal of the Holy Life for which I have willingly and with faith gone forth from the lay life into homelessness, suddenly seems harder to achieve, as its fulfillment constantly escapes me, and thus what is yet to be attained and realized becomes much more difficult, if not impossible, to attain.’

“Now, if this is the case, then get up and leave, without thinking twice. Whether it is in the dead of the night or during any time of the day, quickly and immediately walk away from such a person, without even saying a word or asking their permission! In this way, you must never again associate with such a character.

1b. “However, friends, if you come to know of someone, about whom you reflect thus:

‘Every time I associate with this person, I notice that wholesome and good merit-making qualities seem to arise and increase within me, whereas unwholesome and bad merit-making qualities diminish and just vanish. Also, as a result of my association with this person, I notice how the monastic requisites, which I need as a recluse to sustain myself, such as the robes I use, the alms food I eat, the housing, and medical necessities for me to use also, all become available and very easy to come by, with resources in abundance.’

‘Furthermore, the main objective and goal of the Holy Life for which I have willingly and with faith gone forth from the lay life into homelessness, suddenly seems easier to achieve, as its fulfillment constantly gets closer and closer, whereby I am able to attain and realize that which was not yet attained or realized, and thus I am steadily developing in my practice.’

“Now, if this is the case, then you must stay with such a true spiritual friend, without thinking twice. In this way, you must associate with and not leave such companions in the Holy Life, even if they reject and want to send you away or even try and throw you out!

“In this way, friends, you must recognize and distinguish between these two kinds of people: those you must associate with and those you must avoid and not associate with, at all.

“Therefore, this is the reason for me to have made that statement to you earlier.

2. “And what was meant by the statement: *‘Friends, there are two kinds of robes that you must recognize: those you could wear, and those that you must not wear at all?’*”

2a. “You might obtain a certain kind of robe, about which you reflect thus:

‘Every time I wear this robe, I notice that unwholesome and bad merit-making qualities seem to arise and increase within me, whereas wholesome and good merit-making qualities diminish and just vanish.’

“Now, if this is the case, then you must never wear those robes again.

2b. “On the other hand, friends, if you obtain another set of robes, about which you reflect thus:

‘Every time I wear this robe, I notice that wholesome and good merit-making qualities seem to arise and increase within me, whereas unwholesome and bad merit-making qualities diminish and just vanish.’

“Then, if this is the case, you must use and wear those robes.

“In this way, friends, you must recognize and distinguish between these two kinds of robes: those you could wear, and those that you must not wear at all.

“Therefore, this is the reason for me to have made that statement to you earlier.

3. “And what was meant by the statement: *‘Friends, there are two kinds of alms food that may be offered: those that you could accept and eat, and those that you must avoid and not touch at all?’*”

3a. “You might obtain a certain kind of alms food, about which you reflect thus:

‘Every time I eat or partake of this kind of alms food, I notice that unwholesome and bad merit-making qualities seem to arise and increase within me, whereas wholesome and good merit-making qualities diminish and just vanish.’

“Now, if this is the case, then you must not eat or partake of that kind of alms food ever again.

3b. “On the other hand, friends, if you obtain another kind of alms food, about which you reflect thus:

‘Every time I eat or partake of this kind of alms food, I notice that wholesome and good merit-making qualities seem to arise and increase within me, whereas unwholesome and bad merit-making qualities diminish and just vanish.’

“Then, if this is the case, you must eat and partake of that kind of alms food.

“In this way, friends, you must recognize and distinguish between these two kinds of alms food: those you could accept and eat, and those that you must avoid and not touch at all.

“Therefore, this is the reason for me to have made that statement to you earlier.

4. “And what was meant by the statement: *‘Friends, there are these two kinds of housing you may be offered: those that you can use and stay in, and those that you must avoid and not set foot in?’*

4a. “You might be offered a kind of housing for you to stay in, about which you reflect thus:

‘Every time I stay in this place, I notice that unwholesome and bad merit-making qualities seem to arise and increase within me, whereas wholesome and good merit-making qualities diminish and just vanish.’

“Now, if this is the case, then as soon as possible, you must leave and never stay in such a place ever again.

4b. “On the other hand, friends, if you are offered another kind of housing for you to stay in, about which you reflect thus:

‘Every time I stay in this place, I notice that wholesome and good merit-making qualities seem to arise and increase within me, whereas unwholesome and bad merit-making qualities diminish and just vanish.’

“Then, if this is the case, you must stay in that kind of housing that is being provided for you.

“In this way, friends, you must recognize and distinguish between these two kinds of housing: those that you can use and stay in, and those that you must avoid and not set foot in.

“Therefore, this is the reason for me to have made that statement to you earlier.

5. “And what was meant by the statement: *‘Friends, there are these two kinds of towns or villages that are resorted to for support: those that you can approach and visit, and those that you must avoid and not set foot in?’*

5a. “You might resort to a town or village to find support, about which you reflect thus:

‘Every time I pass by or visit this town or village, I notice that unwholesome and bad merit-making qualities seem to arise and increase within me, whereas wholesome and good merit-making qualities diminish and just vanish.’

“Now, if this is the case, then you must not frequent or visit such towns or villages ever again.

5b. “On the other hand, friends, if you resort to other towns or villages to find support, about which you reflect thus:

‘Every time I pass by or visit this town or village, I notice that wholesome and good merit-making qualities seem to arise and increase within me, whereas unwholesome and bad merit-making qualities diminish and just vanish.

“Then, if this is the case, you could pass by or visit such towns or villages in the future.

“In this way, friends, you must recognize and distinguish between these two kinds of towns or villages that are resorted to for support: those that you can approach and visit, and those that you must avoid and not set foot in.

“Therefore, this is the reason for me to have made that statement to you earlier.

6. “And, what was meant by the statement: *‘Friends, there are these two kinds of countries or regions: those that you could visit and stay in, and those that you must avoid and not go near?’*

6a. “You might go to or stay in a certain country or region, about which you reflect thus:

‘Every time I come to or stay in this country or region, I notice that unwholesome and bad merit-making qualities seem to arise and increase within me, whereas wholesome and good merit-making qualities diminish and just vanish.’

“Now, if this is the case, then you must leave that country or region immediately, and not go or stay there ever again in the future.

6b. “On the other hand, friends, if you go to or stay in a certain country or region, about which you reflect thus:

‘Every time I come to or stay in this country or region, I notice that wholesome and good merit-making qualities seem to arise and increase within me, whereas unwholesome and bad merit-making qualities diminish and just vanish.

“Then, if this is the case, you may go to or stay in such a country or region frequently.

“In this way, friends, you must recognize and distinguish between these two kinds of countries or regions: those that you could visit and stay in, and those that you must avoid and not go near, at all.

“Therefore, this is the reason for me to have made that statement to you earlier.”

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