DN 31 — Sigalovada Sutta: The Discourse to Sigala

English translation by Narada Thera.

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Source revision: sha256:7c411108530c04aafcca0ac43267ed12227cbb2653320e8ae0bb686e566bb783

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Text

Thus have I heard:

On one occasion the Exalted One was dwelling in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels' Sanctuary, near Rajagaha.

Now at that time, young Sigala, a householder's son, rising early in the morning, departing from Rajagaha, with wet clothes and wet hair, worshipped with joined hands the various quarters — the East, the South, the West, the North, the Nadir, and the Zenith.

Then the Exalted One, having robed himself in the forenoon took bowl and robe, and entered Rajagaha for alms. Now he saw young Sigala worshipping thus and spoke to him as follows:

"Wherefore do you, young householder, rising early in the morning, departing from Rajagaha, with wet clothes and wet hair, worship, with joined hands these various quarters — the East, the South, the West, the North, the Nadir, and the Zenith?"

"My father, Lord, while dying, said to me: The six quarters, dear son, you shall worship. And I, Lord, respecting, revering, reverencing and honoring my father's word, rise early in the morning, and leaving Rajagaha, with wet clothes and wet hair, worship with joined hands, these six quarters."

"It is not thus, young householder, the six quarters should be worshipped in the discipline of the noble."

"How then, Lord, should the six quarters be worshipped in the discipline of the noble? It is well, Lord, if the Exalted One would teach the doctrine to me showing how the six quarters should be worshipped in the discipline of the noble."

"Well, young householder, listen and bear it well in mind; I shall speak." — "Very good, Lord," responded young Sigala.

And the Exalted One spoke as follows:

"Inasmuch, young householder, as the noble disciple (1) has eradicated the four vices in conduct,[1] (2) inasmuch as he commits no evil action in four ways, (3) inasmuch as he pursues not the six channels for dissipating wealth, he thus, avoiding these fourteen evil things, covers the six quarters, and enters the path leading to victory in both worlds: he is favored in this world and in the world beyond. Upon the dissolution of the body, after death, he is born in a happy heavenly realm.

(1) "What are the four vices in conduct that he has eradicated? The destruction of life, householder, is a vice and so are stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying. These are the four vices that he has eradicated."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

Killing, stealing, lying and adultery, These four evils the wise never praise.

(2) "In which four ways does one commit no evil action? Led by desire does one commit evil. Led by anger does one commit evil. Led by ignorance does one commit evil. Led by fear does one commit evil.[2]

"But inasmuch as the noble disciple is not led by desire, anger, ignorance, and fear, he commits no evil."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

Whoever through desire, hate or fear, Or ignorance should transgress the Dhamma, All his glory fades away Like the moon during the waning half. Whoever through desire, hate or fear, Or ignorance never transgresses the Dhamma, All his glory ever increases Like the moon during the waxing half.

(3) "What are the six channels for dissipating wealth which he does not pursue?

(a) "indulgence in intoxicants which cause infatuation and heedlessness; (b) sauntering in streets at unseemly hours; (c) frequenting theatrical shows; (d) indulgence in gambling which causes heedlessness; (e) association with evil companions; (f) the habit of idleness.

(a) "There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in indulging in intoxicants which cause infatuation and heedlessness:

(i) loss of wealth, (ii) increase of quarrels, (iii) susceptibility to disease, (iv) earning an evil reputation, (v) shameless exposure of body, (vi) weakening of intellect.

(b) "There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in sauntering in streets at unseemly hours:

(i) he himself is unprotected and unguarded, (ii) his wife and children are unprotected and unguarded, (iii) his property is unprotected and unguarded, (iv) he is suspected of evil deeds,[3] (v) he is subject to false rumours, (vi) he meets with many troubles.

(c) "There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in frequenting theatrical shows. He is ever thinking:

(i) where is there dancing? (ii) where is there singing? (iii) where is there music? (iv) where is there recitation? (v) where is there playing with cymbals? (vi) where is there pot-blowing?[4]

(d) "There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in indulging in gambling:

(i) the winner begets hate, (ii) the loser grieves for lost wealth, (iii) loss of wealth, (iv) his word is not relied upon in a court of law, (v) he is despised by his friends and associates, (vi) he is not sought after for matrimony; for people would say he is a gambler and is not fit to look after a wife.

(e) "There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in associating with evil companions, namely: any gambler, any libertine, any drunkard, any swindler, any cheat, any rowdy is his friend and companion.

(f) "There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in being addicted to idleness:

"He does no work, saying:

(i) that it is extremely cold, (ii) that it is extremely hot, (iii) that it is too late in the evening, (iv) that it is too early in the morning, (v) that he is extremely hungry, (vi) that he is too full.

"Living in this way, he leaves many duties undone, new wealth he does not get, and wealth he has acquired dwindles away."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

"One is a bottle friend; one says, 'friend, friend' only to one's face; one is a friend and an associate only when it is advantageous.

"Sleeping till sunrise, adultery, irascibility, malevolence, evil companions, avarice — these six causes ruin a man.

"The man who has evil comrades and friends is given to evil ways, to ruin does he fall in both worlds — here and the next.

"Dice, women, liquor, dancing, singing, sleeping by day, sauntering at unseemly hours, evil companions, avarice — these nine[5] causes ruin a man.

"Who plays with dice and drinks intoxicants, goes to women who are dear unto others as their own lives, associates with the mean and not with elders — he declines just as the moon during the waning half.

"Who is drunk, poor, destitute, still thirsty whilst drinking, frequents the bars, sinks in debt as a stone in water, swiftly brings disrepute to his family.

"Who by habit sleeps by day, and keeps late hours, is ever intoxicated, and is licentious, is not fit to lead a household life.

"Who says it is too hot, too cold, too late, and leaves things undone, the opportunities for good go past such men.

"But he who does not regard cold or heat any more than a blade of grass and who does his duties manfully, does not fall away from happiness."

"These four, young householder, should be understood as foes in the guise of friends:

(1) he who appropriates a friend's possessions, (2) he who renders lip-service, (3) he who flatters, (4) he who brings ruin.

(1) "In four ways, young householder, should one who appropriates be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend:

(i) he appropriates his friend's wealth, (ii) he gives little and asks much, (iii) he does his duty out of fear, (iv) he associates for his own advantage.

(2) "In four ways, young householder, should one who renders lip-service be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend:

(i) he makes friendly profession as regards the past, (ii) he makes friendly profession as regards the future, (iii) he tries to gain one's favor by empty words, (iv) when opportunity for service has arisen, he expresses his inability.

(3) "In four ways, young householder, should one who flatters be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend:

(i) he approves of his friend's evil deeds, (ii) he disapproves his friend's good deeds, (iii) he praises him in his presence, (iv) he speaks ill of him in his absence.

(4) "In four ways, young householder, should one who brings ruin be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend:

(i) he is a companion in indulging in intoxicants that cause infatuation and heedlessness, (ii) he is a companion in sauntering in streets at unseemly hours, (iii) he is a companion in frequenting theatrical shows, (iv) he is a companion in indulging in gambling which causes heedlessness."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

The friend who appropriates, the friend who renders lip-service, the friend that flatters, the friend who brings ruin, these four as enemies the wise behold, avoid them from afar as paths of peril.

"These four, young householder, should be understood as warm-hearted friends:

(1) he who is a helpmate, (2) he who is the same in happiness and sorrow, (3) he who gives good counsel, (4) he who sympathises.

(1) "In four ways, young householder, should a helpmate be understood as a warm-hearted friend:

(i) he guards the heedless, (ii) he protects the wealth of the heedless, (iii) he becomes a refuge when you are in danger, (iv) when there are commitments he provides you with double the supply needed.

(2) "In four ways, young householder, should one who is the same in happiness and sorrow be understood as a warm-hearted friend:

(i) he reveals his secrets, (ii) he conceals one's own secrets, (iii) in misfortune he does not forsake one, (iv) his life even he sacrifices for one's sake.

(3) "In four ways, young householder, should one who gives good counsel be understood as a warm-hearted friend:

(i) he restrains one from doing evil, (ii) he encourages one to do good, (iii) he informs one of what is unknown to oneself, (iv) he points out the path to heaven.

(4) "In four ways, young householder, should one who sympathises be understood as a warm-hearted friend:

(i) he does not rejoice in one's misfortune, (ii) he rejoices in one's prosperity, (iii) he restrains others speaking ill of oneself, (iv) he praises those who speak well of oneself."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

The friend who is a helpmate, the friend in happiness and woe, the friend who gives good counsel, the friend who sympathises too — these four as friends the wise behold and cherish them devotedly as does a mother her own child. The wise and virtuous shine like a blazing fire. He who acquires his wealth in harmless ways like to a bee that honey gathers,[6] riches mount up for him like ant hill's rapid growth. With wealth acquired this way, a layman fit for household life, in portions four divides his wealth: thus will he friendship win. One portion for his wants he uses,[7] two portions on his business spends, the fourth for times of need he keeps.

"And how, young householder, does a noble disciple cover the six quarters?

"The following should be looked upon as the six quarters. The parents should be looked upon as the East, teachers as the South, wife and children as the West, friends and associates as the North, servants and employees as the Nadir, ascetics and brahmans as the Zenith.[8]

"In five ways, young householder, a child should minister to his parents as the East:

(i) Having supported me I shall support them, (ii) I shall do their duties, (iii) I shall keep the family tradition, (iv) I shall make myself worthy of my inheritance, (v) furthermore I shall offer alms in honor of my departed relatives.[9]

"In five ways, young householder, the parents thus ministered to as the East by their children, show their compassion:

(i) they restrain them from evil, (ii) they encourage them to do good, (iii) they train them for a profession, (iv) they arrange a suitable marriage, (v) at the proper time they hand over their inheritance to them.

"In these five ways do children minister to their parents as the East and the parents show their compassion to their children. Thus is the East covered by them and made safe and secure.

"In five ways, young householder, a pupil should minister to a teacher as the South:

(i) by rising from the seat in salutation, (ii) by attending on him, (iii) by eagerness to learn, (iv) by personal service, (v) by respectful attention while receiving instructions.

"In five ways, young householder, do teachers thus ministered to as the South by their pupils, show their compassion:

(i) they train them in the best discipline, (ii) they see that they grasp their lessons well, (iii) they instruct them in the arts and sciences, (iv) they introduce them to their friends and associates, (v) they provide for their safety in every quarter.

"The teachers thus ministered to as the South by their pupils, show their compassion towards them in these five ways. Thus is the South covered by them and made safe and secure.

"In five ways, young householder, should a wife as the West be ministered to by a husband:

(i) by being courteous to her, (ii) by not despising her, (iii) by being faithful to her, (iv) by handing over authority to her, (v) by providing her with adornments.

"The wife thus ministered to as the West by her husband shows her compassion to her husband in five ways:

(i) she performs her duties well, (ii) she is hospitable to relations and attendants[10] (iii) she is faithful, (iv) she protects what he brings, (v) she is skilled and industrious in discharging her duties.

"In these five ways does the wife show her compassion to her husband who ministers to her as the West. Thus is the West covered by him and made safe and secure.

"In five ways, young householder, should a clansman minister to his friends and associates as the North:

(i) by liberality, (ii) by courteous speech, (iii) by being helpful, (iv) by being impartial, (v) by sincerity.

"The friends and associates thus ministered to as the North by a clansman show compassion to him in five ways:

(i) they protect him when he is heedless, (ii) they protect his property when he is heedless, (iii) they become a refuge when he is in danger, (iv) they do not forsake him in his troubles, (v) they show consideration for his family.

"The friends and associates thus ministered to as the North by a clansman show their compassion towards him in these five ways. Thus is the North covered by him and made safe and secure.

"In five ways should a master minister to his servants and employees as the Nadir:

(i) by assigning them work according to their ability, (ii) by supplying them with food and with wages, (iii) by tending them in sickness, (iv) by sharing with them any delicacies, (v) by granting them leave at times.

"The servants and employees thus ministered to as the Nadir by their master show their compassion to him in five ways:

(i) they rise before him, (ii) they go to sleep after him, (iii) they take only what is given, (iv) they perform their duties well, (v) they uphold his good name and fame.

"The servants and employees thus ministered to as the Nadir show their compassion towards him in these five ways. Thus is the Nadir covered by him and made safe and secure.

"In five ways, young householder, should a householder minister to ascetics and brahmans as the Zenith:

(i) by lovable deeds, (ii) by lovable words, (iii) by lovable thoughts, (iv) by keeping open house to them, (v) by supplying their material needs.

"The ascetics and brahmans thus ministered to as the Zenith by a householder show their compassion towards him in six ways:

(i) they restrain him from evil, (ii) they persuade him to do good, (iii) they love him with a kind heart, (iv) they make him hear what he has not heard, (v) they clarify what he has already heard, (vi) they point out the path to a heavenly state.

"In these six ways do ascetics and brahmans show their compassion towards a householder who ministers to them as the Zenith. Thus is the Zenith covered by him and made safe and secure." Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

The mother and father are the East, The Teachers are the South, Wife and Children are the West, The friends and associates are the North. Servants and employees are the Nadir, The ascetics and brahmans are the Zenith; Who is fit to lead the household life, These six quarters he should salute. Who is wise and virtuous, Gentle and keen-witted, Humble and amenable, Such a one to honor may attain. Who is energetic and not indolent, In misfortune unshaken, Flawless in manner and intelligent, Such a one to honor may attain. Who is hospitable, and friendly, Liberal and unselfish, A guide, an instructor, a leader, Such a one to honor may attain. Generosity, sweet speech, Helpfulness to others, Impartiality to all, As the case demands. These four winning ways make the world go round, As the linchpin in a moving car. If these in the world exist not, Neither mother nor father will receive, Respect and honor from their children. Since these four winning ways The wise appraise in every way, To eminence they attain, And praise they rightly gain.

When the Exalted One had spoken thus, Sigala, the young householder, said as follows:

"Excellent, Lord, excellent! It is as if, Lord, a man were to set upright that which was overturned, or were to reveal that which was hidden, or were to point out the way to one who had gone astray, or were to hold a lamp amidst the darkness, so that those who have eyes may see. Even so, has the doctrine been explained in various ways by the Exalted One.

"I take refuge, Lord, in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. May the Exalted One receive me as a lay follower; as one who has taken refuge from this very day to life's end."

Notes

1.

kamma-kilesa, lit., 'actions of defilement.'

2.

These are the four agati, 'evil courses of action': chanda, dosa, moha, bhaya.

3.

Crimes committed by others.

4.

A kind of amusement.

5.

The Pali original has here "six causes" as two compound words and one double-term phrase are counted as units.

6.

Dhammapada v. 49: "As a bee, without harming the flower, its color or scent, flies away, collecting only the honey..."

7.

This portion includes what is spent on good works: gifts to monks, charity, etc.

8.

"The symbolism is deliberately chosen: as the day in the East, so life begins with parents' care; teacher's fees and the South are the same word: dakkhina; domestic cares follow when the youth becomes man, as the West holds the later daylight; North is 'beyond' (uttara), so by help of friends, etc., he gets beyond troubles." — (Rhys Davids)

9.

This is a sacred custom of the Aryans who never forgot the dead. This tradition is still faithfully observed by the Buddhists of Sri Lanka who make ceremonial offerings of alms to the monks on the eighth day, in the third month, and on each anniversary of the demise of the parents. Merit of these good actions is offered to the departed after such ceremony. Moreover after every punna-kamma (good action), a Buddhist never fails to think of his parents and offer merit. Such is the loyalty and the gratitude shown to parents as advised by the Buddha.

10.

lit., 'the folk around' (parijana).