

On one occasion the Blessed One was traveling along the highway between Madhura and Veranja, and a number of householders and their wives were traveling along the same road. Then the Blessed One left the road and sat down on a seat at the foot of a tree. The householders and their wives saw the Blessed One sitting there and approached him having paid homage to him, they sat down to one side, and the Blessed One then said to them:

“Householders, there are these four kinds of marriages. What four? A wretch lives together with a wretch; a wretch lives together with a goddess; a god lives together with a wretch; a god lives together with a goddess.

“And how does a wretch live together with a wretch? Here, householders, the husband is one who destroys life, takes what is not given, engages in sexual misconduct, speaks falsely, and indulges in wines, liquor and intoxicants which are a basis for negligence; he is immoral, of bad character; he dwells at home with a heart obsessed by the stain of stinginess; he abuses and reviles ascetics and brahmins. And his wife is exactly the same in all respects. It is in such a way that a wretch lives together with a wretch.

“And how does a wretch live together with a goddess? Here, householders, the husband is one who destroys life ... who abuses and reviles ascetics and Brahmins. But his wife is one who abstains from the destruction of life ... from wines, liquor and intoxicants; she is virtuous, of good character; she dwells at home with a heart free from the stain of stinginess; she does not abuse or revile ascetics and Brahmins. It is in such a way that a wretch lives together with a goddess.

“And how does a god live together with a wretch? Here, householders, the husband is one who abstains from the destruction of life ... who does not abuse or revile ascetics and Brahmins. But his wife is one who destroys life ... who abuses and reviles ascetics and Brahmins. It is in such a way that a god lives together with a wretch.

“And how does a god live together with a goddess? Here, householders, the husband is one who abstains from the destruction of life ... from wines, liquor and intoxicants; he is virtuous, of good character; he dwells at home with a heart free from the stain of stinginess; he does not abuse or revile ascetics and Brahmins. And his wife is exactly the same in all respects. It is in such a way that a god lives together with a goddess.

“These, householders, are the four kinds of marriages.”

Numerical Discourses of the Buddha

An anthology of Suttas from the Anguttara Nikāya

Selected and translated from the Pāli by Nyanaponika Thera and Bhikkhu Bodhi