SN 7.21 — With Saṅgārava

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Linked Discourses 7.21

2. Lay Followers

With Saṅgārava

At Sāvatthī.

Now at that time there was a brahmin named Saṅgārava staying in Sāvatthī. He practiced purification by water, believing in purification by water. He lived committed to the practice of immersing himself in water at daybreak and dusk. Then Venerable Ānanda robed up in the morning and, taking his bowl and robe, entered Sāvatthī for alms.

He wandered for alms in Sāvatthī. After the meal, on his return from almsround, he went to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and said to him, “Sir, there is a brahmin named Saṅgārava staying in Sāvatthī. He practices purification by water, believing in purification by water. He lives devoted to ritual bathing at daybreak and dusk. Please visit him at his home out of sympathy.” The Buddha consented with silence.

Then the Buddha robed up in the morning and, taking his bowl and robe, went to the home of the brahmin Saṅgārava, and sat down on the seat spread out. Then the brahmin Saṅgārava went up to the Buddha, and exchanged greetings with him.

When the greetings and polite conversation were over, he sat down to one side. The Buddha said to him, “Is it really true, brahmin, that you practice purification by water, believing in purification by water; that you live committed to the practice of immersing yourself in water at daybreak and dusk?”

“Yes, worthy Gotama.”

“But brahmin, for what reason do you practice purification by water?”

“It’s because, Worthy Gotama, whatever bad deeds I’ve done during the day I rinse off by bathing at dusk; and whatever bad deeds I’ve done during the night, I rinse off by bathing at dawn. That’s the reason why I practice purification by water.”

“The teaching is a lake, brahmin, into which ethics are the stairs,

unclouded, praised by the fine to the good.

There the knowledge masters go to bathe,

and cross to the far shore with dry limbs.”

When he had spoken, Saṅgārava said to the Buddha, “Excellent, worthy Gotama! Excellent! … From this day forth, may the worthy Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge for life.”