

AN 5.167: Codanā Sutta

Criticizing

Translated by Bhante Suddhāso

Venerable Sāriputta addressed the monks: “Venerables, a monk who wishes to criticize another should first establish five resolutions:

“I will speak at a proper time, not an improper time.

“I will speak truthfully, not untruthfully.

“I will speak gently, not harshly.

“I will speak beneficially, not unbeneficially.

“I will speak with a mind of loving-kindness, not with internal hatred.

“A monk who wishes to criticize another should first establish these five resolutions.

“Venerables, here I see a certain person became upset when they were criticized at the wrong time, not the right time; they became upset when they were criticized untruthfully, not truthfully; they became upset when they were criticized harshly, not gently; they became upset when they were criticized unbeneficially, not beneficially; they became upset when they were criticized with internal hatred, not with a mind of loving-kindness.

“Venerables, that monk who was criticized improperly¹ should be provided with non-remorse in five ways: ‘Venerable, you were criticized at the wrong time, not the right time; that is sufficient reason for you to lack remorse. You were criticized untruthfully, not truthfully; that is sufficient reason for you to lack remorse. You were criticized harshly, not gently; that is sufficient reason for you to lack remorse. You were criticized unbeneficially, not beneficially; that is sufficient reason for you to lack remorse. You were criticized with internal hatred, not with a mind of loving-kindness; that is sufficient reason for you to lack remorse.’ Venerables, that monk who was criticized improperly should be provided with non-remorse in these five ways.

“Venerables, the monk who criticized improperly should be provided with remorse in five ways: ‘Venerable, you criticized at the wrong time, not the right time; that is sufficient reason for you to feel remorse. You criticized untruthfully, not truthfully; that is sufficient reason for you to feel remorse. You criticized harshly, not gently; that is sufficient reason for you to feel remorse. You criticized unbeneficially, not beneficially; that is sufficient reason for you to feel remorse. You criticized with internal hatred, not with a mind of loving-kindness; that is sufficient reason for you to feel remorse.’ Venerables, the monk who criticized improperly should be provided with remorse in these five ways. For what reason? So that another monk will not think to untruthfully criticize.

“Venerables, here I see a certain person became upset when they were criticized at the right time, not the wrong time; they became upset when they were criticized truthfully, not untruthfully; they became upset when they were criticized gently, not harshly; they became upset when they were criticized beneficially, not unbeneficially; they became upset when they were criticized with a mind of loving-kindness, not with internal hatred.

¹ *Adhamma*. That is, not in accordance with the Dhamma.

“Venerables, that monk who was criticized properly should be provided with remorse in five ways: ‘Venerable, you were criticized at the right time, not the wrong time; that is sufficient reason for you to feel remorse. You were criticized truthfully, not untruthfully; that is sufficient reason for you to feel remorse. You were criticized gently, not harshly; that is sufficient reason for you to feel remorse. You were criticized beneficially, not unbeneficially; that is sufficient reason for you to feel remorse. You were criticized with a mind of loving-kindness, not with internal hatred; that is sufficient reason for you to feel remorse.’ Venerables, that monk who was criticized properly should be provided with remorse in these five ways.

“Venerables, the monk who criticized properly should be provided with non-remorse in five ways: ‘Venerable, you criticized at the right time, not the wrong time; that is sufficient reason for you to lack remorse. You criticized truthfully, not untruthfully; that is sufficient reason for you to lack remorse. You criticized gently, not harshly; that is sufficient reason for you to lack remorse. You criticized beneficially, not unbeneficially; that is sufficient reason for you to lack remorse. You criticized with a mind of loving-kindness, not with internal hatred; that is sufficient reason for you to lack remorse.’ Venerables, the monk who criticized properly should be provided with non-remorse in these five ways. For what reason? So that another monk will think to truthfully criticize.

“Venerables, when a person is criticized, they should be established in two things: the truth, and imperturbability. Venerables, whether others criticize me at the right time or the wrong time, truthfully or untruthfully, gently or harshly, beneficially or unbeneficially, with a mind of loving-kindness or with internal hatred, still I will be established in two these two things: the truth, and imperturbability. If I know, ‘This is present in me,’ then I say, ‘It is present, it is found in me.’ If I know, ‘That is not present in me,’ then I say, ‘It is not present, it is not found in me.’”

“Sāriputta², although you are saying this, there are still some empty people here who do not acquire respectfulness.”

“Bhante, those people who lack faith, who leave the household life and become a homeless monastic for the sake of a livelihood rather than because of faith, who are deceitful, fraudulent, dishonest, arrogant, insolent, fickle, talkative, babbling, with unguarded senses, immoderate in eating, not devoted to wakefulness, uninterested in contemplation, not reverential of the training, living excessively, sloppy, masters in backsliding, who have given up on seclusion, lazy, unenergetic, unmindful, unaware, unconcentrated, scatter-minded, unwise, and obtuse - those are the ones who, when I am saying this, do not acquire respectfulness.

“However, Bhante, those good people who leave the household life and become a homeless monastic because of faith, who are not deceitful, not fraudulent, honest, not arrogant, not insolent, not fickle, not talkative, not babbling, with guarded senses, moderate in eating, devoted to wakefulness, interested in contemplation, reverential of

2 The interlocutor is not identified in the Sutta. However, since the interlocutor addresses Ven. Sāriputta simply as “Sāriputta” without using any title, and since Ven. Sāriputta calls the interlocutor “Bhante,” one may reasonably conclude that the interlocutor is the Buddha.

the training, not living excessively, not sloppy, who have given up on backsliding, are masters of seclusion, energetic, self-directed, mindful, aware, concentrated, with unified minds, wise, not obtuse - those are the ones who, when I am saying this, acquire respectfulness.”

“Sāriputta, those people who lack faith, who leave the household life and become a homeless monastic for the sake of a livelihood rather than because of faith, who are deceitful, fraudulent, dishonest, arrogant, insolent, fickle, talkative, babbling, with unguarded senses, immoderate in eating, not devoted to wakefulness, uninterested in contemplation, not reverential of the training, living excessively, sloppy, masters in backsliding, who have given up on seclusion, lazy, unenergetic, unmindful, unaware, unconcentrated, scatter-minded, unwise, and obtuse - let them be.

“Sāriputta, those good people who leave the household life and become a homeless monastic because of faith, who are not deceitful, not fraudulent, honest, not arrogant, not insolent, not fickle, not talkative, not babbling, with guarded senses, moderate in eating, devoted to wakefulness, interested in contemplation, reverential of the training, not living excessively, not sloppy, who have given up on backsliding, are masters of seclusion, energetic, self-directed, mindful, aware, concentrated, with unified minds, wise, not obtuse - Sāriputta, those are the ones you should speak to. Sāriputta, advise your fellow practitioners; Sāriputta, instruct your fellow practitioners; [thinking] ‘I will help them emerge from bad things and establish them in good things.’ Sāriputta, this is how you are to train yourself.”