

MN 56
Upāli Sutta
“The Householder Upāli”
Translated by Candana Bhikkhu

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I have personally heard this.

At one time, the Blessed One was staying in Nālanda, at the Mango Orchard that was owned by Pāvārika.

It was during that time that naked ascetic Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta was also staying in Nālanda, along with a large retinue of his Jain ascetics, while being supported by his lay followers.

Then, one of Nigaṇṭha’s naked ascetic students, by the name of Dīgha Tapassī went wandering for alms in Nālanda, and on returning from his alms round, after the meal, went over to where the Blessed One was staying at the Mango Orchard. Once there, the naked ascetic, Dīgha Tapassī, the Nigaṇṭha follower exchanged friendly greetings and stood to one side. Then the Blessed One said this to him: “Tapassī, there are seats available, if you wish, you may go ahead and sit down.”

And Dīgha Tapassī, took a low seat and the Blessed One said this:

“Tapassī, how many types of actions (kamma) does the naked ascetic Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta identify that are evil and unwholesome in nature; that bring about the execution of evil and unwholesome actions?”

And the Nigaṇṭha follower Dīgha Tapassī, the naked ascetic replied:

“Friend Gautama, in teaching us, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta does not usually use terms like “actions.” Instead, he speaks of and describes such matters in terms of “offences.”

“In that case, Tapassī, how many types of offences does Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta identify that are evil and unwholesome in nature; that bring about the execution of evil and unwholesome actions?”

“Friend, Gautama, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta has declared three offences in reference to committing evil and unwholesome actions; that bring about the execution of evil

and unwholesome actions. These are: bodily offence, verbal offence, and mental offence.”

“And how, Tapassī, are these offences different from each other? Are they one and the same, or are they to be distinguished from each other?”

“Friend, Gautama, bodily offence is one thing, verbal offence is another, and mental offence is yet another.”

“In that case, Tapassī, from these three offences that are described as being different from each other, which one does Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta identify and declare as *the* most significant and blameworthy, in committing evil and unwholesome actions; that bring about the execution of evil and unwholesome actions? Is it the bodily offence, verbal offence, or mental offence?”

“Friend Gautama, of these three offences that are described as being different from each other, it is the bodily offence that Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta identifies and declares as *the* most significant and blameworthy, in committing evil and unwholesome actions; that bring about the execution of evil and unwholesome actions, and not so much the verbal offence or mental offence.”

“Tapassī, are you saying the bodily offence is *the* most significant and blameworthy?”

“Yes, Friend Gautama, I say it is the bodily offence that is the most significant and blameworthy.”

“Tapassī, are you saying the bodily offence is *the* most significant and blameworthy?”

“Yes, Friend Gautama, I say it is the bodily offence that is the most significant and blameworthy.”

“Tapassī, are you saying the bodily offence is *the* most significant and blameworthy?”

“Yes, Friend Gautama, I say it is the bodily offence that is the most significant and blameworthy.”

In this manner, the Blessed One made certain that the naked ascetic Dīgha Tapassī maintained his position by stating it repeatedly three times. And when this was said, Dīgha Tapassī, the naked ascetic asked the Blessed One:

“Friend Gautama, and how many types of offences do *you* identify that are evil and unwholesome in nature; that bring about the execution of evil and unwholesome actions?”

“Friend, Tapassī, it is not the practice of the Tathāgatas to use the term “offence.” It is our practice to use term “action” instead.

“In that case, Friend Gautama, how many types of actions do you identify that are evil and unwholesome in nature; that bring about the execution of evil and unwholesome actions?”

“Tapassī, I declare three types of actions that are responsible in reference to committing evil and unwholesome actions; that bring about the execution of evil and unwholesome actions. These are: bodily actions, verbal actions, and mental actions.”

“And how, Friend Gautama, are these actions different from each other? Are they one and the same, or are they to be distinguished from each other?”

“Tapassī, bodily action is one thing, verbal action is another, and mental action is yet another.”

“In that case, Friend Gautama from these three actions that are described as being different from each other, which one do you identify and declare as *the* most significant and blameworthy, in committing evil and unwholesome actions; that bring about the execution of evil and unwholesome actions? Is it the bodily action, verbal action, or mental action?”

“Tapassī, of these three actions that are described as being different from each other, it is the mental action that I identify and declare as *the* most significant and blameworthy, in committing evil and unwholesome actions; that bring about the execution of evil and unwholesome actions, and not so much the verbal offence or mental offence.”

“Friend Gautama, are you saying the mental action is *the* most significant and blameworthy?”

“Yes, Tapassī, I say it is the mental action that is *the* most significant and blameworthy.”

“Friend Gautama, are you saying the mental action is *the* most significant and blameworthy?”

“Yes, Tapassī, I say it is the mental action that is *the* most significant and blameworthy.”

“Friend Gautama, are you saying the mental action is *the* most significant and blameworthy?”

“Yes, Tapassī, I say it is the mental action that is *the* most significant and blameworthy.”

In this manner, the Nigaṇṭha follower, the naked ascetic Dīgha Tapassī made certain that The Blessed One maintained his position by stating it repeatedly three times. And once this exchange was over, Dīgha Tapassī got up from his seat and went back to his teacher, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta.

Meanwhile, the naked ascetic Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta was seated surrounded by a large gathering of lay supporters from Bālaka, headed by the wealthy householder, Upāli.

In seeing Dīgha Tapassī approach his assembly, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta asked him:

“Tapassī, where are you coming from at this time of day?”

“Bhante, I am coming from the presence of the recluse Gautama.”

“Ah, and did you engage in any discussion with the recluse Gautama?”

“Yes, Bhante, I *did* engage in a discussion with the recluse Gautama.”

“And what was the nature of the discussion that took place between you and the recluse Gautama, Tapassī?”

Then the naked ascetic, the Nigaṇṭha follower, Dīgha Tapassī related the entire conversation that took place between himself and The Blessed One.

And when this was related, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta said to the naked ascetic Dīgha Tapassī:

“Very Good! Tapassī! You are, after all, a very good student of mine, well-versed in the teachings I proclaim; thoroughly understanding your teacher’s dispensation correctly. For how could the trivial mental offence be in any way as important or significance as the physical offence? On the contrary, it is the physical offence that is *the* most significant and blameworthy in committing evil and unwholesome actions; that brings about the execution of evil and unwholesome actions, and not so much the verbal offence or mental offence. Tapassī, you have indeed said the right thing to the recluse Gautama.”

When this was said, the householder Upāli, the most prominent lay supporter of the Nigaṇṭhas, exclaimed:

“Very good, Bhante! It is truly great that the Venerable Dīgha Tapassī, being a very good student and well-versed in the teachings you proclaim; thoroughly understands the teacher’s dispensation correctly. For how could the trivial mental offence be in *any way* as important or significance as the physical offence? On the contrary, it is the *physical* offence that is the most significant and blameworthy, in committing evil and unwholesome actions; that brings about the execution of evil and unwholesome actions, and not so much the verbal offence or mental offence.

Bhante, I will now go to the recluse Gautama, and bring up this subject again to him, as I challenge him on his doctrine by debating with him refuting his doctrine, and if he maintains his position that he did with the Venerable Dīgha Tapassī, then just like a stronger man would grab hold of a long-haired lamb by its fleece, dragging it this way and that as one pleases, in the same way, I will drag the recluse Gautama this way and that, as I debate with him refuting his doctrine. Just like a strong distillery worker would fling the massive distilling mixer into the deep vat and grabbing hold of its end, he would pull it towards him, mixing and dragging its contents this way and that, in the same way, I will drag the recluse Gautama this way and that, as I debate with him refuting his doctrine. Just like a strong distillery worker would grab hold of the distillery strainer by its ears, as he tosses its contents up and down, turning and shaking it upside down, dragging it this way and that, in the same way, I will drag the recluse Gautama this way and that, as I debate with him refuting his doctrine.

And just like a 60-year-old elephant that jumps into a deep pond and enjoys entertaining itself by playing the game of hemp-washing, in the same way, I will have fun with the recluse Gautama, as I debate with him.”

Now, I’m off, Bhante, as I go and debate with the recluse Gautama!”

“Very good, Householder! Go, and debate with the recluse Gautama, refuting his doctrine. Because, either I should go, or my good student, Dīgha Tapassī, or you yourself should go and do it.”

At that point, the naked ascetic Dīgha Tapassī interjected by exclaiming:

“Bhante, I don’t think that sending the householder Upāli to go and debate with the recluse Gautama is a good idea, for the recluse Gautama is a magician. He is intelligent and crafty; he knows how to entice and convert the disciples of other teachers and sects.”

“It’s impossible Tapassī!” Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta retorted hastily, as he continued,

“It’s just not possible, Tapassī, that my devout disciple, the householder Upāli should ever become the disciple of the recluse Gautama. But it *is* possible that the recluse Gautama would *himself* become the disciple of the householder Upāli, *my own* disciple. Anyhow, either I should go, or you yourself, Dīgha Tapassī, or my good lay disciple Upāli, should go and debate with the recluse Gautama, refuting his doctrine.”

A second time, the naked ascetic Dīgha Tapassī repeated his concern:

“Bhante, I don’t think that sending the householder Upāli, to go and debate with the recluse Gautama is a good idea, for the recluse Gautama is a magician. He is intelligent and crafty; he knows how to entice and convert the disciples of other teachers and sects.”

And a second time, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta retorted:

“It’s impossible Tapassī! It’s just not possible, Tapassī, that my devout disciple, the householder Upāli should ever become the disciple of the recluse Gautama. But it *is* possible that the recluse Gautama would *himself* become the disciple of the householder Upāli, *my own* disciple. Anyhow, either I should go, or you yourself, Dīgha Tapassī, or my good lay disciple Upāli, should go and debate with the recluse Gautama, refuting his doctrine.”

And a third and final time, the naked ascetic Dīgha Tapassī repeated his concern:

“Bhante, I don’t think that sending the householder Upāli, to go and debate with the recluse Gautama is a good idea, for the recluse Gautama is a magician. He is intelligent and crafty; he knows how to entice and convert the disciples of other teachers and sects.”

And a third time, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta retorted:

“It’s impossible Tapassī! It’s just not possible, Tapassī, that my devout disciple, the householder Upāli should ever become the disciple of the recluse Gautama. But it *is* possible that the recluse Gautama would *himself* become the disciple of the householder Upāli, *my own* disciple. Anyhow, either I should go, or you yourself, Dīgha Tapassī, or my good lay disciple Upāli, should go and debate with the recluse Gautama, refuting his doctrine.”

Then, the householder Upāli, the follower of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta said:

“Bhante, in that case, I will go now,” as he got up from his seat, paid homage to his teacher and after circumambulating him, he left for the Pāvārika Mango Orchard. In approaching the Blessed One, the householder Upāli, the disciple of the Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta paid his respects and then sat to one side and said:

“Bhante, did the Nigaṇṭha follower, the naked ascetic Dīgha Tapassī come here, earlier today?”

“Householder, the Nigaṇṭha follower, the naked ascetic Dīgha Tapassī came here, earlier today.”

“Bhante, did any conversation take place with the Nigaṇṭha follower, the naked ascetic Dīgha Tapassī?”

“A conversation did take place with the Nigaṇṭha follower, the naked ascetic Dīgha Tapassī.”

“Bhante, and what may I ask was the topic of conversation with the Nigaṇṭha follower, the naked ascetic Dīgha Tapassī?”

And The Blessed One related the entire discussion that took place between Him and the Nigaṇṭha follower, the naked ascetic Dīgha Tapassī.

“Very Good! The Venerable Tapassī explained it accurately! After all, he is a very good student, well-versed in the doctrine of our teacher; thoroughly understanding his teacher’s dispensation correctly. For how could the trivial mental offence be in any way as important or significant as the physical offence? On the contrary, it is the *physical* offence that is the most significant and blameworthy in committing evil and unwholesome actions; that brings about the execution of evil and unwholesome actions, and not so much the verbal offence or mental offence.

“Householder, if you also base your understanding of truth on this doctrine, holding on to it as true and are willing to discuss it further, then perhaps we can have a conversation on this matter.”

“Bhante, I *also* base my understanding of truth on this doctrine, holding on to it as truth and am willing to discuss it further. So, yes, let us have a conversation on this matter.”

“What do you think, householder? Suppose there is a follower of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, a naked ascetic, who suddenly becomes gravely ill. However, although being afflicted with a serious disease, suffering and in pain, burning with fever, he continues to reject any cold water (which is not allowed according to your teacher’s doctrine), while insisting on taking only hot water (which is allowed, according to your teacher’s doctrine). Now, because of him adhering to his teacher’s instruction of not taking any cold water, he dies.

Now that he is dead, householder, where does your teacher say this man would be reborn?”

“Bhante, there are divine beings, Devas that are called “mentally-tied,” he will be reborn amongst them. And why is that? It is because he died while being tied by the mind.”

“Householder, householder! Think carefully before you reply. What you said earlier does not agree with what you’re saying now. Householder, you clearly stated earlier the words:

‘I also base my understanding of truth on this doctrine, holding on to it as truth and am willing to discuss it further. So, yes, let us have a conversation on this matter.’”

“Bhante, despite what the Blessed One says, nevertheless, I firmly believe that it is the *physical* offence that is *the* most significant and blameworthy in committing

evil and unwholesome actions; that brings about the execution of evil and unwholesome actions, and not so much the verbal offence or mental offence.”

“In that case, householder? Suppose there is a follower of Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, a naked ascetic, who restrains himself while using the four kinds of suppression; being restrained, in regard to all evil behavior; devoted fully to restraining himself against all evil, but in doing so, as he moves about, walking here and there, he inflicts death and destruction to many small living beings. Now, householder, what does your teacher, the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta declare to be the result of such behavior?”

“Bhante, my teacher, the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta declares whatever is unintentional to be of no significance.

“But, householder, what if it were intentional?”

“In that case, Bhante, it becomes of great significance and *is* blameworthy.”

“And in what type of offence is it, householder, that your teacher identifies and declares the presence of intention?”

“It is in mental offence, Bhante.”

“Householder, householder! Think carefully before you reply. What you said earlier does not agree with what you’re saying now. Householder, you clearly stated earlier the words:

‘I also base my understanding of truth on this doctrine, holding on to it as truth and am willing to discuss it further. So, yes, let us have a conversation on this matter.’”

“Bhante, despite what the Blessed One says, nevertheless, it is the *physical* offence that is the most significant and blameworthy in committing evil and unwholesome actions; that brings about the execution of evil and unwholesome actions, and not so much the verbal offence or mental offence.”

“What do you think, householder, is Nālandā densely populated? And are the people of Nālandā rich and prosperous?”

“Bhante, Nālandā is indeed densely populated, and its people are truly rich and prosperous.”

“Householder, suppose a strong and powerful man would come brandishing an unsheathed sword in hand, shouting: ‘*Within an instant, I will turn the whole of Nālanda into a mass of flesh, a pile of dead flesh!*’ Now, householder, would he be able to do it?”

“Bhante, *even* if there were ten, twenty, thirty, or even forty men to join him in such an evil act, they would still be unable to do it, in an *instant*; Let alone, one evil man, such as that?”

“Householder, suppose a recluse or a brahmin, who has the ability to wield psychic powers with his mind, who says: ‘*Within an instant, I will reduce the whole of Nālanda into ashes with a single defiled and evil intention.*’ Now, householder, would he, by wielding psychic power with his mind, be able to turn Nālanda into ashes in an instant, with a single defiled and evil intention?”

“Bhante, such a recluse or brahmin by wielding psychic powers with his mind would be able to turn ten, twenty, thirty, forty, or even fifty such Nālandas into ashes in an instant, with a single defiled and evil intention. Let alone a single trivial Nālanda?”

“Householder, householder! Think carefully before you reply. What you said earlier does not agree with what you’re saying now. Householder, you clearly stated earlier the words:

‘I also base my understanding of truth on this doctrine, holding on to it as truth and am willing to discuss it further. So, yes, let us have a conversation on this matter.’”

“Bhante, despite what the Blessed One says, nevertheless, it is the *physical* offence that is the most significant and blameworthy in committing evil and unwholesome actions; that brings about the execution of evil and unwholesome actions, and not so much the verbal offence or mental offence.”

“Householder, are you familiar as to how the Daṇḍaka, Kālinga, Mejjha, and Mātanga Forests came into being?”

“Yes, Bhante.”

“And how exactly, householder, did these forests come into being?”

“Bhante, I have heard that they are the result of a hateful mental act performed by some meditating yogis.”

“Householder, householder! Think carefully before you reply. What you said earlier does not agree with what you’re saying now. Householder, you clearly stated earlier the words:

‘I also base my understanding of truth on this doctrine, holding on to it as truth and am willing to discuss it further. So, yes, let us have a conversation on this matter.’”

“Bhante, I was fully satisfied and delighted even with the very first simile the Blessed One presented to me, nevertheless, as I wished to hear more of the wonderful illustrations and explanations given by the Blessed One, I intentionally prolonged our discussion, feigning opposition. And now, I understand Bhante. Now, I understand Blessed Lord.

It is simply magnificent, Bhante! It is excellent, Lord! The Blessed One has made the Dhamma clear to me in many ways. I feel as though the Tathāgata turned upright what had been turned upside down, revealing what was hidden; showing the correct path to someone who was lost; as though one were to bring a lamp into the darkness, for all those with eyesight to see.

Bhante, I go for refuge to the Blessed One, to the Dhamma, and to the Sangha of Bhikkhus. May the Blessed One accept and remember me as one of his lay followers, who has gone to him for refuge, for life.”

“Householder, think carefully before you act. For it is important for such a distinguished person like yourself to consider your role within the community thoroughly first, prior to making such a declaration.”

“Bhante, now I am *even more* impressed, touched and fully certain in my heart; so utterly delighted to hear these words of the Blessed One: ‘Householder, think carefully before you act. For it is important for such a distinguished person like yourself to consider your role within the community thoroughly first, prior to making such a declaration!’ After all, if it were any of the leaders of other sects, in hearing they were about to acquire me as their disciple and supporter, they would immediately carry me about like a banner through the streets of Nālanda, announcing to everyone how, “*the householder Upāli is now my disciple and supporter!*” yet here, not only do I not see the Blessed One doing such a thing, quite the contrary, He is *even* cautioning me with His words of advice, by saying:

‘Householder, think carefully before you act. For it is important for such a distinguished person like yourself to consider your role within the community thoroughly first, prior to making such a declaration.’

“Therefore, Bhante, for the second time, I go for refuge to the Blessed One, to the Dhamma, and to the Sangha of Bhikkhus. May the Blessed One accept and remember me as one of his lay followers, who has gone to him for refuge, for life.”

“Householder, remember that for a long time, your clan has been an avid supporter of the naked Nigaṇṭhas, and to this end, you should consider that alms continue to be offered to them when they approach your home.”

“Bhante, now I am *even more* impressed, touched and joyful in my heart; so utterly delighted to hear these words of the Blessed One. For I have often heard from the Nigaṇṭhas the claims that the recluse Gautama declares the following: *‘Offerings should only be made to me, not to other leaders of sects. Offerings should be made only to my disciples, and not to the disciples of other sects. Offerings made to my disciples are of great fruit, but not the offerings made to others.’*

But here, on the contrary, the Blessed One yet again advises me kindly to continue making offerings to those naked Nigaṇṭhas! Therefore, Lord, when the time is appropriate, we shall provide such offerings to them, as needed.

“So, for the third time, Blessed Lord, I go for refuge to the Blessed One, to the Dhamma, and to the Sangha of Bhikkhus. May the Blessed One accept and remember me as one of his lay followers, who has gone to him for refuge, for life.”

Then, the Blessed One gave the householder Upāli the Dhamma, gradually unraveling it for him, beginning with a discourse on the benefits of making offerings, then a discourse on the benefits of developing a virtuous character through one’s behavior with mental, verbal, and bodily actions, followed by a discourse on the heavenly realms. The Blessed One then explained the dangers in pursuing sensual desires; the depraved consequences of living such a vane life; the vileness of defiling pursuits in life, and the wonderful benefits of giving all that up. Then, when it was time, while observing how the mind of the householder Upāli was ready, malleable, free of hindrances, lofty and pleased, the Blessed One expounded to him the exalted Dhamma of the Buddhas: The Truth of suffering, the Truth of its arising, the Truth of its cessation, and the Truth of the Path that leads to the cessation of suffering.

Then, suddenly, just like a pure, clean cloth with all its impurities removed, would take on dye evenly, in that same manner, the spotless, stainless Vision of the Dhamma arose in the heart of the householder Upāli, right as he sat there listening attentively to his Teacher, with his hands gently clasped together. And he knew in his heart with unshakeable certainty: *‘Whatever arises from causes, is of the nature to cease.’*

And the householder Upāli, then and there saw the Dhamma, by knowing and penetrating it with an utterly joyous heart as he experienced the unprecedented sense of clarity, that overcomes all doubts about the Dhamma. And by gaining the sublime state of full confidence in the Dhamma thus, he knew in his heart that there could *never* be anymore, *any* other Teacher or Teaching for him, other than the Dispensation of the Blessed One.

Then, Upāli, the Noble Disciple said.

“Bhante, we will go now, there is much work to be done.”

“Householder, you may do now what you think is suitable.”

Then the householder Upāli, in hearing the words of the Blessed One, being pleased, delighted, and beaming with joy in his heart, arose from his seat, and after paying homage to the Blessed One, and then circumambulating Him, went home. Once there, Upāli the householder, addressed his gatekeeper thus, while instructing him:

“Friend, gatekeeper, from now on the gates of our home are to be shut to the naked Nigaṇṭhas and Nigaṇṭhis. But the gates are to be kept open wide for the Blessed One, the Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, the Upāsakas, and Upāsikas.

And if any Nigaṇṭhas *do* approach the gates, you should tell them the following: “Wait here sirs, you may not enter. From today forward, the householder Upāli has taken Refuge in the Blessed One, and he is now the disciple of the recluse Gautama. The gates are to be closed to *all* Nigaṇṭhas and Nigaṇṭhis, but they *are* open to the Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, the Upāsakas, and Upāsikas of the Blessed One. However, sirs, if you are here to obtain alms food, then please remain standing and food will be brought to you here.”

“Yes, lord,” replied the gatekeeper in agreement.

It was not long after that the naked Nigaṇṭha follower, Dīgha Tapassī heard that Upāli, the householder had now become a disciple and supporter of the recluse Gautama. So, he immediately went to his teacher, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta and reported:

“Bhante, I have heard the news that the householder Upāli, your disciple, has now become a disciple of the recluse Gautama!”

“That’s impossible Tapassī!” replied Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta incredulously, while adding:

It’s just not possible, Tapassī, that my devout disciple, the householder Upāli should ever become the disciple of the recluse Gautama. But it *is* possible that the recluse Gautama would *himself* become the disciple of the householder Upāli, my *own* disciple.”

And for the second time, the naked ascetic Dīgha Tapassī addressed his teacher Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta:

“But bhante, I have heard the news that the householder Upāli, your disciple, has now become a disciple of the recluse Gautama!”

And for the second time, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta retorted:

“That’s impossible Tapassī! It’s just not possible, Tapassī, that my devout disciple, the householder Upāli should ever become the disciple of the recluse Gautama. But it *is* possible that the recluse Gautama would *himself* become the disciple of the householder Upāli, my *own* disciple.”

And for the third time, the naked ascetic Dīgha Tapassī repeated to his teacher, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta:

“Nevertheless, Bhante, I have heard the news that the householder Upāli, your disciple has now become a disciple of the recluse Gautama!”

And for a third time, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta exclaimed:

“That’s impossible Tapassī! It’s just not possible, Tapassī, that my devout disciple, the householder Upāli should ever become the disciple of the recluse Gautama. But it *is* possible that the recluse Gautama would *himself* become the disciple of the householder Upāli, my *own* disciple.”

Either way, Bhante, I will *personally* go and find out whether the householder Upāli has truly become the disciple of the recluse Gautama or not!”

“Then go Tapassī, and find out yourself, whether the householder Upāli has truly become the disciple of the recluse Gautama or not!”

Then, the naked Nigaṇṭha follower, Dīgha Tapassī rushed to the householder Upāli’s home, and having reached it, he was met by the gatekeeper who in seeing him coming in the distance, called out:

“Wait sir! You may not enter! From today forward, the householder Upāli has taken Refuge in the Blessed One, and he is now the disciple of the recluse Gautama. The gates are to be closed to *all* Nigaṇṭhas and Nigaṇṭhis, but they *are* open to the Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, the Upāsakas, and Upāsikas of the Blessed One. However, sir, if you are here to obtain alms food, then please remain standing and food will be brought to you here.”

Then the naked Nigaṇṭha follower, Dīgha Tapassī said: “Friend, I’m not in need of any alms food!” as he left the gatekeeper, while rushing back to his teacher, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, and gave him the news:

“Bhante, it *is* the truth! The householder Upāli has truly become the disciple of the recluse Gautama. I told you, Bhante! I told you, that sending the householder Upāli, to go and debate with the recluse Gautama was *not* a good idea, for the recluse Gautama is a magician! He is intelligent and crafty; he knows how to entice and convert the disciples of other teachers and sects!”

“That’s impossible Tapassī! It’s just not possible, Tapassī, that my devout disciple, the householder Upāli should ever become the disciple of the recluse Gautama. But it *is* possible that the recluse Gautama would *himself* become the disciple of the householder Upāli, *my own* disciple!”

And for a second time, the naked ascetic Dīgha Tapassī told his teacher Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta:

“Bhante, it *is* the truth! The householder Upāli has *truly* become the disciple of the recluse Gautama. I told you, Bhante! I told you, that sending the householder Upāli, to go and debate with the recluse Gautama was not a good idea, for the recluse Gautama is a magician! He is intelligent and crafty; he knows how to entice and convert the disciples of other teachers and sects!”

And for the second time, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta exclaimed:

“That’s impossible Tapassī! It’s just not possible, Tapassī, that my devout disciple, the householder Upāli should ever become the disciple of the recluse Gautama. But *it is* possible that the recluse Gautama would *himself* become the disciple of the householder Upāli, my *own* disciple.”

And for the third time, the naked ascetic Dīgha Tapassī repeated to his teacher, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta:

“Bhante, *it is* the truth! The householder Upāli has truly become the disciple of the recluse Gautama. I told you, Bhante! I told you, that sending the householder Upāli, to go and debate with the recluse Gautama was not a good idea, for the recluse Gautama is a magician! He is intelligent and crafty; he knows how to entice and convert the disciples of other teachers and sects!”

And for the third time, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta exclaimed:

“That’s impossible Tapassī! It’s just not possible, Tapassī, that my devout disciple, the householder Upāli should ever become the disciple of the recluse Gautama. But *it is* possible that the recluse Gautama would *himself* become the disciple of the householder Upāli, my *own* disciple.”

Then, exasperated, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta himself went and approached the householder Upāli’s house followed by a large gathering of his naked ascetic Nigaṇṭhas.

Now, the gatekeeper in seeing the crowd of naked Nigaṇṭhas headed by Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta himself coming in the distance, called out:

“Wait sirs! You may *not* enter! From today forward, the householder Upāli has taken Refuge in the Blessed One, and he is now the disciple of the recluse Gautama. The gates are to be closed to *all* Nigaṇṭhas and Nigaṇṭhis, but they *are* open to the Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, the Upāsakas, and Upāsikas of the Blessed One. However, sirs, if you are here to obtain alms food, then please remain standing and food will be brought to you here.”

“Friend gatekeeper, we would like to speak with your lord, the householder Upāli. Go and tell him that Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta has come with a large gathering of Nigaṇṭhas and is standing outside. He likes to meet with the householder Upāli.”

And the gatekeeper went and approached the householder Upāli and informed him.

“Sir, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta has come with a large gathering of Nigaṇṭha naked ascetics and is standing outside. He likes to meet with you.”

“Then friend gatekeeper, first go and have seats be prepared in the reception hall, within the middle house.”

“Yes, sir,” replied the gatekeeper, and after having made the necessary arrangements in the reception hall, within the middle house, he returned to the householder Upāli and said:

“Sir, the seats are all ready and waiting for you in the reception hall, within the middle house. You may do now, as you think is fit, sir.”

Then, the householder Upāli, by first going to the reception hall, within the middle house, sat on the most opulent, respectable, highest, best, and most excellent seat there, as he instructed the gatekeeper:

“Friend gatekeeper, it is now time! You may now go and tell Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta and his naked followers, *‘Bhante, the householder Upāli informs you all that you may now enter, by following me to the reception hall, within the middle house.’*”

“Yes, sir,” replied the gatekeeper as he went and informed Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta and his naked followers: “Bhante, the householder Upāli informs you all that you may now enter, by following me to the reception hall, within the middle house.”

Then, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta along with his naked ascetics went to the reception hall, within the middle house.

Customarily, in the past, whenever the householder Upāli saw his teacher Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta in the distance, approaching his house gates, he would rush out to go and meet him, while also preparing the most opulent, respectable, highest, best, and most excellent seat in his home, by dusting it off with his own upper robe, and once he had done so, he would then invite him to sit on the especially ready-made seat.

However, now it was the householder Upāli himself, who was seated on the most opulent, respectable, highest, best, and most excellent seat.

In seeing them enter, the householder Upāli pointed at the other seats and said to Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta and his naked ascetics: “Bhante, there are seats available; you may go ahead and sit down if you so wish.”

Witnessing this, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta exclaimed:

“Have you gone mad, householder? Or are you now a dull-witted idiot? You told us that you were ‘going to debate with the recluse Gautama and refute his doctrine.’ But I see you are now back having trapped yourself in the netting of a wrong doctrine! Householder, much like a man who has gone to castrate someone else, instead only ended up coming back, having himself been castrated, on both sides!

Just like a man who was sent to pull someone’s eyes out, instead only returns with both *his* eyes having been pulled out! So, I see you householder, who said to us that you were ‘going to debate with the recluse Gautama and refute his doctrine,’ but only came back having trapped yourself in the netting of a wrong doctrine!

“Householder, you have truly been enticed by the crafty recluse Gautama’s converting magic!”

“And how *wonderful it is!* That “*converting magic*,” Sir!

“What an *amazing* “enticement,” it is then to be converted!

“Now, if *only* my dear and loved ones; my kinsmen and relatives, were to be similarly enticed by that converting magic, it would conduce to their wellbeing, their benefit, and happiness for a very long time!

“If only all the warrior rulers and kings were to be similarly enticed by that converting magic, it would conduce to their wellbeing, their benefit, and happiness for a very long time!

If only all brahmins were to be similarly enticed by that converting magic, it would conduce to their wellbeing, their benefit, and happiness for a very long time!

If only all businessmen and merchants were to be similarly enticed by that converting magic, it would conduce to their wellbeing, their benefit, and happiness for a very long time!

If only all workers were to be similarly enticed by that converting magic, it would conduce to their wellbeing, their benefit, and happiness for a very long time!

If only the universe with its Devas, its Māras, and its Brahmās, along with its generation of recluses, brahmins, the world with its leaders and its people were to be similarly enticed by that converting magic, it would conduce to their wellbeing, their benefit, and happiness for a very long time!

To help demonstrate what I mean here, Bhante, I will share with you a simile, for some wise men understand the real meaning of a statement through the means of a simile.

“A long time ago, there was once, a brahmin, old and burdened with years. He had a young wife, who was about to give birth. Now, that young wife said to the brahmin:

‘Brahmin, go to the market and buy a young monkey for my son, so that he can have something to play with.’

“But the brahmin replied to her by saying: *‘Wait, until you first give birth. Once you give birth to a son, I will bring him a male monkey for him to play with, and if you give birth to a daughter, I will buy a female monkey instead, for her to play with.’*

“Again, for the second time, she repeated her request, and he advised her again to first wait until she gave birth.

And for the third time, the young wife again repeated her request. Then, the brahmin being very attached to his young wife, went to the market where he bought a male monkey, and brought it to his pregnant wife, and said:

‘Here is a young male monkey for your son, so that he can have something to play with.’

“Then the young wife continued:

‘Now, Brahmin, go to the dyer's son Rattapāni with this monkey, and have the monkey be painted in yellow dye. Make sure it gets pounded and beaten repeatedly on both sides, while also having it be well polished.’

“As the brahmin was very much attached to the young wife, he took the monkey with him to the dyer's son Rattapāni and said:

‘Friend Rattapāni, I want this monkey dyed in yellow color. Also, make sure it gets pounded and beaten repeatedly on both sides, and then have it well polished.’

“Then the dyer's son said to him:

‘Sir, the young monkey, will not be able to take on any dye color, neither pounded or beaten repeatedly, nor any polishing.’

“In the same manner, Bhante, the foolish doctrine of the ascetic Nigaṇṭha’s dispute, although may be appealing and delightful to foolish people, it certainly is not one that is tolerated by the wise. Such a foolish doctrine can never be able to withstand the scrutiny of the wise, and their thorough examination.

“Now, returning back to our old brahmin, on another occasion, he brought a pair of new robes to the dyer's son Rattapāni and told him:

‘Friend, Rattapāni, I want this pair of new robes be dyed in yellow color. Also, make sure it gets pounded and beaten repeatedly on both sides, and have it well polished.’

“To which, the dyer's son Rattapāni replied:

‘Very well, sir, this pair of new robes will take on the dyeing, the beating on both sides, and the polishing.’

“In the same manner, the Doctrine of the Perfectly Awakened Buddha is delightful to the wise, but not so for the foolish, who cannot tolerate it. But the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One is always applicable; able to withstand the scrutiny of the wise, and their thorough examination.”

Then, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta stated:

“But, householder, *all* the people *together* with the king of this land, *know* you as *my* follower and supporter; a disciple of Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta. Now, *whose* disciple do you declare yourself to be, then?”

When this was said, the householder Upāli arose from his seat slowly, arranged his upper robe on one shoulder, and by carefully clasping his hands together, he raised them towards the direction where the Blessed One was staying in the Pāvārika Mango Orchard, and said:

“Well then, sir, listen closely and you will know for certain, as to whose Disciple I am –

*I pay homage to the Supremely Wise One, who is beyond all delusion,
With the arrow pulled out, the truly Victorious Conqueror;*

*He is truly appeased, living without anguish,
Calmed and with a perfectly tranquil and balanced mind.
He is the Blessed One, the Buddha, and
I am His Disciple.*

*He is the Unequaled Being, who bears his very last body,
Having completed all the duties of a recluse,
Attained the supreme goal of the Holy Life.
The Disciplined Charioteer with all hesitations overcome,
He indeed is the Happy One,
He is the Blessed One, the Buddha, and*

I am His Disciple.

*He is stainless and beyond all insecurities,
Who lives contentedly, with no perplexities or doubts.
Unrivalled in his guidance, the Skillful Discipliner,
Pure throughout, the Victorious One who illuminates,
Having cut off all conceit and pride.
He is the Blessed One, the Buddha, and
I am His Disciple.*

*The Incomparable Leader of the herd
Immeasurable in His depth of understanding; the supremely Virtuous One,
With all passions fully extinguished, He is the One restrained
The Provider of safety, who stands free from bondage.
He is the Blessed One, the Buddha, and
I am His Disciple.*

*The Royal Tusker is He, unbound and always at home in seclusion,
The Emancipated One, released from all fetters that bind.
He is the Patient One, endowed with knowledge, the Sage with limitlessly deep
wisdom.
Versatile in all conversations, freed from all mental proliferation,
With his banner fully lowered, He stands pure.*

*He is the Blessed One, the Buddha, and
I am His Disciple.*

*He is the Foremost, the Seventh among all Sages
Free from all hypocrisies and deceptions, He possesses the Threefold Knowledges.
With a pure heart, He is the calm Master of discourse, and in composing verses.
The giver of alms and offerings, since time immemorial.
He is the Blessed One, the Buddha, and
I am His Disciple.*

*He is the Noble One, always mindful, and with wise penetrative insight,
Always balanced, released from liking or disliking.
Never perturbed, he is completely free from craving, the undisturbed Master of
Himself.
He is the Blessed One, the Buddha, and I am His Disciple.*

*Comfortably abiding in meditation, He lives the Holy Life honorably
Never attached to either company or isolation, He resides in the highest secluded
mind.*

*Himself having attained to the summit, with perfect purity,
Having crossed over the Ocean of Dukkha himself, He now helps others to cross.
He is the Blessed One, the Buddha, and
I am His Disciple.*

*With unparalleled discernment that is most profound, He is the One who's serene
Completely empty of any greed, the Overlord of Wisdom
He is Tathāgata, He is The Sugata.
Unrivaled and Peerless is He, confidently standing without compare.
He is the Blessed One, the Buddha, and
I am His Disciple.*

*Having severed all manner of craving, He has become the Awakened One,
With no fumes of desire left burning, He is free from all contaminants
The Foremost Worthy One to receive gifts,
He is the mightiest among the most powerful.
The most Glorious of all beings.
The Incomparable One, deserving of the highest homage.
He is the Blessed One, the Buddha, and
I am His Disciple."*

And then, the naked ascetic, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta retorted:

"And when, householder, did you have enough time to put together this long praise for the recluse Gautama?"

"Sir, when there is an abundantly vast heap of numerous flowers of all kinds, then a skilled garland maker or his apprentice, would find it compelling to make a beautifully exquisite garland of multi-colored flowers. In just the same way, sir, the Blessed One has innumerable wonderful and praiseworthy qualities, so many inspiring virtues to list. Therefore, sir, *how* can we truly resist praising the One Worthy of our highest admiration, when we still yet have the chance?"

Then, the old Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, unable to endure hearing such praise and honor being offered to the Blessed One, he then and there, vomited hot blood.

Sādhū

Sādhū

Sādhū