

MN 57
Majjhima Nikāya
The Middle Length Discourses

Gahapati Vagga
The Section on Householders

Kukkuravatika Sutta
“The Man who Identified as a Dog”

Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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I have personally heard this.

One day, while The Blessed One was traveling through the Koliyan region, He came upon an area near a village by the name of Haliddavasana, where He decided to reside for a while.

During that time, there was a man named Puṇṇa, a Koliyan, who was living naked, identifying himself as a bull, while engaging in mimicking the behavior of a bull.

Now, this Puṇṇa lived with his friend Seniya, who in turn was also living naked, identifying himself as a dog, while engaging in mimicking the behavior of a dog.

Then, on hearing that The Blessed One was living nearby, both Puṇṇa and his friend Seniya went and approached The Teacher, eager to ask some questions.

Having approached, Puṇṇa greeted The Blessed One by showing his respect and bowing to The Teacher, he then went and sat to one side, while Seniya, being more reserved, respectfully exchanged friendly greetings with The Blessed One, and then went and sat to one side, curling up as if he was a dog.

Then, Puṇṇa, the Koliyan who identified himself as a bull, addressed The Blessed One by saying:

“Bhante, Seniya here, the one living naked and identifying himself as a dog, does something that is very difficult for many to do: he *only* eats food that is tossed at him, once it’s on the floor.

“He has been dedicated to this lifestyle of his for quite a long time now, living and behaving like a dog, in all that he does in his conduct.

“Could you please tell us about his next birth? We are wondering as to where he will be reborn once he dies at the end of this life.”

And The Blessed One replied:

“Let that question be, and just drop the whole subject, Puṇṇa! Please, do not ask me that question!”

However, Puṇṇa kept insisting to get an answer, and asked his question a second time.

“Bhante, Seniya here, the one living naked and identifying himself as a dog, does something that is very difficult for many to do: he *only* eats food that is tossed at him, once it’s on the floor.

“He has been dedicated to this lifestyle of his for quite a long time now, living and behaving like a dog, in all that he does in his conduct.

“Could you please tell us about his next birth? We are wondering as to where he will be reborn once he dies at the end of this life.”

And for a second time, The Blessed One replied:

“Let that question be, and just drop the whole subject, Puṇṇa! Please, do not ask me that question!”

But again, Puṇṇa insisted on getting an answer, and asked his question a third time.

“Bhante, Seniya here, the one living naked and identifying himself as a dog, does something that is very difficult for many to do: he *only* eats food that is tossed at him, once it’s on the floor.

“He has been dedicated to this lifestyle of his for quite a long time now, living and behaving like a dog, in all that he does in his conduct.

“Could you please tell us about his next birth? We are wondering as to where he will be reborn once he dies at the end of this life?”

Then, The Blessed One spoke, by addressing Puṇṇa:

“Well, Puṇṇa, seeing that in your eagerness to get an answer you keep asking me a question that I tried telling you not to ask, I will now provide you with my reply –

“Puṇṇa, if a person really dedicates himself fully and without interruptions to living naked like a dog, always identifying himself as a dog, to the point where he engages in the habitual patterns and the very behavior and conduct of a dog, thinking and acting as a dog in all his mannerisms, constantly, then, when this body of his breaks down, right after his death, he will be reborn as a real dog, in the company of other dogs!

“This is a fact, despite what such a person might like to believe or think, such as:

‘By dedicating myself to living like a naked dog, behaving and identifying myself as a dog, may I be granted rebirth into the realm of the Devas and Gods, as a reward for my dedicated effort in being and living like a dog!’

“Therefore, to hold on to such hopes in his heart is none other than holding on to wrong view, and not much else.

“Now, Puṇṇa, do know this as well –

“Anyone who holds on to such wrong views or lives his life with wrong view, can expect himself to be reborn into one of two possible destinations, which will be waiting for him at the moment of his death: being immediately deposited either into the hell realms, or being reborn into the animal realm, and nowhere else!

“So, when one fully and with dedication commits to living naked like a dog, identifying himself as and behaving like a dog, the only thing he *will* achieve will be rebirth into the animal realm, as an actual dog.

“But, if for some reason he fails in that too, then the only other destination waiting for him at death will be the hell realms and nowhere else!”

Having carefully listened to The Blessed One’s reply, Seniya, who was sitting there curled up like a dog, suddenly became sad and started crying.

Then, while addressing Puṇṇa once again, The Blessed One said:

“See, Puṇṇa? Did I not inform you earlier? –

‘Let that question be, and just drop the whole subject, Puṇṇa! Please, do not ask me that question!’”

Then, Seniya, the one who identified himself as a dog, addressed The Blessed One by saying:

“Bhante, I am not crying over the words I heard spoken by The Blessed One.

“I am crying over the fact that Puṇṇa here thinks of himself to be a bull!

“After all, he lives dedicated to this lifestyle of a bull for quite a long time now, living and behaving like a bull, in all that he does in his conduct.

“Could you please tell us, as to the destination of his next birth? Where will he be reborn once he dies at the end of this life?”

And The Blessed One replied:

“Let that question be, and just drop the whole subject, Seniya! Please, do not ask me that question!”

However, Seniya kept on insisting to get an answer, raising his question a second time.

“Bhante, with regards to Puṇṇa here, the one living naked and identifying himself as a bull.

“He lives dedicated to this lifestyle of a bull for quite a long time now, living and behaving like a bull, in all that he does in his conduct.

“Could you please tell us, as to the destination of his next birth? Where will he be reborn once he dies at the end of this life?”

And for a second time, The Blessed One replied:

“Let that question be, and just drop the whole subject, Seniya! Please, do not ask me that question!”

But again, Seniya insisted on getting an answer, raising his question a third time.

“Bhante, with regards to Puṇṇa here, the one living naked and identifying himself as a bull

“He lives dedicated to this lifestyle of a bull for quite a long time now, living and behaving like a bull, in all that he does in his conduct.

“Could you please tell us, as to the destination of his next birth? Where will he be reborn once he dies at the end of this life?”

Then, The Blessed One spoke, while addressing Seniya:

“Well, Seniya, seeing that in your eagerness to get an answer you keep asking me a question that I encouraged you not to ask, I will now go ahead and provide you with my reply –

“Seniya, if a person commits fully and without interruptions to living naked like a bull, always identifying himself as a bull, to the point where he engages in the habitual patterns and the very behavior of a bull, thinking and acting as a bull in all his mannerisms, non-stop, then, when this body of his breaks down, right after his death, he will be reborn as a *real* bull, in the company of cows and bulls!

“This is a fact, despite what he might want to believe or think, such as:

‘By dedicating myself to living like a naked bull, behaving and identifying myself as a bull, may I be granted rebirth into the realm of the Devas and Gods, as a reward for my dedicated effort in being and living like a bull!’

Then, Puṇṇa, who was carefully listening to The Blessed One’s reply, suddenly burst into tears.

And The Blessed One addressed Seniya by saying:

“See, Seniya? Did I not inform you earlier? –

‘Let that question be, and just drop the whole subject, Seniya! Please, do not ask me that question!’”

Then, Puṇṇa, the Koliyan who identified himself as a bull, addressed The Blessed One and said:

“Bhante, I am not crying over the words I just heard spoken by The Blessed One.

“However, I am crying over the fact that even though I dedicated myself all these years to living and practicing the lifestyle of a naked bull, now I am in the presence of The Blessed One, who I am quite certain will teach me how to abandon that lifestyle entirely.

“Similarly, Bhante, I am also glad that here, my friend Seniya, is getting the same opportunity to also abandon his own lifestyle, of behaving like a naked dog!”

Then, The Blessed One said:

“In that case, Puṇṇa, listen carefully and attend closely to what I shall say to you both.”

“Yes, Bhante,” Puṇṇa replied.

And The Blessed One continued speaking,

“Puṇṇa, there are these four actions that I declare, which I have personally realized for myself, with direct understanding through higher knowledge.

“Now, what are these four?

“Puṇṇa, there are dark actions that produce dark results; there are bright actions that produce bright results; there are dark and bright actions that produce both, dark and bright results; and there are actions that are neither dark nor bright that produce neither dark nor bright results, but instead, bring about the destruction of all actions, as their consequence.’

“And what Puṇṇa, are dark actions that produce dark results?

“Here, Puṇṇa, someone intentionally engages in evil and harmful bodily actions; he intentionally engages in evil and harmful verbal actions in his communication; and he intentionally engages in evil and harmful mental actions by causing harm through his thinking.

“Now, as a consequence, after death, such a person is immediately reborn into a world that is harmful; where situations and other beings cause him sorrow and pain, exclusively; where the touches that make contact with him throughout his sensory impingement are exclusively those of affliction and pain.

“Thus, he dwells experiencing one painful affliction after another, from all sides, much like what those beings born into the hell realms have to face.

“Puṇṇa, this is what is meant by ‘dark actions that produce dark results.’

“And what actions, Puṇṇa, are bright actions that produce bright results?

“Here, Puṇṇa, someone intentionally engages in beneficial and non-harmful bodily actions; similarly, he intentionally engages in beneficial and non-harmful verbal actions in his communication; and he intentionally engages in beneficial and non-harmful mental actions, through his thinking.

“Now, as a consequence, after death, such a person is immediately reborn into a pleasure-filled world where the circumstances he is surrounded by, as well as those beings around him, cause him much joy and pleasure, exclusively; where the touches that make contact with him throughout his sensory impingement are exclusively those of joy. Thus, he dwells experiencing delightful happiness from all sides, much like what the Subhakiṇhā Devas experience in their heavenly realm, exclusively.

“This, Puṇṇa, is what is meant by ‘bright actions that produce bright results.’

“And what are those dark and bright actions, Puṇṇa, which produce both dark and bright results?

“Here, Puṇṇa, someone intentionally engages in both harmful and beneficial bodily actions; he intentionally engages in both harmful and beneficial verbal actions through his communication; and he intentionally engages in both harmful and beneficial mental actions, through his thinking.

“Now, as a consequence, after death, such a person is immediately reborn into a world where the circumstances he is surrounded by, as well as those beings around him, cause him harm at times, and pleasure at other times; where the touches that make contact with him throughout his sensory impingement are a constant blend of experiences that carry both painful afflictions, as well as those that include pleasure or happiness, much like those human beings living in the world, or some of the Devas in certain heavenly realms, or those reborn into one of the less miserable lower realms.

“Therefore, Puṇṇa, this is what is meant by ‘dark and bright actions which produce both dark and bright results.’

“And what are those actions, Puṇṇa, that are neither dark nor bright; actions that produce neither dark nor bright results, but instead bring about the destruction of actions, as their consequence?

“Here, Puṇṇa, someone makes the intention to put an end to all dark actions with dark results. In addition, he makes the intention to put an end to all bright actions with bright results, as well. Such a person also makes the intention to put an end to all dark and bright actions combined, those that produce both dark and bright results.

“Now, as a consequence, what results from such intentionally lived actions is the very destruction of actions themselves.

“Therefore, Puṇṇa, these are the dark actions that produce dark results; the bright actions that produce bright results; the dark and bright actions that produce both dark and bright results; and those actions that are neither dark nor bright that produce neither dark nor bright results, but instead, bring about the destruction of all actions, as their consequence.’

“Puṇṇa, these are the four actions that I now again declare, which I have personally realized for myself, with direct understanding through higher knowledge.”

Then, when The Blessed One had just finished speaking these words, Puṇṇa, the Koliyan, who had identified himself as a bull, made this utterance:

“It is excellent, Bhante! It is marvelous, Bhante! The Blessed One has made The Dhamma clear to me in many ways. I feel as though The Blessed One has turned upright what was overturned; revealing what was hidden, by showing the correct path to someone who was lost, much like bringing a lit oil 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 me as one of His lay disciples, who has taken refuge in Him as My Teacher, from today until the end of my life!”

Then, Seniya, the one who had identified himself as a dog, also spoke by addressing The Blessed One:

“It is excellent, Bhante! It is marvelous, Bhante! The Blessed One has made The Dhamma clear to me in many ways. I feel as though The Blessed One has turned upright what was overturned; revealing what was hidden, by showing the correct path to someone who was lost, much like bringing a lit oil 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.

“Bhante, I also request the Going Forth in Your presence, so that I may lead the Holy Life in full. Therefore, I also request to receive the Higher Ordination!”

And The Blessed One said:

“Seniya, whoever formerly has received ordination in another religious tradition, hence a follower of some other creed, on wishing to receive admission and the Higher Ordination in this Dhamma and Discipline, must remain on probation for a period of four months.

“At the end of those four months, Seniya, if the Bhikkhus are satisfied with him, they may grant him full admission and the Higher Ordination, as a Bhikkhu.

“However, Seniya, in this matter, I do see individual differences of personalities and recognize you as an exception.”

Then, while addressing The Blessed One, with his hands still in worshipful anjalī, Seniya said:

“Blessed Lord, seeing that it is a requirement for me to be on probation for four months prior to being granted the full admission and the Higher Ordination as a Bhikkhu, then I will remain on probation for a period of four years!

“And at the end of those four years, if the Bhikkhus are satisfied with me, let them grant me then the full admission and the Higher Ordination as a Bhikkhu.”

Thus, the once naked Seniya, who used to identify himself as a dog, received his full admission and the Higher Ordination as a Bhikkhu, in the presence of The Blessed One.

And from the moment of his ordination, the Venerable Seniya lived alone, secluded, and withdrawn from the crowd, energetic, while diligently working to maintain his continuity of mindfulness, throughout.

Thus, before long, the Venerable Seniya realized for himself, directly, with Unshakable Wisdom and through his own efforts, the Supreme Goal of The Holy Life, for the purpose of which Good Sons of families rightfully and with strong faith in their hearts leave the household life and go forth and become homeless.

Now, the Venerable Seniya also, by attaining to and dwelling in that Unshakable Emancipation of the Heart, knew for himself, right there and then, with unparalleled certainty:

*'Birth is finally destroyed!
The Holy Life has now been fully lived!
Whatever work that had to be done, is now completed and done!
There is no more return to any state of becoming!'*

Thus, the Venerable Seniya became one of the Arahants.

Sādhu Sādhu Sādhu

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