

4 The Discourse on the Lion-roar at Udumbarikā

Udumbarikā Sīha,nāda Sutta | D 25

Theme: The Dharma's true purpose & the spiritual bases for interfaith dialogue

Translated by Piya Tan 2012; simplified 2016

Reflective reading

[For full text, commentary and notes, see **SD 1.4** at <http://dharmafarer.org>.]

Thus have I heard.

1 Sandhāna the lay non-returner

Once when the Lord was staying on the Vulture's Peak near Rājagaha, the wanderer Nigrodha was staying at the Udumbarikā wanderers' park with a large company of some 3,000 wanderers.

At dawn, the houselord **Sandhāna** came to Rājagaha to see the Lord. As it was very early, he did not want to disturb the respected monks who were in retreat. So, he spent the free time at the Udumbarikā wanderers' park and to visit the wanderer Nigrodha.

2 Sandhana visits the wanderers

At that time, the wanderer Nigrodha was sitting with a large crowd of wanderers, all talking loudly, shouting, making loud noises and indulging in various **low talk** – about current events, worldly things, frivolous chatter and speculative arguments.

When the wanderer Nigrodha saw the houselord Sandhāna coming, he at once asked his own company of followers to quieten down, saying:

“Good sirs, be quiet please! The houselord Sandhāna, a disciple of the recluse Gotama, is approaching. He is one of those white-dressed lay disciples of the recluse Gotama in Rājagaha. They are fond of quiet. If he sees that we are quiet, he will most likely want to come and visit us.”

When this was said, the wanderers fell silent.

3 Sandhāna praises the Buddha

The houselord Sandhāna approached the wanderer Nigrodha and they greeted one another. Sandhāna then sat down at one side and said to Nigrodha:

“Good sir, these wanderers, when they assemble, they make such a great noise, and indulge in various low talk!

The Lord's way is different—he resorts to a dwelling in the forest, in the jungle, free from noise, with little sound, alone with the winds, away from humans, conducive for seclusion.”

4 Nigrodha's challenge

The wanderer Nigrodha replied:

“Well now, houselord, with whom does the recluse Gotama talk? Where does he get his wisdom from? He's just a loner, awkward before others, not knowing how to converse. He's like a one-eyed cow, walking in circles, keeping to the fringes of a field—Gotama is only occupied with the fringes of things.

If he comes to this assembly, we will baffle him with a single question and knock him over like an empty pot!”

5 The Buddha appears

Now the Lord, with his divine ear heard this conversation between the houselord Sandhāna and the wanderer Nigrodha.

Descending from the Vulture’s Peak, he came to the bank of the Sumāgadhā lotus lake beside the Peacocks’ Feeding Ground and walked up and down there in the open.

When the wanderer Nigrodha saw him, he at once told his company:

“Good sirs, be quiet please! The recluse Gotama is walking up and down in the open on the Sumāgadhā bank. He is fond of quiet. If he sees that we are quiet, he will visit us. Then, we will question him, thus:

‘Bhante, how does the Lord train his disciples to gain confidence to declare the fundamentals of the holy life?’” [6]

When this was said, the wanderers fell silent.

6 The Buddha arrives

When the Lord arrived, the wanderer Nigrodha welcomed him politely and offered him a seat.

The Lord sat down and then said to Nigrodha:

“Nigrodha, what is the talk you all who are gathered here are having before I interrupted you?”

The wanderer Nigrodha replied:

“Bhante, we were considering whether to ask you this question:

‘Bhante, how does the Lord train his disciples to gain confidence to declare the fundamentals of the holy life?’” [5; 23]

7 The Buddha’s counter-question

“Nigrodha, it is hard for someone with a different view, following a different practice and teaching, to understand what I teach my disciples – that is, regarding the fundamentals of the holy life.

Come, then, Nigrodha, ask me about your own teachings, about how you properly keep to the practice of ascetic abstinence [the strict practice of refraining from certain things].”

When this was said, a great commotion arose amongst the wanderers:

“Marvellous is the recluse Gotama in his powers and virtues to hold back his own doctrine and to invite others to discuss theirs!”

Silencing them, the wanderer Nigrodha then said:

“Bhante, we live by keeping to the asceticism of abstinence. When is this properly practised? When is it fulfilled?”

THE BUDDHA’S TEACHING

8 The Buddha describes the wanderers’ abstinenes

“Here, Nigrodha, an ascetic (who practises self-mortification) does this:

He goes about naked,

he has loose habits (flouts conventions),

he licks his hands,

he does not come when invited, and does not stop when invited.

He does not accept food brought to him nor food specially prepared for him nor a meal invitation.

he accepts nothing from a pot or from a bowl,

from across the door-steps, from among the firewood, from among the rice-pounders,

from two eating together, from a pregnant woman, from a woman giving suck,

from a woman having an affair with a man, from a food-distribution centre,

from where a dog is waiting, from where flies are swarming,

he accepts neither fish nor meat, drinks neither wine nor beer nor cereal brew.

9 The Buddha describes the wanderers' practices

He keeps himself to one house, to one morsel (when collecting alms) ... to two houses, to two morsels ... to seven houses, to seven morsels.

He lives on one small serving of food, or two ... or seven small servings a day.

He takes food once a day; once every two days ... once every seven days. And he does this up to a fortnight.

He eats only greens or millet or wild rice or hide-parings or water-lettuce or rice-bran or rice-remnants, or sesame flour, or grass, or cow-dung.

He lives on forest roots and fruits, he eats only windfall [fruits fallen from a tree].

He clothes himself in hemp; in hemp-mixed cloth; in shrouds; in refuse rags; in tree bark; in antelope hide; in strips of antelope hide; in kusa-grass fabric; in bark fabric; in wood-shaving fabric; in a human-hair cloak; in bristle-blanket; in owl's wings.

He practises pulling out his hair and beard.

He stands continuously, rejecting seats.

He squats continuously.

He uses a bed of spikes, and sleeps on it.

He makes a plank his bed.

He makes the hard stony ground his bed.

He lies on one side covered only in dirt and mud.

He lies in the open on whatever groundsheet there is.

He lives on dirt, devoting himself to eating dirt [dirty food].

He does not drink cold water.

He is devoted to (the ritual of) bathing in water thrice a day, the third one in the evening.

—What do you think, Nigrodha, is this the proper practice of ascetic abstinence or not?"

"Indeed, bhante, it is proper and fulfilled!"

"But, Nigrodha, this practice of ascetic abstinence still has various imperfections!"

10 The imperfections of the asceticism of abstinence

"What, bhante, are the **imperfections** of this practice?"

(1) "Here, Nigrodha, an ascetic practises austerity. As a result, he delights in it, thinking that he has won his goal when he has not—this, Nigrodha, is an imperfection in that ascetic.

(2) Furthermore, such an ascetic elevates himself and disparages others—this, too, is an imperfection in that ascetic.

(3) Furthermore, such an ascetic becomes intoxicated with conceit, and is heedless—this, too, is an imperfection in that ascetic.

(4) Furthermore, an ascetic practises austerity, and this brings him gains, honours and fame—this, too, is an imperfection in that ascetic.

(5) Furthermore, on account of such gains, honours and fame, he elevates himself and disparages others—this, too, is an imperfection in that ascetic.

(6) Furthermore, on account of such gains, honours and fame, he is intoxicated with conceit, he is heedless—this, too, is an imperfection in that ascetic.

(7) Furthermore, such an ascetic divides his food into two portions, thinking: 'This portion suits me, that doesn't suit me!' And what does not suit him he readily rejects, while what suits him he eats with relish, unaware of the danger, knowing no way out—this, too, is an imperfection in that ascetic.

(8) Furthermore, an ascetic practises austerity for the sake of gains, honours and fame, thinking: ‘Kings, ministers, nobles [kshatriyas], brahmin housemasters, religious teachers will honour me!’—this, too, is an imperfection in that ascetic.

(9) Furthermore, an ascetic disparages some recluse or brahmin, saying:

‘See how he lives in abundance, eating all sorts of things—these 5 parts of a plant, namely, roots, stems, joints, cuttings, and seeds—with that bunch of lightnings, that jaw full of razor-teeth of his, and they call *him* an ascetic!’—this, too, is an imperfection in that ascetic.

(10) Furthermore, an ascetic sees another recluse or brahmin being patronized and honoured amongst families, and he thinks:

‘They are patronizing that fellow named so-and-so, living in abundance, being patronized and honoured amongst families but they do not patronize and honour *me*, an ascetic who lives a rough life!’

Thus, envy and jealousy would arise in him because of those householders—this, too, is an imperfection in that ascetic.

(11) Furthermore, an ascetic is one who sits before the people in public—this, too, is an imperfection in that ascetic.

(12) Furthermore, an ascetic goes about showing off among the families, as if to say: ‘Look at this asceticism of mine! Look at this asceticism of mine!’—this, too, is an imperfection in that ascetic.

(13) Furthermore, an ascetic resorts to underhanded conduct. On being asked: ‘Do you approve of this?’, when he does not approve, he says, ‘I do’, or when he does approve, he says, ‘I do not’. In this way, he becomes a conscious liar—this, too, is an imperfection in that ascetic.

(14) Furthermore, an ascetic, when the Tathāgata or a Tathāgata’s disciple teaches the Dharma in a way that deserves his agreement, he withholds his agreement—this, too, is an imperfection in that ascetic.

(15) Furthermore, an ascetic is angry and resentful—this, too, is an imperfection in that ascetic.

(16) Furthermore, an ascetic is mean and spiteful—this, too, is an imperfection in that ascetic.

(17) Furthermore, an ascetic is envious and selfish—this, too, is an imperfection in that ascetic.

(18) Furthermore, an ascetic is crafty and deceitful—this, too, is an imperfection in that ascetic.

(19) Furthermore, an ascetic is obstinate and arrogant—this, too, is an imperfection in that ascetic.

(20) Furthermore, an ascetic has bad desires and is under their sway—this, too, is an imperfection in that ascetic.

(21) Furthermore, an ascetic holds wrong views and given to extreme opinions—this, too, is an imperfection in that ascetic.

(22) Furthermore, an ascetic is badly stuck to his own views—this, too, is an imperfection in that ascetic.

—What do you think, Nigrodha: are these imperfections in the practice of ascetic abstinence or not?”

“Certainly they are, bhante. It is possible, bhante, that a certain ascetic might have all these imperfections, but so does any other!”

11 The purified ascetic

(1) Here, Nigrodha, an ascetic practises austerity. While he is doing so, he does *not* delight in not winning his goal—to that extent he is purified.

(2) Furthermore, an ascetic practises austerity. In so doing, he does *not* elevate himself and does not disparage others—to that extent he is purified.

(3) Furthermore, an ascetic practises austerity, but is *not* intoxicated with conceit, he is not heedless—to that extent he is purified.

(4) Furthermore, an ascetic practises austerity, and this brings him gains, honours and fame, in which he delights *not*, knowing that he has not won his goal—to that extent he is purified.

(5) Furthermore, an ascetic practises austerity, and this brings him gains, honours and fame. On account of such gains, honours and fame, he *neither* praises himself *nor* disparages others—to that extent he is purified.

(6) Furthermore, an ascetic practises austerity, and this brings him gains, honours and fame. On account of such gains, honours and fame, he is *not* intoxicated with conceit, nor infatuated, nor heedless—to that extent he is purified.

(7) Furthermore, an ascetic practises austerity, but does *not* divide his food into two portions, thinking: ‘This portion suits me, that doesn’t suit me!’ so that what does not suit him, he does not reject, while what suits him he does not eat with relish, aware of the danger, knowing a way out—to that extent he is purified.

(8) Furthermore, an ascetic practises austerity *not* for the sake of gains, honours and fame, and not thinking: ‘Kings, ministers, nobles, brahmin housemasters, religious teachers will honour me,’—to that extent he is purified.

(9) Furthermore, an ascetic does *not* disparage some recluse or brahmin, saying: ‘See how he lives in abundance, eating all these good parts of a plant—roots, stems, joints, cuttings and seeds—with that bunch of lightnings, that jawful of razor-teeth, of his, and they call *him* an ascetic!’—to that extent he is purified.

(10) Furthermore, an ascetic sees another recluse or brahmin being patronized and honoured, but does *not* think: ‘They are patronizing that fellow named so-and-so, living in abundance, being patronized and honoured, but they do not patronize and honour *me*, an ascetic who lives a rough life!’

Thus, envy and jealousy do not arise in him because of those houselords—to that extent, he is purified.

(11) Furthermore, an ascetic is *not* one who sits before the people in public—to that extent, he is purified.

(12) Furthermore, an ascetic does *not* go about ostentatiously among the families, as if to say: ‘Look at this asceticism of mine! Look at this asceticism of mine!’—to that extent, he is purified.

(13) Furthermore, an ascetic does not resort to underhanded conduct. On being asked: ‘Do you approve of this?’, when he does not approve, he says, ‘I do not approve,’ or when he does approve, he says, ‘I do approve.’ In this way, he does *not* tell a deliberate lie—to that extent, he is purified.

(14) Furthermore, an ascetic, when the Tathāgata or a Tathāgata’s disciple presents the Dharma in a way that deserves his assent, he gives his assent—to that extent, he is purified.

(15) Furthermore, an ascetic is neither angry nor resentful—to that extent, he is purified.

(16) Furthermore, an ascetic is neither mean nor spiteful—to that extent, he is purified.

(17) An ascetic is neither envious nor jealous—to that extent, he is purified.

(18) An ascetic is neither crafty nor deceitful—to that extent, he is purified.

(19) An ascetic is neither obstinate nor arrogant—to that extent, he is purified.

(20) An ascetic neither has bad desires nor is he under their sway—to that extent, he is purified.

(21) An ascetic neither holds wrong views nor is he given to extreme opinions—to that extent, he is purified.

(22) An ascetic is neither stuck in self-view, nor firmly holds on to it, but easily lets it go—to that extent, he is purified.

—What do you think, Nigrodha: is the practice of ascetic abstinence purified by these things or not?”

“Certainly it is, bhante, it reaches its peak here, *penetrating the heartwood.*”

“No, Nigrodha, it does not reach its peak here, penetrating the heartwood. It has only reached the loose outer bark!”

12 Refrain: The 4 restraints (1)

“Well then, bhante, how does the practice of ascetic abstinence reach its peak, penetrating the heartwood? It would be good, bhante, if the Lord were to cause my practice of ascetic abstinence to reach its peak, **penetrating the heartwood!**”

“Here, Nigrodha, an ascetic observes the 4 restraints. And what are the 4 restraints?

Here, Nigrodha, an ascetic:

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (1) does not harm a living being, | nor cause any to be harmed, | nor approves of such harming; |
| (2) does not take the not-given, | nor cause any to be taken, | nor approves of such taking; |
| (3) does not tell a lie, | nor cause any lie to be told, | nor approves of such lying; |
| (4) does not desire for sense-pleasure, | nor cause others to do so, | nor approves of such desire. |

Through observing these 4 restraints, through making this his austerity, he moves upwards [spiritually] and does not fall back into lower things.

13 Refrain: The 5 hindrances (1)

Then, he resorts to a solitary lodging, a forest, foot of a tree, a mountain gully, a mountain cave, a charnel ground, a jungle thicket, the open air, a heap of straw.

Then, on returning from the alms-round, having eaten, he sits down cross-legged and holding his body erect, establishes mindfulness before him.

- (1) Abandoning covetousness for the world, he dwells with a mind free from it and purified of it.
- (2) Abandoning ill-will and hatred, he dwells with a mind free from them, and by compassion for all living beings, his mind is purified of ill-will.
- (3) Abandoning sloth and torpor, he dwells with a mind purified of them, and by the perception of light, mindful and fully comprehending, his mind is purified of sloth and torpor.
- (4) Abandoning restlessness and guilt, he dwells with a mind purified of them, and by a pacified mind is purified of restlessness and guilt.
- (5) Abandoning doubt, he dwells having overcome doubt, without uncertainty regarding the wholesome, his mind is purified of doubt.

14 Refrain: The 4 immeasurables (1)

(1) THE CULTIVATION OF LOVINGKINDNESS

Having abandoned these 5 hindrances, and to weaken mental impurities by applying insight, he dwells with a heart of **lovingkindness**, suffusing it everywhere, to everyone as well as to himself, with lovingkindness, immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

(2) THE CULTIVATION OF COMPASSION

Having abandoned these 5 hindrances, and to weaken mental impurities by applying insight, he dwells with a heart of **compassion**, suffusing it everywhere, to everyone as well as to himself, with compassion, immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

(3) THE CULTIVATION OF GLADNESS

Having abandoned these 5 hindrances, and to weaken mental impurities by applying insight, he dwells with a heart of **gladness**, suffusing it everywhere, to everyone as well as to himself, with gladness, immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

(4) THE CULTIVATION OF EQUANIMITY

Having abandoned these 5 hindrances, and to weaken mental impurities by applying insight, he dwells with a heart of **equanimity**,

suffusing it everywhere, to everyone as well as to himself,
with equanimity, immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

—What do you think, Nigrodha: is the practice of ascetic abstinence purified by these things or not?”

“Certainly it is, bhante, it reaches its peak here, penetrating the heartwood.”

“No, Nigrodha, it does not reach its peak here, penetrating the heartwood. It has only reached the bark!”

“Well then, bhante, how does the practice of ascetic abstinence reach its peak, penetrating the heartwood? It would be good, bhante, if the Lord were to cause my practice of ascetic abstinence to attain to its peak, penetrating the heartwood!”

15 Refrain: The 4 restraints (2)

Here, Nigrodha, an ascetic:

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|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (1) does not harm a living being, | nor cause any to be harmed, | nor approves of such harming; |
| (2) does not take the not-given, | nor cause any to be taken, | nor approves of such taking; |
| (3) does not tell a lie, | nor cause any lie to be told, | nor approves of such lying; |
| (4) does not desire for sense-pleasure, | nor cause others to do so, | nor approves of such desire. |

Through observing these 4 restraints, through making this his austerity, he moves upwards (spiritually) and does not fall back into lower things.

16 Refrain: The 5 hindrances (2)

Then, he resorts to a solitary lodging, a forest, foot of a tree, a mountain gully, a mountain cave, a charnel ground, a jungle thicket, the open air, a heap of straw.

Then, on returning from the alms-round, having eaten, he sits down cross-legged and holding his body erect, establishes mindfulness before him.

- (1) Abandoning covetousness for the world, he dwells with a mind free from it and purified of it.
- (2) Abandoning ill-will and hatred, he dwells with a mind free from them, and by compassion for all living beings, his mind is purified of ill-will.
- (3) Abandoning sloth and torpor, he dwells with a mind purified of them, and by the perception of light, mindful and fully comprehending, his mind is purified of sloth and torpor.
- (4) Abandoning restlessness and guilt, he dwells with a mind purified of them, and by a pacified mind is purified of restlessness and guilt.
- (5) Abandoning doubt, he dwells having overcome doubt, without uncertainty regarding the wholesome, his mind is purified of doubt.

17 Refrain: The 4 immeasurables attained (2)

(1) THE CULTIVATION OF LOVINGKINDNESS

Having abandoned these 5 hindrances, and to weaken mental impurities by applying insight, he dwells with a heart of **lovingkindness**,
suffusing it everywhere, to everyone as well as to himself,
with lovingkindness, immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

(2) THE CULTIVATION OF COMPASSION

Having abandoned these 5 hindrances, and to weaken mental impurities by applying insight, he dwells with a heart of **compassion**,
suffusing it everywhere, to everyone as well as to himself,
with compassion, immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

(3) *THE CULTIVATION OF GLADNESS*

Having abandoned these 5 hindrances, and to weaken mental impurities by applying insight,
 he dwells with a heart of **gladness**,
 suffusing it everywhere, to everyone as well as to himself,
 with gladness, immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

(4) *THE CULTIVATION OF EQUANIMITY*

Having abandoned these 5 hindrances, and to weaken mental impurities by applying insight,
 he dwells with a heart of **equanimity**,
 suffusing it everywhere, to everyone as well as to himself,,
 with equanimity, immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

18 Recollection of past lives: the sapwood

He recalls **his numerous past lives**, up to one hundred thousand births, each time recalling his name, appearance, family, food, joy and pain, and his death, and another rebirth, recalling it in the same manner. And passing away from there, is now born here. Thus, he remembers his past lives in all their modes and details.

—What do you think, Nigrodha: is the practice of ascetic abstinence purified by these things or not?”

“Certainly it is, bhante, it attains its peak here, penetrating the heartwood.”

“No, Nigrodha, it does not attain its peak here, penetrating to the heartwood. It has only reached the sapwood!”

19 Refrain: The 4 restraints (3)

“Well then, bhante, how does the practice of ascetic abstinence reach its peak, penetrating the heartwood? It would be good, bhante, if the Lord were to cause my practice of ascetic abstinence to reach its peak, penetrating the heartwood!”

“Here, Nigrodha, an ascetic who observes the 4 restraints. And what are the 4 restraints?”

Here, Nigrodha, an ascetic

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (1) does not harm a living being, | nor cause any to be harmed, | nor approves of such harming; |
| (2) does not take the not-given, | nor cause any to be taken, | nor approves of such taking; |
| (3) does not tell a lie, | nor cause any lie to be told, | nor approves of such lying; |
| (4) does not desire for sense-pleasure, | nor cause others to do so, | nor approves of such desire. |

Through observing these 4 restraints, through making this his austerity, he moves upwards [spiritually] and does not fall back into lower things.

20 Refrain: The 5 hindrances (3)

Then, he resorts to a solitary lodging, a forest, foot of a tree, a mountain gully, a mountain cave, a charnel ground, a jungle thicket, the open air, a heap of straw.

Then, on returning from the alms-round, having eaten, he sits down cross-legged and holding his body erect, establishes mindfulness before him.

- (1) Abandoning covetousness for the world, he dwells with a mind free from it and purified of it.
- (2) Abandoning ill-will and hatred, he dwells with a mind free from them, and by compassion for all living beings, his mind is purified of ill-will.
- (3) Abandoning sloth and torpor, he dwells with a mind purified of them, and by the perception of light, mindful and fully comprehending, his mind is purified of sloth and torpor.
- (4) Abandoning restlessness and guilt, he dwells with a mind purified of them, and by a pacified mind is purified of restlessness and guilt.

(5) *Abandoning doubt, he dwells having overcome doubt, without uncertainty regarding the wholesome, his mind is purified of doubt.*

21 Refrain: The 4 immeasurables (3)

(1) *THE CULTIVATION OF LOVINGKINDNESS*

*Having abandoned these 5 hindrances, and to weaken mental impurities by applying insight, he dwells with a heart of **lovingkindness**, suffusing it everywhere, to everyone as well as to himself, with lovingkindness, immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.*

(2) *THE CULTIVATION OF COMPASSION*

*Having abandoned these 5 hindrances, and to weaken mental impurities by applying insight, he dwells with a heart of **compassion**, suffusing it everywhere, to everyone as well as to himself, with compassion, immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.*

(3) *THE CULTIVATION OF GLADNESS*

*Having abandoned these 5 hindrances, and to weaken mental impurities by applying insight, he dwells with a heart of **gladness**, suffusing it everywhere, to everyone as well as to himself, with gladness, immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.*

(4) *THE CULTIVATION OF EQUANIMITY*

*Having abandoned these 5 hindrances, and to weaken mental impurities by applying insight, he dwells with a heart of **equanimity**, suffusing it everywhere, to everyone as well as to himself,, with equanimity, immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.*

22 Knowledge of how karma affects rebirth

Thus, he recalls various past lives with their conditions and details.

And then, by means of **the divine eye**, he sees beings dying and reborn, and he knows how they are inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate, in the heavens and in the suffering states, faring according to their karma.

23 The heartwood

—What do you think, Nigrodha: is the practice of ascetic abstinence purified by these things or not?”

“Certainly it is, bhante, it attains its peak here, penetrating the heartwood.”

“Yes, indeed it is, Nigrodha, that austerity is so purified as to reach its peak here, penetrating to the heartwood [the pith]. It has reached the heartwood.”

And so, Nigrodha, you asked:

‘*Bhante, how does the Lord train his disciples to gain confidence to declare the fundamentals of the holy life?*’ [6]

I train my disciples in **something higher and finer** which they claim as the fundamentals of the holy life.”

When this was said, a great commotion arose amongst the wanderers:

“We and our teaching are ruined! We know of nothing higher or more far-reaching!”

24 Sandhāna's retort

When the houselord Sandhāna realized that these wanderers outside the faith were actually heeding the Lord's word, he said to Nigrodha:

"Venerable Nigrodha, you had said to me:

'Well now, houselord, with whom does the recluse Gotama talk? Where does he get his wisdom from? He's just a loner, awkward before others, not knowing how to converse. He's like a one-eyed cow, walking in circles, keeps to the fringes of a field—Gotama is only occupied with the fringes of things.

If he comes to this assembly, we will baffle him with a single question and knock him over like an empty pot!' [4]

So, now that the Lord has come here, why don't you baffle him with a single question and knock him over like an empty pot?" [4]

And at these words, the wanderer Nigrodha sat silent, dismayed, his shoulders drooping, hanging his head, glum, at a loss for words.

25 The Buddha's admonition

Seeing that the wanderer Nigrodha was silent and dismayed, the Lord said:

"Is it true, Nigrodha, that you said those words?"

"Bhante, it is true that I said those words—foolishly, mistakenly, unskillfully."

"What do you think, Nigrodha—have you heard it said by wanderers who were old, venerable, teachers and the teachers of teachers,

that the arhats, fully self-awakened buddhas used to gather and talk by shouting, screaming, making a great noise, and indulging in low talk like you with your teaching?

Or did they not say rather that those Lords resort to dwelling in the forest, in the jungle, free from noise, with little sound, alone with the winds, away from humans, conducive for seclusion—just as I do now?"

"Bhante, I have heard it said that those who were arhats, fully self-awakened buddhas did not indulge in loud talk nor low talk, but resorted to dwelling in the forest—just as the Lord does now."

"Nigrodha, you are an intelligent man of mature years. Has it never occurred to you that, 'Having awakened himself, the Lord teaches the Dharma of awakening; having tamed [disciplined] himself, the Lord teaches the Dharma for taming oneself; having calmed himself, the Lord teaches the Dharma leading to calm; having crossed beyond suffering himself, the Lord teaches the Dharma for crossing beyond (to nirvana);

having attained nirvana himself, the Lord teaches the Dharma for the sake of nirvana?'"

26 Nigrodha's apology

When this was said, the wanderer Nigrodha said to the Lord:

"Bhante, I have transgressed—just as one foolish, confused, unskillful—that I spoke thus of the Lord! Bhante, may the Lord accept my transgression as a transgression, so that I may henceforth show restraint."

"Indeed, Nigrodha, you have transgressed.

But, since you see your transgression as a transgression and make amends in accordance with the Dharma, we accept it.

For, it is progress in the discipline of the noble ones when, seeing a transgression as a transgression, one makes amends in accordance with the Dharma and shows restraint henceforth.

27 The Buddha's challenge

Now, Nigrodha, I tell you this:

Let an intelligent person, honest, trustworthy, upright, come to me, and I will instruct him,
I will teach him the Dharma.

If he then practises what he is taught to attain for himself here and now,
he will win that supreme goal of the holy life—
for the sake of which good lay-people renounce the world—
in only 7 years ... or even just 7 days.

28 The true purpose of the Buddha Dharma

(1) Nigrodha, you may think,

‘The recluse Gotama says this to win disciples.’ This is not so.

Let whoever is your teacher remain as your teacher.

(2) You may think,

‘The recluse Gotama says this to make us fall from our rules.’ This is not so.

Let your rules remain as your rules.

(3) You may think,

‘The recluse Gotama says this to make us fall from our livelihood.’ This is not so.

Let your livelihood remain as your livelihood.

(4) You may think,

‘The recluse Gotama says this to make us do unwholesome things and follow unwholesome teachings.’ This is not so.

Let what you consider unwholesome continue to be so considered.

(5) You may think,

The recluse Gotama says this to separate us from wholesome things and wholesome teachings.’ This is not so.

Let what you consider wholesome continue to be so considered.

—I do not speak for any of these reasons.

There are, Nigrodha, **unwholesome things** *that have not been abandoned, defiled, conducive to re-birth, fearful, productive of painful results in the future, associated with birth, decay and death.* It is for the abandonment of these things that I teach Dharma.

If you practise accordingly, **these defiled states will be abandoned**, *the states that purify will increase, and by your direct knowledge, you will realize, here and now, the wealth of wisdom.*”

29 Māra the bad one

When this was said, the wanderers sat silent, dismayed, their shoulders drooping, hanging their heads, downcast, at a loss for words—so possessed were their minds by Māra [the bad one].

Then, the Lord said:

“Every one of these hollow men is possessed by the bad one, so that not even one of them thinks:

‘Let us now follow the holy life proclaimed by the recluse Gotama, that we may know it—for what do seven days matter?’”

Then, the Lord, having uttered the lion-roar in the Udumbarikā Wanderer's Park, rose up into the air and returned to the Vultures' Peak. And the houselord Sandhāna, too, returned to Rājagaha.

— So it is —

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