AN 3.61 — Titthāyatanadi Sutta (Beliefs of Sectarians)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

AN III

Suttas 61-70

Mahā Vagga “The Greater Section”

61. Titthāyatanadi Sutta (Beliefs of Sectarians) Bhikkhus, there are these three beliefs held by various sectarians, which when exposed to scrutiny, questioned, and cross-examined by those considered to be wise, quickly collapse, for they get recognized as ways to drive one to give up striving in The Holy Life, encouraging and leading the person to become carelessly negligent.

Now, what are these three?

a. There are some recluses and brahmins who hold the view that says:

‘Whatever someone happens to experience, whether pleasant, painful, or neutral, all that is simply the result of actions they have done in the past.’

b. There are some other recluses and brahmins who hold the view that says:

‘Whatever someone happens to experience, whether pleasant, painful, or neutral, all that is the result of some ‘Almighty’, ‘Supreme Being’ or ‘Creator God.’

c. There are some recluses and brahmins who hold the view that says:

‘Whatever someone happens to experience, whether pleasant, painful, or neutral, all that is arbitrary, simply taking place randomly and on account of pure chance, with no reason, meaning, or cause behind it, whatsoever.’

aa. Here, Bhikkhus, I went and approached those recluses and brahmins who hold the view, that asserts the belief:

‘Whatever someone happens to experience, whether pleasant, painful, or neutral, all that is simply the result of actions they have done in the past,’ and I asked them –

“Venerable sirs, is it true that you are of the view, that whatever someone happens to experience, whether pleasant, painful, or neutral, all that is simply the result of actions they have done in the past?’

When asked thus, they admitted and affirmed it.

Then, I challenged them with the rebuke:

“But venerable sirs, do you destroy life, steal or take what is not given, indulge in sex, tell lies, slander, use harsh words, use idle chatter, desire and covet others’ possessions, or bear anger and hatred in your hearts, and hold wrong views, all as a result of actions done in the past?”

In hearing this, they all fell silent.

Now, Bhikkhus, you must understand that all those who fall back on the belief and wrong view that what they experience is nothing but the result of the actions done in the past, are themselves negligent, for they do not even have the wish, let alone the interest and effort, for what should and should not be done.

So, because of their confusion and perplexity, being uncertain and not knowing as to what should and should not be done, those recluses and brahmins live while being unguarded in their behavior through body, speech, and mind.

And since these people are thus unable to hold true to the values of improving and developing oneself in The Holy Life, all those recluses and brahmins do not guard their minds, and therefore do not deserve the title of a ‘recluse,’ at all.

Bhikkhus, this is the first rebuke made to those recluses and brahmins who hold such a doctrine based on wrong views.

bb. Then, Bhikkhus, I went and approached those recluses and brahmins who hold the view, that asserts the belief:

‘Whatever someone happens to experience, whether pleasant, painful, or neutral, all that is the result of some ‘Almighty’, ‘Supreme Being’, or ‘Creator God,’ and I asked them –

“Venerable sirs, is it true that you are of the view, that whatever someone happens to experience, whether pleasant, painful, or neutral, all that is the result of some ‘Almighty’, ‘Supreme Being’, or ‘Creator God’?’

And when asked thus, they admitted and affirmed it.

Then, I challenged them with the rebuke:

“But venerable sirs, do you destroy life, steal and take what is not given, indulge in sex, tell lies, slander, use harsh words, use idle chatter, desire and covet others’ possessions, or bear anger and hatred in your hearts, and hold wrong views, all because of such an ‘Almighty’ , ‘Supreme Being’, or ‘Creator God,’ who makes you engage in such behaviors?”

In hearing this, they all fell silent.

Now, Bhikkhus, you must understand that all those who fall back on the belief and wrong view that what they experience is nothing but the will and decision of some ‘Almighty’, ‘Supreme Being’, or ‘Creator God,’ are themselves negligent, for they do not even have the wish, let alone the interest and effort, for what should and should not be done.

So, because of their confusion and perplexity, being uncertain and not knowing as to what should and should not be done, those recluses and brahmins live while being unguarded in their behavior through body, speech, and mind.

And since these people are thus unable to hold true to the values of improving and developing oneself in The Holy Life, all those recluses and brahmins do not guard their minds, and therefore do not deserve the title of a ‘recluse,’ at all.

Bhikkhus, this then is the second rebuke made to those recluses and brahmins who hold such a doctrine based on wrong views.

cc. Then, Bhikkhus, I went and approached those recluses and brahmins who hold the view, that asserts the belief:

‘Whatever someone happens to experience, whether pleasant, painful, or neutral, all that is taking place randomly and on account of pure chance, with no reason and cause behind it.’ and I asked them –

“Venerable sirs, is it true that you are of the view, that whatever someone happens to experience, whether pleasant, painful, or neutral, all that is taking place randomly and on account of pure chance, with no reason and cause behind it?’

And when asked thus, they admitted and affirmed it.

Then, I challenged them with the rebuke:

“But venerable sirs, do you destroy life, steal and take what is not given, indulge in sex, tell lies, slander, use harsh words, use idle chatter, desire and covet others’ possessions, or bear anger and hatred in your hearts, and hold wrong views, all for no reason or cause at all? Would all such behavior be the result of pure chance, and simply a random occurrence?”

In hearing this, they all fell silent.

Now, Bhikkhus, you must understand that all those who fall back on the belief and wrong view that what they experience occurs randomly and on account of pure chance and without any reason or cause, are themselves negligent, for they do not even have the wish, let alone the interest and effort, for what should and should not be done.

So, because of their confusion and perplexity, being uncertain and not knowing as to what should and should not be done, those recluses and brahmins live while being unguarded in their behavior through body, speech, and mind.

And since these people are thus unable to hold true to the values of improving and developing oneself in The Holy Life, all those recluses and brahmins do not guard their minds, and therefore do not deserve the title of a 'recluse,' at all.

Bhikkhus, this then is the third rebuke made to those recluses and brahmins who hold such a doctrine based on wrong views.

These are, Bhikkhus, those three beliefs of various sectarians, which when exposed to scrutiny, questioned, and cross-examined by the ones who are truly considered wise, quickly collapse, for they get recognized as ways to drive one to give up striving in The Holy Life, encouraging and leading the person to become carelessly negligent.

On the other hand, Bhikkhus, The Dhamma that I proclaim and teach you is not defiled, at all! It always remains un-refutable, impossible to be rebuked, and is considered faultless by all those who are truly wise.

And how, Bhikkhus, is The Dhamma that I proclaim and teach not defiled, un-refutable, impossible to be rebuked, and considered faultless by all those who are truly wise?

Here, Bhikkhus, I proclaim and teach the Six Elements, embodying The Dhamma that is not defiled, un-refuted, impossible to be rebuked, and considered faultless by all those who are truly wise.

I proclaim and teach the Six Bases for Contact, embodying The Dhamma that is not defiled, un-refuted, impossible to be rebuked, and considered faultless by all those who are truly wise.

I proclaim and teach the Eighteen Mental Examinations, embodying The Dhamma that is not defiled, un-refuted, impossible to be rebuked, and considered faultless by all those who are truly wise.

I proclaim and teach the Four Noble Truths, embodying The Dhamma that is not defiled, un-refuted, impossible to be rebuked, and considered faultless by all those who are truly wise.

1. Now, Bhikkhus, when it was said, 'I teach the Six Elements, embodying The Dhamma that is not defiled, un-refuted, impossible to be rebuked, and considered faultless by all

those who are truly wise' – what was exactly meant by this statement?

Bhikkhus, there are these Six Elements. Which six? There is the element of earth, the element of water, the element of fire, the element of air, the element of space, and the element of consciousness, all of which embody The Dhamma that I have been proclaiming and teaching you, which is not defiled, un-refuted, impossible to be rebuked, and is considered blameless by all those who are truly wise.

This is the reason, therefore, why it was just stated:

'I teach the Six Elements, embodying The Dhamma that is not defiled, un-refuted, impossible to be rebuked, and considered faultless by all those who are truly wise. '

2. Further, Bhikkhus, when it was said, 'I teach the Six Bases for Contact, embodying The Dhamma that is not defiled, un-refuted, impossible to be rebuked, and considered faultless by all those who are truly wise' – what was exactly meant by this statement?

Bhikkhus, there are these Six Bases for Contact. Which six?

There is contact made through the eye base; there is contact made through the ear base; there is contact made through the nose base; there is contact made through the tongue base; there is contact made through the body base, and there is contact made through the mind base, all of which embody The Dhamma that I have been proclaiming and teaching you, which is not defiled, un-refuted, impossible to be rebuked, and is considered blameless by all those who are truly wise.

This is the reason, therefore, why it was just stated:

'I teach the Six Bases for Contact, embodying The Dhamma that is not defiled, un-refuted, impossible to be rebuked, and considered faultless by all those who are truly wise.'

3. Further, Bhikkhus, when it was said, 'I teach the Eighteen Mental Examinations, embodying The Dhamma that is not defiled, un-refuted, impossible to be rebuked, and considered faultless by all those who are truly wise' – what was exactly meant by this statement?

Bhikkhus, there are these Eighteen Mental Examinations. Which eighteen?

Here, Bhikkhus, on seeing a form, one examines the mind experiencing pleasure; one examines the mind experiencing repulsion; one examines the mind experiencing equanimity.

Similarly, on hearing a sound, one examines the mind experiencing pleasure; one examines the mind experiencing repulsion; one examines the mind experiencing equanimity.

On smelling an odor, one examines the mind experiencing pleasure; one examines the mind experiencing repulsion; one examines the mind experiencing equanimity.

On tasting a flavor, one examines the mind experiencing pleasure; one examines the mind experiencing repulsion; one examines the mind experiencing equanimity.

On touching a tangible object, one examines the mind experiencing pleasure; one examines the mind experiencing repulsion; one examines the mind experiencing equanimity.

On knowing a thought, one examines the mind experiencing pleasure; one examines the mind experiencing repulsion; one examines the mind experiencing equanimity.

Therefore, Bhikkhus all these eighteen mental examinations embody The Dhamma that I have been proclaiming and teaching you, which is not defiled, un-refuted, impossible to be rebuked, and is considered blameless by all those who are truly wise.

This is the reason, therefore, why it was just stated:

'I teach the Eighteen Mental Examinations, embodying The Dhamma that is not defiled, un-refuted, impossible to be rebuked, and considered faultless by all those who are truly wise. '

4. And when, Bhikkhus, it was said, 'I proclaim and teach the Four Noble Truths, embodying The Dhamma that is not defiled, un-refuted, impossible to be rebuked, and considered faultless by all those who are truly wise' – what was exactly meant by this statement?

Bhikkhus, there are these Four Noble Truths. Which Four?

Here, Bhikkhus, on account of the six elements, there is a descent into the embryo. To the one thus entered into the embryo, there is name and form. On account of the presence of name and form, there are the six sense bases. On account of the six sense bases, there is contact. On account of contact being thus possible, there are feelings.

In this way, Bhikkhus, to those who experience feeling, I then teach:

'This is suffering; this is the cause of suffering; this the cessation of suffering; and this is the Path leading to the cessation of suffering.'

And what, Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of Suffering?

Here, Bhikkhus, I declare and teach that birth is suffering, getting old is suffering, falling sick is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow, lamentation, pain, depression, and anguish are all suffering; not obtaining what one desires is suffering; in short, the five aggregates that one grips and tenaciously holds onto is itself suffering.

This, Bhikkhus, is called the Noble Truth of Suffering.

And what, Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering?

Here, Bhikkhus, on account of willful ignorance in oneself, preparations (saṅkhārā) are then allowed to arise, which prime and load up and thus spring forth by manifesting and becoming the generative causes for one's behavior. On account of these generative causes, consciousness arises. On account of consciousness, name and form arises. On account of name and form, the six sense bases arise. On account of the six sense bases, contact arises. On account of contact, feelings arise. On account of feelings, craving arises. On account of craving, gripping or tenacious grabbing arises. On account of tenaciously grabbing, the desire for rebecoming arises. On account of the desire to rebecome, birth takes place. On account of being born, there naturally follow the facts of ageing and getting old, falling sick, death, sorrow, crying and lamenting, pain, depression, and anguish.

This, therefore, Bhikkhus, is called the Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering.

And what, Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering?

Here, Bhikkhus, with the complete cessation of willful ignoring, the saṅkhārā themselves cease. With the cessation of the saṅkhārā, consciousness then ceases. With the cessation of consciousness, name and form cease. With the cessation of name and form, the six sense bases also cease. With the cessation of the six sense bases, contact ceases to occur. With the cessation of contact, then feelings cease altogether. With the cessation of feelings, craving ceases. With the cessation of craving, gripping or tenaciously grabbing cease. With the cessation of tenacious grabbing, the desire to rebecome ceases. With the cessation of the desire to rebecome, birth then ceases altogether. With the cessation of birth, then ageing and getting old, falling sick, death, sorrow, crying and lamenting, pain, depression, and anguish all cease.

This, Bhikkhus, is called the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering.

And what, Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering?

Here, Bhikkhus, it is this same Noble Eightfold Path, that is: Right View, Right Intentional Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Effort, Right Lifestyle, Right Mindfulness, and Right Samādhi (collected stability of mind).

This, Bhikkhus, is called the Noble Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering.

Therefore, Bhikkhus, these Four Noble Truths indeed embody The Dhamma that is not defiled, un-refuted, impossible to be rebuked, and considered blameless by all those who are truly wise.

This is the reason, therefore, why it was just stated:

‘I proclaim and teach the Four Noble Truths, embodying The Dhamma that is not defiled, un-refuted, impossible to be rebuked, and considered faultless by all those who are truly wise. ’