AN 7.54 — AN 7:51 Undeclared | Abyākata Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

Undeclared

Abyākata Sutta (AN 7:51)

Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, what is the cause, what is the reason, why uncertainty doesn’t arise in an instructed disciple of the noble ones over the undeclared issues?”

“Because of the cessation of views, monk, uncertainty doesn’t arise in an instructed disciple of the noble ones over the undeclared issues. The view-standpoint, ‘The Tathāgata exists after death,’ the view-standpoint, ‘The Tathāgata doesn’t exist after death,’ the view-standpoint, ‘The Tathāgata both does and doesn’t exist after death,’ the

view-standpoint, ‘The Tathāgata neither does nor doesn’t exist after death’: The uninstructed run-of-the-mill person doesn’t discern view, doesn’t discern the origination of view, doesn’t discern the cessation of view, doesn’t discern the path of practice leading to the cessation of view, and so for him that view grows. He is not freed from birth, aging, & death; from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. He is not freed, I tell you, from suffering & stress. But the instructed disciple of the noble ones discerns view, discerns the origination of view, discerns the cessation of view, discerns the path of practice leading to the cessation of view, and so for him that view ceases. He is freed from birth, aging, & death; from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. He is freed, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“Thus knowing, thus seeing, the instructed disciple of the noble ones doesn’t declare that ‘The Tathāgata exists after death,’ doesn’t declare that ‘The Tathāgata doesn’t exist after death,’ doesn’t declare that ‘The Tathāgata both does and doesn’t exist after death,’ doesn’t declare that ‘The Tathāgata neither does nor doesn’t exist after death.’ Thus knowing, thus seeing, he is thus of a nature not to declare the undeclared issues. Thus knowing, thus seeing, he isn’t paralyzed, doesn’t quake, doesn’t shiver or shake over the undeclared issues.

“‘The Tathāgata exists after death’—this craving-standpoint, this perception-standpoint, this product of conceiving, this product of elaboration, this clinging-standpoint: That’s anguish.1 ‘The Tathāgata doesn’t exist after death’: That’s anguish. ‘The Tathāgata both does and doesn’t exist after death’: That’s anguish. ‘The Tathāgata neither does nor doesn’t exist after death’: That’s anguish.2

The uninstructed run-of-the-mill person doesn’t discern anguish, doesn’t discern the origination of anguish, doesn’t discern the cessation of anguish, doesn’t discern the path of practice leading to the cessation of anguish, and so for him that anguish grows. He is not freed from birth, aging, & death; from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. He is not freed, I tell you, from suffering & stress. But the instructed disciple of the noble ones discerns anguish, discerns the origination of anguish, discerns the cessation of anguish, discerns the path of practice leading to the cessation of anguish, and so for him that anguish ceases. He is freed from birth, aging, & death; from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. He is freed, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“Thus knowing, thus seeing, the instructed disciple of the noble ones doesn’t declare that ‘The Tathāgata exists after death,’ doesn’t declare that ‘The Tathāgata doesn’t exist after death,’ doesn’t declare that ‘The Tathāgata both does and doesn’t exist after death,’ doesn’t declare that ‘The Tathāgata neither does nor doesn’t exist after death.’ Thus knowing, thus seeing, he is thus of a nature not to declare the undeclared issues. Thus knowing, thus seeing, he isn’t paralyzed, doesn’t quake, doesn’t shiver or shake over the undeclared issues.”

Notes

1. “Anguish” here translates vippaṭisāra, which is usually rendered into English as “remorse” or “regret.” Here, however, the feeling of vippaṭisāra relates to concerns about the future, rather than the past, and so neither remorse nor regret are appropriate to the context. The anguish alluded to in this passage is based either on the fear that awakening would entail an end to existence or on the contrary fear that it wouldn’t.

2. In some manuscripts, this paragraph runs as follows: “‘The Tathāgata exists after death’—this craving-standpoint, this perception-standpoint, this product of conceiving, this product of elaboration, this clinging-standpoint: That’s anguish. ‘The Tathāgata doesn’t exist after death’ … ‘The Tathāgata both does and doesn’t exist after death’ … ‘The Tathāgata neither does nor doesn’t exist after death’—this craving-standpoint, this perception-standpoint, this product of conceiving, this product of elaboration, this clinging-standpoint: That’s anguish.”

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: DN 9; MN 63, MN 72; SN 12:20; SN 44; AN 10:93