AN 10.95 — AN 10:95 To Uttiya | Uttiya Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

To Uttiya

Uttiya Sutta (AN 10:95)

Then Uttiya the wanderer went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One,

“Master Gotama, is it the case that ‘The cosmos is eternal: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless’?”

“Uttiya, I haven’t declared that ‘The cosmos is eternal: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless.’”

“Very well, then, Master Gotama, is it the case that: ‘The cosmos is not eternal: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless’?”

“Uttiya, I haven’t declared that ‘The cosmos is not eternal: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless.’”

“Very well, then, Master Gotama, is it the case that ‘The cosmos is finite … ’ … ‘The cosmos is infinite … ’ … ‘The soul & the body are the same … ’ … ‘The soul is one thing and the body another … ’ … ‘After death a Tathāgata exists … ’ … ‘After death a Tathāgata does not exist … ’ … ‘After death a Tathāgata both does & does not exist … ’ … ‘After death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless’?”

“Uttiya, I haven’t declared that ‘After death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless.’”

“But, Master Gotama, on being asked, ‘Is it the case that “The cosmos is eternal: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless”?’ you inform me, ‘Uttiya, I haven’t declared that “The cosmos is eternal: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless.”’ On being asked, ‘Is it the case that “The cosmos is not eternal … ” … “The cosmos is finite … ” … “The cosmos is infinite … ” … “The soul & the body are the same … ” … “The soul is one thing and the body another … ” … “After death a Tathāgata exists … ” … “After death a Tathāgata does not exist … ” … “After death a Tathāgata both does & does not exist … ” … “After death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless”?’ you inform me, ‘Uttiya, I haven’t declared that “After death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless.”’ Now is there anything you have declared?”

“Uttiya, having directly known it, I teach the Dhamma to my disciples for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of unbinding.”

“And, Master Gotama, when having directly known it, you teach the Dhamma to your disciples for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of unbinding, will all the cosmos be led (to release), or a half of it, or a third?”

When this was said, the Blessed One was silent.

Then the thought occurred to Ven. Ānanda: “Don’t let Uttiya the wanderer acquire the evil viewpoint that, ‘When I asked him an all-encompassing question, Gotama the contemplative faltered and didn’t reply. Perhaps he was unable to.’ That would be for his long-term harm & suffering.” So he said to Uttiya, “In that case, my friend, I will give you an analogy, for there are cases where it is through the use of analogy that intelligent people can understand the meaning of what is being said.

“Suppose that there were a royal frontier city with strong ramparts, strong walls & arches, and a single gate. In it would be a wise, competent, & intelligent gatekeeper to keep out those he didn’t know and to let in those he did. Walking along the path encircling the city, he wouldn’t see a crack or an opening in the walls big enough for even a cat to slip through. Although he wouldn’t know that ‘So-and-so many creatures enter or leave the city,’ he would know this: ‘Whatever large creatures enter or leave the city all enter or leave it through this gate.’

“In the same way, the Tathāgata does not endeavor to have all the cosmos or half of it or a third of it led (to release) by means of (his Dhamma). But he does know this: ‘All those who have been led, are being led, or will be led (to release) from the cosmos have done so, are doing so, or will do so after having abandoned the five hindrances—those defilements of awareness that weaken discernment—having well-established [‘well-tuned’] their minds in the four establishings of mindfulness, and having developed, as they have come to be, the seven factors for awakening. When you asked the Blessed One this question, you had already asked it in another way.1 That’s why he didn’t respond.”

Note

1. The question as to whether all the cosmos or only a part of it would be led to release is another way of asking whether the cosmos is eternal or not. Notice that Ven. Ānanda mentions those who have been led to release from the cosmos. He doesn’t mention the cosmos as being led to release. For his use of the word, “cosmos,” here, see SN 35:82.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: DN 12; MN 72; SN 6:1; AN 3:22; AN 4:45