Ud 6.4 — Tittha Sutta: Sectarians (1)

English translation by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

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Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion there were many contemplatives, brahmans, & wanderers of various sects living around Sāvatthī with differing views, differing opinions, differing beliefs, dependent for support on their differing views. Some of the contemplatives & brahmans held this doctrine, this view: "The cosmos is eternal. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless."

Some of the contemplatives & brahmans held this doctrine, this view: "The cosmos is not eternal" ... "The cosmos is finite" ... "The cosmos is infinite" ... "The soul is the same thing as the body" ... "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 exists & does not exist" ... "After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless."

And they kept on arguing, quarreling, & disputing, wounding one another with weapons of the mouth, saying, "The Dhamma is like this, it's not like that. The Dhamma's not like that, it's like this."

Then in the early morning, a large number of monks adjusted their under robes and — carrying their bowls & robes — went into Sāvatthī for alms. Having gone for alms in Sāvatthī, after the meal, returning from their alms round, they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to the Blessed One, "Lord, there are many contemplatives, brahmans, & wanderers of various sects living around Sāvatthī with differing views, differing opinions, differing beliefs, dependent for support on their differing views... And they keep on arguing, quarreling, & disputing, wounding one another with weapons of the mouth, saying, 'The Dhamma is like this, it's not like that. The Dhamma's not like that, it's like this.'"

"Monks, the wanderers of other sects are blind & eyeless. They don't know what is beneficial and what is harmful. They don't know what is the Dhamma and what is non-Dhamma. Not knowing what is beneficial and what is harmful, not knowing what is Dhamma and what is non-Dhamma, they keep on arguing, quarreling, & disputing, wounding one another with weapons of the mouth, saying, 'The Dhamma is like this, it's not like that. The Dhamma's not like that, it's like this.'

"Once, monks, in this same Sāvatthī, there was a certain king, and the king said to a certain man, 'Come, my good man. Gather together all the people in Sāvatthī who have been blind from birth.'"

"Responding, 'As you say, your majesty,' to the king, the man — having rounded up all the people in Sāvatthī who had been blind from birth — went to the king and on arrival said, 'Your majesty, the people in Sāvatthī who have been blind from birth have been gathered together.'

"'Very well then, I say, show the blind people an elephant.'

"Responding, 'As you say, your majesty,' to the king, the man showed the blind people an elephant. To some of the blind people he showed the elephant's head, saying, 'This, blind people, is what an elephant is like.' To some of them he showed the elephant's ear, saying, 'This, blind people, is what an elephant is like.' To some of them he showed the elephant's tusk... the elephant's trunk... the elephant's body... the elephant's foot... the elephant's hindquarters... the elephant's tail... the tuft at the end of the elephant's tail, saying, 'This, blind people, is what an elephant is like.'

"Then, having shown the blind people the elephant, the man went to the king and on arrival said, 'Your majesty, the blind people have seen the elephant. May your majesty do what you think it is now time to do.'

"Then the king went to the blind people and on arrival asked them, 'Blind people, have you seen the elephant?'

"'Yes, your majesty. We have seen the elephant.'

"'Now tell me, blind people, what the elephant is like.'

"The blind people who had been shown the elephant's head said, 'The elephant, your majesty, is just like a jar.'

"Those who had been shown the elephant's ear said, 'The elephant, your majesty, is just like a winnowing basket.'

"Those who had been shown the elephant's tusk said, 'The elephant, your majesty, is just like plowshare.'[1]

"Those who had been shown the elephant's trunk said, 'The elephant, your majesty, is just like the pole of a plow.'

"Those who had been shown the elephant's body said, 'The elephant, your majesty, is just like a granary.'

"Those who had been shown the elephant's foot said, 'The elephant, your majesty, is just like a post.'

"Those who had been shown the elephant's hindquarters said, 'The elephant, your majesty, is just like a mortar.'

"Those who had been shown the elephant's tail said, 'The elephant, your majesty, is just like a pestle.'

"Those who had been shown the tuft at the end of the elephant's tail said, 'The elephant, your majesty, is just like a broom.'

"Saying, 'The elephant is like this, it's not like that. The elephant's not like that, it's like this,' they struck one another with their fists. That gratified the king.

"In the same way, monks, the wanderers of other sects are blind & eyeless. They don't know what is beneficial and what is harmful. They don't know what is the Dhamma and what is non-Dhamma. Not knowing what is beneficial and what is harmful, not knowing what is Dhamma and what is non-Dhamma, they keep on arguing, quarreling, & disputing, wounding one another with weapons of the mouth, saying, 'The Dhamma is like this, it's not like that. The Dhamma's not like that, it's like this.'"

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

With regard to these things they're attached — some contemplatives & brahmans. They quarrel & fight — people seeing one side.

Note

1.

Reading phālo with the Thai and Sri Lankan editions. According to the PTS dictionary, this word can also mean "iron rod." The Burmese edition reads, khīlo, "post" or "stake." The Thai edition also includes another variant reading: sallo, "arrow."