Ud 6.4 — Followers of Various Other Religions (1st)

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Text

Heartfelt Sayings 6.4

Followers of Various Other Religions (1st)

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Now at that time several ascetics, brahmins, and wanderers who followed various other religions were residing in Sāvatthī, holding different views, beliefs, and opinions, relying on different views.

There were some ascetics and brahmins who had this doctrine and view: "The cosmos is eternal. This is the only truth, anything else is futile."

Others held views such as the following, each regarding their own view as true and others as silly. "The cosmos is not eternal."

"The cosmos is finite."

"The cosmos is infinite."

"The soul and the body are one and the same."

"The soul is one thing, the body another."

"A realized one still exists after death."

"A realized one no longer exists after death."

"A realized one both still exists and no longer exists after death."

"A realized one neither still exists nor no longer exists after death."

They were fighting, quarreling, and disputing, continually wounding each other with barbed words: "Such is Truth, such is not Truth! Such is not Truth, such is Truth!"

Then several mendicants robed up in the morning and, taking their bowls and robes, entered Sāvatthī for alms. Then, after the meal, when they returned from almsround, they went up to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and told him what was happening. The Buddha said:

"The wanderers of other religions are blind and sightless. They don't understand what is beneficial or what is not beneficial, nor what is the truth and what is not the truth. That's why they are fighting, quarreling, and disputing, continually wounding each other with barbed words.

Once upon a time, mendicants, right here in Sāvatthī there was a certain king. Then the king addressed a man, ‘Please, my man, gather all those blind from birth throughout Sāvatthī and bring them together in one place.’ ‘Yes, Your Majesty,’ that man replied. He did as the king asked, then said to him, ‘Your Majesty, the blind people throughout Sāvatthī have been gathered.’ ‘Well then, lad, show them an elephant.’ ‘Yes, Your Majesty,’ that man replied. He did as the king asked.

To some of the blind people he showed the elephant’s head, saying, ‘Here is the elephant.’ To some of them he showed the elephant’s ear, saying, ‘Here is the elephant.’ To some of them he showed the elephant’s tusk, saying, ‘Here is the elephant.’ To some of them he showed the elephant’s trunk, saying, ‘Here is the elephant.’ To some of them he showed the elephant’s flank, saying, ‘Here is the elephant.’ To some of them he showed the elephant’s leg, saying, ‘Here is the elephant.’ To some of them he showed the elephant’s thigh, saying, ‘Here is the elephant.’ To some of them he showed the elephant’s tail, saying, ‘Here is the elephant.’ To some of them he showed the tip of the elephant’s tail, saying, ‘Here is the elephant.’

Then he approached the king and said, ‘Your Majesty, the blind people have been shown the elephant. Please go at your convenience.’

Then the king went up to the blind people and said, ‘Have you seen the elephant?’ ‘Yes, Your Majesty, we have been shown the elephant.’ ‘Then tell us, what kind of thing is an elephant?’

The blind people who had been shown the elephant’s head said, ‘Your Majesty, an elephant is like a pot.’

Those who had been shown the ear said, ‘An elephant is like a winnowing fan.’

Those who had been shown the tusk said, ‘An elephant is like a ploughshare.’

Those who had been shown the trunk said, ‘An elephant is like a draft-pole.’

Those who had been shown the flank said, ‘An elephant is like a storehouse.’

Those who had been shown the leg said, ‘An elephant is like a pillar.’

Those who had been shown the thigh said, ‘An elephant is like a mortar.’

Those who had been shown the tail said, ‘An elephant is like a pestle.’

Those who had been shown the tip of the tail said, ‘An elephant is like a broom.’

Saying, ‘Such is an elephant, not such! Such is not an elephant, such is!’ they punched each other with their fists. At that, the king was pleased.

In the same way, mendicants, the wanderers of other religions are blind and sightless. They don’t understand what is beneficial or what is not beneficial, nor what is the truth and what is not the truth. That’s why they are fighting, quarreling, and disputing, continually wounding each other with barbed words. ‘Such is Truth, such is not! Such is not Truth, such is!’”

Then, understanding this matter, on that occasion the Buddha expressed this heartfelt sentiment:

“Some ascetics and brahmins, it seems,

cling to these things.

Arguing, they dispute,

the folk who see just one part.”