Ud 6.5 — Tittha Sutta: Sectarians (2)

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 self & the cosmos are eternal. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless."

Some of the contemplatives & brahmans held this doctrine, this view: "The self & the cosmos are not eternal" ... "The self & the cosmos are both eternal and not eternal" ... "The self & the cosmos are neither eternal nor not eternal" ...

"The self & the cosmos are self-made" ... "The self & the cosmos are other-made" ... "The self & the cosmos are both self-made & other-made" ... "The self & the cosmos — without self-making, without other-making — are spontaneously arisen" ...

"Pleasure & pain, the self & the cosmos are self-made" ... "other-made" ... "both self-made & other-made" ... "Pleasure & pain, the self & the cosmos — without self-making, without other-making — are spontaneously arisen. 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.'"

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. Not reaching the footing,[1] they sink in mid-stream.

Note

1.

This compound — tamogadhaṃ — is ambiguous in that it can be divided in two ways: tam-ogadhaṃ, "that footing"; or tamo-gadhaṃ, "a footing in darkness." The first is the meaning apparently intended here, with "that footing" referring to the deathless (the image is of the point, when crossing a river, where one comes close enough to the far shore that one can touch bottom — see AN 10:58). However, the Buddha was probably conscious that the compound could also be interpreted in the second way, which would have made the term memorable for its shock value. There are several other passages in Pali poetry where terms seem to have been intended to carry both positive and negative meanings for this reason. See, for example, Dhp 97, Sn 4.10, and Sn 4.13.

See also: DN 2; SN 12.20; SN 12.35; SN 12.67; AN 3.62.