

63 *Cūlamālunkya Sutta*

The Shorter Discourse to Mālunkyāputta

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park.

2. Then, while the venerable Mālunkyāputta was alone in meditation, the following thought arose in his mind:

“These speculative views have been left undeclared by the Blessed One, set aside and rejected by him, namely: ‘the world is eternal’ and ‘the world is not eternal’; ‘the world is finite’ and ‘the world is infinite’; ‘the soul is the same as the body’ and ‘the soul is one thing and the body another’; and ‘after death a Tathāgata exists’ and ‘after death a Tathāgata does not exist’ and ‘after death a Tathāgata both exists and does not exist’ and ‘after death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist.’ The Blessed One does not declare these to me, and I do not approve of and accept the fact that he does not declare these to me, so I shall go to the Blessed One and ask him the meaning of this. If he declares to me either ‘the world is eternal’ or ‘the world is not eternal’...or ‘after death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist,’ then I will lead the holy life under him; if he does not declare these to me, then I will abandon the training and return to the low life.” [427]

3. Then, when it was evening, the venerable Mālunkyāputta rose from meditation and went to the Blessed One. After paying homage to him, he sat down at one side and told him:

“Here, venerable sir, while I was alone in meditation, the following thought arose in my mind: ‘These speculative views have been left undeclared by the Blessed One...If he does not declare these to me, then I will abandon the training and return to the low life.’ If the Blessed One knows ‘the world is eternal,’ let the Blessed One declare to me ‘the world is eternal’; if the Blessed One knows ‘the world is not eternal,’ let the Blessed One declare

to me ‘the world is not eternal.’ If the Blessed One does not know either ‘the world is eternal’ or ‘the world is not eternal,’ then it is straightforward for one who does not know and does not see to say: ‘I do not know, I do not see.’

“If the Blessed One knows ‘the world is finite,’...‘the world is infinite,’...‘the soul is the same as the body,’...‘the soul is one thing and the body another,’...‘after death a Tathāgata exists,’ [428]...‘after death a Tathāgata does not exist,’...If the Blessed One knows ‘after death a Tathāgata both exists and does not exist,’ let the Blessed One declare that to me; if the Blessed One knows ‘after death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist,’ let the Blessed One declare that to me. If the Blessed One does not know either ‘after death a Tathāgata both exists and does not exist’ or ‘after death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist,’ then it is straightforward for one who does not know and does not see to say: ‘I do not know, I do not see.’”

4. “How then, Mālunkyāputta, did I ever say to you: ‘Come, Mālunkyāputta, lead the holy life under me and I will declare to you “the world is eternal”...or “after death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist”’?—“No, venerable sir.”—“Did you ever tell me: ‘I will lead the holy life under the Blessed One, and the Blessed One will declare to me “the world is eternal”...or “after death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist”’?—“No, venerable sir.”—“That being so, misguided man, who are you and what are you abandoning?”

5. “If anyone should say thus: ‘I will not lead the holy life under the Blessed One until the Blessed One declares to me “the world is eternal”...or “after death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist,”’ [429] that would still remain undeclared by the Tathāgata and meanwhile that person would die. Suppose, Mālunkyāputta, a man were wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and his friends and companions, his kinsmen and relatives, brought a surgeon to treat him. The man would say: ‘I will not let the surgeon pull out this arrow until I know whether the man who wounded me was a noble or a brahmin or a merchant or a worker.’ And he would say: ‘I will not let the surgeon pull out this arrow until I know the name and clan of the man who wounded me;...until I know whether the man who wounded me was tall or short or of middle height;... until I know whether the man who wounded me was dark or

brown or golden-skinned;...until I know whether the man who wounded me lives in such a village or town or city;...until I know whether the bow that wounded me was a long bow or a cross-bow;...until I know whether the bowstring that wounded me was fibre or reed or sinew or hemp or bark;...until I know whether the shaft that wounded me was wild or cultivated;... until I know with what kind of feathers the shaft that wounded me was fitted—whether those of a vulture or a heron or a hawk or a peacock or a stork;...until I know with what kind of sinew the shaft that wounded me was bound—whether that of an ox or a buffalo or a deer or a monkey;...until I know what kind of arrowhead it was that wounded me—whether spiked or razor-tipped or curved or barbed or calf-toothed or lancet-shaped.’ [430]

“All this would still not be known to that man and meanwhile he would die. So too, Mālunkyāputta, if anyone should say thus: ‘I will not lead the holy life under the Blessed One until the Blessed One declares to me: “the world is eternal”...or “after death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist,”’ that would still remain undeclared by the Tathāgata and meanwhile that person would die.

6. “Mālunkyāputta, if there is the view ‘the world is eternal,’ the holy life cannot be lived; and if there is the view ‘the world is not eternal,’ the holy life cannot be lived. Whether there is the view ‘the world is eternal’ or the view ‘the world is not eternal,’ there is birth, there is ageing, there is death, there are sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair, the destruction of which I prescribe here and now.

“If there is the view ‘the world is finite,’...‘the world is infinite,’...‘the soul is the same as the body,’...‘the soul is one thing and the body another,’...‘after death a Tathāgata exists,’...‘after death a Tathāgata does not exist,’ the holy life cannot be lived... [431] If there is the view ‘after death a Tathāgata both exists and does not exist,’ the holy life cannot be lived; and if there is the view ‘after death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist,’ the holy life cannot be lived. Whether there is the view ‘after death a Tathāgata both exists and does not exist’ or the view ‘after death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist,’ there is birth, there is ageing, there is death, there are sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair, the destruction of which I prescribe here and now.

7. “Therefore, Mālunkyāputta, remember what I have left undeclared as undeclared, and remember what I have declared as declared. And what have I left undeclared? ‘The world is eternal’—I have left undeclared. ‘The world is not eternal’—I have left undeclared. ‘The world is finite’—I have left undeclared. ‘The world is infinite’—I have left undeclared. ‘The soul is the same as the body’—I have left undeclared. ‘The soul is one thing and the body another’—I have left undeclared. ‘After death a Tathāgata exists’—I have left undeclared. ‘After death a Tathāgata does not exist’—I have left undeclared. ‘After death a Tathāgata both exists and does not exist’—I have left undeclared. ‘After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist’—I have left undeclared.

8. “Why have I left that undeclared? Because it is unbeneficial, it does not belong to the fundamentals of the holy life, it does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna. That is why I have left it undeclared.

9. “And what have I declared? ‘This is suffering’—I have declared. ‘This is the origin of suffering’—I have declared. ‘This is the cessation of suffering’—I have declared. ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering’—I have declared.

10. “Why have I declared that? Because it is beneficial, it belongs to the fundamentals of the holy life, it leads to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna. That is why I have declared it.

“Therefore, Mālunkyāputta, [432] remember what I have left undeclared as undeclared, and remember what I have declared as declared.”

That is what the Blessed One said. The venerable Mālunkyāputta was satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One’s words.⁶⁴⁸