SN 22.86 — Anuradha Sutta: To Anuradha

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 Vesali, in the Great Wood, at the Hall of the Gabled Pavilion. At that time Ven. Anuradha was staying not far from the Blessed One in a wilderness hut.

Then a large number of wandering sectarians went to Ven. Anuradha and on arrival exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, they sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to Ven. Anuradha, "Friend Anuradha, the Tathagata — the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment — being described, is described with [one of] these four positions: The Tathagata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does & does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death."

When this was said, Ven. Anuradha said to the wandering sectarians, "Friends, the Tathagata — the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment — being described, is described otherwise than with these four positions: The Tathagata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does & does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death."

When this was said, the wandering sectarians said to Ven. Anuradha, "This monk is either a newcomer, not long gone forth, or else an elder who is foolish & inexperienced." So the wandering sectarians, addressing Ven. Anuradha as they would a newcomer or a fool, got up from their seats and left.

Then not long after the wandering sectarians had left, this thought occurred to Ven. Anuradha: "If I am questioned again by those wandering sectarians, how will I answer in such a way that will I speak in line with what the Blessed One has said, will not misrepresent the Blessed One with what is unfactual, will answer in line with the Dhamma, so that no one whose thinking is in line with the Dhamma will have grounds for criticizing me?"

Then Ven. Anuradha went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: "Just now I was staying not far from the Blessed One in a wilderness hut. Then a large number of wandering sectarians came and... said to me, 'Friend Anuradha, the Tathagata — the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment — being described, is described with [one of] these four positions: The Tathagata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does & does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death.'

"When this was said, I said to them, 'Friends, the Tathagata — the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment — being described, is described otherwise than with these four positions: The Tathagata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does & does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death.'

"When this was said, the wandering sectarians said to me, 'This monk is either a newcomer, not long gone forth, or else an elder who is foolish & inexperienced.' So, addressing me as they would a newcomer or a fool, they got up from their seats and left.

"Then not long after the wandering sectarians had left, this thought occurred to me: 'If I am questioned again by those wandering sectarians, how will I answer in such a way that will I speak in line with what the Blessed One has said, will not misrepresent the Blessed One with what is unfactual, will answer in line with the Dhamma, and no one whose thinking is in line with the Dhamma will have grounds for criticizing me?'"

"What do you think, Anuradha: Is form constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."

"And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?"

"Stressful, lord."

"And is it proper to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"No, lord."

"Is feeling constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."...

"Is perception constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."...

"Are fabrications constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."...

"Is consciousness constant or inconstant?

"Inconstant, lord."

"And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?"

"Stressful, lord."

"And is it proper to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"No, lord."

"What do you think, Anuradha: Do you regard form as the Tathagata?"

"No, lord."

"Do you regard feeling as the Tathagata?"

"No, lord."

"Do you regard perception as the Tathagata?"

"No, lord."

"Do you regard fabrications as the Tathagata?"

"No, lord."

"Do you regard consciousness as the Tathagata?"

"No, lord."

"What do you think, Anuradha: Do you regard the Tathagata as being in form?... Elsewhere than form?... In feeling?... Elsewhere than feeling?... In perception?... Elsewhere than perception?... In fabrications?... Elsewhere than fabrications?... In consciousness?... Elsewhere than consciousness?"

"No, lord."

"What do you think: Do you regard the Tathagata as form-feeling-perception-fabrications-consciousness?"

"No, lord."

"Do you regard the Tathagata as that which is without form, without feeling, without perception, without fabrications, without consciousness?"

"No, lord."

"And so, Anuradha — when you can't pin down the Tathagata as a truth or reality even in the present life — is it proper for you to declare, 'Friends, the Tathagata — the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment — being described, is described otherwise than with these four positions: The Tathagata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does & does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death'?"

"No, lord."

"Very good, Anuradha. Very good. Both formerly & now, it is only stress that I describe, and the cessation of stress."

See also: The suttas in the Avyakata Samyutta.