SN 44.7 — Moggallana Sutta: With Moggallana

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

Then Vacchagotta the wanderer went to Ven. Maha Moggallana and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Maha Moggallana, "Now then, Master Moggallana, is the cosmos eternal?"

"That has not been declared by the Blessed One, Vaccha: 'The cosmos is eternal.'"

"Well then, Master Moggallana, is the cosmos not eternal?"

"Vaccha, that too has not been declared by the Blessed One: 'The cosmos is not eternal.'"

"Then is the cosmos finite?"... "Is the cosmos infinite?"... "Is the body the same as the soul?"... "Is the body one thing, and the soul another?"... "Does the Tathagata exist after death?"... "Does the Tathagata not exist after death?"... "Does the Tathagata both exist and not exist after death?"... "Does the Tathagata neither exist nor not exist after death?"

"Vaccha, that too has not been declared by the Blessed One: 'The Tathagata neither exists nor does not exist after death."

"Now, Master Moggallana, what is the cause, what is the reason why — when wanderers of other sects are asked in this way, they answer that 'The cosmos is eternal' or 'The cosmos is not eternal' or 'The cosmos is finite' or 'The cosmos is infinite' or 'The body is the same as the soul' or 'The body is one thing and the soul another' or 'The Tathagata exists after death' or 'The Tathagata does not exist after death' or 'The Tathagata both exists and does not exist after death" or 'The Tathagata neither exists nor does not exist after death,' yet when Gotama the contemplative is asked in this way, he does not answer that 'The cosmos is eternal' or 'The cosmos is not eternal' or 'The cosmos is finite' or 'The cosmos is infinite' or 'The body is the same as the soul' or 'The body is one thing and the soul another' or 'The Tathagata exists after death' or 'The Tathagata does not exist after death' or 'The Tathagata both exists and does not exist after death" or 'The Tathagata neither exists nor does not exist after death'?"

"Vaccha, the members of other sects assume of the eye that 'This is mine, this is my self, this is what I am.' They assume of the ear... the nose... the tongue... the body... the intellect that 'This is mine, this is my self, this is what I am.' That is why, when asked in this way, they answer that 'The cosmos is eternal'... or that 'The Tathagata neither exists nor does not exist after death.' But the Tathagata, worthy and rightly self-awakened, does not assume of the eye that 'This is mine, this is my self, this is what I am.' He does not assume of the ear... the nose... the tongue... the body... the intellect that 'This is mine, this is my self, this is what I am.' That is why, when asked in this way, he does not answer that 'The cosmos is eternal'... or that 'The Tathagata neither exists nor does not exist after death.'"

Then Vacchagotta the wanderer, getting up from his seat, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he [addressed the same questions to the Blessed One and received exactly the same explanation].

"Amazing, Master Gotama! Astounding! How the meaning and phrasing of the teacher and disciple agree, coincide, and do not diverge from one another with regard to the supreme teaching! Just now, Master Gotama, I went to the contemplative Moggallana and, on arrival, asked him about this matter, and he answered me with the same words, the same phrasing, as Master Gotama. Amazing, Master Gotama! Astounding! How the meaning and phrasing of the teacher and disciple agree, coincide, and do not diverge from one another with regard to the supreme teaching!"

See also: other suttas in the Avyakata Samyutta (and the translator's Introduction); AN 4.42.