SN 44.7 — With Moggallāna

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Text

Linked Discourses 44.7

1. The Undeclared Points

With Moggallāna

Then the wanderer Vacchagotta went up to Venerable Mahāmoggallāna, and exchanged greetings with him. When the greetings and polite conversation were over, he sat down to one side, and said to Mahāmoggallāna:

“Worthy Moggallāna, is this right: ‘the cosmos is eternal’?”

“Vaccha, this has not been declared by the Buddha.”

“Then is this right: ‘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’?”

“This too has not been declared by the Buddha.”

“What’s the cause, worthy Moggallāna, what’s the reason why, when the wanderers of other religions are asked these questions, they declare one of these to be true? And what’s the reason why, when the ascetic Gotama is asked these questions, he does not declare one of these to be true?”

“Vaccha, the wanderers of other religions regard the eye like this: ‘This is mine, I am this, this is my self.’ They regard the ear … nose … tongue … body … mind like this: ‘This is mine, I am this, this is my self.’

That’s why, when asked, they declare one of those answers to be true.

The Realized One, the perfected one, the fully awakened Buddha regards the eye like this: ‘This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self.’ He regards the ear … nose … tongue … body … mind like this: ‘This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self.’

That’s why, when asked, he does not declare one of those answers to be true.”

Then the wanderer Vacchagotta rose from his seat and went to the Buddha and exchanged greetings with him. When the greetings and polite conversation were over, he sat down to one side. He asked the Buddha the same questions, and received the same

answers.

He said, “It’s incredible, worthy Gotama, it’s amazing! How the meaning and the phrasing of the Teacher and the disciple fit together and agree without contradiction when it comes to the chief matter! Just now I went to the ascetic Mahāmoggallāna and asked him about this matter. And he explained it to me with these words and phrases, just like the worthy Gotama. It’s incredible, worthy Gotama, it’s amazing! How the meaning and the phrasing of the Teacher and the disciple fit together and agree without contradiction when it comes to the chief matter!”