SN 44.8 — SN 44:8 With Vacchagotta | Vacchagotta Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

Source: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/SN/SN44_8.html

Source revision: sha256:06db98f11dbe5b66e3b290b0f8bcaa44ec5f2fe3d1e1b74062fcf0baea044036

License: CC-BY-NC-4.0 — https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

License URL: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

Copyright: Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017

License notice: Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017 This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported. To see a copy of this license visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. “Commercial” shall mean any sale, whether for commercial or non-profit purposes or entities. Questions about this book may be addressed to Metta Forest Monastery Valley Center, CA 92082-1409 U.S.A. Additional resources More Dhamma talks, books and translations by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu are available to download in digital audio and various ebook formats at dhammatalks.org. Printed copy A paperback copy of this book is available free of charge. To request one, write to: Book Request, Metta Forest Monastery, PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082 USA.

Attribution: From Handful of Leaves, Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu; https://www.dhammatalks.org/Archive/Writings/Ebooks/SuttaPitaka_251113.epub. Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017 This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported. To see a copy of this license visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. “Commercial” shall mean any sale, whether for commercial or non-profit purposes or entities. Questions about this book may be addressed to Metta Forest Monastery Valley Center, CA 92082-1409 U.S.A. Additional resources More Dhamma talks, books and translations by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu are available to download in digital audio and various ebook formats at dhammatalks.org. Printed copy A paperback copy of this book is available free of charge. To request one, write to: Book Request, Metta Forest Monastery, PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082 USA.

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

With Vacchagotta

Vacchagotta Sutta (SN 44:8)

Then Vacchagotta the wanderer 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 said to the Blessed One, “Now then, Master Gotama, is the cosmos eternal?”

“That has not been declared by me, Vaccha: ‘The cosmos is eternal.’”

“Well then, Master Gotama, is the cosmos not eternal?”

“Vaccha, that too has not been declared by me: ‘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 Tathāgata exist after death?” … “Does the Tathāgata not exist after death?” … “Does the Tathāgata both exist and not exist after death?” … “Does the Tathāgata neither exist nor not exist after death?”

“Vaccha, that too has not been declared by me: ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.”

“Now, Master Gotama, 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 Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death” or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death,’ yet when Master Gotama 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 Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death” or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death’?”

“Vaccha, the members of other sects assume form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form.

“They assume feeling to be the self…

“They assume perception to be the self…

“They assume fabrications to be the self…

“They assume consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness. That is why, when asked in this way, they answer that ‘The cosmos is eternal’ … or that ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’

“But the Tathāgata, worthy & rightly self-awakened, doesn’t assume form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form.

“He doesn’t assume feeling to be the self…

“He doesn’t assume perception to be the self…

“He doesn’t assume fabrications to be the self…

“He doesn’t assume consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness. That is why, when asked in this way, he does not answer that ‘The cosmos is eternal’ … or that ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’”

The Vacchagotta the wanderer, getting up from his seat, went to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna 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 Ven. Mahā Moggallāna and received exactly the same explanation).

“Amazing, Master Moggallāna! 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 Moggallāna, I went to the contemplative Gotama and, on arrival, asked him about this matter, and he answered me with the same words, the same phrasing, as Master Moggallāna. Amazing, Master Moggallāna! 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!”