SN 44.10 — With Ānanda

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Linked Discourses 44.10

1. The Undeclared Points

With Ānanda

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

“Worthy Gotama, does the self survive?” But when he said this, the Buddha kept silent.

“Then does the self not survive?” But for a second time the Buddha kept silent. Then the wanderer Vacchagotta rose from his seat and left.

And then, not long after Vacchagotta had left, Venerable Ānanda said to the Buddha:

“Sir, why didn’t you answer Vacchagotta’s question?”

“Ānanda, when Vacchagotta asked me whether the self survives, if I had answered that ‘the self survives’ I would have been siding with the ascetics and brahmins who are eternalists. When Vacchagotta asked me whether the self does not survive, if I had answered that ‘the self does not survive’ I would have been siding with the ascetics and brahmins who are annihilationists.

When Vacchagotta asked me whether the self survives, if I had answered that ‘the self survives’, would that have facilitated the arising of the knowledge that all things are not-self?”

“No, sir.”

“When Vacchagotta asked me whether the self does not survive, if I had answered that ‘the self does not survive’, Vacchagotta—who is already confused—would have got even more confused, thinking: ‘It seems that the self that I once had no longer survives.’”