

THE PALIVERSE PROJECT

The Universe of Buddha's Wisdom

The Triple Canon (Tipiṭaka)

The Canon of Discourses (Sutta Piṭaka)

5. The Collection of Minor Texts (5. Khuddaka Nikāya)

20. The Questions of Milinda (20. Milindapañhapāḷi)

1. The Chapter on the Donkey (1. Gadrabhavaggo)

[Mil 7.2.1-7.2.10, PTS 366-374]



PaliVerse

5. The Collection of Minor Texts

20. The Questions of Milinda

1. The Chapter on the Donkey

1. The Question on the Donkey's Quality

1. "Venerable Nāgasena, as for what you say 'one factor of the donkey should be adopted', which is that one factor to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a donkey lies down wherever anywhere - on a rubbish heap, at a crossroads, at a junction, at a village gate, on a heap of chaff - and is not given to much sleeping, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, having spread out a piece of leather wherever anywhere - on a grass mat, on a leaf mat, on a wooden bed, on the ground - one should lie down wherever anywhere, and one should not be given to much sleeping. This, great king, is the one factor of the donkey to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the Blessed One, the god above gods: 'Using wooden pillows, monks, at present my disciples dwell diligent, ardent in striving.' This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Sāriputta, the General of the Teaching -

'For one sitting cross-legged, the rain falls on the knees;
Enough for comfortable abiding, for the resolute monk.'"

The Question on the Donkey's Quality is the first.

2. The Question on the Cock's Quality

2. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'five factors of the cock should be adopted.' What are those five factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a cock goes into seclusion at the proper time, even so, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, at the proper time, having swept the shrine courtyard, having set out drinking water and water for washing, having looked after the body, having bathed, having paid homage to the shrine, having gone to see the senior monks, at the proper time one should enter an empty house. This, great king, is the first factor of the cock to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, a cock rises at the proper time. Even so, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, having risen at the proper time, having swept the shrine courtyard, having set out drinking water and water for washing, having looked after the body, having paid homage to the shrine, one should enter an empty house again. This, great king, is the second factor of the cock to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, a cock, having scratched and scratched the earth, swallows food. Even so, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, having reviewed again and again, food should be swallowed: 'Not for amusement, not for intoxication, not for adornment, not for beautification, only for the presence and sustenance of this body, for the cessation of harm, for the support

of the holy life, thus: "I shall ward off the old feeling and shall not give rise to a new feeling, and there will be for me progress, blamelessness, and comfortable dwelling." This, great king, is the third factor of the cock to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the Blessed One, the god above gods -

'Like son's flesh in the wilderness, like oil for an axle;
Thus one should take food, for sustenance, without greed.'

"Furthermore, great king, a cock, though having eyes, is blind at night. Even so, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, though not blind, one should be as if blind; even in the forest, even in the village as food resort, even while walking for almsfood, regarding enticing forms, sounds, odours, flavours, tangible objects and mental phenomena, one should be as if blind, deaf, and mute; one should not grasp at signs, one should not grasp at features. This, great king, is the fourth factor of the cock to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Mahākaccāyana -

'One with eyes should be as if blind, one with ears as if deaf;
One with wisdom should be as if mute, one with strength as if weak;
Then when a matter has arisen, one should lie like one dead.'

"Furthermore, great king, a cock, even when being struck with clods, sticks, clubs and mallets, does not abandon its own home. Even so, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, even while doing robe-making work, even while doing new construction work, even while performing duties and counter-duties, even while reciting, even while making others recite, wise attention should not be abandoned; for this, great king, is the practitioner's own home, that is to say, wise attention. This, great king, is the fifth factor of the cock to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the Blessed One, the god above gods: 'And what, monks, is a monk's own resort, his own paternal domain? That is to say, the four establishments of mindfulness.' This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Sāriputta, the General of the Teaching -

'Just as a well-tamed elephant does not trample its own trunk;
It knows what is food and what is not food, the arrangement of its own livelihood.

'So too by a son of the Buddha, or by one who is diligent;
The word of the Conqueror should not be trampled, with attention as the highest excellence.'"

The Question on the Cock's Quality is the second.

3. The Question on the Squirrel's Quality

3. "Venerable Nāgasena, as for what you say 'one factor of the squirrel should be adopted', which is that one factor to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a squirrel, when an enemy attacks, having spread out its tail and made it large, wards off the enemy with that very tail-cudgel, even so, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, when the enemy of defilements attacks, having spread out the cudgel of the establishment of mindfulness and made it large,

all defilements should be warded off with that very cudgel of the establishment of mindfulness. This, great king, is the one factor of the squirrel to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Cūḷapanthaka -

'Whenever defilements attack, destroying the qualities of asceticism;
With the cudgel of the establishment of mindfulness, they should be struck
again and again.'

The Question on the Squirrel's Quality is the third.

4. The Question on the Female Panther's Quality

4. "Venerable Nāgasena, as for what you say 'one factor of the female panther should be adopted', which is that one factor to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a female panther conceives an embryo only once, and does not go to a male again and again, even so, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, having seen in the future conception, rebirth, lying in a womb, death, dissolution, destruction, ruin, the fear of wandering in the round of rebirths, unfortunate realms, unevenness, and oppression, wise attention should be made thus: 'I shall not take conception again in renewed existence.' This, great king, is the one factor of the female panther to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the Blessed One, the god above gods, in the Dhaniya the Cowherd Discourse in the Suttanipāṭa:

"'Like a bull having cut through bonds, like an elephant having torn apart a rotten creeper;
I shall not again go to lying in a womb, so if you wish, rain, O sky.'"

The Question on the Female Panther's Quality is the fourth.

5. The Question on the Panther's Quality

5. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'two factors of the panther should be adopted.' What are those two factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a panther, having hidden in a thicket of grass or a jungle thicket or a mountain thicket in the forest, catches deer, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, seclusion should be cultivated - a forest, the root of a tree, a mountain, a grotto, a mountain cave, a cemetery, a deep forest, an open space, a heap of straw - with little noise, with little disturbance, with an atmosphere of solitude, remote from people, suitable for seclusion. For cultivating seclusion, great king, one who practises meditation, one devoted to meditation, soon attains mastery of the six higher knowledges. This, great king, is the first factor of the panther to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder monks who compiled the scriptures -

"'Just as a panther, having hidden, catches deer;
Just so this son of the Buddha, engaged in exertion, gifted with introspection;
Having entered the forest, attains the highest fruit.'

"Furthermore, great king, a panther, having killed whatever beast, does not eat it if it has fallen on the left side. Just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, food produced by giving bamboo, or by giving leaves, or by giving flowers, or by giving fruit, or by giving bathing powder, or by giving clay, or by giving bath powder, or by giving wooden toothbrush, or by giving water for washing the face, or by flattery, or by bean-soup-like behaviour, or by acting as a servant, or by running errands on foot, or by medical treatment, or by acting as a messenger, or by going as an errand-runner, or by almsfood for almsfood, or by giving in return for giving, or by the science of building-sites, or by astrology, or by palmistry, or by some other wrong livelihood scorned by the Buddha, should not be eaten - like a panther with a beast fallen on the left side. This, great king, is the second factor of the panther to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Sāriputta, the General of the Teaching -

"Milk-rice with honey arisen from the diffusion of verbal intimation;
If I were to eat it, my livelihood would be blamed.

"Even if my mesentery, having come out, were to go outside;
I would never corrupt my livelihood, even while abandoning life."

The Question on the Panther's Quality is the fifth.

6. The Question on the Tortoise's Quality

6. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'five factors of the tortoise should be adopted.' What are those five factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a tortoise, a water-dweller, takes up residence in the water itself, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, compassionate for the welfare of all living beings and creatures, having pervaded the entire world with a mind accompanied by friendliness, extensive, exalted, limitless, without enmity, without ill-will, one should dwell. This, great king, is the first factor of the tortoise to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, a tortoise, floating up in the water, having raised its head, if it sees anyone, right there it dives down, plunges in deeply, thinking 'May they not see me again,' just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, when mental defilements are falling upon one, one should dive into the lake of the object, one should plunge in deeply, thinking 'May the mental defilements not see me again.' This, great king, is the second factor of the tortoise to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, a tortoise, having emerged from the water, dries its body in the sun, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, having withdrawn the mind from sitting, standing, lying down, and walking, the mind should be dried in the right striving. This, great king, is the third factor of the tortoise to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, a tortoise, having dug the earth, takes up residence in a secluded place, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, having abandoned material gain, honour and fame, having plunged into an empty, secluded forest, a deep forest, a mountain, a grotto, a mountain cave, with little noise, with little disturbance, secluded, one should take up

residence in a secluded place indeed. This, great king, is the fourth factor of the tortoise to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Upasena, the son of Vaṅganta:

'Secluded, with little noise, frequented by beasts of prey;
A monk should resort to such lodging, for the sake of seclusion.'

"Furthermore, great king, a tortoise, while wandering on a journey, if it sees anyone or hears a sound, having deposited its limbs with the snout as the fifth into its own shell, it remains inactive, silent, guarding its body, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, when forms, sounds, odours, flavours, tangible objects and mental phenomena are falling upon one everywhere, not opening the door panel of restraint at the six doors, having drawn in the mind, having made restraint, one should dwell with mindfulness and full awareness, guarding the ascetic practice. This, great king, is the fifth factor of the tortoise to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the Blessed One, the god above gods, in the excellent Connected Collection, in the Tortoise Simile Discourse:

'Like a tortoise its limbs in its own shell, a monk, drawing in mental thoughts;
Independent, not harming another, attained final Nibbāna, one should not
blame anyone.'

The Question on the Tortoise's Quality is the sixth.

7. The Question on the Bamboo's Quality

7. "Venerable Nāgasena, as for what you say 'one factor of the bamboo should be adopted', which is that one factor to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a bamboo bends in conformity wherever the wind blows, and does not run after another purpose, even so, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, having conformed to the ninefold teaching of the Teacher spoken by the Buddha, the Blessed One, standing in what is allowable and faultless, the ascetic practice alone should be sought. This, great king, is the one factor of the bamboo to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Rāhula -

'The ninefold word of the Buddha, having conformed to it always;
Standing in what is allowable and faultless, one has crossed over the realm of
misery.'

The Question on the Bamboo's Quality is the seventh.

8. The Question on the Bow's Quality

8. "Venerable Nāgasena, as for what you say 'one factor of the bow should be adopted', which is that one factor to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a bow well-planed and bent bends evenly from tip to root and does not resist, even so, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, one should bow to elders, juniors and those of middle standing equally and not be obstinate. This, great king, is the one factor of the bow to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the Blessed One, the god above gods, in the Vidhura Jātaka:

'The wise one, with belly like a bow, should tremble like a bamboo;

He should not speak contrary, he should dwell in the royal residence."

The Question on the Bow's Quality is the eighth.

9. The Question on the Crow's Quality

9. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'two factors of the crow should be adopted.' What are those two factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a crow goes about suspicious and apprehensive, careful and cautious, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, being suspicious and apprehensive, careful and cautious, one should go about with mindfulness established, with faculties restrained. This, great king, is the first factor of the crow to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, a crow, having seen whatever food, having shared it with relatives, eats it. Just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, with those gains that are righteous and righteously acquired, even as little as what is contained in the bowl, one should be one who shares without reservation with such gains, with virtuous fellows in the holy life. This, great king, is the second factor of the crow to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Sāriputta, the General of the Teaching -

'If austere ascetics offer to me whatever they have obtained,
Having shared with all, then I eat the food.'

The Question on the Crow's Quality is the ninth.

10. The Question on the Monkey's Quality

10. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'two factors of the monkey should be adopted.' What are those two factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a monkey, when taking up residence, takes up residence in such a place - a great, large tree, secluded, with branches in all directions, a shelter for the fearful - just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, one should dwell in dependence on such a good friend and teacher - one who has shame, well-behaved, moral, of good character, very learned, a bearer of the Teaching, an expert in monastic discipline, dear, worthy of respect and reverence, a speaker, patient with words, an exhorter, one clever in instruction, one who shows, an instigator, one who incites, one who gladdens. This, great king, is the first factor of the monkey to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, a monkey walks, stands, and sits only in a tree; if it falls into sleep, right there it experiences its night's residence. Just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, one should be facing the forest wilds; in the forest wilds itself, standing, walking, sitting, and lying down, one should fall into sleep; right there one should experience the establishment of mindfulness. This, great king, is the second factor of the monkey to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Sāriputta, the General of the Teaching -

"Whether walking up and down or standing, or by sitting and lying down;
A monk shines in the forest wilds, as one praised for the forest wilds' end."

The Question on the Monkey's Quality is the tenth.

The Donkey Chapter is the first.

Its summary:

The donkey and the cock, the squirrel, the female panther and the panther;
The tortoise, the bamboo and the bow, the crow and then the monkey.



ABOUT THIS TRANSLATION

This translation is part of the PaliVerse Project - the first complete, unified English translation of the Pāli Canon together with its Commentaries (Aṭṭhakathā) and Subcommentaries (Tīkā), accompanied by interactive study tools. PaliVerse is an ongoing project. The AI translations are continuously improved through experts' revisions and feedback. This text is the latest translation as of the date of download.

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