

THE PALIVERSE PROJECT

The Universe of Buddha's Wisdom

Commentaries (Aṭṭhakathā)

- 3. The Canon of Higher Teaching - Commentaries
(3. Abhidhamma Piṭaka - Aṭṭhakathā)
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PaliVerse

5. Commentary on the Points of Controversy

2. Discussion on Falling Away

1. Commentary on the Decline of Fitness of Argument

239. Now comes the discussion on decline. Subject to decline, not subject to decline - relying on discourses such as "These two things, monks, lead to the decline of a monk who is a learner," "These five things, monks, lead to the decline of a monk who is temporarily liberated," and so on, the Sammitīyas, the Vajjiputtakas, the Sabbatthivādins, and some of the Mahāsaṅghikas wish for decline even of a Worthy One. Therefore, whether they be those or yet others for whom this is the view, for the purpose of breaking their view, "Does a Worthy One fall away from arahantship?" is the question of the proponent of one's own doctrine. Therein, "falls away" - there are two kinds of decline: decline from what has been attained and decline from what has not been attained. There, "For the second time too, the Venerable Godhika fell away from that temporary liberation of mind" - this is called decline from what has been attained. "Do not let the goal of asceticism decline for you who are a hundred seeking the goal of asceticism" - this is decline from what has not been attained. Among those, here decline from what has been attained is intended. For with reference to that, "Yes" is the acknowledgment of the opponent. But in one's own doctrine, this so-called decline from what has been attained they wish only for mundane meditative attainments, not for the fruits of asceticism such as arahantship and so on. Even in the other's doctrine, they do not wish for it regarding all fruits of asceticism, in all existences, at all times, and for all persons. But that is merely their view; therefore, to break the entire net of views, the teaching was expanded again by the method beginning with "everywhere" and so on.

Therein, because the opponent does not wish for the decline of a Worthy One who, having gradually fallen away, is established in the fruition of stream-entry, but wishes it only for one established in the higher fruits. And because he does not wish it for one established in fine-material and immaterial existences, but because of the existence of things subject to decline such as taking pleasure in worldly activities and so on, he wishes it only for one established in sensual existence, therefore when asked "everywhere" he rejects. When asked again firmly, he acknowledges with reference to sensual existence. For in every sensual existence there are types of sensual pleasure that cause decline; therefore he declines there - this is his view.

In the third question, "decline" asks about things that cause decline. Therein, because decline consists of things such as taking pleasure in worldly activities and so on, or in particular sensual lust and anger alone, and these do not exist in fine-material and immaterial existence, therefore "indeed not" is the rejecting of the opponent.

"Always" is a question about time. Therein, in the first question, he rejects because there is no decline at the time of wise attention. In the second, he acknowledges because one who unwisely attends declines always, whether in the night-time or the daytime. In the third, he rejects because when there is conjunction with things that

cause decline, what is called decline exists only for a moment; before that, for one who has not declined, and afterwards, for one who has declined, there is no such thing as decline.

Regarding the questions about "all Worthy Ones," in the first he rejects with reference to those with sharp faculties. In the second, he acknowledges with reference to those with soft faculties. In the third too, only those with sharp faculties are intended. For there is no decline for all of them - this is his view.

In the millionaire illustration, the first question is of the opponent, the second is of the proponent of one's own doctrine. Therein this is the intention - That which you ask me - "A Worthy One falling away from arahantship falls away from the four fruits" - therein I ask you in return - "When a millionaire holding the position of millionaire with four hundred thousand, having lost one hundred thousand, has the millionaire fallen away from the position of millionaire?" Then, when the proponent of one's own doctrine said "Yes" with reference to decline in one part, he asks whether he has fallen away from all his wealth. Since he has not thus fallen away, the proponent of one's own doctrine, having said "indeed not," then asks him the second question about capability, in which the view has arisen that "just so a Worthy One too falls away, and yet not from the four fruits" - he asks this second question about capability. The opponent, not seeing a fixed rule regarding the millionaire's incapability, having acknowledged, when asked about the capability of a Worthy One to fall away from the four fruits, having unwisely taken the meaning of the statement "fixed in destiny, heading for the highest enlightenment," standing on his view, rejects with reference to the incapability of falling away from the fruition of stream-entry. But that is merely his view.

To this extent, the method of argumentation is finished.

2. Commentary on the Comparison and Decline of Noble Persons

240. Now the comparison of noble persons has begun. Therein, because some wish for decline even of a Worthy One, some of a non-returner also, some of a once-returner also. But for a stream-enterer, all too do not wish it at all. Those who, having fallen away from arahantship, are established in the state of non-returner or once-returner - they wish for the decline of those, not of the other non-returners and once-returners. But for a stream-enterer, even they do not wish it in every way at all; therefore the questions were made by the repetition method. Therein, the acknowledgment and the rejecting should be understood by the influence of their respective views. For in the question "a non-returner falls away from the fruition of non-returning," the rejecting is by virtue of those who do not wish for the decline of a non-returner. The acknowledgment is by virtue of those who wish for the decline of ordinary non-returners or of non-returners established after having fallen away from arahantship - this is the opening of the method here. Following that, all the repetitions should be understood in meaning.

241. But what is said here "one realises arahantship immediately after the fruition of stream-entry" - that is said with reference to the attainment of arahantship by one who has fallen away and strives again. The other rejects because of the absence of arahantship immediately after the fruition of stream-entry.

242. Beyond that, in order to question by means of such and so on as "this so-called decline would be either due to the weakness of the abandoning of mental defilements, or due to the non-exceeding of path development and so on, or due to the not seeing of the truths," beginning with "for whom have more mental defilements been abandoned" was said. All that is of obvious meaning; but the meaning of the discourses should be understood by the very method stated in the Tradition Commentaries.

262. "A temporarily liberated Worthy One falls away from arahantship" - here, one with soft faculties is temporarily liberated, one with sharp faculties is perpetually liberated - this is their view. But in one's own doctrine, the conclusion is that one who has not attained mastery but is an obtainer of meditative absorption is temporarily liberated, while one who has attained mastery and is an obtainer of meditative absorption, as well as all noble persons, are perpetually liberated in the noble deliverance. But he, having taken up that view of his own, said "the temporarily liberated one falls away, the other does not fall away." The remainder here is clear in meaning.

Commentary on the Comparison of Noble Persons and Decline.

3. Commentary on the Decline of Discourse Substantiation

265. Now there is the substantiation by discourse. Therein, "various" means high and low by the distinction of highest and inferior. "Paṭipādā" means practice. "Proclaimed by the ascetic" means illuminated by the Buddha-ascetic. For the easy practice with quick direct knowledge is high. The difficult practice with sluggish direct knowledge is low. The other two are high by one factor, and low by one. Or only the first stated is high, the other three also are low. And by that high and low practice, they do not go to the beyond twofold; the meaning is that by one path they do not go to Nibbāna twice. Why? Because the mental defilements that have been abandoned by whichever path are not to be abandoned by that again. By this he explains the absence of the nature of decline. "Nor is this sensed as once only" - and this beyond is not worthy of touching just once only. Why? Because all mental defilements are not abandoned by one path. By this he explains the absence of arahantship by one path alone.

"Is there something to be cut for one who has cut" - he asks whether there is anything to be cut again of the round of mental defilements that has been cut. The other, having rejected with reference to one with sharp faculties, when asked again, acknowledges with reference to one with soft faculties. The own-side advocate, having brought a discourse, shows the absence. Therein, "the mental flood and snare" means the mental flood of defilements and the snare of defilements.

266. "Adding to what has been done" means the further development of the path that has been developed. Here too, the rejecting and the acknowledging should be understood by the very former method.

267. "Lead to decline": in the discourse brought by the opponent, the five things lead to decline of what has not been attained and to decline of mundane attainment. But he considers it as decline from the attained fruition of arahantship. Therefore he said "there is taking pleasure in work for a Worthy One." The other too, having rejected

with reference to the perpetually liberated, acknowledges with reference to the other. Or, having rejected that which occurs by way of sensual lust, he acknowledges that which occurs otherwise. But when asked about the existence of lust and so on, he is not able to acknowledge it.

268. "Overcome by what" means the meaning is having become pursued by what, followed by, or overwhelmed. In the question about underlying tendency too, the rejecting and the acknowledging should be understood by way of one with sharp faculties and one with soft faculties only. "Good underlying tendency" - he acknowledges either by mere similarity of expression. "Lust goes to production" - he said this with reference to what is abandoned by meditative development. In what follows too, regarding hate and delusion, the same method applies. But regarding identity view and so on, because they have been abandoned through seeing, he does not wish for production. The remainder is of manifest meaning everywhere.

Substantiation by Discourse.

The Discussion on Decline is finished.



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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