

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)

2. The Chapter on the Ocean (2. Samuddavaggo)

[Mil 7.3.1-7.3.10, PTS 375-381]



PaliVerse

5. The Collection of Minor Texts

20. The Questions of Milinda

2. The Chapter on the Ocean

1. The Question on the Gourd Creeper's Quality

1. "Venerable Nāgasena, as for what you say 'one factor of the gourd creeper should be adopted', which is that one factor to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a gourd creeper, having taken hold with its tendrils of grass or wood or a creeper, grows up upon it, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, wishing to grow in arahantship, having taken hold of an object with the mind, one should grow in arahantship. This, great king, is the one factor of the gourd creeper to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Sāriputta, the General of the Teaching -

'Just as a gourd creeper, on grass or wood or a creeper;
Having taken hold with its tendrils, from there it grows upward.

'So too by a son of the Buddha, one desiring the fruition of arahantship;
Having taken hold of an object, one should grow in the fruition of one beyond training.'

The Question on the Gourd Creeper's Quality is the first.

2. The Question on the Lotus's Quality

2. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'three factors of the lotus should be adopted.' What are those three factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a lotus born in the water, grown in the water, is untainted by the water, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, one should be untainted everywhere - in family, in group, in material gain, in fame, in honour, in respect, and in requisites for use. This, great king, is the first factor of the lotus to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, a lotus, having risen above the water, stands. Just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, having overcome the whole world, having risen above, one should stand in supramundane states. This, great king, is the second factor of the lotus to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, a lotus, set in motion even by a trifling wind, trembles. Just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, self-control should be exercised even in trifling mental defilements, one should dwell seeing danger. This, great king, is the third factor of the lotus to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the Blessed One, the god above gods: 'Seeing danger in the slightest faults, having accepted the training rules, he trains in them.'

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

3. The Question on the Seed's Quality

3. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'two factors of the seed should be adopted.' What are those two factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a seed, even though small, sown in a good field, when the rain god sends down proper showers, produces very many fruits, even so, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, morality practised according to the method produces the consummate fruit of asceticism. Thus one should rightly proceed. This, great king, is the first factor of the seed to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, a seed planted in a well-purified field grows up very quickly, even so, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, the mind well-grasped, purified in an empty house, cast into the excellent field of the establishment of mindfulness, grows very quickly. This, great king, is the second factor of the seed to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Anuruddha -

"Just as in a pure field, a seed is established;
Its fruit is abundant, and it pleases the farmer.

"So too the mind of the practitioner, purified in an empty house;
In the field of the establishment of mindfulness, it grows very quickly."

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

4. The Question on the Sal Beauty's Quality

4. "Venerable Nāgasena, as for what you say 'one factor of the sal tree should be adopted', which is that one factor to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, the sal tree named sālakalyāṇikā grows within the earth itself, even a hundred cubits or more, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, the four fruits of asceticism, the four analytical knowledges, the six higher knowledges, and the entire ascetic practice should be fulfilled in an empty house itself. This, great king, is the one factor of the sal tree to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Rāhula -

"The sālakalyāṇikā by name, a tree growing in the earth;
Within the earth itself, even a hundred cubits it grows.

"Just as when the time has arrived, through ripening that tree;
Having sprung up in one day, even a hundred cubits it grows.

"Just so I, O great hero, like the sālakalyāṇikā;
Within an empty house, grew according to the Teaching."

The Question on the Sal Beauty's Quality is the fourth.

5. The Question on the Boat's Quality

5. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'three factors of the boat should be adopted.' What are those three factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a boat helps many people across through the combination of a raft made of manifold timbers, just so indeed,

great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, the world with its gods should be helped across through the combination of manifold teachings of good conduct, morality, virtue, and all kinds of duties. This, great king, is the first factor of the boat to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, a boat endures the force of manifold waves, the force of thundering, the force of spreading whirlpools, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, the force of manifold waves of mental defilements, and the force of manifold waves of faults - material gain, honour, fame, praise, veneration, homage, blame and praise among other families, happiness and suffering, respect and disrespect - should be endured. This, great king, is the second factor of the boat to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, a boat travels in the great ocean that is unlimited, infinite, without a further shore, unagitated, deep, with great sounds, teeming with groups of timi fish, timingala fish, makara fish, and other fish, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, the mind should be directed towards the penetration of the full realisation of the four truths with three rounds and twelve aspects. This, great king, is the third factor of the boat to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the Blessed One, the god above gods, in the excellent Connected Collection, in the Connected Discourses on Truth:

"But when thinking, monks, you should think "This is suffering"; you should think "This is the origin of suffering"; you should think "This is the cessation of suffering"; you should think "This is the practice leading to the cessation of suffering.""

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

6. The Question on the Anchor's Quality

6. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'two factors of the anchor should be adopted.' What are those two factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, an anchor secures and holds a boat in the great ocean whose water surface is disturbed by many waves, entangled and agitated, and does not allow it to be carried away in all directions, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, the mind should be secured in the great battle of great thoughts, in the net of waves of lust, hate and delusion, and should not be allowed to be carried away in all directions. This, great king, is the first factor of the anchor to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, an anchor does not float or sink; even in a hundred cubits of water it secures the boat and brings it to a position. Just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, in material gain, fame, honour, respect, salutation, veneration and esteem, even at the highest gain and highest fame, one should not float; the mind should be fixed only on what is sufficient for the sustenance of the body. This, great king, is the second factor of the anchor to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Sāriputta, the General of the Teaching -

'Just as an anchor in the ocean does not float or sink;
So too in material gain and honour, do not float or sink.'"

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

7. The Question on the Well's Quality

7. "Venerable Nāgasena, as for what you say 'one factor of the well should be adopted', which is that one factor to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a well holds a rope and a strap and a hook, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, one should be endowed with mindfulness and full awareness; when going forward, when returning, when looking ahead, when looking aside, when bending, when stretching, when wearing the double robe, bowl and robes, when eating, when drinking, when chewing, when tasting, when defecating and urinating, when walking, when standing, when sitting, when sleeping, when waking, when speaking, when remaining silent, one should act with full awareness. This, great king, is the one factor of the well to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the Blessed One, the god above gods: 'Monks, a monk should dwell mindful and fully aware; this is our instruction to you.'"

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

8. The Question on the Helmsman's Quality

8. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'three factors of the helmsman should be adopted.' What are those three factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a helmsman steers the boat night and day, constantly, continuously, diligent, careful and cautious, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, guiding the mind, night and day, constantly, continuously, diligent, careful and cautious, the mind should be guided by wise attention. This, great king, is the first factor of the helmsman to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the Blessed One, the god above gods, in the Dhammapada:

'Be delighted in heedfulness, guard your own mind;
Lift yourselves out of difficulty, as an elephant sunk in mud.'

"Furthermore, great king, whatever is good or evil in the great ocean, all that is known to the helmsman, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, the wholesome and unwholesome, the blameworthy and blameless, the inferior and superior, the counterpart of dark and bright should be cognised. This, great king, is the second factor of the helmsman to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, the helmsman puts a seal on the machine, saying 'Let no one touch the machine,' just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, the seal of restraint should be placed on the mind, saying 'Do not think any evil unwholesome thought.' This, great king, is the third factor of the helmsman to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the Blessed One, the god above gods, in the excellent Connected Collection: 'Do not, monks, think evil unwholesome thoughts, as follows: sensual thought, thought of anger, thought of violence.'"

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

9. The Question on the Labourer's Quality

9. "Venerable Nāgasena, as for what you say 'one factor of the labourer should be adopted', which is that one factor to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a labourer thinks thus: 'I am a hired servant, I do work on this boat, owing to this boat I receive food and wages, negligence should not be done by me, this boat should be steered by me with diligence,' just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, it should be thought thus: 'Meditating on this body made of the four primary elements, constantly, continuously, diligent, mindful, fully aware, concentrated, with fully focused mind, I shall be released from birth, ageing, illness, death, sorrow, lamentation, suffering, displeasure, and anguish - diligence should be done by me.' This, great king, is the one factor of the labourer to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Sāriputta, the General of the Teaching -

'Meditate on this body, fully understand it again and again;
Having seen the intrinsic nature in the body, you will make an end of suffering.'

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

10. The Question on the Ocean's Quality

10. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'five factors of the ocean should be adopted.' What are those five factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, the great ocean does not associate with a dead corpse, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, one should not associate with the stains of defilement - lust, hate, delusion, conceit, wrong view, contempt, insolence, envy, stinginess, deceit, fraudulence, crookedness, unrighteousness, and misconduct. This, great king, is the first factor of the ocean to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, the great ocean, holding an accumulation of various jewels - pearls, gems, lapis lazuli, conch shells, stones, coral, and crystal gems - conceals them, does not scatter them outside. Just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, having attained the various jewels of qualities - path, fruition, meditative absorption, deliverance, concentration, attainment, insight, and direct knowledge - they should be concealed, not brought outside. This, great king, is the second factor of the ocean to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, the great ocean dwells together with great primary elements. Just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, one should dwell in dependence on a good friend, a fellow in the holy life - one of few wishes, content, an advocate of austere practices, of detached conduct, accomplished in good conduct, having shame, well-behaved, worthy of respect, worthy of reverence, a speaker, patient with words, an accuser, one who censures evil, an exhorter, an adviser, one clever in instruction, one who shows, an instigator, one who incites, one who gladdens. This, great king, is the third factor of the great ocean to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, the great ocean, though filled by hundreds of thousands of rivers - the Ganges, Yamunā, Aciravatī, Sarabhū, Mahī, and others - full of fresh water, and by showers of water from the sky, does not overflow its own boundary. Just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, for the sake of material gain, honour, fame, homage, reverence, and veneration, even

for the sake of life, intentional transgression of a training rule should not be done. This, great king, is the fourth factor of the great ocean to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the Blessed One, the god above gods -

'Just as, great king, the great ocean is stable in nature and does not overflow its boundaries, just so indeed, great king, whatever training rule has been laid down by me for the great disciples, my disciples do not transgress it even for the sake of their life.'

"Furthermore, great king, the great ocean is not filled by all rivers - the Ganges, Yamunā, Aciravatī, Sarabhū, Mahī - nor by showers of water from the sky. Just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, even while hearing the excellent ninefold teaching of the Conqueror's Dispensation - synopsis, interrogation, hearing, retention, judgment, higher teaching, monastic discipline, profound discourses, analysis, setting down of terms, connection of terms, and inflection of terms - one should not be satisfied. This, great king, is the fifth factor of the great ocean to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the Blessed One, the god above gods, in the Sutasoma Jātaka -

"Just as fire burning grass and wood is not satisfied, like the ocean with rivers; Thus too the wise, O foremost king, having heard, are not satisfied with well-spoken words."

The Question on the Ocean's Quality is the tenth. The Ocean Chapter is the second.

Its summary:

The gourd creeper and the lotus, the seed and the sālakalyāṇikā;
The boat and the boat's mooring, the well and the helmsman likewise;
The labourer and the ocean, by that the chapter is called.



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 (Ṭīkā), 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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