

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)

4. The Chapter on Termite (4. Upacikāvaggo)

[Mil 7.5.1-7.5.10, PTS 393-399]



PaliVerse

5. The Collection of Minor Texts

20. The Questions of Milinda

4. The Chapter on Termite

1. The Question on the Quality of a Termite

1. "Venerable Nāgasena, as for what you say 'one factor of a termite should be adopted', which is that one factor to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a termite, having made a roof above, having covered itself, goes about for its food resort, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, having made a roof of moral restraint, having covered the mind, one should go about for almsfood. By the roof of moral restraint, great king, one who practises meditation, one devoted to meditation, becomes one who has transcended all fear. This, great king, is the one factor of a termite to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Upasena, the son of Vaṅganta:

'Having made the roof of moral restraint, the meditator, having covered the mind;
Untainted by the world, is released from fear.'

The question on the quality of a termite is the first.

2. The Question on the Quality of a Cat

2. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'two factors of a cat should be adopted.' What are those two factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a cat, whether gone to a cave, gone to a hollow, or gone inside a storied building, seeks only a rat, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, whether gone to a village, gone to a forest, gone to the root of a tree, or gone to an empty house, constantly, continuously, diligently, the food of mindfulness of the body alone should be sought. This, great king, is the first factor of a cat to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, a cat seeks food only nearby, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, one should dwell observing rise and fall in just these five aggregates of clinging: 'such is matter, such is the origin of matter, such is the passing away of matter; such is feeling, such is the origin of feeling, such is the passing away of feeling; such is perception, such is the origin of perception, such is the passing away of perception; such are activities, such is the origin of activities, such is the passing away of activities; such is consciousness, such is the origin of consciousness, such is the passing away of consciousness.' This, great king, is the second factor of a cat to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the Blessed One, the god above gods -

'One should not be far from here, what will the highest existence do;
In the present conventional expression, find it in one's own body.'

The question on the quality of a cat is the second.

3. The Question on the Quality of a Rat

3. "Venerable Nāgasena, as for what you say 'one factor of a rat should be adopted', which is that one factor to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a rat going about here and there goes about seeking food, even so, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, going about here and there, one should be one who seeks wise attention. This, great king, is the one factor of a rat to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Upasena, the son of Vaṅganta:

"Having made the Teaching his aim, dwelling, gifted with introspection;
He dwells unattached, at peace, always mindful."

The question on the quality of a rat is the third.

4. The Question on the Quality of a Scorpion

4. "Venerable Nāgasena, as for what you say 'one factor of a scorpion should be adopted', which is that one factor to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a scorpion, having a tail as its weapon, goes about with its tail raised, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, one should have knowledge as one's weapon, one should dwell with knowledge raised. This, great king, is the one factor of a scorpion to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Upasena, the son of Vaṅganta:

"Having taken the sword of knowledge, dwelling, gifted with introspection;
He is released from all fear, and he would be difficult to overcome."

The question on the quality of a scorpion is the fourth.

5. The Question on the Quality of a Mongoose

5. "Venerable Nāgasena, as for what you say 'one factor of a mongoose should be adopted', which is that one factor to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a mongoose approaching a snake, having saturated its body with medicine, approaches the snake to seize it, even so, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, approaching the world that is abundant in wrath and resentment, overcome by dispute, strife, contention and opposition, the mind should be anointed with the medicine of friendliness. This, great king, is the one factor of a mongoose to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Sāriputta, the General of the Teaching -

'Therefore for oneself and for others too, the development of friendliness
should be practised;
One should pervade with a mind of friendliness - this is the instruction of the
Buddhas.'

The question on the quality of a mongoose is the fifth.

6. The Question on the Quality of an Old Jackal

6. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'two factors of an old jackal should be adopted.' What are those two factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, an old jackal, having obtained food, without disgust, takes as much as he likes, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, having obtained food, without disgust, only enough for the sustenance of the body should be consumed. This, great king, is the first factor of the old jackal to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Mahākassapa -

"Having descended from my lodging, I entered the village for almsfood;
A man who was a leper eating, I attended on him attentively.

"He, with his decaying hand, offered me a morsel;
As he was putting in the morsel, his finger fell off therein.

"Depending on the wall's base, I ate that morsel;
Whether eating or having eaten, no loathing is found in me.'

"Furthermore, great king, an old jackal, having obtained food, does not discriminate whether it is coarse or superior, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, having obtained food, one should not discriminate 'whether it is coarse or superior or good or not good,' one should be content with whatever is obtained. This, great king, is the second factor of the old jackal to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Upasena, the son of Vaṅganta:

"One should be content even with coarse food, one should not wish for abundant flavours;
For one greedy for flavours, the mind does not delight in meditative absorption;
Content with whatever, one fulfils asceticism.'"

The question on the quality of an old jackal is the sixth.

7. The Question on the Quality of a Deer

7. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'three factors of a deer should be adopted.' What are those three factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a deer roams in the forest by day, in the open air at night, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, one should dwell in the forest by day, in the open air at night. This, great king, is the first factor of the deer to be adopted.

"This too was spoken, great king, by the Blessed One, the god above gods, in the Discourse on Hair-raising -

'I, Sāriputta, on those nights that are cold, wintry, during the eight days between the months, at the time of snowfall, on such nights I dwelt at night in the open air, by day in the jungle thicket. In the last month of summer I dwelt by day in the open air, at night in the jungle thicket.'

"Furthermore, great king, a deer, when a spear or an arrow is falling upon it, deceives and flees, it does not bring its body near; just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, when mental defilements are

falling upon one, one should deceive and flee, one should not bring the mind near. This, great king, is the second factor of the deer to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, a deer, having seen humans, flees to one place or another, thinking 'May they not see me'; just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, having seen those given to quarrel, dispute, strife and contention, the immoral, the lazy, those delighting in company, one should flee to one place or another, thinking 'May they not see me, and may I not see them.' This, great king, is the third factor of the deer to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Sāriputta, the General of the Teaching -

"May there never be near me one of evil desires, lazy, lacking in energy;
Of little learning, of inappropriate conduct, authorized anywhere."

The question on the quality of a deer is the seventh.

8. The Question on the Quality of an Ox

8. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'four factors of a bull should be adopted.' What are those four factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a bull does not abandon its own home, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, one's own body should not be abandoned, thinking 'this body is subject to impermanence, rubbing, massaging, breaking up, scattering, and destruction.' This, great king, is the first factor of the bull to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, a bull, having taken up the yoke, bears the burden through happiness and suffering, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, having taken up the holy life, through happiness and suffering, until the exhaustion of life, the holy life limited with the end of life should be lived. This, great king, is the second factor of the bull to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, a bull, being drawn by desire, drinks drinking water, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, the instruction of teachers and preceptors should be accepted, being drawn by desire, affection, and confidence. This, great king, is the third factor of the bull to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, a bull, being driven by whoever, bears the burden, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, the exhortation and instruction of elder, newly ordained, and middle monks, and also of a lay follower householder, should be accepted with the head. This, great king, is the fourth factor of the bull to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Sāriputta, the General of the Teaching -

"Being one gone forth that very day, seven years old by birth;
Even he should instruct me, I accept it on the top of my head.

"Having seen strong desire and affection in him, I would attend on him;
I would place him in the position of teacher, attentively, again and again."

The question on the quality of an ox is the eighth.

9. The Question on the Quality of a Boar

9. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'two factors of a boar should be adopted.' What are those two factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a boar, when the hot, scorching summer season has arrived, approaches water, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, when the mind is agitated, stumbling, confused and heated by hate, the cool, deathless, sublime meditation on friendliness should be approached. This, great king, is the first factor of a boar to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, a boar, having approached muddy water, having dug the earth with his snout, having made a trough, lies down in the trough, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, having placed the body in the mind, one should lie down having gone into the midst of the object. This, great king, is the second factor of a boar to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Piṇḍolabhāradvāja -

"Having seen the intrinsic nature in the body, having investigated, one gifted with introspection;

Alone, without a companion, lies down in the midst of the object."

The question on the quality of a boar is the ninth.

10. The Question on the Quality of an Elephant

10. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'five factors of the elephant should be adopted.' What are those five factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, an elephant, while walking, splits the earth, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, thoroughly examining the body, all mental defilements should be split. This, great king, is the first factor of the elephant to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, an elephant looks around with its whole body, looks only straight ahead, does not look about in all directions, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, one should be one who looks around with the whole body, one should not look about in all directions, one should not look up above, one should not look down below, one should be one who looks only a yoke's length ahead. This, great king, is the second factor of the elephant to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, an elephant, having no fixed sleeping place, having gone for its food resort, does not approach that very place for the purpose of dwelling, it has no permanent established abode, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, one should be one with no fixed sleeping place, one should go for almsfood without attachment, if one gifted with introspection sees a delightful, suitable pavilion or tree-root or cave or cliff in a pleasant place, one should approach that very place for dwelling, a permanent established abode should not be made. This, great king, is the third factor of the elephant to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, an elephant, having plunged into water, having plunged into a great lotus pond filled with pure, spotless, cool water, covered with white water lilies, blue lotuses, red lotuses and white lotuses, plays the sport of a noble elephant,

just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, having plunged into the great pond of the establishment of mindfulness, filled with the excellent water of the pure, spotless, clear, undisturbed Teaching, covered with the flowers of liberation, activities should be shaken off and removed by knowledge, the sport of one devoted to meditation should be played. This, great king, is the fourth factor of the elephant to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, an elephant lifts its foot mindfully, puts down its foot mindfully, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, the foot should be lifted with mindfulness and full awareness, the foot should be put down with mindfulness and full awareness, in going forward and returning, in bending and stretching, everywhere one should be with mindfulness and full awareness. This, great king, is the fifth factor of the elephant to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the Blessed One, the god above gods, in the excellent Connected Collection:

'Restraint by body is good, good is restraint by speech;
Restraint by mind is good, good is restraint everywhere;
One who has shame, restrained everywhere, is called protected.'

The question on the quality of an elephant is the tenth. The Termite Chapter is the fourth.

Its summary:

Termite and cat, rat and scorpion;
Mongoose, jackal, deer,
Bull, boar, with elephant makes ten.



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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