

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)

7. The Chapter on the Pot (7. Kumbhavaggo)

[Mil 7.8.1-7.8.7, PTS 415-419]



PaliVerse

5. The Collection of Minor Texts

20. The Questions of Milinda

7. The Chapter on the Pot

1. The Question on the Quality of the Water-pot

1. "Venerable Nāgasena, as for what you say 'one factor of a water-pot should be adopted', which is that one factor to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a water-pot that is full does not make noise, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, having attained perfection in scripture, in achievement, in learning, in asceticism, no noise should be made, conceit should not be made by that, wisdom should not be displayed, one should be with conceit destroyed, with wisdom destroyed, upright, not garrulous, not boastful. This, great king, is the one factor of a water-pot to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the Blessed One, the god above gods, in the Suttanipāta:

"What is deficient makes noise, what is full is peaceful indeed;
The fool is like a half-filled pot, the wise person is like a full lake."

The Question on the Quality of the Water-pot is the first.

2. The Question on the Quality of Iron

2. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'two factors of iron should be adopted.' What are those two factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, iron when well saturated vomits, just so indeed, great king, the mind of one who practises meditation, of one devoted to meditation, not saturated with wise attention, vomits. This, great king, is the first factor of iron to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, iron does not vomit water once drunk, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, whatever confidence has once arisen, that should not again be vomited - 'Eminent is that Blessed One, the Perfectly Enlightened One, well proclaimed is the Teaching, the Community is practicing well.' 'Materiality is impermanent, feeling is impermanent, perception is impermanent, activities are impermanent, consciousness is impermanent' - whatever knowledge has once arisen, that should not again be vomited. This, great king, is the second factor of iron to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the Blessed One, the god above gods -

'A man purified in vision, fixed in destiny in the noble teaching, attaining distinction;
He does not tremble in many ways, and in every respect he is just at the forefront.'"

The Question on the Quality of Iron is the second.

3. The Question on the Quality of the Umbrella

3. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'three factors of an umbrella should be adopted.' What are those three factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, an umbrella moves above the head, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, one should be one who moves above the head of mental defilements. This, great king, is the first factor of the umbrella to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, an umbrella is a support for the head, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, one should be supported by wise attention. This, great king, is the second factor of the umbrella to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, an umbrella wards off wind, heat and rain from clouds, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, the rain of defilements from the wind of views and the torment of the threefold fire of the various views of the many ascetics and brahmins should be warded off. This, great king, is the third factor of the umbrella to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Sāriputta, the General of the Teaching -

"Just as an umbrella, extensive, without holes, firmly constructed;
Wards off wind and heat, and great rain from clouds.

"So too a son of the Buddha, bearing the umbrella of morality, pure;
Wards off the rain of defilements, and the torment of the threefold fire."

The Question on the Quality of the Umbrella is the third.

4. The Question on the Quality of the Field

4. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'three factors of a field should be adopted.' What are those three factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, a field is accomplished with channels, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, one should be accomplished with the channels of good conduct in duties and counter-duties. This, great king, is the first factor of a field to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, a field is accomplished with boundaries, and by that boundary, having protected the water, it ripens the grain; just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, one should be accomplished with the boundary of morality and shame, and by that boundary of morality and shame, having protected asceticism, the four fruits of asceticism should be attained. This, great king, is the second factor of a field to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, a field is accomplished with industriousness, productive of joy for the farmer; even a little seed sown becomes much, much sown becomes more; just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, one should be accomplished with industriousness, giving extensive fruit, one should be productive of joy for donors, so that a little given becomes much, much given becomes more. This, great king, is the third factor of a field to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Upāli, the expert in monastic discipline -

"One should be like a field, industrious, giving extensively;

This is called the excellent field, which gives extensive fruit."

The Question on the Quality of the Field is the fourth.

5. The Question on the Quality of Medicine

5. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'two factors of medicine should be adopted.' What are those two factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, worms do not remain in medicine, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, mental defilements should not be allowed to remain in the mind. This, great king, is the first factor of medicine to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, medicine wards off all poison whether bitten, touched, seen, eaten, drunk, chewed, or tasted, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, all the poison of lust, hate, delusion, conceit, and wrong view should be warded off. This, great king, is the second factor of medicine to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the Blessed One, the god above gods -

'By one who practises meditation wishing to see the intrinsic nature of activities,
One should be like medicine, for the elimination of the poison of mental defilements.'"

The Question on the Quality of Medicine is the fifth.

6. The Question on the Quality of Food

6. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'three factors of food should be adopted.' What are those three factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, food is the support for all beings, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, one should be a support for the path for all beings. This, great king, is the first factor of food to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, food increases the strength of all beings, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, one should grow by the growth of merit. This, great king, is the second factor of food to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, food is longed for by all beings, just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, one should be longed for by the whole world. This, great king, is the third factor of food to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the Elder Mahāmoggallāna -

'By self-control, by procedure, by morality, by practice;
One who practises meditation should be wished for by the whole world.'"

The Question on the Quality of Food is the sixth.

7. The Question on the Quality of the Archer

7. "Venerable Nāgasena, you say 'four factors of an archer should be adopted.' What are those four factors to be adopted?" "Just as, great king, an archer, when shooting an arrow, plants both feet firmly on the ground, makes the knees without deficiency, places the quiver at the hip joint, makes the body stiff, raises both hands to a fixed position, clenches the fist, keeps the fingers continuous, raises the neck, closes the eyes and mouth, makes the aim straight, produces joy thinking 'I will shoot,' just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, the feet of energy should be established on the ground of morality, patience and meekness should be made without deficiency, the mind should be placed in restraint, oneself should be brought to self-control and discipline, desire and infatuation should be crushed, the mind should be made continuous in wise attention, energy should be exerted, the six doors should be closed, mindfulness should be established, joy should be produced thinking 'I will pierce all mental defilements with the iron bar of knowledge.' This, great king, is the first factor of the archer to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, an archer keeps a straightening block for straightening a crooked, bent, curved arrow. Just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, the straightening block of the establishment of mindfulness should be kept in this body for straightening the crooked, bent, curved mind. This, great king, is the second factor of the archer to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, an archer practises on a target; just so indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, this body should be practised upon. How, great king, should one who practises meditation, one devoted to meditation, practise upon this body? It should be practised upon as impermanent, it should be practised upon as suffering, it should be practised upon as non-self, as a disease, etc. as a boil, etc. as a dart... etc. as misery, etc. as an affliction, etc. as alien, etc. as disintegrating, etc. as a calamity, etc. as a danger, etc. as peril, etc. as an obstacle, etc. as unstable, etc. as perishable, etc. as not lasting, etc. as without shelter, etc. as without refuge, etc. as without protection, etc. as empty, etc. as hollow, etc. as void, etc. as dangerous... etc. as subject to change, etc. as without substance, etc. as the root of misery, etc. as murderous, etc. as non-existence, etc. as with mental corruptions, etc. as conditioned, etc. as Māra's bait, etc. as subject to birth, etc. as subject to ageing, etc. as subject to illness, etc. as subject to death, etc. as subject to sorrow, etc. as subject to lamentation, etc. as subject to anguish, etc. as subject to defilement, etc. Thus indeed, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, this body should be practised upon. This, great king, is the third factor of the archer to be adopted.

"Furthermore, great king, an archer practises morning and evening. Just so, great king, by one who practises meditation, by one devoted to meditation, the object should be attended to morning and evening. This, great king, is the fourth factor of the archer to be adopted. This too was spoken, great king, by the elder Sāriputta, the General of the Teaching -

"Just as an archer, morning and evening, practises;
Not abandoning practice, he obtains food and wages.

"So too a son of the Buddha practises body-contemplation;

Not abandoning body-contemplation, he attains arahantship."

The Question on the Quality of the Archer is the seventh.

The Water-pot Chapter is the seventh.

Its summary:

The water-pot and iron, the umbrella and the field and the medicine;
With food and the archer, now spoken by the wise.

The Questions on the Discussion of Similes is concluded.

Conclusion

Thus in the six chapters adorned with twenty-two sections, two hundred and sixty-two questions of Milinda that have come in this book are complete, and those that have not come are forty-two; combining all those that have come and those that have not come, there are three hundred and four questions; all of them go by the term 'Questions of Milinda'.

At the conclusion of the questioning and answering between the king and the elder, this great earth, eighty-four hundred thousand yojanas thick with water as its boundary, trembled in six ways, lightning flashed forth, deities rained down a shower of divine flowers, the Great Brahmā gave applause, there was a great roar like the sound of thunder in the belly of the great ocean; thus that King Milinda and the company of the harem, having extended joined palms with their heads, paid homage.

King Milinda, with an exceedingly delighted heart, with a heart of well-subdued conceit, perceiving the essence in the Buddha's teaching, without doubt in the Triple Gem, free from thickets, free from obstinacy, having become exceedingly devoted, confident, free from attachment, with the pillar of conceit destroyed, like a king of serpents with fangs removed, regarding the elder's virtues, the going forth, the practice and deportments, said thus: "Excellent, Venerable Nāgasena, the question within the Buddha's domain has been answered by you; in this Buddha's teaching, setting aside the General of the Dhamma, the Elder Sāriputta, there is no other equal to you in answering questions. Forgive me, Venerable Nāgasena, for my transgression. May the Venerable Nāgasena remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forth for life."

Then the king, together with his army, having attended upon the Elder Nāgasena, having had a monastery named Milinda built and having handed it over to the elder, tended to Nāgasena together with a hundred million monks with the four requisites; again having become confident in the elder's wisdom, having handed over the kingdom to his son, having gone forth from home into homelessness, having developed insight, he attained arahantship. Therefore it was said -

"Wisdom is praised in the world, made for the duration of the Good Teaching;
Having destroyed doubt by wisdom, the wise attain peace.

In whatever aggregate wisdom is established, mindfulness there is not lacking;

The basis for the veneration of distinction, the foremost, the best, the unsurpassed;
Therefore a wise man, seeing his own welfare;
Should venerate the wise one, respectfully, like a shrine."

In Laṅkā, in the city of Doṇi, by one dwelling there named Doṇi;
Written by the Great Elder, well-established as it was heard;
The questions of King Milinda, and the answers of Nāgasena;
Milinda indeed was of great wisdom, Nāgasena was very wise;
By this meritorious action, from here I go to Tusita;
May I see Metteyya when he comes, may I hear the highest Teaching.

The Questions of Milinda is concluded.



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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