Mil 3.1.15 — 15. Distinguishing Characteristic of Wisdom Question

English translation by John Kelly.
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Text

Milinda’s Questions

Great Chapter

15. Distinguishing Characteristic of Wisdom Question

The king asked: “Venerable Nāgasena, what is the distinguishing characteristic of wisdom?” “Previously, your majesty, I said that severing is a distinguishing characteristic of wisdom, and also illuminating is a distinguishing characteristic of wisdom.” “How, venerable sir, is illuminating a distinguishing characteristic of wisdom.” “Wisdom arising, your majesty, dispels the darkness of ignorance, generates the radiance of true knowledge, displays the light of understanding, and makes evident the noble truths. Then, a spiritual practitioner sees with right wisdom what is ‘impermanent’, ‘suffering’, or ‘not self’.”

“Please give me an analogy.” “Just as, your majesty, a person might bring a lamp into a dark house, and this lamp brought in dispels the darkness, generates radiance, displays light, and makes evident forms. In the same way, your majesty, wisdom arising dispels the darkness of ignorance, generates the radiance of true knowledge, displays the light of understanding, and makes evident the noble truths. Then, a spiritual practitioner sees with right wisdom what is ‘impermanent’, ‘suffering’, or ‘not self’. Thus, your majesty, is illuminating a distinguishing characteristic of wisdom.”

“You are clever, Venerable Nāgasena!”

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