Mil 3.4.5 — 5. Question on the Reason for Effort

English translation by John Kelly.
Source: https://suttacentral.net/mil3.4.5/en/kelly
Source revision: da23a8afdd1be12267ecf4a0ff94af5187093702
License: CC0-1.0 — https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/

Text

Milinda’s Questions

Nibbāna Chapter

5. Question on the Reason for Effort

The king said: “Venerable Nāgasena, you told me that, so that this suffering would cease and another suffering would not arise, that was the goal of your going forth. Is it just because of previous effort? Should not one make an effort at the current time?” The elder said: “Effort at the current time is not so useful, effort made previously is useful.”

“Please give me an analogy.” “What do you think, your majesty, when you become thirsty, would you then have a well or a dam dug and say ‘I will drink water’?” “Certainly not, venerable sir.” “In the same way, effort at the current time is not so useful, effort made previously is useful.”

“Give me another analogy.” “What do you think, your majesty, when you become hungry, would you then have a field ploughed, plant rice, and have the grain brought in, and say ‘I will eat rice’?” “Certainly not, venerable sir.” “In the same way, effort at the current time is not so useful, effort made previously is useful.”

“Give me another analogy.” “What do you think, your majesty, when you are faced with a battle, would you then have a moat dug, a rampart, a gateway, and a watchtower constructed, and then train in the use of elephants, horses, chariots, bows and swords?” “Certainly not, venerable sir.” “In the same way, effort at the current time is not so useful, effort made previously is useful. And this too was said, your majesty, by the Blessed One:

‘One should do formerly

what one knows is for one’s benefit;

Not having thoughts like a wagon driver,

one is steadfast in wisdom.

As a wagon driver who has abandoned

the well-prepared, even, high road,

Climbing on the uneven path,

just broods with his axle broken,

Straying from the Dhamma thus,

and following what isn't Dhamma,

The lazy one coming face-to-face with death,

just broods with his axle broken.'"

"You are clever, Venerable Nāgasena!"

Question on the Reason for Effort fifth