Mil 3.7.3 — 3. Question on Striving for the Abandonment of Suffering

English translation by John Kelly.
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Text

Milinda’s Questions

Analysis of Formless Dhammas Chapter

3. Question on Striving for the Abandonment of Suffering

The king asked: “Venerable Nāgasena, are you striving for the abandonment of past suffering?” “Certainly not, your majesty.” “Then, venerable sir, are you striving for the abandonment of future suffering?” “Certainly not, your majesty.” “Then, venerable sir, are you striving for the abandonment of present suffering?” “Certainly not, your majesty.” “If you are not striving for the abandonment of past suffering, nor for the abandonment of future suffering, nor for the abandonment of present suffering, then what are you striving for?” The elder said, “Your majesty, I am striving so that this suffering would cease and that no other suffering would arise.”

“Is there now, Venerable Nāgasena, future suffering for you?” “There is not, your majesty.” “Indeed, Venerable Nāgasena, you are very wise that you strive for abandoning future suffering that is not existing.” “Are there, your majesty, any opposing kings, that are adversaries, that have risen up against you?” “Yes, venerable sir, there are.” “Is it then, your majesty, that you had a moat dug, a rampart put up, and a gateway and watchtower constructed?” “Certainly not, venerable sir, these were prepared previously.” “Is it then, your majesty, that you would train in elephant warfare, in horse warfare, in chariot warfare, in archery, and in swordsmanship?” “Certainly not, venerable sir, I had trained in these previously.” “For what reason?” “In order to prevent future perils, venerable sir.” “Is there a future peril now, your majesty?” “There is not, venerable sir.” “Indeed, your majesty, you are very wise that you would prepare for the prevention of a future peril that is not existing.”

“Give me another analogy.” “What do you think, your majesty, when you might become thirsty is it then that you would have a well, a pond, or a reservoir dug, thinking, ‘I will drink water’?” “Certainly not, venerable sir, this has been arranged for previously.” “For what reason?” “It has been arranged, venerable sir, in order to prevent future thirst.” “Is there a future thirst now, your majesty?” “There is not, venerable sir.” “Indeed, your majesty, you are very wise that you would prepare for the prevention of a future thirst that is not existing.”

“Give me another analogy.” “What do you think, your majesty, when you might become hungry is it then that you would have a field ploughed, and rice sowed, thinking, ‘I will eat

food’?” “Certainly not, venerable sir, this has been arranged for previously.” “For what reason?” “In order, venerable sir, to prevent future hunger.” “Is there a future hunger now, your majesty?” “There is not, venerable sir.” “Indeed, your majesty, you are very wise that you would prepare for the prevention of a future hunger that is not existing.”

“You are clever, Venerable Nāgasena!”

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