Mil 3.7.7 — 7. Question on the Increase or Decrease of Merit and Demerit

English translation by John Kelly.
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Text

Milinda’s Questions

Analysis of Formless Dhammas Chapter

7. Question on the Increase or Decrease of Merit and Demerit

The king said, “Venerable Nāgasena, which of the two is greater, merit or demerit?” “Merit is greater, your majesty, demerit is small.” “For what reason?” “For one doing demerit, your majesty, there is the regret, ‘I have committed an evil deed’, and therefore demerit does not increase. But for one doing merit, your majesty, there is no regret; and for one without regret gladness arises; for one who is glad joy arises; for one with a joyous mind the body calms down; one with a calmed body experiences happiness; the mind of one who is happy becomes concentrated; and one who is concentrated knows things as they really are. For this reason, merit increases. Even if a man with his hands and feet cut off gives just a handful of lotuses to the Blessed One, he will not go to a hell realm for ninety-one aeons. For this reason, your majesty, merit is greater and demerit is small.”

“You are clever, Venerable Nāgasena!”

Question on the Increase or Decrease of Merit and Demerit seventh