Mil 5.1.8 — 8. Question on Cutting Off Unwholesome States

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Text

Milinda’s Questions

Questions on Dilemmas

Supernatural Powers Chapter

8. Question on Cutting Off Unwholesome States

“Venerable Nāgasena, did the Tathāgata attain omniscience after burning up all unwholesome states, or did he attain omniscience while some unwholesome states remained?” “Your majesty, the Blessed One attained omniscience after burning up all unwholesome states. No unwholesome state remained in the Blessed One.”

“But, venerable sir, did painful feeling ever arise in the Tathāgata’s body?” “Yes, your majesty. At Rājagaha the Blessed One’s foot was pierced by a splinter, and an illness involving bloody discharge (dysentery) arose. When his body was congested, Jīvaka administered a purgative. When a wind ailment arose, the elder who was his attendant (Ānanda) sought out hot water.”

“Venerable Nāgasena, if the Tathāgata attained omniscience after burning up all unwholesome states, then the statement that the Blessed One’s foot was pierced by a splinter and that he suffered an illness with bloody discharge is false. But if the Tathāgata’s foot were pierced by a splinter and he suffered an illness with bloody discharge, then the statement that the Tathāgata attained omniscience after burning up all unwholesome states is also false. Venerable sir, there is no experiencing of feeling without kamma; all feeling is rooted in kamma, and one feels it by way of kamma alone. This double-horned dilemma has now come to you, and it must be resolved by you.”

“Certainly not, your majesty; not all feeling is rooted in kamma. Feelings arise from eight causes, and by these causes many beings experience feeling. From which eight? Some feelings that arise here, your majesty, originate from wind; some, your majesty, from bile; … some, your majesty, from phlegm; … some, your majesty, from the combination of the three; … some, your majesty, from the change of seasons; … some, your majesty, from careless conduct; … some, your majesty, from external assault; … and some, your majesty, arise from the result of kamma. By these eight causes many beings experience feeling. Among these, those people who say ‘kamma afflicts beings’ are denying the other causes that exist for beings. Their statement is false.” “Venerable Nāgasena, whatever is caused by wind, bile, phlegm, the combination of the three, the change of seasons, uneven conduct,

or external assault: all of these originate from kamma alone. All of them come to be by way of kamma."

"Your majesty, if all those ailments originated from kamma alone, they would not have distinct characteristics by category. Wind, your majesty, is aggravated in ten ways: by cold, by heat, by hunger, by thirst, by overeating, by standing, by exertion, by violent motion, by assault, and by the result of kamma. Of these, the nine kinds do not arise in the past or the future, but in the present existence. Therefore it should not be said that 'all feeling originates from kamma.' Bile, your majesty, is aggravated in three ways: by cold, by heat, and by unsuitable food. Phlegm, your majesty, is aggravated in three ways: by cold, by heat, and by food and drink. And the wind, the bile, and the phlegm, having been aggravated by their respective disturbances and having become mixed, bring on their own particular feeling. Feeling born of the change of seasons arises through the change of seasons. Feeling born of uneven conduct arises through uneven conduct. As for feeling from external assault, your majesty, there is that which is mere action and there is that which is the result of kamma. Feeling born of the result of kamma arises through kamma done in the past. Thus, your majesty, what is born of the result of kamma is small, and what remains is far greater. In this matter fools overreach, saying, 'It is all the result of kamma.' That kamma cannot be determined without the knowledge of a Buddha.

As for the splinter that pierced the Blessed One's foot, your majesty, that feeling was not born of wind, nor of bile, nor of phlegm, nor of their combination, nor of the change of seasons, nor of uneven conduct, nor of the result of kamma. It was from external assault alone. For Devadatta, your majesty, bore a grudge against the Tathāgata for many hundreds of thousands of births. Out of that grudge he took up a great, heavy rock and let it go, thinking, 'I will drop it on his head.' Then two other rocks came and caught that rock before it reached the Tathāgata. By the force of the impact a splinter broke off, fell on the Blessed One's foot, and drew blood. This feeling of the Blessed One, your majesty, was produced either from the result of kamma or from mere action; beyond these there is no other feeling.

Just as, your majesty, a seed fails to grow because either the field or the seed is faulty, in the same way this feeling of the Blessed One was produced either from the result of kamma or from mere action; beyond these there is no other feeling.

Or again, your majesty, just as food is digested badly because either the stomach or the food is faulty, so too this feeling of the Blessed One was produced either from the result of kamma or from mere action; beyond these there is no other feeling. Moreover, your majesty, the Blessed One has no feeling born of the result of kamma, and none born of uneven conduct. The Blessed One's feeling arises from the remaining causes, and by such feeling it is not possible to deprive the Blessed One of life.

Pleasant and unpleasant, agreeable and disagreeable feelings, your majesty, fall upon this body made of the four great elements. Suppose, your majesty, a clod thrown into the air falls on the great earth. Does that clod fall on the great earth because of something done in the past?" "Certainly not, venerable sir. There is no cause in the great earth by which the great earth would experience the result of wholesome or unwholesome deeds. The clod falls on the great earth by a present cause, one not rooted in kamma." "Just as the great

earth, your majesty, so should the Tathāgata be regarded. As the clod falls on the great earth without anything done in the past, in the same way, your majesty, that splinter fell on the Tathāgata's foot without anything done in the past.

Again, your majesty, people break up and dig the great earth. Do those people break up and dig the great earth because of something done in the past?" "Certainly not, venerable sir." "In the same way, your majesty, the splinter that fell on the Blessed One's foot did not fall because of something done in the past. And the illness with bloody discharge that arose in the Blessed One did not arise because of the past either. It arose from the combination of the humours alone. Whatever bodily ailments arose in the Blessed One, your majesty, were not produced by kamma. They were produced from one or another of these six causes.

And this too was said, your majesty, by the Blessed One, the god above the gods, in the Moḷiyasīvaka explanation, in the excellent collection of the Saṃyutta Nikāya:

'Some feelings that arise here, Sīvaka, originate from bile. This is something to be known by oneself, Sīvaka, that some feelings arise originating from bile. It is also accepted as true in the world, Sīvaka, that some feelings arise originating from bile. Now, Sīvaka, those ascetics and brahmins who hold this doctrine and view, "Whatever this person experiences, whether pleasant, painful, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, all of that is caused by past action," overreach what they know by themselves, and they overreach what is accepted as true in the world. Therefore I say that these ascetics and brahmins are wrong.

Some feelings that arise here, Sīvaka, originate from phlegm; … some, Sīvaka, originate from wind; … some, Sīvaka, from the combination of the three ; … some, Sīvaka, from the change of seasons; … some, Sīvaka, from uneven conduct; … some, Sīvaka, from external assault; … and some feelings that arise here, Sīvaka, are born of the result of kamma. This is something to be known by oneself, Sīvaka, that some feelings arise born of the result of kamma. It is also accepted as true in the world, Sīvaka, that some feelings arise born of the result of kamma. Now, Sīvaka, those ascetics and brahmins who hold this doctrine and view, "Whatever this person experiences, whether pleasant, painful, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, all of that is caused by past action," overreach what they know by themselves, and they overreach what is accepted as true in the world. Therefore I say that these ascetics and brahmins are wrong.'

So too, your majesty, not all feeling is born of the result of kamma. Hold this firmly: the Blessed One attained omniscience after burning up all unwholesome states." "Very good, Venerable Nāgasena. I accept it as you say."

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