Snp 5.3 — Sn 5:3 Puṇṇaka’s Questions

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

5:3 Puṇṇaka’s Questions

To the one unperturbed,

who has seen the roots,1

I have come with a question.

Because of what

have many human seers

—noble warriors, brahmans—

offered sacrifices to devas

here in the world?2

I ask you, Blessed One.

Please tell me.

The Buddha:

Those many human seers

—noble warriors, brahmans—

who have offered sacrifices to devas

here in the world, Puṇṇaka,

hoping for more of this state of being,

offered their sacrifices

because of aging.

Puṇṇaka:

These many human seers

—noble warriors, brahmans—

who have offered sacrifices to devas

here in the world:

Have they, Blessed One,

heeding the path of sacrifice, dear sir,

crossed over birth & aging?

I ask you, Blessed One.

Please tell me.

The Buddha:

They hoped for, liked,

longed for,

so they sacrificed—

they longed for sensuality,

dependent on gain.

I tell you:

Those who take on the yoke

of sacrifice,

impassioned with

the passion for becoming,

have not crossed over birth & aging.3

Puṇṇaka:

If those who take on the yoke of sacrifice

haven't crossed over birth & aging,

then who in the world, dear sir,

of beings divine & human

has crossed over birth & aging?

I ask you, Blessed One.

Please tell me.

The Buddha:

He who has fathomed

the high & low in the world,

for whom there is nothing

perturbing in the world—

evaporated,4 undesiring,

untroubled, at peace—

he, I tell you, has crossed over birth

& aging.5

vv. 1043–1048

Notes

1. Nd II cites three main ways in which the Buddha has seen the roots:

a) He has seen that greed, aversion, and delusion are the roots of what is unskillful, and that lack of greed, lack of aversion, and lack of delusion are the roots of what is skillful. Nd II anchors this point with a reference to AN 6:39, although its quote from that sutta contains two phrases not present in the sutta. Where AN 6:39 reads, "It's through action born of non-greed, action born of non-aversion, action born of non-delusion that devas are discerned, that human beings are discerned, or any other good destinations," Nd II

reads, "It's through action born of non-greed, action born of non-aversion, action born of non-delusion that devas are discerned, that human beings are discerned, or any other good destinations for the production of a self-state [attabhāva] in a deva or a human being." Where AN 6:39 reads, "It's through action born of greed, action born of aversion, action born of delusion that hell is discerned, that the animal womb is discerned, that the realm of hungry ghosts is discerned, or any other bad destinations," Nd II reads "It's through action born of greed, action born of aversion, action born of delusion that hell is discerned, that the animal womb is discerned, that the realm of hungry ghosts is discerned, or any other bad destinations for the production of a self-state in hell, in the animal womb, or in the realm of hungry ghosts." If we assume that the extra phrases were originally not present in AN 6:39, the question arises as to why they were added in Nd II. One possible reason is that the compilers of Nd II may have been bothered by AN 6:39's suggestion that its list of good and bad destinations was not complete—e.g., that there could be other good destinations aside from the realms of devas and human beings—so they tried to close off that possibility.

b) The Buddha has seen further that all unskillful qualities are rooted in ignorance (here Nd II quotes a passage from SN 20:1: "All qualities that are unskillful, that have a share in what's unskillful, that side with what's unskillful, are rooted in ignorance and converge in ignorance. From the uprooting of ignorance, they are all uprooted"). The Buddha has also seen that all skillful qualities are rooted in heedfulness (here Nd II quotes a passage found in SN 45:79–80, SN 45:82, and SN 46:31: "All qualities that are skillful, that have a share in what's skillful, that side with what's skillful, are rooted in heedfulness, converge in heedfulness, and heedfulness is foremost among them").

c) The Buddha has also seen that ignorance is the root of all the factors of dependent co-arising.

For another sense in which the Buddha has seen the root, see MN 1.

2. See Sn 3:4 for another answer to a very similar question.

3. On the issue of rebirth in the suttas, see The Truth of Rebirth.

4. According to Nd II, this means that one's bodily, verbal, and mental misconduct have evaporated away, along with all one's defilements.

5. AN 3:32 and AN 4:41 contain discussions of the last verse in this poem.

In AN 3:32, Ven. Ānanda asks the Buddha, "Could it be that a monk could attain a concentration of such a sort such that, with regard to this conscious body, he would have no 'I'-making or 'mine'-making or obsession with conceit, such that with regard to all external themes [topics of concentration] he would have no 'I'-making or 'mine'-making or obsession with conceit, and that he would enter & remain in the awareness-release & discernment-release in which there is no 'I'-making or 'mine'-making or obsession with conceit?"

The Buddha answers that it is possible, and that such a concentration can be attained when one is percipient in this way: “This is peace, this is exquisite—the pacification of all fabrications; the relinquishing of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; unbinding.” He then adds that it was in connection to this state of mind that he uttered the last verse in this poem.

In AN 4:41, the Buddha identifies four ways of developing concentration: “There is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to a pleasant abiding in the here-&-now. There is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to the attainment of knowledge & vision. There is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to mindfulness & alertness. There is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to the ending of the effluents.” The Buddha then adds that he uttered the last verse of this poem in connection with these four ways of developing concentration.

Although the verse does not mention concentration explicitly, the use of the phrase, “nothing perturbing” is apparently a reference to the states of concentration called imperturbable. See MN 102, note 2, and MN 106, note 1.