

Was there a Buddha?

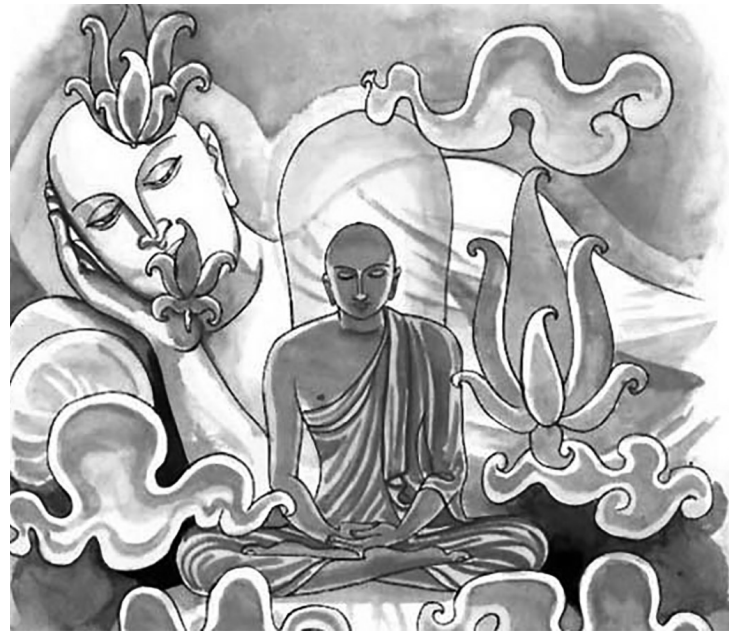
— Discussion of the *Nagasena Bhikshu Sutra* (continued)

有佛嗎？

— 那先比丘經研討（續）

A Dharma Talk Given by Bhikshuni Heng Yuan in the Online Lecture Series at Gold Buddha Monastery, Vancouver, BC, Canada on July 8, 2022

比丘尼恒圓法師講於2022年7月8日加拿大溫哥華金佛寺網絡講座系列



Milanda asked Venerable Nagasena again, “Does the Buddha have thirty-two hallmarks and eighty characteristics, and does he have golden halo and light all over his body?”

Venerable Nagasena said, “The Buddha does have thirty-two hallmarks and eighty characteristics. And his whole body is covered with a golden halo.”

Milinda said, “Do the Buddha’s parents also have thirty-two hallmarks and eighty characteristics, and golden halos around their bodies?”

Venerable Nagasena said, “The Buddha’s parents do not have these wonderful signs.”

The king said, “Children look like their parents. If his parents did not have these signs, the Buddha did not have these signs.”

He continued to explain by asking, “Has the king ever seen a lotus flower?”

The king said, “I have seen a lotus flower.”

Venerable Nagasena said, “Lotus flowers grow in muddy water. The color of its blossoms is very bright and beautiful, but shouldn’t it be the color of muddy water since it was born from muddy water?”

The king said, “It is not like muddy water.”

彌蘭陀王又問那先比丘。「佛真的有三十二相，八十種隨形好嗎？他的身上真的充滿金光嗎？」

那先說：「是的，佛陀確實有三十二相，八十種隨形好。身上真的充滿金光。」

王說：「那佛的父母也有三十二相，八十種隨形好。身上都充滿金色光？」

那先回答：「沒有。」

王說：「如果父母沒有這個相好；那佛也肯定沒有。」王接著又說：「小孩都像他的父母的。父母沒有這個相，那佛肯定也沒有。」

那先反問：「大王可曾見過蓮花嗎？」

王說：「見過啊。」

那先說：「蓮花從淤泥生長

Venerable Nagasena said, “Although the Buddha’s parents did not have the above-mentioned wonderful features, the Buddha does have these wonderful features. Although the Buddha was born in the world, he is not like the things of the world. This is the result of his practice and realization for many kalpas, and it cannot be measured with the common sense of the world.”

Milinda said, “Good indeed! Good indeed!”

Even though King Milinda said here that the Buddha shouldn’t have these hallmarks because he should look like his parents who do not have these features, we actually know that there are some similarities. For example, one of the Buddha’s cousins, the Venerable Ananda had thirty of the thirty-two hallmarks. If he had so many similar characteristics like the Buddha, we could assume that more of the Buddha’s family members also had similar looks.

However, the Buddha had a perfect appearance. The Venerable Master said that this is due to his cultivation of blessings and wisdom for three asamkhyeya kalpas and planting the causes for his hallmarks during a hundred great eons.

An example would be how the Buddha in a past life gave up his life for others through acts of giving while practicing the bodhisattva path. Once, the Buddha was born as a Brahmin in a wealthy family. But he chose to renounce that life to cultivate in the forest. One day, he passed by a ravine and saw a mother tiger roar out of hunger below. She was so hungry that she was even considering eating her own cubs. Food was scarce, so the Buddha threw himself off the cliff of the ravine, sacrificing himself so that the mother tiger could eat him and spare her cubs.

It wasn’t in just this one life, but the Buddha willingly gave up his life many times in order to help others. It is through eons of practice that he perfected his wisdom and conduct.

So now King Milinda had his questions, “Was there a Buddha?” and “What did the Buddha look like?” answered.

Milinda asked Venerable Nagasena again, “Can the Buddha know all things of the past, present, and future?”

Venerable Nagasena replied, “Yes, the Buddha knows all these things.”

The king asked, “If the Buddha knew all these things, why didn’t he focus on teaching all of these things to his disciples at

出來。朵朵蓮花可像淤泥的水色嗎？」

大王說：「一點都不像。」

比丘說：「同理可證。雖然佛的父母沒有這個相好。但是佛確實有種種相好。佛生於世間長於世間。卻不像世間事物。這都是他累劫修來的，不能以世俗常理來衡量。」

大王聽了，不禁讚嘆說：「善哉善哉。」

儘管彌蘭陀王在這裡說佛陀不應該有這些相好，因為他應該看起來像他的父母，而他父母沒有這些相好，但我們實際上知道是有一些相似之處的。例如，佛陀的表弟，阿難尊者就有三十二相中的三十相。如果他和佛陀有那麼多相似的相好，我們可以假設更多的佛陀的家人也有類似的相好。

而且，佛陀有完美的相好。師父上人說過，這是因為佛「三祇修福慧，百劫種相好。」

有一個例子是佛陀在過去生如何在修菩薩道時為他人布施生命。有一生，佛陀出生在一個富裕的婆羅門家庭。但他卻捨棄榮華富貴的生活，去森林中修行。一天，他路過一條溝壑，看見下面一隻母老虎餓得吼叫起來。她太餓了，甚至考慮吃自己的幼崽。因為食物匱乏，佛陀就從懸崖上跳下，犧牲了自己，以便母虎可以吃掉他並放過她的幼崽。不只是這一生，佛陀為了幫助他人，多次甘願捨命。正是通過多劫的修行，他才能夠覺行圓滿。

所以現在彌蘭陀王的「有佛嗎？」和「佛長什麼樣子？」的問題都得到了回答。

大王又問那先比丘說：「佛真的知過去、識現在、明未來嗎？」

尊者回答：「是的。天下事佛悉知悉見。」

王說：「假設佛悉知悉見所有諸事。那他為甚麼不一次全部教給他的

once? Why teach them slowly?”

Venerable Nagasena asked the king, “Do you have a doctor in your country?”

The king said, “There are many doctors.”

Venerable Nagasena, “Can these doctors know all kinds of medicines in the world?”

Milinda said, “They can know all kinds of medicines in the world.”

Then Venerable Nagasena asked, “When these doctors treat people, do they give all the medicine to the patient at one time? Or do they administer it slowly?”

Milinda said, “When you are not sick, you can’t premedicate. The medicine is dispensed only when the disease is diagnosed.”

Venerable Nagasena said, “Similarly, even if the Buddha knows the past, the present, and the future, he does not teach everything at one time. He will teach the scriptures and precepts slowly according to each being’s capability in order for them to practice.”

Milinda said, “Good indeed! Well said!”

When the Venerable Master gave talks on the Dharma door of Guanyin, he said it is the most wonderful foremost practice. When he introduced the Earth Store Dharma door, he said it is the most wonderful foremost practice. When he lectured on methods of meditation, he said it is the most wonderful foremost practice.

So one of his disciples asked, “Shifu, you told us that the Dharma door of Guanyin is the best, but then you also told us that the Earth Store Dharma door and meditation and all other Dharma doors are the best. How can they all be the best? Which one is the best? Which one is number one?”

Venerable Master replied, “There are 84,000 Dharma doors and 84,000 number ones. Whichever one works for you, is number one. Just like there are many medicines for different illnesses. If you have a headache, taking medicine for the stomach will not work. It’s good medicine, but not the right medicine.”

Once when the Venerable Master was lecturing on the *Shurangama Sutra*, a scholar came over to ask him, “How do you know for sure that the Buddha spoke this text?” Because the texts were compiled so long ago and through the Buddha’s disciples, where is the proof that Shyacamuni Buddha spoke them?

弟子呢？為甚麼一次教一點；一點一點地教呢？」

於是那先反問大王：「貴國是否有醫師？」

大王說：「當然有很多醫師。」

那先說：「那醫師是不是知道天下所有的藥呢？」

大王很自信的回答：「那當然啦。」

比丘接著問：「那醫師治病是一次全部的藥都給；還是慢慢給啊？」

大王說：「當然沒病不可給藥；對症才能下藥。」

那先比丘說：「佛陀也是如此，他雖然知過去，識現在，明未來。但也不可以一次全教授給天下人。應當循序漸進針對他們的根器教授經戒，使令弟子們奉行才是。」

王說：「善哉善哉。」

當師父上人講觀音法門的時候，他說觀音法門是最妙的修行。他在介紹地藏法門時，他說再沒有比地藏法門更妙的修行了。可當他講授禪修的方法時，他說禪修是最妙的，最第一的。

於是一個弟子問道：「師父，您說觀音法門最好，但後來你又告訴我們，地藏法門和禪定等一切法門是最好的。怎麼可能都是最好的？只有一個最好，一個第一。哪一個是最好的？哪一個是第一？」

上人回答：「八萬四千法門，八萬四千個第一。哪一種對你有用，那就是第一。就像針對不同疾病，給不同的藥物一樣。如果你頭痛，吃胃藥是行不通的。雖然那是良藥，但不是正確的藥。」

上人曾經在講《楞嚴經》的時候，有個學者來問他：「你怎麼知道佛說過這部經？」因為這些經文是由佛弟子很久之前結集的，有什麼證據可以證明釋迦牟尼佛說了這些經呢？

上人回答：「我不知道。」

The Venerable Master replied, “I do not know.”

The scholar looked satisfied. But as he turned to sit down, the Venerable Master said, “But I know that whoever spoke these principles was a Buddha.” It is precisely because the principles in the sutras are so profound that only a greatly enlightened being such as buddha could have spoken them.

The Prajna Sutra states: There are four ways of answering questions: straightforwardly, analytically (defining or redefining the terms), answers with a counter question, and questions that should be put aside. The answers that we looked at today in this section of *the Milinda Pañha* uses the counter questions.

The answers in the dialogues in *The Milinda Pañha* were given as a counter question. King Milinda liked this method. Although King Milinda was satisfied with the answers he received from Venerable Nagasena, these same answers may not be as fitting for every situation and for every person. However we can learn from such dialogues and react to our own situations with our own wisdom.

Another example of a wise teacher who used the counter question method, was the Sixth Patriarch. He instructed: “Should someone suddenly ask you about a dharma, answer him with its opposite. If you always answer with the opposite, both will be eliminated and nothing will be left, since each depends on the other for existence.” Just as he was able to answer Master’s Shen-Shiu’s verse of “*The body is a Bodhi tree, The mind is like a bright mirror stand. Time and again brush it clean, And let no dust alight.*” With opposing verses, “*Originally Bodhi has no tree, The bright mirror has no stand. Originally there is not a single thing; Where can dust alight?*” If Master Shen-Shiu hadn’t made his verse, the Sixth Patriarch would not have countered with his verse.

Being able to answer questions appropriately according to each situation is an accumulation of wisdom and proper knowledge and views. The Venerable Master always said to make the principles in the sutras part of our lives; do not cultivate for so long and have the sutras still be just black words on white paper. We should practice those principles. In all kinds of knowledge, we should try to make them applicable to other things; we can investigate and understand the principles in the sutras and then take what we learned and apply them in our everyday lives.

☞ To be continued

學者看起來很滿意。但當他轉身坐下時，上人說：「但我知道能夠講這些道理的人是佛。」正因為經中的道理太深奧了，只有佛這樣的大覺者才能說出來這樣的道理。

《般若經》說：有四種回答問題的方法：定答、分別義答、反問答、置答。我們今天在《彌蘭陀問經》的這一部分中看到的回答是使用了反問答。

《那先比丘經》對話中的答案是專門針對喜歡被反問的彌蘭陀王的。儘管彌蘭陀王對他從那先尊者那裡得到的答覆感到滿意。這些相同的答案可能並不適合每種情況和每個人。然而，我們可以從這樣的對話中學習，並用我們自己的智慧對自己的情況做出反應。

六祖教導我們，忽然有人來請問你佛法，你就用對待法，來回答他。例如：來和去，是相因相循的，沒有來，也就沒有去；沒有去，就沒有來。來，就是去的因；去，就是來的果。既是來去相因，就來去二法盡除；沒有來，沒有去，再沒有可去之處了。例如，神秀大師所說的偈頌是：「身為菩提樹，心如明鏡台。時時勤拂拭，勿使惹塵埃。」六祖回答的偈頌是：「菩提本無樹，明鏡亦非臺。本來無一物，何處惹塵埃。」如果神秀大師沒有作這個偈頌，六祖就不會用他的偈頌來反問了。

能夠根據每個情況適當地回答問題，正是智慧和正知正見的積累。上人常說要把佛經中的道理融入我們的生活；不要修行那麼久，經書還只是白紙上的黑字。我們應該實踐這些道理。盡量把各種知識活學活用。我們可以研究和理解經典中的道理，然後將我們所學的道理應用到日常生活中。

☞待續