

(SUMMERY)

FOLKLORE IN MILINDAPAÑHO

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It is a matter of surprise that the very deep and serious discussion in ancient philosophical literature has been established in a very easy way. After a deep insight and a wider observation of the old Sanskrit, Prākṛit and Pāli literature, we can say that it has a great potential of knowledge and this knowledge is mentioned in a very interesting manner. We find this style of writing in Upaniṣads- Satyam vada Dharmam cara etc. Actually Ācāryas' insight has been remained only on subject matter or knowledge and not to show off their scholarship. They used to take examples direct from their surroundings and extract teachings to reveal what they follow. They opined that the profound knowledge alone has no meaning if it is not practical and deep rooted in folk wisdom. Ācāryas consider the folk wisdom (LOKAPAÑÑĀ) as a pramāṇa (logic).

King Milinda asks questions and reverend Nāgasena answers all the questions by counter questioning and that is the unique dialectical method of this text. Nāgasena take examples from the folk wisdom. King Milinda is also very quick eyed. He asks Nāgasena- Bhante, Who is Nāgasena? Are your eyes, nose, hair, nails, skin, veins, blood Nāgasena or sanjā, sanskāra and vijñāna Nāgasena? Nāgasena answers him in such a manner that king forced to praise his knowledge. Nāgasena has deep insight of folk sense and Milinda becomes fond of Nāgasena. Milinda requests him to explain it with more examples.

There is another beauty of Milindapañho text and that is the importance of everything. For example donkey is a symbol of folly and ignorance and monkey is of naughtiness, but Nāgasena says that we must learn from donkey and monkey too. As donkey lies in dust, but remains very alert. An ascetic (bhikṣu) must also sleep on earth with attentive attitude. We should not bother about the filthy surroundings. Peacock, tortoise crow cat, rat, deer, elephant, pigeon, owl etc. teach us and we should be alert enough to learn from them. Our life must flow like air which carries fragrance from one place to another. Similarly we should take only good qualities of all beings and forget about the bad surroundings to ensure that no one should feel fear. Nāgasena praises paññā (wisdom) all time. We must respect all be ready to learn from everyone. This is the message of Milindapañho.