

## Study and Discussion Questions for *Early Buddhist Discourses*

### Chapter Eleven: Discourse to Prince Abhaya (*Abhayarājakumāra Sutta*)

#### *Study Questions*

- 1) What was the question that Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta suggested to Prince Abhaya to ask the Buddha? Why was this question supposed to pose a problem for the Buddha?
- 2) What was the Buddha's reply to Prince Abhaya's question? Why did Prince Abhaya respond: "The Jains have already lost."?
- 3) Explain the analogy between the assistance Prince Abhaya would give a choking child and the statements the Buddha would utter. What attitude motivates the Buddha to teach?
- 4) Create a table that indicates the types of statements the Buddha does not utter and those he utters at the proper time. Use these three categories: (1) true/accurate or false inaccurate; (2) beneficial or unbeneficial; (3) welcome/agreeable/ pleasant or not-welcome/disagreeable/unpleasant.
- 5) Given the table in the previous question, what do the cases where the Buddha would utter a certain statement have in common?
- 6) Which two permutations of the three categories are missing?
- 7) Does the Buddha claim to have answers to questions ready-at-hand or not? Why or why not?

#### *Discussions Questions*

- 1) Why did Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta send Prince Abhaya with a question to trick the Buddha?
- 2) In what way was Prince Abhaya's question a logical trap? (Note: the logical form of Prince Abhaya's question appears to be a "constructive dilemma." Students trained in formal logic may want to try to symbolize Prince Abhaya's question to facilitate its analysis.)
- 3) Did the Buddha's response avoid the logical trap of Prince Abhaya's question?
- 4) Why does the Buddha utter statements that are true and beneficial (whether agreeable or disagreeable), but not those that are true and unbeneficial? Can a statement be true, yet "unbeneficial?" Does the possibility of a true, and unbeneficial statement imply a rejection of the utilitarian conception of truth?
- 5) Are the Buddha's statements aimed at defining truth or merely indicative of what the Buddha will *teach*?
- 6) Why did the Buddha leave out two possibilities (among the eight possible permutations of statements), namely, a statement that is false, beneficial and agreeable and a statement that is false, unbeneficial and disagreeable? What does this imply about the Buddha's conception of truth?