

THE PALIVERSE PROJECT

The Universe of Buddha's Wisdom

The Triple Canon (Tipiṭaka)

The Canon of Discourses (Sutta Piṭaka)

5. The Collection of Minor Texts (5. Khuddaka Nikāya)

20. The Questions of Milinda (20. Milindapañhapāḷi)

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PaliVerse

5. The Collection of Minor Texts

20. The Questions of Milinda

Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One

In the Minor Collection

The Questions of Milinda

1. Milinda was the name of that king, in Sāgala, the best of cities;
He approached Nāgasena, as the Ganges approaches the ocean.

Having approached the king, the variegated speaker, the torch-bearer, the
dispeller of darkness;

He asked subtle questions, many concerning the possible and impossible.

Questions and answers, dependent on profound meaning;
Going to the heart, pleasant to the ear, marvellous, causing hair to stand on
end.

Plunged into the Abhidhamma and Vinaya, complete with the net of
discourses;

The variegated talk of Nāgasena, with similes and methods.

Having directed knowledge there, having gladdened the mind;
Listen to the subtle questions, which split apart the grounds for uncertainty.

2. This is as it has been heard -There is a city of the Greeks named Sāgala, a trading
centre of various goods, adorned by rivers and mountains, with a delightful region of
land, endowed with parks, pleasure groves, forests, lakes and lotus ponds, charming
with rivers, mountains and forests, built by the learned, with enemies destroyed,
unoppressed by adversaries, with various variegated strong watchtowers and porches,
with excellent and noble gateways and arched entrances, with an inner palace
surrounded by deep moats and white walls. With well-arranged streets, courtyards,
crossroads and junctions, with well-displayed shops filled with various kinds of
excellent goods, adorned with hundreds of various alms-halls, decorated with
hundreds of thousands of excellent mansions resembling the peaks of snow-capped
mountains, crowded with elephants, horses, chariots and infantry, frequented by
groups of handsome men and women, teeming with people and humans, with many
warriors, brahmins, merchants and workers, joined together with various assemblies
of ascetics and brahmins, long frequented by men of many kinds of knowledge,
endowed with shops of various kinds of cloth such as Kāsi cloth and Koṭumbara cloth
and so on, with well-displayed shops of beautiful flowers and perfumes of many kinds,
fragrant with scents, filled with many desirable jewels, with shops well-displayed
facing all directions, frequented by groups of traders in ornaments, full of coins,

silver, gold, bronze and stone slabs, a dwelling place of shining treasures, with abundant wealth, grain, riches and provisions, with full treasuries and storehouses, with abundant food and drink, with many kinds of hard food, soft food, food to be licked, food to be drunk and food to be tasted, resembling Uttarakuru, with successful crops, like Ālakamandā, the city of the gods.

Standing here, their former action should be told, and in telling it should be told having divided it sixfold. As follows - The Former Connection, the Questions of Milinda, the Questions on Characteristics, the Dilemma Questions, the Questions on Inference, and the Questions on Simile Discussions.

Therein, the Questions of Milinda are twofold: the Questions on Characteristics and the Questions on Cutting off Doubt. The Dilemma Questions are also twofold: the Great Chapter and the Questions on Yogic Discussions.

"Former Connection" means their former action.

1. The Secular Narrative

The Former Connection and so on

3. In the past, it is said, when the Dispensation of the Blessed One Kassapa was existing, a great community of monks was dwelling in a single residence near the Ganges. There, monks accomplished in duty and morality, having risen right early, having taken stick-brooms, reflecting on the virtues of the Buddha, having swept the courtyard, would make a rubbish cul-de-sac. Then one monk said to a novice: "Come, novice, throw away this rubbish." He went as if not hearing. For the second time also, etc. For the third time also, being addressed, he went just as if not hearing. Then that monk, angry, thinking "This novice is indeed difficult to admonish," gave a blow with the broom-stick. Then he, weeping, out of fear, while throwing away the rubbish, made the first aspiration: "By this meritorious action of throwing away rubbish, until I attain Nibbāna, in whatever place I am reborn, may I be influential and of great radiance like the midday sun." Having thrown away the rubbish, having gone to the Ganges landing place for the purpose of bathing, having seen the force of the waves of the Ganges roaring, he made the second aspiration: "Until I attain Nibbāna, in whatever place I am reborn, may I have spontaneous discernment like this force of waves, inexhaustible discernment."

That monk too, having placed the broom in the broom-shed, while going to the Ganges landing place for the purpose of bathing, having heard the novice's aspiration, having thought: "Even this one who was urged by me aspires thus; why would it not succeed for me?" made the aspiration: "Until I attain Nibbāna, in whatever place I am reborn, may I have inexhaustible discernment like this force of the Ganges waves; by this may I be able to unravel and explain all discernment in answering whatever questions are asked."

Both of them, wandering in the round of rebirths among gods and human beings, spent one interval between Buddhas. Then by our Blessed One also, just as the Elder Moggaliputtatissa is seen, so these too are seen: "After five hundred years have passed from my final Nibbāna, these will arise. The Teaching and discipline that was taught by me in a subtle way, these will analyse, having made it disentangled and cleared of thickets, by means of questioning, similes, and logical reasoning" - thus

they were pointed out.

4. Among them, the novice was a king named Milinda in the city of Sāgala in the Indian subcontinent, wise, experienced, intelligent, competent in the functions of the arrangements of spells and meditation regarding the past, future, and present, acting considerably at the time of action, and many treatises had been learnt by him. As follows: the Vedas, convention, arithmetic, meditation, law, the Vaiśeṣika, courtesans, the gandhabbas, medical treatment, archery, the ancient texts, history, astrology, magic, banners, consultation, warfare, prosody - with the word of the Buddha, nineteen; a sophist, difficult to approach, difficult to overcome, he is declared the foremost among the various founders of sects; in the whole Indian subcontinent there was no one equal to King Milinda, that is to say, in strength, in speed, in valour, in wisdom; wealthy, of great riches, of great possessions, with infinite forces and vehicles.

5. Then one day King Milinda, wishing to see the massing of the army with infinite forces and vehicles, the fourfold army with troops in array, having gone out from the city, having inspected the army factors outside the city and having reminded them, that king - a debater in useless talk, skilled in worldly knowledge and sophistry, floating in conversation with people, with curiosity of mind, confident, stretching himself - having looked at the sun, addressed his ministers: "My good men, there is still much of the day remaining, what shall we do? Having entered the city just now, is there any wise person, whether ascetic or brahmin, one who has a following, one who has a group, a teacher of a group, even one claiming to be a Worthy One, a Perfectly Enlightened One, who is able to converse with me, to remove uncertainty? Having approached him, we shall ask questions, we shall remove uncertainty."

When this was said, five hundred Greeks said this to King Milinda: "There are, great king, six teachers: Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, Sañjaya Belaṭṭhaputta, Ajita Kesakambala, Pakudha Kaccāyana. They have followings, they have groups, they are teachers of groups, well-known, famous, founders of sects, highly honoured by many people. Go, great king, ask them questions, remove uncertainty."

6. Then King Milinda, surrounded by five hundred Greeks, having mounted an auspicious vehicle, an excellent chariot, approached Pūraṇa Kassapa; having approached, he exchanged friendly greetings with Pūraṇa Kassapa, and having concluded the pleasant and memorable talk, he sat down to one side. Seated to one side, King Milinda said this to Pūraṇa Kassapa: "Who, Venerable Kassapa, protects the world?" "The earth, great king, protects the world." "If, Venerable Kassapa, the earth protects the world, then why do beings going to the Avīci hell go having passed beyond the earth?" When this was said, Pūraṇa Kassapa was indeed not able to swallow it down, nor was he able to spit it out; he sat with face cast down, with drooping shoulders, silent, brooding.

7. Then King Milinda said this to Makkhali Gosāla: "Are there, Venerable Gosāla, wholesome and unwholesome actions, is there result and consequence of well-done and wrongly-done actions?" "There is not, great king, wholesome and unwholesome actions, there is not result and consequence of well-done and wrongly-done actions. Those, great king, who are warriors in this world, having gone to the world beyond,

they will again become just warriors; those who are brahmins, merchants, workers, outcasts, refuse-removers, having gone to the world beyond, they will again become just brahmins, merchants, workers, outcasts, refuse-removers. What is the use of wholesome and unwholesome actions?" "If, Venerable Gosāla, warriors, brahmins, merchants, workers, outcasts, refuse-removers in this world, having gone to the world beyond, will again become just warriors, brahmins, merchants, workers, outcasts, refuse-removers, there is nothing to be done by wholesome and unwholesome actions. Well then, Venerable Gosāla, those who have had their hands cut off in this world, having gone to the world beyond, will again become just ones with cut off hands. Those who have had their feet cut off will become just ones with cut off feet. Those who have had their hands and feet cut off will become just ones with cut off hands and feet. Those who have had their ears cut off will become just ones with cut off ears. Those who have had their noses cut off will become just ones with cut off noses. Those who have had their ears and noses cut off will become just ones with cut off ears and noses." When this was said, Gosāla remained silent.

Then this occurred to King Milinda: "Hollow indeed, friends, is the Indian subcontinent, chaff indeed, friends, is the Indian subcontinent, there is not any ascetic or brahmin who is able to converse with me, to remove uncertainty."

Then King Milinda addressed his ministers: "How delightful indeed, friends, is this moonlit night, what ascetic or brahmin might we approach today to ask questions, who is able to converse with me, to remove uncertainty?" When this was said, the ministers, remaining silent, stood looking at the king's face.

Now at that time the city of Sāgala had been empty of ascetics, brahmins, householders and wise persons for twelve years; wherever he heard that ascetics, brahmins, householders and wise persons were dwelling, having gone there, the king asked them questions; all of them, being unable to please the king by answering questions, departed to one place or another. Those who did not depart to another direction, all of them remained silent. But the monks mostly went to the Himalayas.

8. Now at that time a hundred million Worthy Ones were dwelling on a protected plateau on the Himalaya mountain. Then the Venerable Assagutta, having heard the word of King Milinda with the divine ear element, having convoked the community of monks at the summit of Yugandhara, asked the monks: "Is there, friends, any monk competent to converse with King Milinda, to remove uncertainty?"

When this was said, the hundred million Worthy Ones remained silent. Asked a second time and a third time, they remained silent. Then the Venerable Assagutta said this to the community of monks: "There is, friends, in the realm of the Thirty-three, to the east of Vejayanta, a mansion named Ketumatī; there dwells a young god named Mahāsenā; he is competent to converse with that King Milinda, to remove uncertainty."

Then the hundred million Worthy Ones, having vanished from the Yugandhara mountain, appeared in the realm of the Thirty-three. Sakka, the lord of the gods, saw those monks coming from afar; having seen them, he approached the Venerable Assagutta; having approached, having paid respect to the Venerable Assagutta, he stood to one side. Standing to one side, Sakka, the lord of the gods, said this to the Venerable Assagutta: "A great community of monks, venerable sir, has arrived. I am a

monastery attendant for the Community; what is needed, what should be done by me?"

Then the Venerable Assagutta said this to Sakka, the lord of the gods: "There is, great king, in the Indian subcontinent, in the city of Sāgala, a king named Milinda, a sophist, difficult to approach, difficult to overcome, declared the foremost among the various founders of sects; he, having approached the community of monks, having asked questions by way of views and doctrines, harasses the community of monks."

Then Sakka, the lord of the gods, said this to the Venerable Assagutta: "This King Milinda, venerable sir, having passed away from here, was reborn among human beings. There is, venerable sir, in the Ketumatī mansion, a young god named Mahāsenā dwelling; he is competent to converse with that King Milinda, to remove uncertainty. We shall request that young god for rebirth in the human world."

Then Sakka, the lord of the gods, having put the community of monks in front, having entered the Ketumatī mansion, having embraced the young god Mahāsenā, said this: "The community of monks requests you, dear sir, for rebirth in the human world." "I have no need, venerable sir, for the human world with its abundance of action; the human world is harsh. Right here, venerable sir, in the heavenly world, having become one who is reborn in successively higher realms, I shall attain final Nibbāna." For the second time, etc. For the third time also, requested by Sakka, the lord of the gods, the young god Mahāsenā said thus: "I have no need, venerable sir, for the human world with its abundance of action; the human world is harsh. Right here, venerable sir, in the heavenly world, having become one who is reborn in successively higher realms, I shall attain final Nibbāna."

Then the Venerable Assagutta said this to the young god Mahāsenā: "Here, dear sir, surveying the world with its gods, apart from you, we do not see anyone else competent to break the argument of King Milinda and to uphold the Dispensation. The community of monks requests you, dear sir; good person, having arisen in the human world, please uphold the Dispensation of the Ten-Powered One." When this was said, the young god Mahāsenā, thinking "I indeed shall be competent to break the argument of King Milinda and to uphold the Buddha's Dispensation," having become joyful and delighted, elated and exultant, gave the acknowledgment: "Very well, venerable sir, I shall arise in the human world."

9. Then those monks, having finished that duty in the heavenly world among the gods of the Thirty-three, vanished and appeared on the protected plateau on the Himalaya mountain.

Then the Venerable Assagutta said this to the community of monks: "Is there, friends, any monk in this community of monks who has not come to the assembly?" When this was said, a certain monk said this to the Venerable Assagutta: "There is, venerable sir, the Venerable Rohaṇa who, seven days ago, having entered the Himalaya mountain, has attained cessation; send a messenger to his presence." The Venerable Rohaṇa also, at that very moment, having emerged from cessation, thinking "The Community is waiting for me," vanished from the Himalaya mountain and appeared on the protected plateau before the hundred million Worthy Ones.

Then the Venerable Assagutta said this to the Venerable Rohaṇa: "Why indeed, friend Rohaṇa, when the Buddha's Dispensation is being split, do you not see the duties of the Community?" "There was inattention on my part, venerable sir."

"Well then, friend Rohaṇa, perform a punishment." "What, venerable sir, should I do?" "There is, friend Rohaṇa, on the slope of the Himalaya mountain, a brahmin village named Gajāṅgala; there dwells a brahmin named Soṇuttara; a son will be born to him, a boy named Nāgasena. Therefore you, friend Rohaṇa, for seven years and ten months, having entered that family for almsfood, having brought out the boy Nāgasena, give him the going forth; when he has gone forth, you will be released from that punishment." The Venerable Rohaṇa also received it saying "Good!"

10. The young god Mahāsenā also, having fallen away from the heavenly world, took conception in the womb of the wife of the brahmin Soṇuttara; together with the taking of conception, three wonderful and marvellous phenomena appeared: weapons blazed forth, the finest crops were produced, a great shower rained down. The Venerable Rohaṇa also, from the time of that taking of conception, for seven years and ten months, entering that family for almsfood, did not obtain even for one day a ladleful of food or a measure of rice gruel or paying respect or salutation with joined palms or doing the proper duties; rather he received only reviling and abuse; there was not even anyone to say "Please pass by, venerable sir"; but after the elapse of seven years and ten months, one day he obtained just the words "Please pass by, venerable sir." On that very day, the brahmin also, coming from his work outside, having seen the elder on the opposite path, said: "What, my dear one gone forth, did you go to our house?" "Yes, brahmin, we went." "Did you obtain anything?" "Yes, brahmin, we obtained." He, displeased, having gone home, asked: "Did you give anything to that one gone forth?" "We gave nothing." The brahmin, on the second day, sat right at the house door, thinking: "Today I shall refute the one gone forth by means of lying." The elder, on the second day, arrived at the brahmin's house door.

The brahmin, having seen the elder, said thus: "You, yesterday, not having obtained anything at our house, said 'we obtained'; is lying proper for you?" The elder said: "We, brahmin, at your house, for seven years and ten months, not having obtained even the mere words 'please pass by', yesterday we obtained the mere words 'please pass by'; therefore, with reference to this verbal acknowledgement, we spoke thus."

The brahmin thought: "These, having obtained even just a verbal acknowledgement, praise saying 'we obtained' in the midst of people; having obtained some other solid food or soft food, why would they not praise?" Having become confident, he had a ladleful of almsfood given from the food prepared for his own use, and curry suitable for it, and said: "You will obtain this almsfood at all times."

He, from the next day onwards, having seen the peace of the elder who was approaching, having become even more confident, requested the elder to take meals at his own house constantly. The elder, having consented by silence, day after day, having done the meal duty, while going, having spoken a little of the Buddha's teaching, goes. That brahmin woman also, after the elapse of ten months, gave birth to a son; they named him "Nāgasena"; he, growing up gradually, became seven years old.

11. Then the father of the boy Nāgasena said this to the boy Nāgasena: "In this brahmin family, dear Nāgasena, you should train in the trainings." "Which, dear father, are the trainings in this brahmin family?" "The three Vedas, dear Nāgasena, are called the trainings; the remaining crafts are called craft." "Well then, dear father, I shall train."

Then the brahmin Soṇuttara, having given a thousand as the teacher's share to the teacher brahmin, having prepared a small bed together in one inner room inside the mansion, said this to the teacher brahmin: "Teach this boy the sacred hymns, brahmin. Well then, 'dear boy', learn the sacred hymns." The teacher brahmin recited; for the boy Nāgasena, by just one recitation, the three Vedas were taken to heart, learnt by heart, well considered, well established, well attended to; at once vision arose in the three Vedas together with their vocabularies and rituals, with phonology and etymology, with the histories as a fifth; he was learned in verse, a grammarian, fully versed in worldly knowledge and the marks of a great man.

Then the boy Nāgasena said this to his father: "Is there, dear father, in this brahmin family anything further to be trained in beyond this, or is it just this much?" "There is not, dear Nāgasena, in this brahmin family anything further to be trained in beyond this; just this much is to be trained in."

Then the boy Nāgasena, having given a reply to the teacher, having descended from the mansion, with his heart stirred by former impressions, gone to a private place, in seclusion, examining the beginning, middle, and end of his own craft, not seeing even a little substance in the beginning or in the middle or in the end, became remorseful and displeased: "Hollow indeed, friends, are these Vedas, chaff indeed, friends, are these Vedas, without substance, unsubstantial."

12. Now at that time the Venerable Rohaṇa, seated in a lodging on the road, having known with his mind the reflection in the mind of the boy Nāgasena, having dressed, taking his bowl and robe, vanished from the lodging on the road and appeared before the brahmin village of Gajāṅgala. The boy Nāgasena, standing at his own gateway, saw the Venerable Rohaṇa coming from afar; having seen him, delighted, elated, greatly pleased, filled with joy and happiness, thinking "Perhaps this one who has gone forth might know something of substance," he approached the Venerable Rohaṇa; having approached, he said this to the Venerable Rohaṇa: "Who indeed are you, sir, such a shaven-headed one clothed in ochre robes?" "I am called one who has gone forth, child." "By what, sir, are you called one who has gone forth?" "One drives away evil stains, therefore I am called one who has gone forth, child." "Why, sir, is your hair not like that of others?" "Having seen these sixteen impediments, child, having shaved off hair and beard, I have gone forth. "Which sixteen?" "The impediment of ornamentation, the impediment of adornment, the impediment of anointing with oil, the impediment of washing, the impediment of garlands, the impediment of scents, the impediment of perfuming, the impediment of yellow myrobalan, the impediment of emblic myrobalan, the impediment of dyeing, the impediment of binding, the impediment of combing, the impediment of the barber, the impediment of disentangling, the impediment of lice; when hair is cut off, they grieve, they are wearied, they lament, they beat their breasts and cry out, they fall into confusion. Entangled in these sixteen impediments, child, people destroy all the most subtle crafts." "Why, sir, are your clothes also not like those of others?" "Clothes

are dependent on sensuality, child; the goods and marks of a householder are dependent on sensuality. Whatever fears arise from clothes, those do not exist for one clothed in ochre robes; therefore my clothes also are not like those of others." "Do you know crafts, sir?" "Yes, child, I know crafts; that which is the highest sacred hymn in the world, that too I know." "Is it possible to give that to me also, sir?" "Yes, child, it is possible." "Then give it to me." "It is not the right time, child; we have entered an inhabited area for almsfood."

Then the boy Nāgasena, having taken the bowl from the hand of the Venerable Rohaṇa, having brought him into the house, having satisfied and served the Venerable Rohaṇa with his own hand with superior solid and soft food, said this to the Venerable Rohaṇa when he had finished eating and had removed his hand from the bowl: "Give me now, sir, the sacred hymn." "When you, child, having become free from impediments, having obtained permission from your mother and father, will take the appearance of one gone forth that was taken by me, then I will give it," he said.

Then the boy Nāgasena, having approached his mother and father, said: "Mother and father, this one who has gone forth says 'I know that which is the highest sacred hymn in the world,' but he does not give it to one who has not gone forth in his presence. I, having gone forth in his presence, will learn that highest sacred hymn." Then his mother and father, thinking "Let our son, even having gone forth, learn the sacred hymn; having learnt it, he will come back again," gave permission saying "Take it, son."

13. Then the Venerable Rohaṇa, taking the boy Nāgasena, approached the lodging on the road, approached the Vijambha site; having approached, having stayed one night at the lodging at the Vijambha site, he approached the protected plateau; having approached, he gave the going forth to the boy Nāgasena in the midst of a hundred million Worthy Ones. And when the Venerable Nāgasena had gone forth, he said this to the Venerable Rohaṇa: "Your appearance has been taken by me, venerable sir; now give me the sacred hymn." Then the Venerable Rohaṇa, having thought: "In what should I first train Nāgasena - in the monastic discipline or in the discourses or in the higher teaching?" thinking: "This Nāgasena is wise; he is able to learn the higher teaching easily," first trained him in the higher teaching.

And the Venerable Nāgasena, having made familiar by just one recitation all that Canon of the Higher Teaching - the Compendium of Mental States adorned with triads and dyads: "wholesome mental states, unwholesome mental states, indeterminate mental states"; the Book of Analysis adorned with eighteen analyses beginning with the analysis of aggregates; the Treatise on Elements divided in fourteen ways beginning with "inclusion, non-inclusion"; the Designation of Human Types divided in six ways beginning with "description of aggregates, description of sense bases"; the Points of Controversy divided by combining a thousand discourses - five hundred discourses in one's own doctrine and five hundred discourses in others' doctrines; the Book of Pairs divided in ten ways beginning with "the Root Pairs, the Aggregate Pairs"; the Book of Conditional Relations divided in twenty-four ways beginning with "root condition, object condition" - said: "Stop, venerable sir, do not reinstate further; with just this much I shall recite."

14. Then the Venerable Nāgasena approached the hundred million Worthy Ones; having approached, he said this to the hundred million Worthy Ones: "I, venerable sir, having put into these three terms - 'wholesome mental states, unwholesome mental states, indeterminate mental states' - will reinstate all that Canon of the Higher Teaching in detail." "Good, Nāgasena, reinstate it."

Then the Venerable Nāgasena reinstated the seven treatises in detail for seven months; the earth resounded, the deities gave applause, the Brahmā gods clapped their hands, divine sandalwood powder and divine mandārava flowers rained down.

15. Then a hundred million Worthy Ones gave full ordination to the Venerable Nāgasena, who had completed twenty years, on the protected plateau. And when the Venerable Nāgasena had been fully ordained, after that night had passed, having dressed in the earlier period of the day, taking his bowl and robe, while entering the village for almsfood together with his preceptor, he produced this reflection: "Hollow indeed is my preceptor, foolish indeed is my preceptor, setting aside the remaining word of the Buddha, he first trained me in the higher teaching."

Then the Venerable Rohaṇa, having known with his mind the reflection in the mind of the Venerable Nāgasena, said this to the Venerable Nāgasena: "You have reflected an unsuitable reflection, Nāgasena; this indeed, Nāgasena, is not suitable for you."

Then this occurred to the Venerable Nāgasena: "Wonderful indeed, friend, marvellous indeed, friend, inasmuch as my preceptor will know the reflection in my mind with his mind; wise indeed is my preceptor; what if I were to ask forgiveness of my preceptor." Then the Venerable Nāgasena said this to the Venerable Rohaṇa: "Forgive me, venerable sir, I shall not reflect thus again."

Then the Venerable Rohaṇa said this to the Venerable Nāgasena: "I do not forgive you, Nāgasena, in this way. There is, Nāgasena, a city named Sāgala; there a king named Milinda exercises kingship; he, having asked questions by way of views and doctrines, harasses the community of monks. If you, having gone there, having tamed that king, will inspire confidence in the Buddha's Dispensation, thus I shall forgive you."

"Let alone, venerable sir, the one King Milinda; if, venerable sir, all the kings in the whole Indian subcontinent, having come, were to ask me questions, having answered all that, I shall make them understand." Having said "Forgive me, venerable sir," when it was said "I do not forgive," he said "Well then, venerable sir, in whose presence shall I reside for these three months?" "This, Nāgasena, the Venerable Assagutta dwells in a lodging on the road. Go, Nāgasena, approach the Venerable Assagutta; having approached, in my name pay respect with your head at the feet of the Venerable Assagutta, and say thus to him: 'My preceptor, venerable sir, pays respect with his head at your feet, and asks about your health, whether you are free from illness, free from affliction, light in rising, strong, and dwelling in comfort; my preceptor, venerable sir, has sent me to reside in your presence for these three months.' When it is said 'What is your preceptor's name?' you should say 'The Elder Rohaṇa by name, venerable sir.' When it is said 'What is my name?' you should say thus: 'My preceptor, venerable sir, knows your name.'" "Yes, venerable sir," the Venerable Nāgasena, having paid respect to the Venerable Rohaṇa, having circumambulated him keeping him on his right, taking his bowl and robe, wandering

on a journey gradually, approached the lodging on the road, approached the Venerable Assagutta; having approached, having paid respect to the Venerable Assagutta, he stood to one side. Standing to one side, the Venerable Nāgasena said this to the Venerable Assagutta: "My preceptor, venerable sir, pays respect with his head at your feet, and says thus: he asks about your health, whether you are free from illness, free from affliction, light in rising, strong, and dwelling in comfort; my preceptor, venerable sir, has sent me to reside in your presence for these three months."

Then the Venerable Assagutta said this to the Venerable Nāgasena: "What is your name?" "I, venerable sir, am named Nāgasena." "What is your preceptor's name?" "My preceptor, venerable sir, is named Rohaṇa." "What is my name?" "My preceptor, venerable sir, knows your name."

"Good, Nāgasena, put away your bowl and robe." "Good, venerable sir," having put away his bowl and robe, on the following day, having swept the residential cell, he set out water for washing the face and a tooth-bangle. The elder swept again the place that had been swept, having thrown away that water he brought other water, and having removed that wooden toothbrush he took another wooden toothbrush; he did not engage in conversation. Having done thus for seven days, on the seventh day, having asked again, when he said the same thing again, he allowed the rains residence.

16. Now at that time a certain great female lay follower had attended upon the Venerable Assagutta for about thirty years. Then that great female lay follower, after the elapse of three months, approached the Venerable Assagutta; having approached, she said this to the Venerable Assagutta: "Is there indeed, dear father, another monk in your presence?" "There is, great female lay follower, a monk named Nāgasena in our presence." "Well then, dear father Assagutta, consent to a meal for tomorrow together with Nāgasena." The Venerable Assagutta consented by silence.

Then the Venerable Assagutta, after that night had passed, having dressed in the earlier period of the day, taking his bowl and robe, together with the Venerable Nāgasena as his attendant monk, approached the dwelling of the great female lay follower; having approached, he sat down on the prepared seat. Then that great female lay follower with her own hand satisfied and served the Venerable Assagutta and the Venerable Nāgasena with superior solid and soft food. Then the Venerable Assagutta said this to the Venerable Nāgasena when he had finished eating and had removed his hand from the bowl: "You, Nāgasena, give thanksgiving to the great female lay follower." Having said this, he rose from his seat and departed.

Then that great female lay follower said this to the Venerable Nāgasena: "I am old, dear son Nāgasena; give me thanksgiving with a profound talk on the Teaching." Then the Venerable Nāgasena gave thanksgiving to that great female lay follower with a profound talk on the Teaching, supramundane, connected with emptiness. Then in that great female lay follower, in that very seat, the stainless, spotless eye of the Teaching arose: "Whatever has the nature of arising, all that has the nature of cessation." And the Venerable Nāgasena too, having given thanksgiving to that great female lay follower, reviewing the Teaching taught by himself, having established insight, seated in that very seat, became established in the fruition of stream-entry.

Then the Venerable Assagutta, seated in the circular pavilion, having known the attainment of the eye of the Teaching by both, uttered applause: "Good, good, Nāgasena! By one arrow-strike two great bodies have been destroyed." And many thousands of deities uttered applause.

17. Then the Venerable Nāgasena, having risen from his seat, approached the Venerable Assagutta; having approached, having paid respect to the Venerable Assagutta, he sat down to one side. To the Venerable Nāgasena seated to one side, the Venerable Assagutta said this: "Go, Nāgasena, to Pāṭaliputta; in the city of Pāṭaliputta, in the Asoka park, the Venerable Dhammarakkhita dwells; learn thoroughly the Buddha's teaching in his presence." "How far, venerable sir, is the city of Pāṭaliputta from here?" "A hundred yojanas, Nāgasena." "The road is far, venerable sir. Almsfood is difficult to obtain on the way; how shall I go?" "Go, Nāgasena; on the way you will obtain almsfood - rice of fine grain with the dark grains removed, with various curries and various vegetables." "Yes, venerable sir," the Venerable Nāgasena, having paid respect to the Venerable Assagutta, having circumambulated him keeping him on his right, taking his bowl and robe, set out on a journey towards Pāṭaliputta.

18. Now at that time the millionaire of Pāṭaliputta was travelling on the road leading to Pāṭaliputta with five hundred carts. The millionaire of Pāṭaliputta saw the Venerable Nāgasena coming from afar; having seen him, he approached the Venerable Nāgasena; having approached, having paid respect to the Venerable Nāgasena, he said: "Where are you going, dear son?" "To Pāṭaliputta, householder." "Good, dear son, we too are going to Pāṭaliputta. Travel comfortably together with us."

Then the millionaire of Pāṭaliputta, having become confident in the Venerable Nāgasena's deportment, having satisfied and served the Venerable Nāgasena with his own hand with superior solid and soft food, when the Venerable Nāgasena had finished eating and had removed his hand from the bowl, having taken a certain low seat, sat down to one side. Seated to one side, the millionaire of Pāṭaliputta said this to the Venerable Nāgasena: "What is your name, dear son?" "I, householder, am named Nāgasena." "Do you know the Buddha's teaching, dear son?" "I know, householder, the terms of the higher teaching." "It is a gain for us, dear son, it is well gained for us, dear son. I too, dear son, am one versed in the higher teaching, and you too are one versed in the higher teaching. Speak, dear son, the terms of the higher teaching." Then the Venerable Nāgasena expounded the Higher Teaching to the millionaire of Pāṭaliputta; while he was teaching, in the millionaire of Pāṭaliputta the stainless, spotless eye of the Teaching arose: "Whatever has the nature of arising, all that has the nature of cessation."

Then the millionaire of Pāṭaliputta, having sent ahead about five hundred carts, himself going behind, standing at a crossroads not far from Pāṭaliputta, said this to the Venerable Nāgasena: "This, dear Nāgasena, is the road to the Asoka park. This, dear son, is our woollen blanket jewel, sixteen cubits in length, eight cubits in breadth. Please accept, dear son, this woollen blanket jewel out of compassion." The Venerable Nāgasena accepted that woollen blanket jewel out of compassion. Then the millionaire of Pāṭaliputta, delighted, elated, greatly pleased, filled with joy and happiness, having paid respect to the Venerable Nāgasena, having circumambulated

him keeping him on his right, departed.

19. Then the Venerable Nāgasena approached the Asoka park where the Venerable Dhammarakkhita was; having approached, having paid respect to the Venerable Dhammarakkhita, having told the reason for his coming, in the presence of the Venerable Dhammarakkhita, having learnt thoroughly the three Canons of the Buddha's teaching by phrasing in just one recitation in three months, again in three months he attended to it by meaning.

Then the Venerable Dhammarakkhita said this to the Venerable Nāgasena: "Just as, Nāgasena, a cowherd guards the cattle, others consume the dairy products. Just so indeed, you, Nāgasena, even while bearing the three Canons of the Buddha's teaching, are not a partaker of asceticism." "Let it be, venerable sir, enough with this much." In that very daytime, in that night-time, together with the analytical knowledges he attained arahantship; together with the penetration of truth, all the gods gave applause to the Venerable Nāgasena, the earth resounded, the Brahmā gods clapped their hands, divine sandalwood powder and divine mandārava flowers rained down.

20. Now at that time a hundred million Worthy Ones, having assembled on a protected plateau on the Himalaya mountain, sent a messenger to the presence of the Venerable Nāgasena: "Let Nāgasena come, we wish to see Nāgasena." Then the Venerable Nāgasena, having heard the word of the messenger, vanished from the Asoka park and appeared on the protected plateau on the Himalaya mountain before the hundred million Worthy Ones.

Then the hundred million Worthy Ones said this to the Venerable Nāgasena: "This King Milinda, Nāgasena, harasses the community of monks by argument and counter-argument, by asking questions. Good, Nāgasena, go and tame King Milinda." "Let alone, venerable sir, the one King Milinda; if, venerable sir, all the kings in the whole Indian subcontinent, having come, were to ask me questions, having answered all that, I shall make them understand. Go, venerable sirs, without fear to the city of Sāgala." Then the elder monks made the city of Sāgala radiant with orange robes, with the coming and going of sages.

21. Now at that time the Venerable Āyupāla was dwelling in the Saṅkhyeyya residential cell. Then King Milinda said this to his ministers: "How delightful indeed, friends, is this moonlit night, what ascetic or brahmin might we approach today for discussion and questioning, who is able to converse with me, to remove uncertainty?" When this was said, five hundred Greeks said this to King Milinda: "There is, great king, an elder named Āyupāla, a master of the three Canons, very learned, one who has learnt the collections; he is now dwelling in the Saṅkhyeyya residential cell; go, great king, ask the Venerable Āyupāla questions." "Well then, my good men, inform the venerable sir."

Then the fortune-teller sent a messenger to the presence of the Venerable Āyupāla: "The king, venerable sir, Milinda, wishes to see the Venerable Āyupāla." The Venerable Āyupāla also said thus: "Then let him come." Then King Milinda, surrounded by about five hundred Greeks, having mounted an excellent chariot, approached the Saṅkhyeyya residential cell, approached the Venerable Āyupāla;

having approached, he exchanged friendly greetings with the Venerable Āyupāla, and having concluded the pleasant and memorable talk, he sat down to one side. Seated to one side, King Milinda said this to the Venerable Āyupāla: "For what purpose, Venerable Āyupāla, is your going forth, and what is your ultimate goal?" The elder said: "For the purpose of practising righteousness and practising evenness, great king, is the going forth; the fruit of asceticism is our ultimate goal." "But, venerable sir, is there any householder also who practises righteousness and practises evenness?" "Yes, great king, there is a householder also who practises righteousness and practises evenness. When the Blessed One, great king, was setting in motion the wheel of the Teaching at Isipatana in the Deer Park at Bārāṇasī, there was the full realisation of the teaching for eighteen koṭis of Brahmās; but the full realisation of the teaching by the deities passed beyond the path of counting; all of them were householders, not gone forth.

"Furthermore, great king, when the Great Assembly Discourse was being expounded by the Blessed One, when the Great Blessing Discourse was being expounded, when the Discourse on the Exposition of Even-mindedness was being expounded, when the Discourse on the Exhortation to Rāhula was being expounded, when the Discourse on Downfall was being expounded, there was the full realisation of the teaching by deities who had passed beyond the path of counting; all of them were householders, not gone forth." "Well then, Venerable Āyupāla, your going forth is purposeless; as an outcome of evil action done before, ascetics who are disciples of the Sakyan go forth and undertake the ascetic practices. Those monks, Venerable Āyupāla, who are one-session eaters, surely they were formerly thieves who took away others' possessions; having taken by force others' possessions, as an outcome of that action, they now become one-session eaters, they do not obtain to consume from time to time; there is no morality for them, there is no austere asceticism, there is no holy life. But those monks, Venerable Āyupāla, who are dwellers in the open air, surely they were formerly thieves who sacked villages; having destroyed others' houses, as an outcome of that action, they now become dwellers in the open air, they do not obtain to use lodgings; there is no morality for them, there is no austere asceticism, there is no holy life. But those monks, Venerable Āyupāla, who remain in a sitting position, surely they were formerly thieves who corrupted the roads; having seized, bound, and made to sit down others' travellers, as an outcome of that action, they now remain in a sitting position, they do not obtain to prepare a sleeping place; there is no morality for them, there is no austere asceticism, there is no holy life," he said.

When this was said, the Venerable Āyupāla remained silent, he did not reply anything. Then five hundred Greeks said this to King Milinda: "The elder is wise, great king, but he is unconfident and does not reply anything."

Then King Milinda, having seen the Venerable Āyupāla silent, having clapped his hands and made an acclamation, said this to the Greeks: "Hollow indeed, friends, is the Indian subcontinent, chaff indeed, friends, is the Indian subcontinent; there is not any ascetic or brahmin who is able to converse with me, to remove uncertainty."

22. Then King Milinda, surveying all that assembly, having seen the Greeks fearless and unabashed, this occurred to him: "Without doubt, methinks, there is some other wise monk who is able to converse with me, by which these Greeks are not abashed." Then King Milinda said this to the Greeks: "Is there, my good men, any other wise

monk who is able to converse with me, to remove uncertainty?"

Now at that time the Venerable Nāgasena, surrounded by a group of ascetics, one who has a Community, one who has a following, a teacher of a group, well-known, famous, highly honoured by many people, wise, experienced, intelligent, subtle, discerning, intelligent, disciplined, confident, very learned, a master of the three Canons, one who has attained the highest knowledge, of penetrating higher intelligence, one who has learnt the collections, of penetrating analytical knowledge, a bearer of the Scriptures in the ninefold teaching of the Teacher, having attained perfection in the word of the Conqueror, skilled in the penetration of the Teaching of meaning and teaching, of inexhaustible and varied discernment, a varied speaker, of good conversation, difficult to approach, difficult to overcome, difficult to cross, difficult to obstruct, difficult to restrain, imperturbable like the ocean, motionless like the king of mountains, one who abandons conflict, a dispeller of darkness, a light-bringer, a great speaker, a crusher of the groups of other followers, a crusher of other sectarians, honoured, respected, revered, venerated, and esteemed by monks, nuns, male lay followers, female lay followers, kings, and royal ministers, an obtainer of the requisites of robes, almsfood, lodging, and medicine for the sick, having attained the highest gain and the highest fame, illuminating the ninefold jewel of the Conqueror's Dispensation to elders, wise persons, and those endowed with giving ear, pointing out the path of the Teaching, holding the lamp of the Teaching, raising the post of the Teaching, sacrificing the sacrifice of the Teaching, upholding the banner of the Teaching, raising the flag of the Teaching, blowing the conch of the Teaching, beating the drum of the Teaching, roaring the lion's roar, thundering the thunder of Indra, satisfying the whole world with the great cloud of the nectar of the Teaching, filled with the water of compassion, enveloped by the net of lightning of excellent knowledge, with the sweet thunder of speech, wandering on a journey through villages, market towns, and royal cities, gradually arrived at the city of Sāgala. There the Venerable Nāgasena, together with eighty thousand monks, was dwelling in the Saṅkhyeyya residential cell. Therefore the ancients said:

"Very learned, a varied speaker, subtle and confident;
Skilled in doctrine and skilled in discernment.

"Those monks who are masters of the three Canons, and those of five
collections too;
And those of four collections, honoured Nāgasena.

"Of profound wisdom, intelligent, skilled in what is the path and what is not the
path;
Having attained the highest good, Nāgasena, confident.

"Surrounded by those monks, subtle, speakers of truth;
Wandering through villages and market towns, he approached Sāgala.

"In the Saṅkhyeyya residential cell, Nāgasena then dwelt;
He speaks with people, as a lion on a mountain."

23. Then Devamantiya said this to King Milinda: "Wait, great king; there is, great king, an elder named Nāgasena, wise, experienced, intelligent, disciplined, confident,

very learned, a varied speaker, of good discernment, having attained perfection in the analytical knowledges of meaning, Teaching, language, and discernment; he is now dwelling in the Saṅkhyeyya residential cell. Go, great king, ask the Venerable Nāgasena questions; he is able to converse with you, to remove uncertainty." Then for King Milinda, suddenly upon hearing the sound "Nāgasena," there arose fear, there arose trepidation, there arose terror. Then King Milinda said this to Devamantiya: "Is the monk Nāgasena, friend, able to converse with me?" "He is able, great king, even to converse with Indra, Yama, Varuṇa, Kuvera, Pajāpati, the Suyāma gods, the Santusita gods, the world-guardians, and even with the Great Brahmā, the father and grandfather; how much more then with one who has become a human being."

Then King Milinda said this to Devamantiya: "Well then, you, Devamantiya, send a messenger to the presence of the venerable sir." "Yes, Sire," Devamantiya sent a messenger to the presence of the Venerable Nāgasena: "The king, venerable sir, Milinda, wishes to see the venerable one." And the Venerable Nāgasena said thus: "Then let him come."

Then King Milinda, surrounded by about five hundred Greeks, having mounted an excellent chariot, together with a great army, approached the Saṅkhyeyya residential cell, approached the Venerable Nāgasena. Now at that time the Venerable Nāgasena was seated in the circular pavilion together with eighty thousand monks. King Milinda saw the assembly of the Venerable Nāgasena from afar; having seen it, he said this to Devamantiya: "Whose is this great assembly, Devamantiya?" "It is the assembly of the Venerable Nāgasena, great king."

Then for King Milinda, having seen the assembly of the Venerable Nāgasena from afar, there arose fear, there arose trepidation, there arose terror. Then King Milinda, like an elephant surrounded by swords, like a serpent surrounded by garuḷas, like a jackal surrounded by pythons, like a bear surrounded by buffaloes, like a frog pursued by a serpent, like a deer pursued by a leopard, like a snake that has encountered a snake-catcher, like a rat that has encountered a cat, like a goblin that has encountered an exorcist, like the moon gone into the mouth of Rāhu, like a snake gone into a basket, like a bird gone into a cage, like a fish gone into a net, like a man who has entered a forest of wild beasts, like a demon who has offended Vessavaṇa, like a young god whose life span is exhausted - frightened, agitated, fearful, alarmed, with hair standing on end, displeased, unhappy, with confused mind, with changed disposition - having established mindfulness thinking "May this retinue not despise me," said this to Devamantiya: "Do not, Devamantiya, point out the Venerable Nāgasena to me; I shall know Nāgasena without being told." "Good, great king, you yourself know."

Now at that time the Venerable Nāgasena was junior to forty thousand monks in front of that assembly of monks, and senior to forty thousand monks behind.

Then King Milinda, surveying all that community of monks in front and behind and in the middle, saw the Venerable Nāgasena from afar, seated in the middle of the community of monks, like a maned lion, free from fear and dread, free from terror, free from fear and timidity; having seen him, he knew by his appearance alone: "This one here is Nāgasena."

Then King Milinda said this to Devamantiya: "This, Devamantiya, is the Venerable Nāgasena." "Yes, great king, this is Nāgasena; well indeed, great king, you have recognised Nāgasena." Then the king was pleased: "Nāgasena has been recognised by me without being told." Then for King Milinda, upon seeing the Venerable Nāgasena, there arose fear, there arose trepidation, there arose terror.

Therefore they said:

"Accomplished in conduct, well-tamed in the highest taming;
Having seen Nāgasena, the king spoke these words.

"Many have been spoken to by me, many seen, many discussions entered into;
There was no such fear as my terror today.

"Without doubt, defeat will be mine today;
And victory for Nāgasena, since my mind is not steady."

The External Discussion is concluded.



ABOUT THIS TRANSLATION

This translation is part of the PaliVerse Project - the first complete, unified English translation of the Pāli Canon together with its Commentaries (Aṭṭhakathā) and Subcommentaries (Tīkā), accompanied by interactive study tools. PaliVerse is an ongoing project. The AI translations are continuously improved through experts' revisions and feedback. This text is the latest translation as of the date of download.

PDF Creation Date: 14 September 2026

HOW TO CITE

PaliVerse (2026). The Triple Canon. The Canon of Discourses. 5. The Collection of Minor Texts. 20. The Questions of Milinda. 1. The Secular Narrative Retrieved from paliverse.org

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