NAGASENA BHIKSU SUTRA
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VOLUME I

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NAGASENA BHIKSU SUTRA

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Verse for Commencing the Sutra

The unexcelled, most profound, and exquisitely wondrous Dharma,
Is difficult to encounter throughout hundreds of thousands of millions of *kalpas*.
Since we are now able to see, hear, receive and retain it,
May we comprehend the true meaning of the Tathagata.
The Nagasena Bhiksu Sutra
(Based on Taishō no. 1670B)

Part I: The Secular Narrative

1. Introduction

The Buddha once dwelt in the Kingdom of Sravasti, in Jetavana, Anathapindika’s Park. At that time all the bhiksu sangha, bhiksuni sangha, upasakas, upasikas, all the kings of heaven, great ministers, wealthy men and ordinary people, and also those who pursue the heretical views of the ninety six doctrines – the total number amounting to more than ten-thousand – came daily to the Buddha to hear the Dharma.

It occurred to the Buddha, “The assembly of men here is becoming greater from day to day, and my body cannot be at ease.” The Buddha wished to forsake the assembly of men and retire to a solitary place, where he could sit down, contemplate, and meditate on the Path. The Buddha then deserted the assembly of men, and entered a mountain called the Jiaoluo forest. These trees were imbued with spirits, and the Buddha sat himself at the foot of one of the trees and meditated on the path of purity.
2. Nagasena’s Previous Life as an Elephant-king

Not far from the forest, there was a group of elephants that numbered more than five hundred. Among them there was an elephant-king who was wise and good, who was able to judge between good and bad, and whose manners resembled those of men. All the elephants used to surround the king, and among them there were males and females, all large-tusked, medium-tusked, and small-tusked.\(^8\)

Whenever the elephant-king was thirsty and wished to go and drink water, all the smaller elephants ran before the king and entered the water to drink. After that, they would play in the water, running about and stirring it up, or by fishing in the water they made it turbid and impure. As a result, the king could not have any pure water to drink. Whenever the king was hungry and wanted to go and eat grass, all the small elephants used to run before him and eat all the beautiful grass before sporting around, running about, jumping, and treading on the grass until the king himself would not have any fresh grass to eat at all.
The elephant-king thereupon thought to himself, “My companions are too numerous and troublesome. I regret that all the elephants and their young ones stir up water before I drink, making it turbid, or eat the grass before me, making it impure by treading on it. I always have to drink impure water and eat trodden grass. What if I were to abandon all the elephants and retire to a quiet place where I can be happy?”

Thereupon the elephant-king abandoned the assembly, went to the mountains, and came upon the Jiaoluo forest. He saw the Buddha there, sitting at the foot of a tree. Greatly rejoicing in his heart, the elephant-king came before the Buddha, bowed, knelt down, worshipped him, and then retired to one side and remained there.

The Buddha then thought to himself, “I have abandoned my companions and have come here in the forest. The elephant-king has also forsaken his retinue and come here to the same place.” (704a)° Thus, we have come here for exactly the same purpose.”

The Buddha then preached the Dharma for the sake of the elephant-king, and said,...
...“A Buddha is the most honored among men, and the elephant-king is the most honored among the elephants.”

The Buddha said, “My intention\(^{10}\) is similar to that of yours, the elephant-king; I will be happy being together with the elephant-king in the forest.”

When the elephant-king heard the Dharma, his mind was enlightened and he understood what the Buddha taught. Then he wandered about at the place where the Buddha was.\(^{11}\) He drew water with his trunk and watered the ground, then he plucked some grass with his trunk and swept the place and he made the ground flat by treading on it. The elephant-king served the Buddha in this way from morning till evening everyday.\(^{12}\)

3. **The Attendance by the Elephant-king to the Sutra-recitation**

Sometime afterwards, the Buddha took the quiet path of nirvana\(^{13}\) and disappeared. The elephant-king did not know where the Buddha was and therefore he wandered about to look for the Buddha, but without success. Thereupon he wept and cried, and was full of sorrow, unable to enjoy anything; he did not even eat or drink.
At that time there was a Buddhist monastery on a mountain in that country. It was called Jialuohuan, and in it lived five hundred sramanas, who were all arhats. They used to recite sutras throughout the night on the six fast-days each month. The elephant-king was also on the mountain near the monastery. He noticed that there was a recitation of sutras on the six fast-days, and came to the monastery every fast-day in order to hear sutra recitation.

All the sramanas knew that the elephant-king was glad to hear the recitation, and waited each time until he arrived before starting. While hearing the recitation of a sutra he would neither sleep nor lie down, neither move nor sway, the whole night.

4. Relation Between Nagasena and Menander in Their Previous Lives

As the elephant-king had often heard the exposition of the sutras and had served the Buddha, when his long life as an elephant-king had come to an end, he was later born as a human. He was born in a Brahmin family and did not hear of the Buddha or the sutras, nor did he see any sramana.
Thus, he left his family and went into the deep forests of a mountain to learn the path of a *brahman*. There was another hermit *brahman* living in the same forest and the two visited each other and made each other’s acquaintance.

One of the two thought to himself, “I am disgusted with the human life, with the district magistrate, with the conditions of sorrow, suffering, old age, sickness and death; after death we are to fall into the hells, or to become a hungry ghost (*preta*), or an animal, or live a poor and miserable life when born as a human. Therefore I will shave my hair and beard, and become a *sramana*, wear a *kasaya*, and seek after the quiet path (*nirvana*), which is the means of saving the world.”

The other *brahman* also thought to himself, “I wish to be a sovereign, possessed with might and power, and let all the people under heaven follow me and obey my commands and instructions.”

5. The Births of Nagasena and Menander According to Their Vows in Previous Lives

Some time after they both made these vows, they died and were reborn in the world as men.
The one who wished to become a sovereign in his former life was born as a crown-prince to a king in a land bordering a sea. His parents named him “Menander.”

The other, who wished to pursue the quiet path of nirvana in order to save the world, was born in Sindhu (the ancient name for India), in the district of Kashmir. His parents named him “Tuolie.”

He was born wearing a kasaya, in consequence of the vow he made in his former life. In his household, there was an elephant-king born on the same day as him. [Since elephants were called naga in Sindhu], the parents also named their son “Nagasena.”

6. Nagasena’s Admission into the Sangha

Nagasena grew up and reached fourteen or fifteen years of age. He had a maternal uncle named Rohana who was a sramana and possessed exceptional abilities that were unequalled anywhere. He had the ability of seeing distant things and hearing distant sounds,…
and also knew from where he came. From birth, Rohana could fly, he could go out from where there is no slit and enter where there is no gap and could become whatever he liked freely without any difficulty. Rohana also knew the mind or the thought of devas in the heavens and that of men on earth, including beings which could fly and which could walk.

Nagasena came to his uncle on his own and told him, “Uncle, it is my intention to follow the Buddha’s Path and I wish to shave my hair and beard, don the kasaya robe and become a sramana. I want to become your disciple. Uncle, would you accept me as a sramana?”

Rohana knew Nagasena’s good deeds in his previous life and his wisdom, and hence took pity on him and admitted him as a sramanera. Nagasena, at the beginning, was a novice sramanera who observed the ten precepts, recited the sutras daily, and who also learned about and meditated on the Dharma. As a result, he attained the four dhyanas and therefore he was able to grasp the essence of the doctrines. The only thing he lacked was the high ordination he had yet to obtain.
Now at that time, there was a Buddhist monastery called Hechan on a mountain in the country, and in this monastery dwelled five hundred sramanas who all had attained arhathood. Among them, the leading arhat was called Assagutta and knew about things both in heaven and on earth, as well as the past, present and future.

Nagasena was twenty years of age at the time, and in order to get the higher ordination to becoming a sramana, he went to Hechan monastery where Assagutta lived. Incidentally, it happened to be the full moon day, and all five hundred arhats were sitting in the hall to recite the great sramana precept sutra (pratimoksa). All great sramanas entered into the hall, and Nagasena was also among them.

When all the sramanas had sat down (in the hall), Assagutta surveyed the whole assembly and noticed that all sramanas in the hall were arhats except Nagasena.

Thereupon Assagutta gave a discourse on the Sutra of Parables and said,...
“Just like people judging rice, it is considered to be bad rice even if there is one grain of black rice among the white ones. Now, all of us are white and pure, only Nagasena is black and has not attained arhathood yet.”

On hearing these words of Assagutta, Nagasena was greatly worried, got up and bowed down towards the five hundred *sramanas*, and then went out. He thought to himself, “It is not appropriate for me to sit among them, I have not crossed over (the stream of *samsara*), but all others have crossed over. It is like the jackal among the lions. So am I now. From now on, I will not sit among them unless I have attained the Path (of arhathood).”

Knowing the thoughts of Nagasena, Assagutta called him to come forward and touched his head with his hand saying, “Don’t worry, before long you will attain arhathood.” (704c) So Assagutta asked Nagasena to stay.

7. His Conversion

Again Nagasena had another teacher named Kavigupta whose age was over eighty.
There was an *upasaka* in the county who was wise and good and who used to give alms to Kavigupta and his disciples daily. One day, Nagasena, taking the bowl, went to collect the alms, but his teacher asked him to fill his mouth with water, then to go to take the alms from the *upasaka’s* house.

The *upasaka* saw the young Nagasena who was handsome and whose behavior was far above the common people. He had heard of his reputation and knew that he was of sharp intelligence and had a distinct ambition as well as the ability of expounding the Dharma. The *upasaka* upon seeing Nagasena coming into his house, got up and bowed down with crossed hands, saying, “I have been offering alms to the *sramanas* for a long time, and they usually come and preach me the Dharma. Today I beg you, Venerable Nagasena, please expound the Dharma to me and dispel my doubts.”

Nagasena, thereupon, thought to himself, “My teacher instructed me not to preach by filling my mouth with water. Now, if I spit out the water to preach, it would be against my teacher’s instructions. What should I do?”
Then Nagasena thought again, “The upasaka is of intelligence and noble aspiration. If I preach the Dharma to him, he might enter the Path. Thereupon, Nagasena spat out the water, sat down and gave a talk on the Dharma:

“If a person takes delights in giving and doing good deeds and also observes moral precepts, he will live happily now and will be reborn in the heavens after death. He will be a person of wisdom, intelligence and wealth, and he will be reborn in the human world on descending from heaven. And thereafter, he will not be reborn in hell, in the kingdom of hungry ghosts or in the animal kingdom. But if a person does not observe the dharma and precepts, he would suffer now in this world and in the next life, and will fall into the three evil realms without any opportunity of getting out.”

Nagasena knew that having heard the Dharma, the upasaka was delighted in the heart. Therefore he again preached the profound teaching (of the Buddha).
“Nothing in the world is permanent (anicca), and all will pass away. Therefore, there is suffering (dukkha) when everything passes away or comes to an end. The physical bodies of people are the same. People in the world agree and say that ‘My body will pass away, but my Self (pudgala) is going to (remain or continue).’ Therefore they could not attain freedom, the liberated Path of nirvana. This nirvana is the ultimate happiness without birth, old age, sickness, death, sorrow, grief, and all evils and sufferings are eliminated.”

After Nagasena had preached the Dharma, the upasaka attained the first stage of the Path which is called the srotapanna, and Nagasena himself too, had attained the Path of srotapanna. The upasaka was overjoyed and served Nagasena with excellent and delicious food. Nagasena then told the upasaka that the teacher’s bowl should be filled with food first. After Nagasena had his meal and washed his mouth and hands, he took his teacher’s bowl and returned to the monastery.
His teacher saw the delicious food and said, “Today you have brought good food, you have violated the agreement\textsuperscript{57} of our people, and therefore you should be expelled (from the \textit{sangha}).”\textsuperscript{58} Nagasena was not happy and greatly worried about it. The teacher told Nagasena to meet all the \textit{bhiksus} of the temple in the assembly. After all \textit{bhiksus} had assembled, his teacher said, “Nagasena has violated our agreement, we should expel him (705a) and ask him not to stay among us.”

Assagutta gave a discourse on the \textit{Sutra of Parables}\textsuperscript{59} and said, “It is like a person who has shot two targets with one arrow. Such a person should not be expelled. Nagasena has preached (the Dharma) and as a result, he has attained the Path (of \textit{srotapanna}) and the \textit{upasaka} has also attained the Path (of \textit{srotapanna}). Therefore such a person should not be expelled.”

Then Nagasena’s teacher, Kavigupta said, “Even if Nagasena has shot a hundred targets with one arrow, he has still violated our agreement, we should not allow him to stay in the \textit{sangha}. If all others cannot attain the Path like Nagasena, then there is no future.”
If Nagasena is not expelled, we cannot stop others who would imitate him in the future.”

The monks in the assembly were silent and Nagasena was expelled according to his teacher’s instruction. Then Nagasena prostrated before his teacher’s feet and worshipped him, then paid respect to the bhiksu sangha.

8. His Attainment of Arhathood

After paying his respects, Nagasena departed and went into a mountain. He sat down at the foot of a tree and exerted himself by meditating on the Path day and night diligently without slacking. Soon he attained the Path of arhathood. Thereafter, he could fly, gained clairaudience and clairvoyance, and also could read the thoughts of others and knew his own former lives.

After Nagasena had attained arhathood, he returned to Hechan monastery and came before the sangha confessing his offence, and asked for rehabilitation. The bhiksu sangha in the monastery accepted his request. Then Nagasena paid his respects and departed.
9. His Preaching Activities

Nagasena went on a preaching tour from village to village, from town to town exhorting people to perform meritorious deeds. Among them some people received the five precepts, some attained the stage of srotapanna, some attained the stage of sakrdagamin, some attained the stage of anagamin and some became monks and attained arhathood.

The four heavenly kings of the first heaven, Sakra of the second Tusita heaven and Brahman of the seventh heaven all came before Nagasena and paid him respects with their hands touching his feet, then sat down beside him. Nagasena preached the Dharma to them all. So Nagasena’s name became well known in the four heavens. Wherever Nagasena went, deities, human beings, spirits, serpents, etc., welcomed him. They were happy to see him and also obtained merits.

10. King Menander’s Learning

Nagasena then came to the country of Sagala in Sindhu, and stayed in Sankheyya monastery.
There, Nagasena met an acquaintance from his former life called Menander, who was a prince in a country near the sea.

Ever since he was a child, Menander delighted in reading sutras and learning the heretical teachings. Therefore he knew all the heretical teachings. He liked to discuss them with heretical teachers and no one could beat him in argument. When the father of Menander died of a natural death, Menander was crowned king.

Menander asked his ministers: “Are there any religious men who are able to hold discussions with me on religious matters in the country?”

The ministers replied, “Yes, there is a person who has learned the doctrines of the Buddha. People called him a sramana. This person is wise and erudite and he would be able to discuss religious doctrines with the king.”

11. Description of Sagala

{In the north of Yonaka country, there was a kingdom called Sagala, a citadel of ancient kings. The country enjoyed peace within its border sand in relation with its neighbors and its people were good and honest.}
The city was surrounded on all four sides by roads. The gates of the citadel were adorned with sculptures and engravings.

The ladies in the palace each had a special apartment. The streets and markets were aligned in rows. Roads and thoroughfares were large, with shops on both sides. The place was prosperous and crowded with elephants, horses, chariots, infantry, gentlemen, ladies, wealthy people,\textsuperscript{68} brahmans, religious people, workers, teachers, and ordinary people.\textsuperscript{69} People in all the smaller kingdoms were all wise and noble.

People were dressed in dazzling colors. The women and girls wore white clothes and they adorned themselves with jewels.\textsuperscript{70} The land was high, dry and rich in precious stones. Traders from all four directions came to trade and paid in gold coins, the five kinds of crops were plentiful and even the modest families had savings. Stalls near the markets were selling pastries and food to satisfy the hungry and grape juice and various sorts of wine quenched all kinds of thirst.\textsuperscript{71} All were enjoying happiness beyond description.\textsuperscript{72}

The king of this country was called Menander who ruled the country in accordance...
...with righteousness (Dharma). King Menander was learned and wise and knew the teachings of all religions in the world. Therefore he was capable of discussing puzzling questions concerning the past, future and present. He was an expert in administrative works and arts of warfare. As far as strategies were concerned, he had mastered them all.

12. Discussion Between Ayupala and King Menander

At that time, the king was playing games outside the capital, and his fourfold army was camped outside. The king was proud and thought to himself, “I am the king and know the heretical doctrines of ninety-six varieties, whomsoever asks whatsoever questions, I could guess the meaning of the words scarcely uttered.”

The king said to his minister beside him, “The day is yet young, it would be no use getting back so early. Is there any learned religious teacher or sramana, who would be able to discuss doctrines with me?”

The ministers named Devamantiya and Mankura, who were beside the king, said,...
...“There is a sramana called Ayupala\textsuperscript{80} with profound learning in the doctrines, he would be able to discuss religious doctrines with Your Excellence.” So the king asked the ministers Devamantiya and Mankura to invite him.

Devamantiya and Mankura went to invite the monk and said to him, “The king wishes to meet you.” Ayupala said, “Very good, if the king wants to meet me, he should come himself. I will not go.”

Devamantiya and Mankura went back and told the king what happened. The king, attended by the five hundred cavalrymen, mounted his royal chariot and proceeded to the monastery\textsuperscript{81} where Ayupala lived. He exchanged greetings and compliments of friendship and courtesy with Ayupala, and took his seat. The five hundred cavalymen also took their seats.

The king asked Ayupala, “For what purpose, Ayupala, have you renounced the world, after abandoning your wife and children, shaving your hair and beard, donning the kasaya robe and becoming a sramana? What kind of path are you seeking?”

Ayupala replied to the king, “We study the Buddha’s teaching and practice righteousness\textsuperscript{82}...
...so we obtain happiness in this life as well as in the next life. Thus, we have shaved our hair and beard and become *sramanas* by donning the *kasaya* robes.”

“Is there any layman,” the king asked Ayupala, “who has wife and children and lives in accordance with righteousness, who could obtain happiness now here (705c) and hereafter?”

“Yes, any layman who has a wife and children and lives in accordance with righteousness, could also obtain happiness now here and hereafter.”

Then the king said, “If a layman who has a wife and children and lives in accordance with righteousness can also obtain happiness now here and hereafter, then what is the use of renouncing the world, Ayupala, having to abandon your wife and children, shave your hair and beard to become a *sramana* by donning the *kasaya* robe?”

Ayupala was silent and had not a word to say in reply to the king. Some ministers said, “This *sramana* is of great learning and wisdom, it is because of lack of time that he could not make rejoinder.” Therefore the king’s men raised their hands and cried,...
...“The king is the winner, the king is the winner.” Ayupala admitted defeat by remaining silent.  

The king looked around to the *upasakas* and saw that there was no expression of shame on the faces of the *upasakas*. It occurred to the king himself, “These *upasakas* have no expression of shame on their faces. Is there another learned *sramana* who would be able to discuss the doctrine with me?”

So the king asked Devamantiya, “Is there any *sramana* who would be able to discuss the doctrine and the Path with me?”

### 13. Nagasena’s Learning in the Dharma

At that time, Nagasena was the teacher of a group of *sramanas*, and always travelled together with them and preached to them at their request.

Nagasena knew the essence and difficulties of the sutras and was clever in explaining the twelve divisions of the scripture. He was an expert in resolving the difficulties (in the scriptures) by making out chapters and sentences and knew the Path to *nirvana*. No one could refute what he said and no one excelled him. He could expel all doubts and enlighten the speculators. His wisdom was like that of an ocean,...
...and he could defeat the heretics of ninety-six varieties; he was well respected by the fourfold disciples (monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen) of the Buddha; a place of refuge and object of respect for wise men.\textsuperscript{87} Nagasena often preached the doctrines and instructed people.  

14. Menander’s Invitation to Nagasena

Nagasena came to the country of Sagala with a great company of disciples who were also learned and wise. Nagasena was like a fierce lion (among his followers). Devamantiya told the king, “There is an extraordinary \textit{sramana}, named Nagasena, who has a profound wisdom and knows the essence of all the sutras, and is also able to remove all doubts, nothing is not known to him. He will be able to discuss the doctrine with the king.”

The king said to Devamantiya, “Examine whether he could discuss the doctrine with me?”

“Yes, of course, he could discuss the doctrine with the king” said Devamantiya, “He could even discuss the Dharma with the great Brahman of the seventh heaven, how much more than with a king of human beings.”

He sent Devamantiya to invite Nagasena.
Devamantiya went to where Nagasena dwelled and said, “The king, His Majesty, wants to meet you.” Nagasena accepted the invitation, and accompanied by his disciples, went to the palace of the king.

Though the king had never seen Nagasena, yet when Nagasena came on foot with the other sramanas, his manner was quite different from the others, and the king knew he was Nagasena. The king said to himself, “I have seen so many people in the past, and I have been to assemblies of high ranking people many times, and I had never felt fear. Today I see Nagasena, (and I feel fear). Nagasena will certainly defeat me, because I am not as great as Nagasena, my mind is filled with trepidation and perplexity and I feel uneasy.”

Then Devamantiya told the king, “Nagasena has already arrived. Now he is waiting outside.” The king asked Devamantiya which one was Nagasena. Devamantiya pointed out Nagasena to the king. The king greatly rejoiced saying, “It is exactly as I thought, that person is Nagasena.”

The king saw Nagasena wearing a robe, on foot, but with an extraordinary manner. Nagasena came forward and exchanged greetings and complements of friendship.
The king was delighted and sat down opposite Nagasena.

Nagasena told the king, “The Buddha’s doctrine proclaims: ‘Peace and security are the highest benefit, contentment is the highest wealth, faith is the highest blessing and nirvana is the highest happiness.’”

PART II: DIALOGUES
1. The Person and His Name

Then the king asked Nagasena, “Revered Sir, what is your name?” Nagasena replied, “My parents gave me the name Nagasena and called me Nagasena. Sometimes they called me Sihasena, sometimes they called me Surasena, sometimes they called me Virasena. It is by all these names that people come to recognize me. People in the world are concerned with names only.”

The king asked, “Who is Nagasena?” He asked further, “Is the head Nagasena?”

“No,” answered Nagasena, “the head is not Nagasena.”
"Is the eye, ear, nose, or tongue Nagasena?" asked the king.

"No," answered Nagasena, "the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue – all of them – are not Nagasena."

"Is the neck, nape, shoulder, arm, leg, or hand Nagasena?" asked the king.

"No, none of them is Nagasena," answered Nagasena.

"Is the thigh or foot Nagasena?" asked the king.

"No, neither of them is Nagasena."

"Is form Nagasena?"

"No, it is not Nagasena."

"Is feeling Nagasena?"

"No, it is not Nagasena."

"Is perception Nagasena?"

"No, it is not Nagasena."

"Is volition Nagasena?"

"No, it is not Nagasena."

"Are the liver, lungs, heart, spleen, arteries, intestines or stomach Nagasena?"

"No, none of them is Nagasena."

"Is the combination of the five – form, feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness – Nagasena?"
“No, the combination of the five is not Nagasena either.”
“But is the non-coming together of the five things five – form, feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness – Nagasena?”
“No, Great King.”
“Then, is sound or breath Nagasena?”
And he still answered No.
“But then what is Nagasena?” asked the king.
Then Nagasena asked about the name of carriage, “What is a carriage? Is it the axle the carriage?”
“The axle is not the carriage,” the king said.
“Is the rim the carriage?” (706b) Nagasena asked.
“The rim is not the carriage,” the king said.
“Is the spoke the carriage?” Nagasena asked.
“The spoke is not the carriage,” the king said.
“Is the hub the carriage?” Nagasena asked.
“The hub is not the carriage,” the king said.
“Is the shaft the carriage?” Nagasena asked.
“The shaft is not the carriage,” the king said.
“Is the yoke the carriage?” Nagasena asked.
“The yoke is not the carriage,” the king said.
“Is the framework the carriage?” Nagasena asked.

“The framework is not the carriage,” the king said.

“Is the pole the carriage?” Nagasena asked.

“The pole is not the carriage,” the king said.

“Is the canopy the carriage?” Nagasena asked.

“The canopy is not the carriage,” the king said.

“Then are all these parts of the wood assembled and left aside the carriage?” Nagasena asked.

“No, Sir, all these parts put together and left aside is also not the carriage,” the king said.

“Is all these parts of the wood not assembled the carriage?” Nagasena asked.

“If all these parts of the wood are not assembled it is the carriage,” the king said.

“Then is sound the carriage?” Nagasena asked.

“No, Sir, sound is not the carriage,” the king said.

“What is the carriage?” asked Nagasena.

Nagasena told the king, “In the Buddhist sutras it says, ‘On account of all those pieces of wood coming together, it comes under the generally understood term, the designation ‘carriage.’ So is a human.’”
It is on account of the coming together of all of those things: the head, the face, the ears, the mouth, the neck, the nape, the shoulder, the arms, the bones, the flesh, the hands, the feet, the livers, the lungs, the heart, the spleen, the kidney, the intestines, the stomach, the complexion, the voice, the breath, the feeling, the inclination, that the general term is understood. The designation in common usage is ‘person’.

“Excellent, excellent, Nagasena.”

2. Methods of Discussion

The king asked, “Venerable Nagasena, will you discuss the doctrine with me?”

Nagasena said, “If your majesty would discuss with me as a wise man, yes, I can. But if your majesty would discuss with me as a king, no, I cannot.”

“What does it mean to ‘discuss as a wise man’?”

When the wise converses, they question one another, solve problems together, agree on and turn down a point together. Winners or losers, they know right and wrong, and they themselves know what is right and what is wrong.
That is the highest wisdom. The wise would never have anger or hate. Thus do wise men discuss.”

“And how do kings debate?” asked the king.

“When a king, your majesty, discusses a matter, he speaks in an unbridled fashion. He advances a point and if anyone disagrees with him and is unwilling to do as the king wishes, then the king will punish or even kill that person. Thus your majesty, do kings discuss.”

Then the king said, “I would like to talk as a wise man (pandit), not as a king. You should not talk to me as you would talk to a king, you should talk to me as if you are talking to those sramanas, your disciples, those upasakas, or even the attendants of those sramanas. You should also not have fear and be calm in your mind. Our talk should aim at enlightening each other.”

“Excellent, your majesty,” said Nagasena.

3. Nagasena’s Wit in Answering Questions

“Revered sir, I have a question to ask you.” said the king.

“Please ask it, Sire,” said Nagasena.
“I have asked it already, your reverence.”
“I have already answered it.”
“What was your answer?” (706c)
“O King, what was your question?”
“I have asked nothing.”
“I made no reply.”

Then the king thought to himself, “This sramana is of great wisdom and intelligence. I have just started, and have a number of points on which to question him.” Again the king thought to himself, “However, the sun will soon set. It would be better to carry on the discussion tomorrow. I shall invite Nagasena to the palace in order to have a thorough discussion.”

Then the king told Devamantiya to tell Nagasena that the sun is setting and the king would like to invite him to come to his palace tomorrow and have a good discussion. Devamantiya told Nagasena accordingly, “It is time for the king to go back to the palace, and the king wants to invite Your Reverence, Nagasena to the palace tomorrow.”

Nagasena said, “Very good.” And so saying, the king mounted his horse and returned to the palace. Whilst riding home he muttered, “Nagasena, Nagasena.”
Thus he had Nagasena in his mind until the next morning.

The next day, Devamantiya and other ministers asked the king, “Should we invite His Reverence Nagasena to come today?”

“Yes, invite him.” said the king.

Then Devamantiya asked, “How many *sramanas* should we invite Nagasena to bring along with him?”

“As many *sramanas* as he likes,” replied the king.

The treasurer of the king named Sabbadinna said, “Invite him to bring ten *sramanas*.” But the king repeated, “Let him come with as many as he likes.” Sabbadinna said once again, “Let him come with ten *sramanas*.” The king repeated, “Let him come with as many as he likes.” But Sabbadinna also repeated again, “Let him come with ten *sramanas*.”

When the king heard Sabbadinna’s words for the third time, the king scolded him severely with anger and said, “You are really stingy. Your name is Sabbadinna (lit: stingy), and it is not inappropriate. If you begrudge the imperial goods,...
...how much more would you value your own goods? Is it not known to you that anyone who is against my wish will be punished or even killed?” The king said, “But I pity you and remit your punishment. Do you suppose that I am not capable of feeding so many sramana?” Then Sabbadinna was ashamed and dared not speak another word.106

Devamantiya and Mankura went to Nagasena’s place, worshipped him and said, “The king invites Revered Nagasena to come to the palace.”

“How many sramanas does the king allow me to bring along?” asked Nagasena.

“With as many sramanas as you like”, said Devamantiya. Then Nagasena went with Ayupala and other sramanas about eighty in number. Devamantiya and Mankura all went together to accompany Nagasena. 

4. Breath and Life

In the morning of that day, when they were just about to enter the city, Devamantiya and Mankura asked Nagasena, “Yesterday you told the king that there is nothing which can be called Nagasena.”
Nagasena asked, “Devamantiya and Mankura, what do you think Nagasena is?” (707a)

“The inner breath which comes in and goes out, that we suppose is Nagasena.”

“But if that breath having gone forth should not return, or having returned and would not go forth, would the person be alive?”

“If the breath goes out and does not come back, the person would certainly die.”

“It is just like a person who blows the trumpet, once when the breath goes out, it does not return. Or just like a person that uses the goldsmith’s pipes to blow the fire, does his breath return to him again?”

“No, Sir, it does not.”

“Again it is like a person who blows the ground with a horn, does the breath return to him again?”

“No Sir.”

“The same breath goes out and does not return, then why does he not die?” asked Nagasena.

“We are not capable of understanding such a matter as the breath going in and out, please Sir, explain this matter to us.” said Devamantiya and Mankura.

“These inhalations and exhalations are merely constituent powers of the bodily frame.”
It is just like when a person thinks over some matter and puts the thoughts into words, it becomes verbal matter or language. When a person has some doubts in his mind and thinks it over, then it become a mind object or mind matter. So each part of the body has its own function. But when we analyze or examine them separately, they are all changing (from moment to moment), any one of them cannot be considered Nagasena.”

(On hearing these words), Devamantiya and Mankura became enlightened and took the five precepts and became upasaka.

Nagasena then went to the king in the palace and the king came forward, worshipped Nagasena who with his eighty sramanas, sat down. The king had delicious food prepared and he himself with his own hands served Nagasena and the other sramanas. After eating, they washed their mouths and hands. The king presented each sramana with a suit of cotton garments and a pair of sandals, and to Nagasena and Ayupala three robes and a pair of sandals each.

Then the king said to Nagasena and Ayupala, “Please remain seated here together with ten brethren. Let the rest of the sramanas depart.”
After Nagasena asked the other sramanas to depart and only ten were left, the king ordered, “Let all the honorable and noble women and female performers in the palace come to this hall, sit behind a curtain and listen to Nagasena and me discuss Dharma and the Path.”

At that time all the noble women and the female performers sat behind a curtain, listening to Nagasena’s preaching. The king took a seat and sat down in front of Nagasena.

5. The Aim of Spiritual Life

The king asked, “What should we discuss?” Nagasena said, “Your majesty the king, if you want to listen to the truth or the summon bonum, we should discuss that.”

So the king asked, “What is the object, Sir, of your renunciation, what is the summon bonum at which you aim?”

“The aim of our renunciation is that this sorrow may pass away, and that no future sorrow may arise hereafter. That is why we become sramanas. This is our highest aim.”

“Sir, is this the reason that all the members of the sangha have joined?”
“Certainly not Sire, Not all the members of the sangha have joined for the same reason. There are four categories of sramanas.”

“What are the four?” (707b) asked the king.  

Nagasena said, “Some joined because of the tyranny of a county magistrate; some have joined due to poverty; some are harassed by debt; and some have genuinely renounced the world for the sole purpose of abandoning and eliminating sorrow and suffering here and hereafter.” Nagasena continued, “What I refer to are those who sincerely search for the Path and become sramanas.”

The king asked, “Is it because of searching for the Path that you have become a sramana?”

“I became a sramana when I was merely a boy. Due to the Buddha’s Dharma and his disciples who are all wise sramanas, I have learned from the scriptures and disciplines, which have become deeply rooted in my heart. As a result, I understand that the reason for renunciation is to eradicate sorrow here and hereafter.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”
6. Rebirth

The king asked, “Is there anyone after death who is not to be reborn again?”

“Some are to be reborn again, and some are not.” said Nagasena.

“Who will be reborn? Who will not be reborn?”

“No, those who have lustful desire or craving (tanha) will be reborn again hereafter, and those who do not have lustful craving will not be reborn.”

7. Consideration

“Revered Sir, of those who are not reborn, is it due to their whole-hearted consideration of saddharmas and virtue?”

“No, Your Majesty, by whole-hearted consideration of saddharmas, virtue, wisdom and other good qualities, one will not be reborn.”

“As for the whole-hearted consideration of saddharmas and wisdom (panna), are the meanings of the two terms the same?”
“Certainly not, their meanings are quite different.”

The king said, “Do the oxen, horses and the six kinds of domestic animals, have wisdom or not?”

“Oxen and horses, the six kinds of domestic animals have wisdom, but their minds are different. Have you, your majesty, ever seen the reaper? With their left hands, they grasp the barley into a bunch, and taking the sickles into their right hands, they cut the barley with it. Wise men cut off their lustful craving, just like cutting off the barley.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

8. Faith (saddha)

The king asked Nagasena again, “When you said just now, ‘by other good qualities,’ to what did you refer?”

“Faith (saddha), filial obedience, perseverance (viriya), reflection on good, meditation (samadhi), and wisdom (panna) are the other good qualities.” said Nagasena.

“What is faith?” asked the king.
“Faith means belief without doubt, faith in the existence of the Buddha, of the Buddha’s Dharma and of the bhiksu sangha; faith in the existence of arhats, of the present world, of the next world and of filial piety towards parents; faith in good remuneration for good action, bad remuneration for bad actions. If one has such faith, his mind is serene and clear and the five hindrances are eradicated.

What are the five? The first is lustful craving, the second is hatred, the third is mental sloth, the fourth is sports and enjoyment, the fifth is doubt.\textsuperscript{119} If a person has not removed these five hindrances, his mind is not calm and tranquil.”

Nagasena continued, “A cakkavattin, with his chariots, horses and men, may cross over a small stream called Li,\textsuperscript{120} (707c) and make the water fouled, turbid and muddy. When he is on the other side, the monarch is thirsty and wants to get some water for drinking. Now suppose, the monarch has a water-purifying-gem and had it thrown into the water, then at once, the water becomes clear and pure. So the monarch has pure water to drink.”
Continued Nagasena, "(In the same way), if there is an evil thought in the mind of people, it is just like the turbid water. All the disciples of the Buddha have gained the Path for crossing over the stream of samsara, because their mind is clear and pure, just as the water-purifying-gem purifies the turbid water. If people can remove all the mental evil and be faithful, clear, calm in the mind, it is just like the brilliant moon."

"Excellent, Nagasena."

9. Aspiration of faith

The king asked, "What is aspiration, the mark of faith?"

Nagasena said, "Having seen those among their colleagues who have already eliminated the evil state of the mind, some who have attained srotapanna, others sakrdagamin, anagamin and arhathood, the disciples of the Buddha aspire to pursue their way with faith. As a result, some have also crossed over the samsara.

Then Nagasena said, "As if a mighty storm takes place on a mountain top and the rain water flows down in great quantity."
The people on both sides do not know the depth and breadth of the water and are fearful, and dare not cross it. And suppose a certain person comes from far away and having observed the water, knows exactly the depth and breadth and also knows exactly his own strength and power. He crosses over the water and reached the other shore. The people on both sides follow him by imitating his way and also cross over the stream.

So do the disciples of the Buddha, they have seen that those whose mind is pure have attained the Path of srotapanna, some the Path of sakrdagamin, some the Path of anagamin and some the Path of arhathood. All these are due to their wholesome state of mind and their perseverance.

Therefore the Buddha said, “He who has faith, can save himself. If people of the world can control and overcome the five sense desires by themselves, and also know that the body is suffering, they can save themselves. People all obtain the Path by wisdom.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

10. The Thirty-Seven Factors of Enlightenment
The king asked, “What is filial piety?”
Nagasena answered, “All good qualities are filial piety. The thirty-seven factors of enlightenment\textsuperscript{125} have filial piety as their basis.”

“What are the thirty-seven factors?”

“They are: the four abodes of mindfulness or subjects of reflection,\textsuperscript{126} the four modes of spiritual exertion, the four bases of extraordinary powers, the five spiritual faculties of moral sense, the five mental powers, the seven factors of enlightenment,\textsuperscript{127} and the noble eightfold path.”\textsuperscript{128}

(a) “What are the four abodes of mindfulness?” asked the king.

“The first is to observe the body with consideration of the body; the second is to observe pain and itching with consideration of pain and itching; the third is to observe the mind with consideration of the mind; and the fourth is to observe the Dharma with consideration of the Dharma.”\textsuperscript{129}

(b) “What are the four modes of spiritual exertion?”

“The Buddha has said, ‘Having analyzed the four states of mindfulness, one would not think further.’ These are the four modes of spiritual exertion.\textsuperscript{130}
When one has gained the four modes of spiritual exertion, one has also gained the four psychic powers.”

(c) “What are the four psychic powers?”

“They are: (1) The divine eye; (2) the divine ear; (3) the ability to know other’s mind; and (4) being able to fly with the physical body.”

(d) “What are the five spiritual faculties of moral sense?”

“(1) When the eyes see pleasant of unpleasant forms, but there is no attachment of the mind to them; (2) when the ears hear pleasant, bad or abusive sounds, but there is no attachment of the mind to them; (3) when the nose smells pleasant or unpleasant odors, but there is no attachment of the mind to them; (4) when the mouth receives delicious, bitter or astringent tastes, but there is no attachment of the mind to them, (5) and when the body receives a soft or smooth touch, there is no attachment of the mind to them, or when the body receives a harsh and rough touch, there is no dislike. These are the five spiritual faculties of moral sense.”

(e) “What are the five mental powers?”

“They are (1) to control the eyes; (2) to control the ears; (3) to control the nose;...
...(4) to control the mouth; and (5) to control the body, so that the mind does not (fall into the evil states).  

(f) “What are the seven factors of enlightenment?”  
“They are: (1) mind, (2) discrimination, (3) exertion, (4) joy, (5) serenity, (6) concentration, and (7) protection.”  

(g) “What is the noble eightfold path?  
“They are: right view, right thought, right speech, right livelihood, right action, right means, right mind and right concentration. Thus the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment are based on filial piety (sila).”  

Nagasena continued, “Just as a person carrying a heavy load reaches a faraway (place) and makes his business successful. All these are due to the earth. In the world, the five kinds of grain, trees and other grass all grow up due to the earth.”  

Then Nagasena went on to give a simile, “It is just like an architect who constructs a large city. First he should measure and lay the foundations, then he will be able to build a city. Again it is like a performer who wants to give a performance. First he should clear the ground and make it even.
(In the same way), the Buddha’s disciples, in search of the Path, should first act according to the Dharma and perform good deeds. They understand suffering and so they eliminate lustful craving by following the noble eightfold path.”

“How do they eliminate lustful cravings?” asked the king.

“When they completely absorb their mind into the Path, the lustful cravings naturally disappear.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

11. Exertion

The king said, “What is the characteristic mark of exertion?”

“To hold fast to good qualities. To support good qualities is the characteristic mark of exertion.”

Then Nagasena gave some similes, “It is just like the support given by a post to a wall that is going to collapse, or to a house that is going to fall. This is called exertion.”

Nagasena continued with other similes, “It is as if a king who sends out his army to fight...
but finds his army too weak to fulfill his wishes. So the king sends out his reinforcements to help. As a result, the king wins the battle. If a person has bad qualities, he or she is just like the small and weak army. People eliminate all bad qualities by the support of the good qualities, just as the king wins the battle by the help of the reinforcements. With the help of the five good qualities, one destroys the five bad qualities. It is just like the king who sends reinforcements to the weak army. (708b) This is called supporting good qualities by exertion.”

Thus Nagasena quoted from a sutra: “With the help of exertion, people attain the meritorious Path and go beyond the worldly path without falling back again.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

12. Mindfulness

The king asked again, “Why should the mind think of meritorious deeds?”

Nagasena replied, “It is like a person who takes different kinds of flowers and strings them by the thread so that they cannot be scattered by the wind.”
Nagasena again gave a simile, “It is like the treasurer of the king, he knows how much gold, silver, gems, jade, colored glass and other treasures are in the state treasury. If the trainee wishes to obtain nirvana, he should be mindful of the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment.

This is just what we called crossing over the stream of samsara by way of consideration. With mindfulness, a person knows the meritorious and demeritorious, what should be practiced, what should not be practiced, and also distinguishes between the black ones and the white ones.

Having pondered, he then gives up the demeritorious and cultivates the meritorious.”

Nagasena gave more similes saying, “It is like the king’s guard. He knows the people to whom the king respects and the people to whom the king does not, those who are beneficial to the king and those who are not. He allows those who are beneficial to and respected by the king to come in and does not allow those who are not beneficial to and not respected by the king to come in. So is mindfulness, it lets all the wholesome thoughts come in and stops all the unwholesome thoughts.
In such a way, one should be able to guide his mind and control his thought.”

Then Nagasena quoted from a sutra: “One should protect and check one’s mind and the six cravings in one’s own mind. By strictly checking the mind and holding fast on to it, one can transcend the world.”

“Excellent, Nagasena. ☞

13. Concentration

The king asked Nagasena, “What is the characteristic mark of concentration?”

Nagasena replied, “All meritorious deeds have concentration as their chief. All meritorious actions will follow if a person can concentrate his mind.” Nagasena gave some similes, “Like the staircase which is supported by a main structure, all meritorious deeds depend on concentration. It is like a king where the whole army, elephants, horses, war chariots and infantry would incline to follow his lead when he goes down to battle with his fourfold army in array. All the Buddha’s teachings and other good qualities follow concentration, it is just as the army follows the king.”

Nagasena quoted from the Buddhist sutras:
It is said, ‘Concentration is the foundation of all good qualities. The trainee in the Dharma should first take refuge in concentration. The life of a person is just like the water flowing down the current in constant succession without interruption.’

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

14. Wisdom

The king asked, “What is the characteristic mark of wisdom?”

Nagasena said, “I have already told you before, if a person has wisdom, he can cut off all the doubts, and can distinguish what is meritorious. This is wisdom.”

Nagasena gave a simile, “It is like a person entering a dark room with light in hand, as soon as the light enters the room, the darkness disappears. So a person is endowed with wisdom is like a bright light. The person who is endowed with wisdom can cut off all evils, just like a person who cuts down the trees with a sharp knife (708c). For worldlings, wisdom is of prime importance. A person endowed with wisdom is able to transcend the suffering of Samsara.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”
15. All for the Same Purpose

The king asked, “Nagasena, all the qualities you have mentioned above are so different, are they all for the same purpose of eradicating all defilements?”

Nagasena said, “Yes, they are. Various kinds of good qualities are described in Buddhist sutras, but they are all for the same purpose of eradicating defilements.

Nagasena said, It is like the king who, although he sends his fourfold army to the battlefield, has one aim of defeating the opposing army. In the same way, the Buddha preached various kinds of good qualities in different sutras, but they serve the same purpose of eradicating different kinds of defilements.”

“Excellent, Nagasena, you quote the sutras readily.”

16. The Same or Different; Those Who are Reborn

The king asked, “When a person dies, and he is reborn in a good or in a bad realm, does the body and spirit remain the same as the old one or become another?”
Nagasena replied, “It is neither the same old body and spirit, nor is it apart from the old one.”

Then Nagasena asked the king, “When you, the king, were a baby you were fed by your mother’s milk, and now you are a grown man, so are you the same or different?”

“The child is one, I am another.” said the king.

Then Nagasena said, “When a person is in the womb of his mother, is the embryo which is just formed, the same as the embryo which becomes a form? Is it the same as the one that assumes skin and flesh, or when it is newly born, or when it is a few years old, (is it the same at all these stages of life)? Just as a person learns from a book, can another person do the work for him?”

“No, another person cannot do the work for him.”

Again Nagasena asked, “If a person violates the law and is to be punished, can an innocent one replace him?”

“It cannot be,” said the king.

Nagasena spoke to the king in terms of spiritual effort and criminal law, but the king could not understand it and said to Nagasena, “How would you explain it if asked to do so?”
Then Nagasena explained, “I would say that I am the same person as when I was a baby. The body of the grown man is a continuity of the original embryo and the baby. Therefore the life principle of the grown up man and the baby is fed within this same continuity — the body.”

Nagasena asked the king, “Suppose a person were to light a lamp, would it burn throughout the night?”

“It might do so,” replied the king.

“Now is it the same flame that burns in the first watch of the night, at midnight and at dawn?”

“No, it is not the same flame.”

“Then, is one lamp lit in the first watch of the night, and another lit at midnight and again another lit at dawn?”

“No, it is not. But the light continues burning from the same lamp (from first watch through) to midnight till dawn.”

Nagasena said, “Just so is the continuity of a person from life to life. One passes away and another comes into being, and thus from the continuity, one is reborn, becomes old and dies. From the last phase of his self-consciousness,...
...one is reborn into a new life and (709a) goes on continuously. In this flux, it is neither the same personality nor one different from the old. After death, the personality goes on to be reborn again.”

Then Nagasena gave a simile, “It is like the milk that turns into curds, and from curds to butter, then from butter to ghee. Can the butter and ghee be called milk?”

“No, it cannot be called milk.”

“The consciousness of a person is like the milk, milk can turn into curds, then from curds to butter, and from butter to ghee. The spirit of a person is the same, from the spirit, a person is reborn, grows up, and becomes old. From old age comes death, and after death, the consciousness is again reborn. When this body comes to an end, it takes another body. It is like the interchange of two wicks (of a lamp).”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

17. Knowledge of Having Rebirth
The king asked Nagasena, “Is the enlightened person aware of the fact that he is not to be reborn again hereafter?”

Nagasena replied, “Yes, he knows.”

“How does he know?” asked the king.

Nagasena replied, “When he knows that he has no craving, no sense desire, and no defilement (in his mind), then he knows that he will not be born again hereafter.

It is just like the farmer who has ploughed and sown rice and fills his granary with much grain. Then for a period, the farmer would neither plough nor sow, but live on the stored-up grain. Is there any hope of getting new grain in this farming family?”

“There should be none.”

“How does the farming family know that there is no hope of getting new grain again?” asked Nagasena.

“Because the farming family knows that they have neither ploughed nor sown, therefore there is no hope.”

“Just so, the person who obtains the Path is the same. When he knows for himself that he has already eradicated craving and suffering,...
...and his mind is devoid of desire, then he knows that he will not be born again hereafter.”

18. Wisdom of the Liberated and that of Ordinary People

The king asked, “Is the wisdom possessed by the person who is not to be born again different from that of the ordinary person?”

“Yes,” Nagasena said, “it is different from the ordinary person.”

“Has the ordinary man intelligence?”

“Yes, he has.”

“What is the difference between wisdom and intelligence?”

“They are both the same.”

“Would he, with his intelligence and wisdom, know everything? Is there anything he does not know?”

“In regard to some things, he knows, in regard to others, he does not know.”

“With his intelligence, what does he know and what does he not know?”

“He knows the things that he has learned, and he does not know the things that he has not learned.
The person endowed with wisdom knows that men and phenomena are impermanent and not independent, and that all will finally pass away. Craving is the source of all suffering and it will lead to suffering. The person endowed with wisdom knows impermanence, the rise and fall of all matters. This is the difference between the person who is wise and those who are not.”

(a) “If a person is endowed with wisdom could he still have ignorance?” (709b)

“If a person is endowed with wisdom, all his delusions will disappear.”

Then Nagasena gave a simile, “It is like a person entering a dark room while holding a lamp, the room will be lit and the darkness will disappear. Wisdom is like this. If a person has wisdom, all his delusions will disappear.”

(b) “Then what has his wisdom become?” asked the king.

“When wisdom of reasoning has done its work, then this wisdom of reasoning disappears, but its work, its effect remains.”

Then Nagasena gave a simile, “It is just as a person writes during the night under a lamp.
When the lamp has been extinguished, the writing will still be there. It is the same with regard to the wise. When the wise have accomplished the work, their wisdom ceases, but their work still remains there.”

“What do you mean, by ‘when the wise have accomplished their work, their wisdom ceases to be’?”

Nagasena again gave a simile, “It is just like a person who prepares five pots of water in case that there might be a fire. If a fire breaks out the person could take the five pots of water to extinguish the fire. After the fire has been extinguished, does the person still wish to take the pots back home to use them?”

“The person would not wish to take back the pots, because the pots are broken, the fire has been extinguished, what would be the use of getting them back again?”

“A trainee in the Dharma, with the five kinds of virtues, eliminates all the evils. It is also like putting out the fire using the pots of water.”

“What are the five kinds of virtues?” asked the king.
“(1) Faith in goodness and in the existence of evil; (2) not infringing the precepts; (3) energy; (4) being endowed with wisdom and mindful of goodness; and (5) concentration on the Dharma. These are the five virtues and good qualities. If a person acts according to these five good qualities, then he gains wisdom, knowing that the body and all other things in the world are impermanent, and knows suffering, that everything is not in his command, and also knows that everything is without self.”

It is just like a physician who goes to a sick man’s home with the five kinds of drugs and gives them to the sick man to drink, thereby curing the sick man of his illness. Would the physician in that case think of using the same medicine on the sick man again?”

“No, certainly he would not use the same medicine on the sick man again.”

“The five kinds of medicines are like the five good qualities or virtues, the physician is like the trainee in the Dharma. The sickness is like evil (klesa), the ignorant (prthagjana) are like the sick man and...
...the one who has crossed over to the other shore is like the sick man who has recovered from illness. By the wisdom of reasoning, one crosses to the other shore, when one has crossed to the other shore, this wisdom ceases to be.”

Then Nagasena gave more similes, “It is like a warrior who takes his bow and arrows and goes to battle to fight the foe. With five arrows, he defeats the foe. Does the warrior want to get back his arrows?”

“No, he does not want them back.”

“The five arrows are like the five wisdoms, and the wise who attain the Path with this wisdom are like the warrior who defeats the foe. Evil is like the foe, and a trainee on the Path eliminates all evils with five good qualities. When all evils are removed, pure wisdom arises. A person, by this wisdom, has crossed out of this world, and his attainment will last forever.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

19. The Bodily Pain of an Emancipated One

The king asked, “If a person has crossed over to the other shore, (709c) and will not be reborn hereafter...
...does he still feel any painful sensation?”

Nagasena replied, “Some he feels and some not.”

“What painful sensation does he feel and which not?”

“He may feel bodily pain, but not mental pain.”

“What do you mean by the expression that he feels bodily pain but not mental pain?”

“He is liable to suffer bodily pain, because the body still exists, he is not liable to mental pain, because the mind has got rid of all evil, and is without any desire.”

The king said, “If a person who has crossed over to the other shore still cannot get rid of the bodily pain, then he has not attained the Path of nirvana.” Again the king said, “If a person who has attained the Path has no sense desire, and while his mind is in peace, yet bodily pain still exists, then what is the use of attaining nirvana? If a person has attained nirvana, why does he not die?”

“It is like the unripe fruit, we need not force it to ripen, but when it is ripe, we need not wait again.”
Nagasena continued, “There is a thera by the name of Sariputra who has attained the Path. The following was said by Sariputra when he was alive:

“I do not seek for death, I do not seek for birth; I abide my time, when my time comes, I shall go.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

[Here ends the first chapter]

20. Different Kinds of Feelings

The king asked, “If a person is happy, is it wholesome or unwholesome? If a person is unhappy, is it wholesome or unwholesome?”

Nagasena replied, “As the Buddha has attained non-activity, he does not speak of suffering or happiness.”

“If so,” the king asked, “is it as if there is no suffering in conditioned dharmas?”

Nagasena asked the king, “Now, what do you think, suppose a man were to hold in one hand a red-hot ball of iron, and in the other hand, a lump of ice. Would they both burn him?”

“Yes, both hands will get hurt.”
“But, Great King, are the iron and the ice both hot in his two hands?”
“Certainly not, both are not hot.”
“But, are they both cold?”
“No, both are not cold.”
“But, are both hands burnt? I ask you again, if the heat hurts, both hands should be hot. If the cold hurts, both hands should be cold. How then can they both be burnt, since they are not both hot, nor both cold?”
“I am not intelligent enough to argue with you. Be so good, Nagasena, (710a) as to explain how the matter stands?”

Nagasena said, “In a Buddhist sutras it is said, ‘There are six things arousing internal joyful feelings in men, six things arousing internal sorrowful feelings in men, six things arousing neither pleasant nor unpleasant feelings in men, and six external things arousing sorrowful feelings in men.’”

(a) The king asked, “What are the six things arousing internal joyful feelings in men?”
“They are (1) when the eyes see (pleasant) forms which causes hope to see them again, thus arousing internal joyful feelings in men;
(2) when the ears hear pleasant sounds which causes hope to hear them again, thus arousing internal joyful feelings in men;

(3) when the nose smells pleasant odors which causes hope to smell them again, thus arousing internal joyful feelings in men;

(4) when the tongue tastes nice flavors which causes hope to taste them again, thus arousing internal joyful feelings in men;

(5) when the body touches smoothness and softness which causes hope to touch them again, thus arousing internal joyful feelings in men;

(6) and when the mind obtains pleasant thoughts which causes hope to obtain them again, thus arousing internal joyful feelings in men.

(b) “What are the six external things arousing joyful feelings in men?”

“They are (1) when the eyes see pleasant material forms, one thinks of them as not easily to be obtained and therefore they should be discarded. Thus having pondered and analyzed impermanence, there arouses external joyful feelings;

(2) when the ears hear good sounds, one thinks of them as not easily to be obtained...
...and therefore they should be discarded, thus there arouses external joyful feelings;

(3) when the nose smells good scents, one thinks of them as not easily to be obtained and therefore they should be discarded, there arouses external joyful feelings;

(4) when the tongue tastes nice flavors, one thinks of them as not easily to be obtained and therefore they should be discarded, there arouses external joyful feelings;

(5) when the body touches smoothness and softness, one thinks of them as not easily to be obtained and therefore they should be discarded, there arouses external joyful feelings;

(6) and when the mind indulges in lustful craving, one ponders it over that all things are impermanent and therefore they should be discarded, thinking thus, there arouses external joyful feelings. These are the six external things arousing pleasant feelings.”

(c) “What are the six internal things arousing internal sorrowful feelings in men?” asked again the king.

“They are (1) when we see what our eyes dislike to see, there arises internal sorrowful feelings;
(2) when we hear what our ears dislike to hear, there arises internal sorrowful feelings;
(3) when we smell what our nose dislikes to smell, there arises internal sorrowful feelings;
(4) when we taste what our tongue dislikes to taste, there arises internal sorrowful feelings;
(5) when we touch what our body dislikes to touch, there arises internal sorrowful feelings;
(6) and when we think what the mind dislikes to think, there arises internal sorrowful feelings.”

(d) “What are the six external things arousing sad feelings in men?”

“They are (1) when the eyes see evil material forms, this arouses sad feelings in men;
(2) when the ears hear unpleasant sounds, this arouses sad feelings in men;
(3) when the nose smells bad odors, this arouses sad feelings in men;
(4) when the tongue tastes bitter taste, this arouses sad feelings in men;
(5) when the body touches the roughness and hardness, this arouses sad feelings in men;
(6) and when the mind hates something, this arouses sad feelings in men. These are the six external things arousing sad feelings in men.”
(e) The king asked, “What are the six things arousing neither sorrowful nor joyful feelings in people?”

“They are (1) when the eyes see things, this arouses neither pleasant nor unpleasant feelings; (2) when the ears hear sounds, this arouses neither pleasant nor unpleasant feelings; (3) when the nose smells odors, this arouses neither pleasant nor unpleasant feelings; (4) when the tongue tastes something, this arouses neither pleasant nor unpleasant feelings; (5) when the body touches something, this arouses neither pleasant feelings nor unpleasant feelings; (6) and when the mind thinks over something, this arouses neither pleasant feelings nor unpleasant feelings. These are the six internal things that arouse neither pleasant nor unpleasant feelings.”

(f) “What are the six external things which arouse sorrowful feelings in people?”

“They are (1) when the eyes see a dead body and one ponders over the impermanence of the body and of all external matters, then he thinks to himself, ‘Having pondered over this, why have I not attained emancipation?’ Thus there arise external sorrowful feelings in him.”
(2) When one does not like to hear the good sounds, he thinks to himself, ‘If I have such a thought, why have I not attained emancipation?’ Thus there arise external sorrowful feelings.

(3) When the nose dislikes to smell both good and bad odors, he thinks to himself, ‘If I have such a thought, why have I not attained emancipation?’ Thus there arise external sorrowful feelings.

(4) When tongue tastes bitterness and sweetness indifferently, he thinks to himself, ‘If I have such a thought, why have I not attained emancipation?’ Thus there arise external sorrowful feelings.

(5) When body touches neither smoothness and softness nor roughness and hardness, then he thinks to himself, ‘If I have such a thought, why have I not attained emancipation?’ Thus there arise external sorrowful feelings.

(6) When the mind dislikes craving, he thinks to himself, ‘If I have such a thought, why have I not attained emancipation.’ Thus there arise external sorrowful feelings. These are the six things arousing external sorrowful feelings.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”
21. Name-and-Form and Rebirth

The king asked Nagasena, “What is reborn after death?”

Nagasena replied, “Name-and-form (namarupa) is reborn in the next life.”

“Is it the former name-and-form that is reborn?”

“No, it is neither the former name, nor the former form, but by this name-and-form, good and evil deeds are done in this life and (from these deeds), another name-and-form is reborn in the next life.”

“If that be so, by this name-and-form, good and evil deeds are done in this life and this (name and) form is not to be reborn in the next life. Can one be released from the results of his good or bad deeds done (in this life) so that one does not suffer hereafter?”

“If one does good deeds in this life, and is not to be reborn in the next life, then he is released. But people perform good and bad karma continuously without stopping, surely they will reconnect again and therefore they are not released.”
Then Nagasena gave a simile, “Suppose someone were to steal a fruit\textsuperscript{180} from another man, and the owner of the fruit were to seize the man and bring him before the king, saying, ‘This man has stolen my fruit.’ Then if the thief were to say, ‘Your Majesty, I have not taken away this man’s fruit. (710c) This man has only planted the small fruit tree but not the fruit. I take the fruit to be mine, why do I need to steal? So I have not stolen this man’s fruit, I am not guilty.’” Nagasena said to the king: “Thus the two persons argue with each other as to who is right who is wrong.”

The king said, “The person who has planted the fruit tree is correct, because the fruit comes from that plant. The thief’s argument does not stand up, he is guilty.”

“Why is the thief guilty?” asked Nagasena.

“The thief is guilty because it was the owner of the fruit tree who had planted it, allowed the tree to grow roots and thus bear fruits.”

Then Nagasena said, “So it is in the life of a person. If a person, by this name-and-form, does good and evil deeds in this life...
...and then is reborn in the next life, the good and evil deeds done in this life are the causes and conditions (for birth).”

[(2) Simile of the crops]

Nagasena gave another simile, “Suppose a man were to steal another man’s crop of ripened grains\(^\text{181}\) and the owner were to seize the thief and says, ‘You have stolen my crops.’ The thief argues, ‘I have not stolen your crops, you have sown the cereal grass, but I take the crops, so how can you say that I commit theft?’ The two persons argued with each other and went before the king to tell the king about their dispute. Who is right and who is wrong?”

“The man who has sown the crops is correct, the thief is wrong.” said the king.

“How can you know that the one who steals the crops is wrong?”

“Sowing the paddy is the root cause. If there is no sowing of cereal grass, there is no root cause, thus how can there be crops?”

“So it is in the life of a person. A person, by this name-and-form, does good and evil deeds in this life, and he is reborn in the next life. The good and evil deeds done in this life are the root causes and conditions.”
Nagasena gave a simile, “It is like a man who feels cold in the winter and therefore lights a fire in the house to warm himself up. Then he leaves the fire still burning and goes away. After sometime, the fire burns the walls, rooms and the house. Then if the owner of the house were to seize that man and take him before the king, saying, ‘This man lit a fire and that fire has burned my house.’ Then the man who lights the fire says, ‘I lit a small fire in order to warm myself, I did not intend to burn the house.’”

Nagasena asked, “who is right, who is wrong?”

The king said, “The person who lit the fire is wrong, because the fire serves as a cause or condition (for the burning of the house).”

Nagasena said, “So it is in the life of a person. It is like a person who, by this name-and-form, does good and evil deeds in this life, and thus is to be reborn in the next life. The good and evil deeds done in this life serve as causes and conditions.”
Nagasena gave another simile, “Suppose a man were to light a candle and put it on the wall, and by that light he takes his meal. After some time, if the flame of the candle were to set the wall on fire, then the bamboo and other wood until at last all the houses were on fire. The fire spreads and at last burns the whole city. Then the people of the whole city were to ask the man, ‘You fellow, what have you set the whole of our city on fire for?’ And then the man would say, ‘I just lit a small candle in order to take my meal by the light. Therefore this big fire is different from that small flame which I lit.’ Now, if they, thus disputing, should go before the king, who is right who is wrong?”

“The person who lit the fire is wrong and guilty.”

“But why?”

“Because, Sir, the cause comes from the fire. After he has had his meal, he did not put out the fire and therefore the whole city caught fire.”

Nagasena said, “Just so is the life of a person. A person, by this name-and-form,...

[(4) Simile of the candle fire]
does good and evil deeds in this life, and is
reborn in the next life. The good and evil deeds
done in this life are the causes and conditions.
Because of ignorance (avidya), a person does good
and evil deeds, therefore he is not released (from
suffering).”

[(5) Simile of the marriage]

Nagasena again gave a simile, “Suppose, a
man were to choose a young girl in marriage and
give a price for her. After some years, she, in due
course, grows up to a mature age and another man
paid a price to marry her. Then the first man would
come and say, ‘You fellow, why have you married
my wife?’ Then if the other were to say, ‘You have
chosen the young girl for marriage and paid a price
for her, but I have chosen the grown up girl for
marriage and paid a price for her, how can you say
that I have married your wife?’ Thus disputing,
should the two men go before the king, who is
right, who is wrong?”

“The first one is right.”

“But why?”

“Because, Sir, the grown up girl would have
been derived from the young girl. Therefore she is
the wife of the first one. So the first one is right.”
“Just so is the life of a person. If a person, by this name-and-form, does good and evil deeds in this life, and then should he be reborn in the next life, the good and evil deeds done in this life are the causes and conditions of the next life.”

[(6) *Simile of the milk*]

Nagasena gave another simile, “Suppose a man were to take a bottle and buy milk from a herdsman. Then he leaves the bottle in the herdsman’s charge and says, ‘I will come back for it later.’ After some time, the man comes back to take his bottle of milk, but that bottle of milk has turned into curds already. Then the man, the buyer, says to the herdsman, ‘I have bought milk not curds. But now you give me curds.’ And then if the other were to reply, ‘It is your milk that has turned into curds.’ If they thus disputing with each other, should go before the king, who is right and who is wrong?”

“The herdsman is right.”

“But why?”

“Because, the man bought milk and left it at the herdsman’s house. The milk itself turned into curds, where is the guilt of the herdsman?”
Nagasena said, “Just so is the life of a person. If a person, by this name-and-form, does good and evil deeds in this life, and then is reborn in the next life, the good and evil deeds done in this life are the causes and conditions of that.”

22. Will Nagasena be Reborn?

The king asked, “Will you, Nagasena, be reborn in the next life?”

Nagasena replied, “Great king, what is the use of asking that question again? Have I not already told you that if I have craving in my heart when I die, I shall be reborn. If I have no craving, I shall not be reborn. It is like a man who renders his service to the king exhaustively. The king knows that the man is good and so bestows on him money and materials. Having got the money and materials, the man, having used them to buy clothes and food and drinks for himself, enjoys all the pleasures of the senses, should then publicly declare, ‘I have done great service to the king, but the king pays me naught.’”

Then Nagasena asked the king, “If a man has received rewards, but says that he has received none,...
...are the man’s words reliable?”
“No, not reliable.” replied the king.
“Thus I have told you, great king, if I have craving in my heart, I will be reborn in the next life. If I have no craving in my heart, I will not be reborn in the next life.”
“Excellent, Nagasena.”

23. Inter-dependence of Name and Form
The king asked, “You were talking just now of name-and-form, what does name mean, what does form mean?”
Nagasena replied, “What is currently existing is the form (i.e. the body), what the mind thinks is name.”

“Why is it, Nagasena, that name is not reborn separately from its form?”
“The name and form of a person are connected one with another and spring into being together. It is like an egg that consists of the yoke and the egg-shell. Just so, the name is not separate from its form.”
“Excellent, Nagasena.”
24. Question on Time

The king asked, “Venerable Nagasena, what is meant by ‘time’?”

Nagasena replied, “Concerning the past things we speak in reference to time, concerning the future things we also speak in reference to time, but concerning the present things we speak without referring to time.”

“Very good Nagasena.”

The king said, “In consideration, is there time which exists?”

Nagasena replied, “There is time which exists, there is time which does not exist.”

“Which time exists, which does not?”

“Regarding the person who has attained nirvana, time does not exist, but regarding the person who has not attained the Path and is still subject to birth and death, time exists. {If a person in this life delights in giving and is filial to his parents, then, he will get happiness in the next life.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

25. The Root of Past, Present and Future Dharmas
The king asked, “What is the root\textsuperscript{189} cause, Nagasena, of past things, of present things and of future things?”

Nagasena replied, “Ignorance is the root cause of past, future and present things. Because of ignorance, the spirit\textsuperscript{190} comes into being; conditioned by spirit, the body\textsuperscript{191} comes into being; conditioned by body, name comes into being; conditioned by name, form comes into being; conditioned by form, the six sense awarenesses\textsuperscript{193} come into being: (1) the eye awareness, (2) the ear awareness, (3) the nose awareness, (4) the tongue awareness, (5) the body awareness, and (6) the mind awareness. These are the six sense awarenesses. These six sense organs are all open to the outside (world). How do they open to the outside world? The eyes see forms, the ears listen to sounds, the nose smells odors, the tongue tastes flavors, the body feels the touch of smoothness, and the mind inclines towards craving. These are the six outside things. Going towards the object is called flowing. When these (flowings) are joined together, one is able to know suffering and happiness. From suffering and happiness, there comes craving,\textsuperscript{194} from craving, comes lustful desire,\textsuperscript{195}...
...from lustful desire, comes becoming;\textsuperscript{196} from becoming, comes birth; from birth, comes old age; from old age, comes disease or sickness; from disease or sickness, comes death; from death, comes lamentation; from lamentation, comes grief; from grief, comes inner despair.\textsuperscript{197} All these sufferings of life coming together is called a person. Because of all these (worries and sufferings), the person is subject to birth and death without an end. Therefore, the same old body of a person cannot be obtained.”\textsuperscript{198}

Then Nagasena gave a simile, “It is just like sowing grain. A man sows the five kinds of grains,\textsuperscript{199} from the grains come the roots, then comes stalks, leaves and fruits. After all these comes grain. Then the next year, he sows grain again and also gets much grain.”

Then Nagasena asked the king, “It is like a man who sows grain every year. Is there an end or a stop to the production of grain?”

“If he sows grain every year, there will be no end to its production.”

“Just so is the life of a person. There is no end to this cycle of birth and death.”
Then Nagasena gave a simile, “Just like a hen that lays an egg. From the egg comes a hen, from the hen comes another egg. So it is in a person. The cycle of birth and death continues without end.”

Then the Elder Nagasena drew a cycle of the wheel on the ground and asked the king, “Are there angles to this wheel?”

“This is a complete cycle. There is no angle to it,” said the king.

Then Nagasena said, “In a sutras, the Buddha says, ‘The cycle of birth and death of a person is like the wheel of a chariot rolling on continuously without an end.’”

Nagasena continued,

(a) “When the eyes make contact with various forms, then the eye consciousness arises. When these three (the eye, the form and the eye-consciousness) come together, happiness or suffering arise; from happiness and suffering, craving or attachment arises; from craving, lustful desire arises; from lustful desire, becoming arises; from becoming, there arises birth; from birth, there arise good and bad activities; then there again arises birth.”

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(b) “When the ears hear good sounds, ear-consciousness arises, then these three come together. With the contact of these three, happiness and suffering arise; from happiness and suffering, craving arises; from craving, lustful desire arises; from lustful desire, becoming arises; from becoming, birth arises; from birth, good and bad activities arise; from these good and bad activities, birth again arises.”

(c) “When the nose smells good odors, nose-consciousness arises; from the contact of these three, happiness and suffering arise; from happiness and suffering, craving arises; from craving, lustful desire arises; from lustful desire, becoming arises; from becoming, birth arises; from birth, good and bad activities arise; from these good and bad activities, birth again arises.”

(d) “When the tongue tastes a flavor, then tongue-consciousness arises; from the contact of these three, happiness and suffering arise; from happiness and suffering, craving arises; from craving, lustful desire arises; from lustful desire, becoming arises; from becoming, birth arises; from birth, good and bad activities arise; from these good and bad activities, birth again arises.”
The king asked Nagasena, “Revered Sir, you said that the birth and death of a person are empty,...
Nagasena replied, “When there is no root-cause, one will not be born again. But when there is a root-cause, once more one will pass onto another existence on account of this root-cause.”

“If there is no root-cause, one will not be born again. When there is root-cause, once more one will pass onto another existence. Thus there is no end to this root cause,” said the king.

“Yes, all have to pass on.”

[(1) Other factors in the rebirth of a person]

The king asked Nagasena again, “Are there other factors which would help to continue one’s birth and death?”

Nagasena said, “Are there other factors which help continue the birth and death of all birds and animals in the world?”

“I did not ask you the question with regard to birds and animals in the world. I just ask you, Sir, the root cause of the birth and death of a person.”

Then Nagasena replied, “With reference to trees, they can grow and the seedling is their root cause. With reference to the five kinds of grain, ...
...they can grow and the grain is their root cause. Everything on the earth grows or rises, owing to its root cause. With regard to person, the six passions \(^{210}\) and craving are the root causes.”

“With regard to a person, there are eyes and also forms, there is eye-consciousness; there are ears and sounds, there is also ear-consciousness; there is the nose and smell, there is also nose-consciousness; there is the tongue and flavors, there is also tongue-consciousness; there is the body and softness and smoothness, then there is also body-consciousness; there is the mind and mind objects (\textit{dharmas}), then there is mind-consciousness also.\(^ {211}\)

{Then from all these things, happiness and suffering arise; from happiness and suffering, craving arises; from craving, lustful desire arises; from lustful desire, arise the aggregates of suffering which constitute a human being. The eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue, the body, the mind, the consciousness and the mindfulness cause becoming to arise.}\(^ {212}\) The coming together of all those things is called touch; from touch, painful or pleasant feelings arise; from painful and pleasant feelings, craving arises; from craving, lustful desire arises; from lustful desire, becoming arises;...
from becoming, birth arises; from birth, old age and sickness arise; from sickness, comes death; from death, arises grief; from grief, arises lamentation; from lamentation, arises pain in the heart. Thus is human life.”

[(2) The conditions for arising and cessation]

Then Nagasena continued, “Where there are no eyes, no material forms to be seen, there is also no consciousness. Due to non-consciousness, there is no coming together, due to non-coming together, there are no painful, or pleasant feelings; due to no painful or pleasant feelings, there is no craving; due to no craving, there is no lustful desire; due to no lustful desire, there is no becoming; due to no becoming, there is no birth, no old age; due to no birth, there is no old age, due to no old age, there is no sickness and death; due to no sickness and death, there is no grief and lamentation; due to no grief and lamentation, there is no suffering in the inner heart; due to no such sufferings, one is emancipated and obtains the Path of nirvana.

If there is no ear, there is also no hearing of sounds; if there is no nose, there is also no smelling of odors; if there is no tongue, there is also no tasting of flavor;...
...If there is no body, there is also no touch of softness and smoothness; if there is no mind, there is also no thinking of mind objects. Due to no thinking of mind objects, there is no contact or touch; due to no contact, there is no painful or pleasant feelings; due to no painful or pleasant feelings, there is no craving; due to no craving, there is no lustful desire; due to no lustful desire, there is no embryo; due to no embryo, there is no birth; due to no birth, there is no old age; due to no old age, there is no sickness; due to no sickness, there is no death; due to no death, there is no grief; (712b) due to no grief, there is no lamentation; due to no lamentation, there is no suffering in the inner heart. So abandoning all such sufferings, one obtains the Path of nirvana."

"Excellent, Nagasena."

27. The Origin of Things

The king asked Nagasena, “Is there anything in the world arising spontaneously?”

Then Nagasena replied, “There is nothing in this world that arises spontaneously. All things originate through causes and conditions.”
Then Nagasena asked the king, "What do you think, did this great hall in which you are sitting come spontaneously into being or come into being owing to the endeavor of men?"

"It is due to the moil and toil of men. The woods come from forest, the clay and mud come from earth."

Nagasena said, "It is the same with regard to a person. The combination of eighteen dhatus or twelve ayatanas is called a person. Therefore there is nothing that arises spontaneously. There must be causes and conditions for a thing to arise."

Then Nagasena gave a simile, "It is just like a potter who makes earthen-wares. He takes water and earth, makes them into mud, shapes them into various forms and fires them into various earthen-wares. The mud itself cannot become earthen-ware. There must be man’s effort and the burning of wood before it becomes earthen-ware. There is nothing that arises spontaneously in this world."

Nagasena again gave a simile and said to the king, "It is like a lute (vina)."
If there is no string, no frame, no one to play it, can it produce any sounds?”

“Certainly not Sir.” said the king.

“Then, if there is a lute with string, frame and there is also a man to play it, can it produce sounds?”

“Yes, it can.”

“Thus, there is nothing that arises spontaneously in this world. There must be causes and conditions for a thing to arise.”

[(4) Simile of making fire]

Nagasena said to the king, “It is like making fire by rubbing two sticks together. If there are no sticks, no human effort or exertion, could there be fire?”

“Certainly not.”

“If there are two sticks and also human effort or exertion, could there be fire?”

“Yes, there could be fire.”

“Thus there is nothing that arises spontaneously in this world. There must be causes and conditions for a thing to arise.”

[(5) Simile of fire]

Nagasena asked the king, “It is like a lens without a person holding it, and without the sun,...
...or a clear sky, could it produce fire?”
“Certainly not.”
“Then if there is a person holding the lens, and there is the sun and clear sky, can it produce fire?”
“Yes, it can produce fire.”
“Thus, there is nothing in this world that arises spontaneously. There must be causes and conditions for a thing to arise.”
[(6) *Simile of the image*]
Nagasena asked the king again, “Suppose a man has no mirror, and there is also no light, but he wants to see himself in the mirror. Can he see his own image?
“No, he cannot see his own image.”
“But, if there is a mirror, light and also a person looking at the mirror, can he see his own image?”
“Yes, he can see his own image.”
“Thus, there is nothing in this world that arises spontaneously. There must be causes and conditions for a thing to arise.”

28. Is There a Soul?
The king further asked Nagasena saying, “Is there a soul in an ordinary person?”

Nagasena replied, “By analysis and examination, there is no soul in an ordinary person. What can we call a soul?”

“Is the life or living principle in the body of a person called a soul?” asked the king.

Then Nagasena asked the king, “Can the living principle in a person see the material forms through eyes, hear sounds through the ears, smell odors through nose, taste flavors through tongue, feel smoothness and softness through body, and think over some objects with mind?”

“Yes it could.”

Then Nagasena said, “Now you and I are sitting in this palace with windows open to the four directions. Is it possible for us to see what we want to see through any window we like?”

“Yes, we can.”

Nagasena said, (a) “Suppose, the living principle in the body of a person can see through any orifice of the body freely, can it see the material forms through the eyes? Can it see the material forms through the ears? Can it see the material forms through the nose?...
...(Can it see the material forms through the mouth? Can it see the material forms through the body? Can it see the material forms through the mind?)

“No, it cannot.”

(b) “Suppose, the living principle is in the ear, then can it hear sounds through the ears? Can it see material forms through the ears? Can it smell odors both good and bad through the ears? Can it taste flavors with the ears? Can it feel softness and smoothness with the ears? Can it think over something using the ears?”

(c) “Suppose, the living principle is in the nose, then can it smell both good and bad odors through the nose? Can it see material forms through the nose? Can it hear sounds through the nose? Can it taste flavors with the nose? Can it feel softness and smoothness with the nose? Can it think over something with the nose?”

(d) “Suppose, the living principle is in the mouth, then can it taste flavors through the mouth? Can it see the material forms through the mouth? Can it hear sounds with the mouth? Can it smell good and bad odors with the mouth? Can it feel smoothness and softness through the mouth? Can it think over something with the mouth?”
(e) “Suppose, the living principle is in the body, then can it feel smoothness and softness through the body? Can it see the material forms through the body? Can it hear sounds through the body? Can it smell both good and bad odors through the body? Can it taste flavors through the body? Can it think over something with the body?”

(f) “Suppose the living principle is in the mind, then can it think over something with the mind? Can it see material forms through the mind? Can it hear sounds with the mind? Can it smell good and bad odors with the mind? Can it taste flavors with the mind? Can it feel smoothness and softness with the mind?”

“No, it cannot,” replied the king.

Then Nagasena said, “What you, great king, have said now and previous do not agree. Now, great king, you and I are sitting here in the palace. If the windows of the four directions are to be removed, then can our eyesight reach far and wide?”

“Yes, it can reach far and wide.”

“Suppose, the living principle is in the body, can it see far and wide when the doors (dvara) of eye are removed? Can it hear distant sounds when the doors of ear are cut off and enlarged?
Can it smell distant odors when the nose is cut off and enlarged? Can it taste more flavors when the mouth is removed and enlarged? Can it feel softness and smoothness when the skin of the body is cut off? Is it able to (know the Dharma) more extensively when the mind is removed?”

“No, it cannot.” replied the king.

“What you, great king, have said now and previous do not agree.”

Then Nagasena asked the king, “If your treasurer or storekeeper comes and stands (713a) in front of you, can you know that he stands in front of you?”

“Yes, I know.”

“If the treasurer comes into the king’s palace, does he know that he has entered the king’s palace?”

“Yes, of course, he knows.”

“Then, suppose, the living principle is in the body of a person, can it know sweetness, or sourness, or acidity, or saltiness, or pungency, or astringency when anything possessing flavor is laid upon the tongue?”

“Yes, it would know it.”
“What you, great king, have said now and previous do not agree.”

Then Nagasena gave a simile, “It is like a man drinking wine, if the man were to be put upside down into a big jar full of wine to taste the flavor of the wine, could the man know the flavor of the wine?”

“No, he could not.”

“But why does he not know the flavor?”

“Because the wine could not get into his mouth, to the tongue, so he could not know the flavor of the wine.”

“What you, great king, have said now and previous do not agree.”

Then the king said, “I am not capable of discussing such reasoning. Please, explain to me how the matter stands.”

Nagasena said, “When a person sees the material forms with his own eyes, then the eye-consciousness arises. Due to the arising of eye-consciousness, there arise painful or pleasant feelings. Then the mind and thoughts come into contact. It is the same with regard to ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. When the mind comes in contact with mind-objects,...
...then mind-consciousness arises; then due to the arising of mind-consciousness, there arise painful and pleasant feelings. From painful and pleasant feelings, there arise thoughts; from thoughts, there arises mindfulness. Thus it continues without a soul.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

29. Visual-consciousness and Mental-consciousness

The king said, “When visual-consciousness arises, does mental-consciousness also arise at the same time?”

“Yes, they arise together.”

“What consciousness arises first?”

“The visual-consciousness arises first, then mental-consciousness second.”

“If so, does the visual-consciousness speak to the mental-consciousness: ‘Where I arise, you likewise arise,’ or does the mental-consciousness speak to the eye-consciousness: ‘Where you arise, I will likewise arise?’

“No, they do not thus speak to each other.”

“You have said that they arise at the same time, why is there no communication between the one and the other?”
“There are four circumstances under which there is not communication. What are the four circumstances? They are (1) following on, (2) the existence of a door, (3) walking along the rut, (4) arithmetic. There is no communication under these four circumstances.”

(1) Then the king asked, “What is ‘following on’?”

Nagasena said to the king, “When it rains at the top of a mountain, where will the rain water flow?”

“IT WILL FLOW DOWNWARDS.”

“After that, if it were to rain again, where will this rain water flow?”

“It will flow in the same way as the first water had gone.”

Then Nagasena asked the king, “Would the first rain water speak to the second, ‘You should follow me,’ and the second then speak to the first, ‘I will follow wherever you go.’”

The king replied, “The two waters each goes their own way, the former does not speak to the latter (and the latter also does not speak to the former).”

“The visual-consciousness is just like the water.
The visual-consciousness does not speak to the mental-consciousness, ‘You should follow (713b) me to arise.’ The mental-consciousness also does not speak to the visual-consciousness, ‘I will follow you to arise.’ The visual-consciousness and mental-consciousness do not speak to each other. This is called sloping down. It is the same with regard to ears, nose, tongue, body and mind.”

(2) “What is ‘existence of a door’?” the king asked again.

“It is like a great city with only one gate and a person in the city wants to go out. From where can he go out?”

“He can go out through the only gate.”

“And if another man also wants to go out, how could he go out?”

“Certainly he should go out from the only gate by which the first man has gone out.”

Then Nagasena said, “Would the first man say to the second man, ‘You should follow me,’ or would the second man speak to the first man, ‘I will go out from the gate by which you go out.’ Would the two men speak to one another thus?”

“They would not speak to each other thus.”
“The consciousness is like the door. The visual-consciousness does not speak to the mental-consciousness, ‘You should follow me to arise,’ and the mental-consciousness also does not speak to the visual-consciousness, ‘I will follow you to arise.’ The visual-consciousness and mental-consciousness do not speak to one another. This is called the existence of a door. It is the same with regard to ear, nose, tongue, body and mind.”

(3) The king asked Nagasena, ‘What is ‘walking along the rut’?”

Then Nagasena again asked the king, “Suppose, the first cart would go and leave a rut, then how should the second cart go?”

“The second cart should follow the rut left by the first cart,” said the king.

“Would the first cart tell the second, ‘You should follow my rut, or would the second cart tell the first, ‘I will follow your rut.’ Do the two carts speak to one another thus?”

“No, they do not speak to one another thus,” said the king.

“It is the same with regard to people.
The visual-consciousness does not speak to the mental-consciousness, ‘Where I arise, you likewise arise,’ and the mental-consciousness also does not speak to the visual-consciousness, ‘Where you arise, I will likewise arise.’ It is the same with regard to ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. They do not speak to one another thus.”

(4) The king said to Nagasena, “What is ‘arithmetic’?”

Nagasena replied, “Here arithmetic means valuation. The sciences, writing, etc. are included in arithmetic. When the eyes, the ears, the nose, the mouth, the body and the mind work little by little, one knows. So due to the coming together of the six things, there arises awareness. Awareness cannot arise from only one of the six things.”

“Excellent Nagasena.”

30. The Characteristics of Contact

The king said to Nagasena, “Does feeling as painful or pleasant arise together with visual perception?”

Nagasena replied, “The eyes and feeling as painful or pleasant feelings arise together due to contact.”

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“What is contact?” the king asked.

“When two things touch each other, that is called contact. It is like two rams butting together, one ram is like the eye, the other is like the material form. So contact is called ‘union.’ Suppose one hand is the eye, the other is the material form, (713c) the contact or coming together of the two hands\textsuperscript{235} is called union. It is also like two stones,\textsuperscript{236} one is like the eye, the other is like the material form, the contact or coming together of the two stones is called union. It is the same with regard to eyes, ears, nose, tongue,\textsuperscript{237} body and mind, the contact or coming together is called union. It is also like two\textsuperscript{238} stones, one is like the mind, the other is like the mind-object,\textsuperscript{239} the coming together of the two stones is called union. It is the same with regard to the coming together of mind and mind-object. This is called union or coming together.”

“Excellent Nagasena.”

31. The Characteristics of Feeling

The king said to Nagasena again, “What is the characteristic of feeling?”\textsuperscript{240}
Nagasena replied, “To experience it by oneself is feeling.”

Nagasena said, “It is like a man who renders a service to the king. The man is intelligent and good, so the king bestows money and material things on him. Then the man, having obtained such things, uses them for his own happiness and does whatever he pleases to do. The man thinks to himself, ‘I have rendered a service to the king and received a reward. Now, I have obtained happiness and happiness is such.”

Nagasena again gave a simile, “It is just like in the case of a person who does meritorious deeds by mind, by word of mouth and by bodily action. Thus having done good deeds, the person is reborn into the heaven of bliss on the dissolution of the body after death. While living in heaven in full possession and enjoyment of all the pleasures of sense, he will think to himself, ‘Formerly in the world, I have done good deeds by mind, by word of mouth and by bodily action, as a result, now I have been reborn here experiencing pleasures and enjoyment to the utmost.’ This is called being experienced.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”
32. The Characteristics of Perception

The king asked Nagasena, “What is perception?”

Nagasena replied, “Knowing is perception.

It is like the storekeeper or the treasurer of the king. When he enters into the storehouse, he sees and knows himself how much there is in the store — coins, gold, silver, gems, silken fabrics, cotton, mixed scents, mixed colors. He also knows where the things are put. This is called perception.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

33. The Characteristics of Thought

The king asked Nagasena, “What is thought?”

Nagasena replied, “When a thought occurs to a person, that is because he has done something. It is like a person who prepares poison and also drinks it himself, and then makes others drink it. He himself would suffer bodily pain and others also would. It is also like a person who does evil deeds and after the dissolution of the body, he will be reborn in the hells. And those who follow his advice or teaching would also be reborn in the hells. The evil person thus thinks and speaks.”
“Excellent, Nagasena.”

34. The Sustained Thought

The king asked Nagasena again, “What is reflection?”

Nagasena replied, “When the mind gives rise to thought, then there is a reflection.”

“How does reflection give rise to investigation?”

“It is like a copper vessel or bronze plate when beaten by a man, it makes a sound. When it is raised up, it still gives out lingering sound. The man is also the same, when the mind is active, then thought arises. When the plate is beaten, it is called reflection, when it gives sound, it is called investigation.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

35. Inseparability of Dharmas

The king asked Nagasena, “When those conditions come together, can they be separated again, as this is union, this is wisdom, this is thought, this is mind, and this is motion?”
Then Nagasena said, "If they come together, they cannot be separated again. Suppose the king were to ask his cook to make delicious soup in which there was water, meat, onion, garlic, ginger, salt and glutinous rice. Then the king were to ask his cook, 'Pick out for me as before cooking, the flavors of water and then of the meat, of the onion, of the ginger, (714a) of the salt and of the glutinous rice from the delicious soup that you have made.' But the soup has already been made, could the cook pick out the flavors one by one and give them to the king?"

"No, once the soup has been made with all these flavors, they could not be separated one from the other."

Then Nagasena said to the king, "All these things are also the same. Once they have been united together, they cannot be separated, as this is painful and pleasant feelings, this is wisdom, this is motion and this is thought."

"Excellent, Nagasena." ☞

36. The Taste of Salt

The king again asked Nagasena, "Can a man know the taste of salt with his eyes?"
Nagasena said, “Great king, you know whether one can know the taste of the salt with his eyes.”

Then the king said, “The eyes do not know the taste of the salt.”

Nagasena said, “A man knows the taste of salt by his tongue, not by his eyes.”

“Do all people know the taste by their tongue?”

“People all distinguish different tastes by their tongues.”

The king asked, “Is the taste of all salt to be known and distinguished only by the tongue?”

“Yes, the taste of all salt is to be known and distinguished by the tongue.”

“There is salt brought by chariots and there is also salt brought by cows, can the chariots and cows know the taste of salt?”

“The chariot and the cow cannot know the taste of the salt.”

“Can the taste of salt be weighed?” asked the king.

“Is it the king’s knowledge to weigh the taste of salt?”

Then the king replied, “The taste of salt cannot be weighed, but the weight of salt can be weighed.”
"Excellent, Nagasena."  

37. The Five Awarenesses Produced by Different Karma

The king again asked Nagasena, “Are the five awarenesses (ayatanas) of a person produced by various actions or by one action?

Nagasena replied, “They are produced by various actions, not by one action. It is just like when five kinds of seeds have been sown in a field, they would grow each according to its own kind. So are the five awarenesses of a person, they are produced by various actions.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

38. Causes of Inequality in Humanity

The king asked Nagasena, “In this world, all men are complete with head, beard, hair, skin, face, eyes, ears, mouth, nose, body, and the four limbs of arms and legs, but why among them, are some of long life, others of short life; some have many diseases, others have few diseases;...
...some are poor, others are rich, some are noble, others are mean; some are from large families, others are from small families; some are handsome, others are ugly; some enjoy the confidence of others, others are suspected; some are intelligent and filial, others are stupid; why are they not the same?"

Nagasena replied, "It is just like the fruits of the same kind of trees, some are acid, astringent; some are bitter, some are pungent, some are sweet, some are really sour."265

"Why are they different since all are produced from the same kind of trees?" asked Nagasena.

The king replied, "They are different, because their seedlings are different." (714b)

"It is just the same with regard to people. Because each person thinks differently in his mind266 so people in this world have various differences. Some have a short life, others have a long life; some have many diseases, others have few diseases; some are rich, others are poor; some are noble, others are mean; some are from large families,..."
...others are from small families; some are handsome, others are ugly; some speak words of confidence, others speak useless words; some are intelligent, and others are stupid.”

Then Nagasena said, “That is why the Buddha said: ‘In accordance with one’s own good and bad actions, one will reap the results. Among them, some are rich, others are poor; all are due to their actions, good and bad done in the past. They will reap the results respectively according to their virtue.’”

“Excellent, Excellent, Nagasena.”

39. The Benefits of Previous Endeavour

The king asked Nagasena again, “Suppose a man were to do good deeds, should he have done it previously, or should he do it after now?”

“He should have done it before, because the good deeds done after now are not beneficial to him, but the good deeds done previous are beneficial to him.”

Then Nagasena asked the king, “Suppose, great king, when you are thirsty and want to drink, and you ask your men to have a well dug out, could that meet the king’s thirst?”
“Certainly not, it cannot meet the immediate thirst of the king. The well should be dug beforehand.”

“It is the same with regard to a person, if a person were to do good deeds, he should have done it early. If he does it late, it is not so beneficial to him.”

Nagasena again asked the king, “Suppose, when the king feels hungry, then he asks his men to plough the field, to manure it and to sow crops. Could his belly be filled by doing so?”

“Certainly not, there should be a savings of grain.”

“It is the same with regard to a person, he should have done good deeds in advance. If he does good deeds only when he is in danger, it is not beneficial to him.”

Then Nagasena asked the king, “Suppose, the king has an opponent who he suddenly confronts in battle without preparation, could the king order people to train horses, elephants and men in warfare and also to make weapons?”

The king replied, “No, those things should have been prepared in advance. Then the king could go out to the battle at any moment.”
If the war has broken out already, it is useless for the king to ask his people to train horses, elephants and men.”

Nagasena said, “Thus the Buddha has said in the sutras: ‘People should strive to perform bodily good actions before (disaster strikes), as good actions performed afterwards are not useful or beneficial. One should not give up the right path and adopt the wrong path, do not follow the ignorant ones who discard good and performs evil and who have to lament and wail afterwards, it is of no use. People who discard righteousness and adopt crookedness are going to repent on their death-bed.’”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

40. The Force of Karma

The king asked Nagasena again, “Your sramanas say that the worldly fire is not as hot as the fire in the hells. Your sramanas also say if a small stone is put into ordinary fire, even if it remained there until the evening, it could not melt away. But, a large stone could be put into the fires of the hells and could melt immediately. This is a statement that I cannot believe.”
Your sramanas also say if a person has done demeritorious deeds and is reborn in the hells, that for thousands of years he cannot be burned to death. This, too, is a statement that I cannot believe.”

(a) Nagasena then asked the king, “Have you heard, great king, that in the sea when female-serpents, female dragons, female tortoises, and female crabs are pregnant, they eat sand and stones as food?”

“Yes, they take them as food.”

“Can the sand and stones be consumed in their stomach?”

“Yes, they can be consumed.”

“But can the embryos in the womb, too, be consumed?”

“No, they cannot be consumed.”

“Why can they not be consumed?”

“It is due to the superior potency of their former deeds that they are not consumed.”

Nagasena said, “So does the person in the hells, he is not to be burned to death for thousands of years, because the demeritorious deeds he has done are not exhausted.”
(b) Nagasena again asked the king, “When lionesses, tigresses, female dogs, and female cats all eat meat and swallow bones in their stomach, are the bones consumed?”

“Yes, they are all consumed.”

Then Nagasena asked the king, “Are the embryos in their belly to be consumed also?”

“No, they cannot be consumed.”

“Why can they not be consumed?”

“It is due to the superior potency of their former deeds that they are not consumed.”

Nagasena said, “People in the hells are the same. They are not to be burned to death for hundreds and thousands of years, because the demeritorious deeds done by them are not exhausted.”

(c) Nagasena asked the king again, “When cows, mares, she-donkeys, tailed deer, and doe are pregnant, do they all eat grass and hay as food?”

“Yes, they eat grass and hay as food.”

“Are the grass and hay all consumed in their belly?”

“Yes, they all are consumed.”

“Are the embryos in their belly all consumed?”

“No, they cannot be consumed.”
“Why can’t they be consumed?”

“It is due to the superior potency of their former deeds that they are not consumed.”

Then Nagasena said, “People in the hells are the same. Because their demeritorious deeds are not exhausted, they are not burned to death.”

(d) Nagasena asked the king again, “When women of high rank and ladies of rich families all eat delicious and nice food, is the food all digested in their bellies?”

“Yes, it is all digested.”

“But when they are pregnant, are the embryos in their belly consumed also?”

“No, they cannot be.”

“Why can they not be consumed?”

“It is due to the superior potency of their former deeds that they are not consumed.”

Nagasena said, “People in the hells are the same. They are not to be consumed for thousands of years, because the demeritorious deeds done by them in previous births have not been exhausted.”

Nagasena continued, “If a person is born in the hells, there does he grow up, there he grows old, and he does not die until his demeritorious deeds are exhausted.”
41. Earth Resting on Water

The king asked Nagasena again, “Your people say that the earth rests on water, that water (715a) rests on air, and that air rests on space. These words, I cannot believe.”

Then the elder Nagasena took the writing ink of the king and held the pot of writing ink upside down with three fingers and asked the king, “Is the water in this pot supported by atmosphere?”

The king said, “Yes, it is supported by the atmosphere.”

“No is the water supported by air.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

42. On Nirvana

The king asked Nagasena, “What is nirvana? Is it that all having gone past, there will be no more becoming?”

Nagasena replied, “Nirvana is that in which there is no more becoming. Ignorant people come yearning for and craving for (the sense pleasures of) the inner and outer bodies.”
Therefore they are not set free from old age, sickness and death.\(^{289}\)

Nagasena continued, “Wise men, those who have learned the Dharma, do not cling to the internal and external pleasures of the body, and also have no craving. Having no craving, they have no sense desire. Having no sense desire, they have no pregnancy. Having no pregnancy, there is no birth and no old age. Having no birth and no old age, there is no sickness and no death. Having no sickness (and no death), they have no grief, no lamentation; having no grief and no lamentation, they have no inner pain, they thus obtain nirvana.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

43. Right Practice Leading to Nirvana

The king asked Nagasena again, “Can all the learners of the Dharma attain nirvana?”

Nagasena replied, “Not all the learners of the Dharma can attain nirvana.

Those who rightly endeavor to the meritorious Path, learn and know the right things, practice what should be practiced and give up what should not be practiced, think what should be thought, eradicate what should not be thought,...
...will attain *nirvana.*”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

### 44. On *Nirvana* as Happiness

The king asked Nagasena, “Does he who has not attained the Path of *nirvana* know that *nirvana* is the ultimate happiness?”

Nagasena replied, “Yes, he knows it. Though he has not attained *nirvana*, he still knows that *nirvana* is happiness.”

“But how can he know that *nirvana* is happiness without attaining it?”

Nagasena asked the king, “Do those whose not have their hands and feet cut off know how painful it would be to have them cut off?”

“Yes, though they have not had their hands and feet cut off, they still know the painfulness of cutting off their hands and feet.”

“But how do they know it is painful?”

“Well, they know it by hearing the sounds of the lamentation of those whose hands and feet have been cut off.”

“Just so (with regard to *nirvana*), it is by hearing the joyous words of those who have attained *nirvana*,...
...that they who have not attained nirvana know that nirvana is the ultimate happiness. Because of this they believe it.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

45. Existence of the Buddha

The king asked Nagasena again, “Have you, Nagasena, seen the Buddha?”

Nagasena replied, “No, I have not.”

“How about your teachers?”

Nagasena answered, “No, my teachers also have not seen the Buddha.”

“Then Nagasena, since you and your teachers all have not seen the Buddha, there is certainly no Buddha.”

“Then Nagasena, since you and your teachers all have not seen the Buddha, there is certainly no Buddha.”

“But great king, have you seen the place where the five hundred waters come joining together?”

“Then, since you, your father and grandfather all have not seen the place where the five hundred waters come joining together,...
...there is certainly no such a place in the world where five hundred waters come joining together.”

“Though, my father, grandfather and I have not seen such waters, there are definitely such waters.”

“Though my teachers and I have not seen the Buddha, definitely the Buddha existed.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

[Here ends the second chapter]

46. Incomparability of the Buddha

The king asked, “Is the Buddha incomparable?”

Nagasena replied, “Yes, the Buddha is incomparable.”

“But how do you know that the Buddha is incomparable?”

Nagasena asked the king, “Would those who have never seen the great ocean, know that the ocean is great? There are five great rivers, and to each of them, there are also five hundred small tributaries. The five great rivers are: (1) the Ganges, (2) the Sindhu, (3) the Sita, (4) the Oxus and (5) the Sarasvati. The waters of these five great rivers flow to the ocean day and night, but the water in the ocean neither increases nor decreases.”
Then Nagasena asked the king, “Great king, do you know about this?”
“Certainly, I know,” said the king.
“Because those who have attained enlightenment have spoken of the incomparability of the Buddha. So I believe it.” said Nagasena.
“Excellent, Nagasena.”

47. On How to Know the Buddha’s Incomparability

The king asked Nagasena, “How do you know, Nagasena, that the Buddha is incomparable?”

Then Nagasena asked the king, “Who is the master in writing books?”

“The master who wrote books is called Tissa.”

“Have you, great king, ever seen the master Tissa?”

“Tissa died long, long ago. I have never seen him.”

“Great king, if you have never seen Tissa, then how do you know that Tissa is the master in writing books?”

“Because the ancient books and writings are handed down to us.”
By that I know he is called Tissa.”

Then Nagasena said, “In the same way, he who sees the scriptures and disciplines, sees the Buddha. The sutras and the Path preached by the Buddha are very profound and would lead to happiness. Those who have learned the Buddhist scriptures and discipline, in turn, teach others. Therefore I know that the Buddha is incomparable.”

The king asked Nagasena, “Have you seen for yourself the Buddha’s teachings which should be practiced for a long time?”

Nagasena replied, “The teachings and the discipline explained by the Buddha are so excellent that I should practice them up to my old age.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

48. Rebirth

The king asked Nagasena, “Is the old body not reborn when a person dies?”

Nagasena replied, “When a person dies, he receives a new body, the old body is not reborn.”

Then Nagasena gave a simile, “It is just like the interchange of two wicks of a lamp,...
That the old wick still remains, and the new one is lit. It is the same with regard to the body of a person. The old body does not transmigrate, but he receives a new body.”

Then Nagasena asked the king, “Have you, great king, learned the ancient scriptures from a teacher when you were a boy?”

“Yes,” said the king.

“Great king, when you learned the scriptures from your teacher, did your teacher still have the knowledge of these scriptures when he comes across these scriptures?”

“Yes, my teacher still has the knowledge of these scriptures.”

“So is the body of a human being. It gives up the old body and takes the new one.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

49. Deeds remain

The king asked Nagasena again, “Is there a spirit?”

Nagasena replied, “There is no spirit.”

Then Nagasena gave a simile, “Suppose a man were to steal another man’s fruit. Is the thief guilty?”

“Yes, he is guilty,” said the king.
"When the fruit tree is planted, there is no fruit on it. Then how can you say that the thief is guilty?"

"Suppose, if the trees were not planted, then how can there be fruit? Therefore the thief is guilty."\textsuperscript{298}

"So it is for people. By performing good and bad deeds with this body in the present life, he will be born in the next life and obtain a new body."

"Where are the good and bad deeds done by this old body when he is reborn with a new body?" asked the king.

Then Nagasena said, "The good and bad deeds done by a person always follow him, just like the shadow follows the body. When a person dies, only his body is dissolved, but his deeds remain. It is just as when a person writes under a lamp at night, when the fire is extinguished, the writing still remains. When the fire is lit again, the writing can be seen again. Thus, the deeds done in this life lead to the formation in the next life and then the doer receives the result accordingly."

"Excellent, Nagasena."

50. Whereabouts of Karma
51. Knowledge of Rebirth

The king asked Nagasena, “Could anyone point out where these good and bad deeds are?”

Nagasena replied, “No one can point out where these good and bad deeds are.”

Then Nagasena asked the king, “Is it possible to point out which branch will bear fruit when the fruit tree has not yet borne fruit? Could anyone foretell it?”

“Certainly not,” the king said.

“So, a person who has not yet attained the Path cannot foretell where the good and bad deeds are.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

The king asked, “Does he who is about to be reborn know that he will be reborn?”

Nagasena replied, “Yes, he who is to be reborn knows it.”

“But how can he know it?”

“It is like a farming family who sows seeds, and it rains in time. Does the farming family know that there will be plenty of grain?”

“Yes, they know that there will be plenty of grain.”

Then Nagasena said, “So does a person. He who is about to be reborn knows that he will be reborn.”
“Excellent, Nagasena.”

52. The Buddha’s Whereabouts after Parinirvana

The king asked Nagasena again, “Is there nirvana?” (716a)

Nagasena replied, “Yes, there is nirvana.”

“Can you, Nagasena, point out where the Buddha is?”

“No, I cannot point out where the Buddha is since the Buddha has already attained parinirvana. It is impossible to show where the Buddha is.”

Then Nagasena gave a simile, ‘Suppose, a man has lit a fire. When the fire has been extinguished, can anyone point out where the fire has gone?’

“No one can,” said the king.

Nagasena said, “The Buddha has attained parinirvana and it cannot be pointed out where the Buddha has gone.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

53. The Function of a Sramana’s Body

The king asked Nagasena again, “Is the body dear to sramanas?”
Nagasena replied, “No, the body is not dear to the recluses.”

“If the recluses do not love their bodies, then why do they, when taking rest or sleeping, want to be comfortable; or when eating want palatable and delicious food. They take good care of themselves?”

“But, have you ever been to the middle of a battlefield?”

“Yes, I have been to the battlefield.”

“Have you ever been wounded by knife, spear or arrow?”

“Yes, I have been wounded by knife.”

“Then, how did you treat the wound which was caused by knife, by spear, or by arrow?”

“I treated the wound by anointing it with balm and bandaging it with cotton and wool.”

“Then, great king, it is because the wound is dear to you that you treated it by anointing it with balm and bandaging it with cotton and wool?”

“No, it is not dear to me.”

“If the wound is not dear to you, then why do you treat it so carefully by anointing it with balm and bandaging it with cotton and wool?”
“I only want the wound to get cured quickly. I do not love the wound.”

Then Nagasena said, “So are the recluses. They do not love their body. Although they have to eat, have to drink, yet their mind does not cling to it, they do not want their food to be delicious, to be well prepared or for the beauty of the skin. They just want to keep the body going, so as to follow the Buddha’s teachings and precepts. In the Buddhist sutras, it says, ‘There are nine apertures on a person’s body, and they are like nine wounds caused by a spear. The nine apertures are ill-smelling and impure.’

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

54. The Thirty-two Marks of the Buddha

The king again asked Nagasena, “Is it true that the Buddha was endowed with the thirty-two bodily marks and graced with the eighty subsidiary characteristics? Was his body golden in color with a glorious halo?”

Nagasena replied, ‘Yes, it is true that the Buddha was endowed with the thirty-two bodily marks and graced with the eighty subsidiary characteristics.
His body was golden in color with a glorious halo.”

“But were his parents also endowed with the thirty-two bodily marks and the eighty subsidiary characteristics. Were their bodies golden in color with a glorious halo?”

“No, the parents of the Buddha had not such characteristics.”

“If the parents of the Buddha had no such characteristics, the Buddha also had no such characteristics.” The king continued, “People give birth to children who have similar features to their parents. If the parents of the Buddha had no such characteristics, the Buddha surely had no such characteristics.”

Then Nagasena said, “Although the parents of the Buddha had not the thirty-two bodily marks and the eighty subsidiary characteristics, with golden color and a glorious halo, yet the Buddha surely had such characteristics.”

Nagasena asked the king, “Have you, great king, seen a lotus flower?” (716b)

“Yes, I have seen them.”

“The lotus flower is born of the earth, grows up in mud and water,...
...it is beautiful and fragrant. But does the lotus flower resemble the mud and the water of the lake, either in color or in smell?"

“No, it does not resemble the earth, the mud and the water, either in color or in smell.”

Nagasena then said, “Although the parents of the Buddha had no such characteristics, the Buddha had all such marks and characteristics. The Buddha was born in the world, grew up in the world, but not similar to the worldly people.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

55. Relation Between the Buddha and Brahman

The king asked Nagasena again, “Is the Buddha’s conduct similar to the Brahman, the king of the seventh heaven, having no intercourse with women (brahmachariya)?”

Nagasena replied, “Yes, the Buddha keeps away from women, so he is pure without any defilement.”

“If the Buddha’s conduct is the same as that of the conduct of the Brahman, the king of the seventh heaven, then the Buddha is a follower of Brahman, the king of the seventh heaven.”
“But does Brahman, the king of the seventh heaven, have thoughts [buddhi]?"

“Yes Brahman, the king of the seventh heaven, has thoughts.”

“Then Brahman, the king of the seventh heaven, and the higher heavens all should be the followers of the Buddha.” Nagasena asked the king, “What is the cry of a bird like?”

“A bird’s cry is like the cry of a wild goose.”

Then Nagasena said, “If so, birds are the disciples of wild geese. But in fact, they are of two different kinds. It is the same with regard to the Buddha, he is not the disciple of Brahman king of the seventh heaven.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

56. The Buddha’s Teacher

The king asked Nagasena again, “Did the Buddha learn, know, and practice the Dharma and precepts?”

Nagasena replied, “The Buddha did learn, know, and practice the Dharma and precepts.”

“Then from what teacher did the Buddha receive the Dharma and precepts?”
“The Buddha had no teacher. When the Buddha attained enlightenment, he knew by himself the Dharma, the Path, unlike his disciples who had to learn and know the teaching from the Buddha. They needed to practice it until old age.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

57. Two Kinds of Tears

The king asked Nagasena, “A man cries and sheds tears on the death of his parents, another man also laments and sheds tears while listening to the teachings of the Buddha. In these two cases, are they different?”

Nagasena replied, “He who weeps for his parents is due to his attachment, his thinking of his grief, sorrow and suffering. This kind of sorrow is the sorrow of the ignorant people. He who weeps while listening to the sermon of the Buddha is full of compassion. As he thinks of the sufferings in the world, so his tears come out. He would obtain the great merit.

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

58. The Emancipated Versus the Non-emancipated
The king asked Nagasena again, “What is the difference between one who is emancipated and one who is not emancipated?”

Nagasena replied, “He who is not emancipated has attachment and desire in his heart. He who is emancipated is without attachment and desire in his heart and he eats food only for the sake of keeping alive.”

“I see people in the world craving for bodily pleasure, delicious food, and who are never satisfied.”

“He who is not emancipated wants to take delicious food for his fame, his happiness and good taste. But he who is emancipated takes food not for his pleasure, nor for its delicious taste, but only for the sake of keeping the body alive.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

59. Memory and Mindfulness

The king again asked Nagasena, “Why does one recollect what is past and done long ago?”

Nagasena replied, “When a man is sorrowful, he recollects the things that took place in the distant past.”

“How does he recollect it, by the mind or by the memory?”
“Do you recollect business that you have done in the past?”

“Yes, I have learned something, but later I forgot it.”

“At that time, great king, were you without a mind and thus have forgotten?”

“At that time, I was without mindfulness.”

“So then, great king, you have mindfulness.”312 said Nagasena.

The king again asked Nagasena, “Is there mindfulness when a man does something, be it in the past or present? Are all things known by mindfulness?”

“The past things are remembered by memory, and the present things are also remembered by memory.”313

“Thus people only remember past things, but can’t they remember new things?”

“If things newly done cannot be remembered, then there is no mindfulness.”

“Do people who newly learn books and crafts remember?”314

“People who newly learn books and arts have memory. So the disciples who have learned would know. Therefore there is memory.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”315
The king asked Nagasena again, “In how many ways does memory arise?”
Nagasena replied, “Memory arises in sixteen ways:

(1) From things done in the distant past, memory arises;
(2) From newly learned things, memory arises;
(3) From great events, memory arises;
(4) From thinking of good, memory arises;
(5) From thinking of what one suffered, memory arises;
(6) From thinking personal (things), memory arises;
(7) From diverse acts committed in the past, memory arises;
(8) From teaching somebody, memory arises;
(9) From the specific mark, memory arises;
(10) From remembering, memory arises;
(11) From consciousness, memory arises;
(12) From calculating, memory arises;
(13) From incurring debt, memory arises;
(14) From concentration, memory arises;
(15) From reading books, memory arises;
(16) From seeing again something entrusted to others, memory arises.

These are the sixteen ways that memory arises.

(1) The king asked Nagasena, "How does memory arise from things that had taken place in the distant past?"

"The Buddha’s disciple Ananda and the upasika Jiuchoudanba have the power to remember the things that happened in their previous births. Other disciples have the power to remember the things that happened in their former births. Ananda has so many women devotees. By remembering this, memory arises."

(2) "How does memory arise from newly learned things?"

"Just as a man who has learned accounting but later forgets it. When he sees another person doing accounts, memory arises."

(3) "How does (717a) memory arise from great events?"

"Suppose, a prince is crowned as king, he remembers the greatness and the magnificence (of the ceremony). This is memory arising from great events."
(4) “How does memory arise from thinking of good things?”

“Suppose, a man has been received heartily as a guest and he thinks to himself thus, ‘I was once received warmly and heartily’. This memory arises from thinking of good things.”

(5) “How does memory arise from thinking of what one has suffered?”

“When one remembers that one was beaten or was thrown into prison, memory arises.”

(6) “How does memory arise from thinking personal things?”

“If one sees a similar person or animal, he remembers his parents, family, relatives, or his domestic animals. This is memory arising from thinking.”

(7) “How does memory arise from diverse acts committed in the past?”

“When one remembers the names of people, various things in the world, different kinds of letters, material forms, good or bad smells, sweetness, or bitterness, then memory arises.”

(8) “How does memory arise from teaching somebody?”
“When a person is happy, he forgets people living in fringe areas, or he remembers some and forgets others. When he remembers the people he has forgotten, memory arises.”

(9) “How does memory arise from a specific mark?

“People remember men, cows, and horses by their specific marks. This is memory arising from a specific mark.”

(10) “How does memory arise from remembering?”

“Just like people who suddenly forget what they have done, then by recalling it again and again, memory arises.”

(11) “How does memory arise from consciousness?”

“Those who have learned books by heart, know and remember words. This is memory arising from consciousness.”

(12) “How does memory arise from accounting?”

“One who is trained in accounting knows the method very well. This is memory arising from accounting.”
(13) “How does memory arise from incurring debt?”

“As when one has seen goods deposited nearby as a security, one remembers one’s indebtedness. This is memory arising from incurring debt.”

(14) “How does memory arise from concentration?”

“A monk with concentration of the mind can recall the things experienced by himself in the past thousands of lives. This is memory arising from concentration of the mind.”

(15) “How does memory arise from reading books?”

“The kings have very old books, when reading those books, he would refer to such a king of such a period. This is memory arising from reading books.”

(16) “How does memory arise from seeing again something entrusted to others?”

“If one has entrusted something to somebody, when he sees it again, his memory arises. This is memory arises from seeing something again after it has been entrusted to others.”
61. All-knowing of the Buddha

The king asked Nagasena again, “Does the Buddha know the things in the past, present and future?”

“Yes, the Buddha knows all.”

“If the Buddha knows everything, then why does he not teach all he knows to his disciples? Why does he teach them little by little?”

Then Nagasena asked the king, “Are there physicians in the country?”

“Yes, there are.”

“Do they know all medicines in the world?”

“Yes, they know all the medicines in the world.”

“But when they treat a patient, do they give him the medicine all at once or little by little?”

“If a man is not sick, the physician cannot give him the medicine in advance. It is only when there is sickness, then the physician gives him the appropriate medicine.”

Nagasena said, “Although the Buddha knows things in the past, present and future, he cannot teach all that he knows to people in the world. So he taught his disciples the Dharma and precepts little by little...
...and asked them to follow and practice accordingly.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

62. The Power of Single Mindfulness of the Buddha

The king asked Nagasena again, “Your monks say, ‘If anyone who does evil deeds in the world for a hundred years, at the time of dying, he will be reborn in heaven after death if he has even one thought of the Buddha. These words I cannot believe. Again they say, ‘He who should take the life of a living being would fall into the hells. These words I cannot believe either.”

Nagasena asked the king, “Suppose a man were to put a small stone into the water. Would the small stone float on the surface of the water or sink into the water?”

“The small stone would sink.”

“If a hundred large stones were put into a boat, would the boat sink?”

“No, it would not sink.”

Then Nagasena said, “As a hundred large stones in a boat would not sink, a man with one thought of the Buddha will not fall into the hells,...
...but be born in the heavens even though he had done evil deeds in the past. The small stone that sinks is like people who do evil, but do not know the Dharma of the Buddha. When they die they will fall into the hells.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

63. Aim of Sramanahood

The king asked Nagasena again. “For what purpose do your people learn the Dharma and become monks?”

Nagasena replied, “For the purpose of eradicating past suffering, present suffering, and not wanting to experience it again in the future, I learned the Dharma and become a monk.”

“Future suffering has not yet happened, so why do you prepare to learn the Dharma and become a monk?”

Then Nagasena asked the king, “Are there, great king, rival countries and opponents who might rise up against you?”

“Yes, there are rival countries and opponents who frequently rise up to fight with me.”

“Then, is it when the enemies are coming, that you,...
great king, set to work to have weapons prepared, watch towers erected, and moats dug, or are they all prepared earlier?”

“All these had been prepared beforehand.”

“But why had they been prepared beforehand?”

“Because the enemies might come at any time.” (717c)

“The enemy has not come yet, why do you prepare?”

Nagasena again asked the king, “Is it when you are hungry, that you then sow, or when you are thirsty, that you then dig a well?”

The king said, “It should be done beforehand.”

Then Nagasena said, “For a man who is not thirsty, why should he prepare beforehand?”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

64. An Arhat’s Ability to Travel

The king asked Nagasena again, “How far is it from here to the seventh heaven of Brahman?”

Nagasena said, “It is very far. Suppose a rock as large as the palace of the king were to fall from the seventh heaven of Brahman, it would take six months to reach the earth.”
“Your sramanas say that a person who has attained arhathood flies to the seventh heaven of Brahman as quickly as one could extend forth his bent arm or have it bend back again. These words I could not believe. How could he go thousands and thousands of li\(^{334}\) so fast.”

Nagasena asked the king: “Great king, in which country were you born?”

“I was born in the kingdom of Yonaka, in a country named Alasanda.”\(^{335}\)

“How many li is it from here to Alasanda?”

“It is about two thousand yojana,\(^{336}\) equal to eight thousand li.”

“Do you think of your country which is far away from here?”

“Yes, I always think of things in my country.”

“Great king, try to recollect any business you once did in your country...have you done so?”

“Yes, I have done so.”

“So quick it is, great king, that you have gone and returned a distance of about eighty thousand li.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

65. Duration of Taking Rebirth
The king asked Nagasena again, “Suppose, two men were to die here simultaneously, one were to be born in the seventh heaven of Brahman, another were to be born in Kashmir, about seven hundred and twenty li from here. Which of the two arrive first?”

Then Nagasena asked, “Both would arrive at their own place simultaneously.”

“How can they arrive simultaneously, since the two distances are so different?”

Nagasena said: “Then try to think of the country of Alasanda again.”

“Yes, I have done so.”

“Then, great king, try to think of Kashmir again.”

“Yes, I have done so.”

“Well which one of the two countries did you think of quicker?”

“The two are equal.”

“Just so, if two men were to die simultaneously, and one were to be born in the seventh heaven of Brahman, while the other were to be born in Kashmir, the two men would arrive simultaneously.”

Then Nagasena asked the king, “Suppose, two birds were flying, one were to alight on a tall tree, the other on a small shrub.
If they were to settle down simultaneously, whose shadow would first fall on the ground?"

“The two shadows would fall on the ground simultaneously.”

“Just so, if two men were to die simultaneously, and one were to be born in the seventh heaven of Brahman, while the other were to be born in Kashmir, they would also arrive simultaneously.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

66. Seven Kinds of Wisdom

The king asked Nagasena again, “By how many ways does one need to learn the Path?”

Nagasena replied, “One needs to learn the Path in seven ways. What are the seven? They are: (1) thinking of good and evil things, (2) exertion or energy, (3) taking delight in the Dharma, (4) to subdue the mind to do good, (5) thinking of the Path, (6) concentration of the mind, and (7) to take things without attachment or hatred.”

“Is it to know the Path that all these seven ways are practiced?”

“No, not by all these seven ways does one learn. The wise who can distinguish good and evil learn the Path only by one way.”
Then if one can know the Path by just one way, why are the seven ways all preached?" 

Nagasena asked the king, "Suppose a man were to put a sword in its sheath and place it against a wall, could it cut off anything by itself?"

"No, it could not cut anything by itself."

"Even so, a person though intelligence can achieve wisdom only with the help of the other six ways."

"Excellent, Nagasena."

67. Merit and Demerit

The king asked Nagasena again, "Does a person who performs good deeds obtain more merit, or does a person who performs evil deeds obtain more demerit?"340

Nagasena replied, "The person who does good deeds obtains more merit, and the person who does evil deeds obtains less demerit. Because when a person does evil, he repents it himself daily, therefore his offence diminishes daily. But when a person does good, he rejoices it day and night, so he obtains even more merit."

Then Nagasena said, "Formerly in the country where the Buddha was living,...
(...there was a man without hands and feet. He took some lotuses and offered them to the Buddha. The Buddha then told the monks thus, ‘This man without hands and feet will not fall into the hells, the animal kingdom, nor the kingdom of hungry ghosts in ninety-one kalpas.\textsuperscript{341} He will be born in heaven, then after his merit is exhausted in the heaven, he will be reborn as a human again,’ That is why I know that if people do little good deeds, they will obtain great merit, if they do evil, they will repent and their offence will diminish and be extinguished. Thus I know that when people do evil, their demerit is small.’

‘Excellent, Nagasena.’

68. Doing Evil Knowingly and Unknowingly

The king asked Nagasena again, ‘Who gets greater demerit, a wise person who does evil, or an ignorant person who does evil?’

Nagasena said, ‘The wise who does evil obtains less demerit, but the ignorant who does evil obtains more demerit.’\textsuperscript{342}

‘I do not think so.’ said the king, ‘In my country, according to the law, if a minister commits offence, he will be punished gravely,...
...but if an ignorant person commits an offence, he will be punished lightly. Thus, the wise who do evil get greater demerit, and the ignorant who do evil get less demerit.”

Nagasena gave a simile, “Suppose, a very hot metal were lying on the ground, and one man knows that it is a hot metal, while the other man does not know. If the two men were both to take hold of the hot metal, whose hands would be burnt more?”

“The hands of the man who does not know it, would be burnt more.”

“Like this, ignorant people who do evils without knowing it will not repent it. Therefore their demerit is greater. But the wise people who do evil know that it should not be done, so they repent their offence daily. Therefore their demerit becomes less.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

69. The Supernormal Power of Arhats

The king asked Nagasena again, “Is there anyone who, with his physical body, could go to the seventh heaven of Brahman or to Uttaraku, or any other place as he wishes to go?”

“Yes,” said Nagasena.
“Then how (718b) could a person with his physical body go to the seventh heaven of Brahman, or to Uttarakuru, or any other place as he wishes to go?”

Then Nagasena asked the king, “Do you remember, great king, that you have ever jumped one zhang in playing when you were small?”

“Yes, when I was young, if I wished to jump, I could jump more than a zhang.”

“In the same way, he who has attained the Path could go to the seventh heaven of Brahman or to Uttarakuru with his physical body if he wishes.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

70. Long Bone

The king asked Nagasena again, “Your sramanas say that there are bones as long as four thousand li. What kind of animal would have bones four thousand li long?”

Nagasena said, “Have you, O great king, heard that in the sea, there is a kind of large fish called a zhi, whose body is 28,000 li long?”

“Yes, I have heard of such fish.”
“Yes, if there is a kind of fish whose body is about 28,000 li long, then its ribs are four thousand li long. Are you, great king, still surprised?”

[“Excellent, Nagasena.”] 348

71. On Stopping Breathe

The king asked Nagasena again, “Your sramanas say, ‘I can stop my breathing’. How can they stop their breathing?”

“Then have you ever heard of ‘zhi’ — life principle?”

“Yes, I have heard of it.”

“Is the life principle inside the body frame of a person?”

“Yes, I consider that the life principle is inside the body frame of a person.”

Then Nagasena said, “Great king, the ignorant person cannot control his body and speech, cannot follow the Dharma and precepts. Such a person does not love his own body.” Nagasena continued, “People who learn the Dharma can control their body and speech, follow the Dharma and precepts, and can obtain one-pointedness of the mind. Thus they attain the fourth dhyana state. So can they stop their breathing.”
“Excellent, Nagasena.”

72. Ocean

The king asked Nagasena again, “There is the expression ‘ocean’. Is it because of the water or other reasons that it is called the ‘ocean’?”

Nagasena replied, “It is called ocean by men, because there is just as much salt as water, and just as much water as salt.”

“Why is the ocean all of one taste, the taste of salt?”

“The water in the ocean is so salty because it has been so for a very long time, and because fishes, turtles and other insects make it dirty.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

73. Power of Wisdom

The king asked Nagasena again, “Could one who has attained the Path, ponder over all the subtle, deep, and complicated matters?”
Nagasena replied, “Yes, one who has attained the Path can ponder over all subtle, abstruse, and profound matters. The Buddha’s Dharma is the most abstruse and profound teaching which contains all aspects of knowledge. All those things can be analyzed by wisdom.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

74. Consciousness, wisdom and life principle

The king asked Nagasena again, “Is the consciousness of a person, his wisdom, and his life principle all the same or different?”

Nagasena said, “The consciousness of a person knows, his wisdom realizes the Path, and his life principle is empty without a permanent entity.”

“If there is no life principle, then who sees material forms with eyes; hears sounds with ears; smells odors with nose; tastes flavor with mouth; feels coarseness and smoothness with body and knows good and evil with the mind?”

Then Nagasena asked, “If the life principle can see with eyes, then when pupils are plucked out, can it see farther and wider?
When ears are torn open and enlarged, can they hear farther and wider? When the nose is dug out to make it bigger, can it smell odors farther and wider? When the mouth is wide open, can it know taste farther and wider? When the skin is cut and peeled off, can it feel coarseness and smoothness? When the mind is removed, can thoughts become numerous?"

“No,” said the king.

75. The Buddha Could Comprehend Difficult Things

Nagasena said to the king, “What is difficult to do was done by the Buddha. What the Buddha knew is very subtle.”

The king asked Nagasena again, “What was done by the Buddha that is difficult to do? What are the things that the Buddha knew that are subtle?”

“The Buddha said that he knew and could explain what is inside the body of a person, which cannot be seen by the eyes. He understood things concerning the eyes, things concerning the ears, things concerning the nose, things concerning the mouth, and things concerning the body; he understood destruction, doubts, things concerning the mind\(^{357}\) and things concerning consciousness.”\(^{358}\)
“Suppose a man were to take some water from the ocean into his mouth, would he know that such portion of it is the water from such a spring, such portion is the water from such a stream, and such portion is the water from such a river?”

The king said, “All the waters have mingled into one, it is very difficult to distinguish them.”

“What the Buddha has done is very difficult. He knew the taste of different waters. Now of the ocean water which is before the eye, the king still could not know, (how much less so when it comes to) the spirit which cannot be seen and the six things which are inside the body.”

“That is why the Buddha understood all things from the position of the mind to what is seen by the eyes, heard by the ears, smelled by the nose, tasted by the mouth, and felt by the body, and all that is pleasant, unpleasant, cold, hot, course, and smooth. From the mind to physical factors to everything that is alike, the Buddha knows and analyses them all.”

“Excellent, Nagasena.”

76. The King makes offerings

Nagasena said, “It is past midnight, I have to go back.”
Then the king ordered his attendants to have four rolls of cloth\textsuperscript{361} dipped in oil to serve as torches and sent Nagasena to his temple saying, "You all should respect and attend to Nagasena as if attending me." The attendants replied, "We understand."

The king said, "To have such a teacher as Nagasena and such a pupil like me, the realization of Dharma will be quick."

As all the king’s questions were given suitable answers by Nagasena, thus the king rejoiced. So the king ordered clothes worth ten-thousand coins to be offered to Nagasena from the treasury.

The king said to Nagasena, "From now on, you together with eight hundred sramanas, will be invited daily to my palace for meals and will also be provided with whatever you desire."

Nagasena then told the king, "I am a recluse who has no desire."

The king said "Nagasena, you should protect yourself and also protect me."

"What do you mean, by protecting myself and you?"

"Because I am afraid (719a) that people would blame me of being miserly by saying,..."
...‘Nagasena has solved the king’s doubts, but has not received anything from the king.’ People might also blame you saying, ‘Nagasena was unable to solve the king’s doubts, so the king has not offered him anything.’”

The king continued, “If you, Nagasena, accept my present, I would earn great merit, and you would protect your fame as well.

Just as a lion which is kept in a golden cage will always want to go out. Now, I am a king in the palace, but my mind is not happy. So I want to leave the country and learn the Dharma.”

After the king had finished his speech, Nagasena got up and returned to the temple. When Nagasena had just left, the king pondered by himself over what questions he had asked Nagasena and what answers had been given by Nagasena. Then the king thought, “The questions put by me were well replied to and explained by Nagasena.”

And Nagasena likewise, when he returned to the temple, thought the matter over to himself, “Whatever questions put to me by the king, I have replied to them all.” He thought to himself,...
..."I explained all the questions put by the king." Nagasena thought over these matters until morning.

The next day, Nagasena dressed himself, took his begging bowl, entered the palace, and sat in the royal hall. The king first paid homage to Nagasena, then sat down and said, "Venerable Nagasena, as soon as you had left, I thought to myself about what I had asked Nagasena and what Nagasena had replied. Then it occurred to me that whatever questions I asked, Nagasena explained them well. These thoughts kept me happy up to the morning."

Nagasena also said to the king, "After I had returned to the temple, I also thought over what the king had asked me, and what I explained. I had explained all. These thoughts kept me happy up to the morning." Having said this, Nagasena wanted to depart, and the king paid homage to Nagasena.

[Here ends the Nagasena Bhiksu Sutra]
The invasion by the Greek king of Macedon, Alexander the Great, to the Northwestern part of India in the third century BCE is a well known historical event. Alexander ultimately managed to establish himself in the kingdom known as Bactria. King Milinda, known as Meandner or Menander, is one of Alexander’s Indo-Greek successors, and he ruled the Bactrian kingdom in Northwestern India around 150 BCE. He was a patron of Buddhism according to both the Pāli and Chinese literary traditions. The very existence of a King Meandner is further attested to by the large amount of coins bearing the inscription “Savior King Menander” in Greek which are found from modern Kabul to Punjab. Some of the coins of Menander I and Menander II incorporate the Buddhist symbol of the eight-spoked wheel, which is also associated with Greek symbols of victory. According to Buddhist literature, the great Indian Buddhist emperor Asoka (fl. 3rd cent. BCE) sent Buddhist emissaries to the Greek lands in Asia to spread the Dharma towards the end of third century BCE. Thus the Buddhist presence in Greek Bactria during the second century BCE and the debates on certain important Buddhist doctrines between King Menander I and a Buddhist monk named Nagasena are quite certain.

These debates are found in the Nāgasena Bhikṣu Sūtra 那先比丘經 in Chinese translation and the Milindapañha in the Pāli language. The debates between the king and the Buddhist monk mainly center on some of the important Buddhist concepts such as anātman (no eternal Self or Soul), rebirth, karma, Buddha, nirvāṇa and spiritual life. These questions are still asked today by those who are interested in Buddhism but have little or no knowledge of the teachings. These questions suggest that the king had little knowledge of Buddhism but had difficulty in understanding some major teachings, in particular the concept of anātman and rebirth. As a result, Nāgasena used as many as six similes to illustrate the point. Here is a dialogue on anātman theory to show the nature of their debate.
“Suppose a man, O king, were to light a lamp, would it burn the night through?”
“Yes, it might do so.”
“Now, is it the same flame that burns in the first watch of the night, Sir, and in the second?”
“No.”
“Or the same that burns in the second watch and in the third?”
“No.”
“Then is there one lamp in the first watch, and another in the second, and another in the third?”
“No. The light comes from the same lamp all the night through.”
“Just so, O king, is the continuity of a person or thing maintained. One comes into being, another passes away; and the rebirth is, as it were, simultaneous. Thus neither as the same nor as another does a person go on to the last phase of his self-consciousness.”

**Different Versions of the Dialogue**

From Emperor Asoka in the third century BCE to the time before the writing down of the *Tripitaka* in the first century BCE, there is a short but dark period in the history of Indian Buddhism since there is no Buddhist record left for us to know the activities, thoughts and traditions of the Buddhist Sangha during this time. However, the *Nāgasena Bhikṣu Sūtra* in Chinese translation is an important text for us to get some information concerning the development of Buddhist thought in this period. Thus the book fills the above mentioned gap and provides us with some valuable information.

There are two Chinese translations of this text that have survived, and also a Pāli version named the *Milindapañha* that has survived, which is much longer than the former texts. The Chinese translation entitled the *Nāgasena Bhikṣu Sūtra* corresponds to the first three books in the Pali *Milindapañha* or the first 89 pages of the Pali Text Society edition of the text. Comparative studies show that the Chinese translation of the *Nāgasena Bhikṣu Sūtra* and the first three books of the *Milindapanha* are very much the same. There are 76 dialogues in the Chinese translation and 86 in the Pali version while 9 dialogues in the latter are not found in the former and 3 in the former are not found in the latter. (See appendix for the
comparison of contents). This portion is considered to be old since at the end of the third book there is a remark saying “Here ends the answering of the problems of the questions of Milinda” in the Pali text. What is more, in both the Chinese and Pali versions, at the end of the third book, the contents show that their conversations ended with the king Milinda making offerings to the Bhikṣu Nāgasena and his fellow monks. So the latter part of the Pali Milindapañha must has been added later, probably by Sri Lankan Buddhists.

According to Japanese scholar Kogen Mizuno’s research, the Chinese translation of the Nāgasena Bhikṣu Sūtra must has been done in the second century CE either at the time of An Shigao or a little earlier because the renderings of technical terms in the text are quite old and irregular and even the latter’s translation is comparatively consistent. This makes the text much valuable in terms of documentation. However, this text has enjoyed much less popularity among Western and Eastern scholars compared with the Milindapañha. There are only two translations of the Chinese text compared to thirteen different translations of the Milindapañha. Scholarly studies on the Chinese text are also not many and the few extant articles are either in Japanese, French, or Chinese; only a few are in English.

**Time and Place of Compilation**

Scholars such as Rhys Davids are of the opinion that the Milindapañha is but a translation.¹ This is because in the preface to the Sinhalese translation entitled the Milinda Prasnaya, it states that the dialogues of king Milinda and Nāgasena, which took place about 500 years after the death of the Buddha, were translated into the Māgadhī language by ‘teachers of old’— of which that Pali version was translated into Sinhalese in 1877.² Rhys Davids is also of the opinion that the original text most probably was compiled in Northwest India in either Sanskrit or Prakrit. But, he said that it must have been compiled a little after the beginning of the Christian era.³ Other scholars like W. W.

Tarn, while agreeing with Rhys Davids about the place of compilation, disagree about the time of compilation. Tarn has said, “He (the author) is supposed to have written in Northwestern India ... not too long after Menander’s death,” and Tarn places Menander’s death between 150-145 BCE.\(^4\) Mizuno holds a similar opinion as that of Tarn, citing the supporting evidence of references to Milinda’s dialogues with Nāgasena within Buddhaghosa’s commentaries. This fact is also mentioned by Rhys Davids in the introduction to his own translation. But Mizuno believes that the Sinhalese commentarial tradition is much older, and that the four references cited by Buddhist scholar monks who lived in second century BCE are from the beginning of the Christian era. So Mizuno comes to the conclusion that the original text must have been written down in its native land no later than the first century BCE.\(^5\) Winternitz echoed the same by saying that the author must “has lived at a time when people’s memory of the Greek king was still fresh. But as there was an end of Greek rule over India soon after the death of Menandros, it can be hardly presumed that he would have been remembered for more than one century. Accordingly the work might have been composed by about the beginning of the Christian era.”\(^6\) Thus, the original text must have been compiled between 150 BCE to 50 CE.

**The School to Which it Belongs**

As Mizuno indicated in his study, the *Milindapañha* and the *Nāgasena Bhksu Sūtra* must belong to different schools. N. Dutt is of the opinion that the *Milindapañha* very likely belonged to Sarvāstivāda school as the *Abhidharmakośa-vyakhya* refers to Nāgasena as purvaka-sthavira.\(^7\) However, this statement perhaps better applies to the original text since the *Milindapañha* is but only a translation as discussed above. The *Milindapañha* is quite clear that it is a Theravāda text since it quotes many

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suttas by their titles from the Pāli canon as traced by Rhys Davids. And also the quotation of the seven Abhidhamma books and the stereotypical formula of the paticcasamuppāda speak out clearly that the Milindapañha belongs to the Theravāda school. But the Nāgasena Bhksu Sūtra is quite problematic since there is absolutely no evidence to help us. Thich Minh Chau says: “All the proofs above show that the Chinese original was compiled at a time, when the growth of the Abhidharma had not yet matured and that the classification of the Buddhadharma into Āgama or Nikāya was not yet widely adopted.” But even this conclusion is too rash, because a deduction based only on the fact that the Chinese version does not mention any of the terms like Tripiṭaka, Āgama, Abhidharma etc. is not a good evidence. Probably the classification was already there, but the compiler did not use it.

As mentioned above, N. Dutt thinks that the Milindapañha very likely belonged to Sarvāstivāda school. But, I think this actually points to the original text as belonging to Sarvāstivāda school rather the extant Milindapañha. However, we have other internal evidence supporting that it may belong to Sarvāstivāda school because the text mentions the existence of three times – past, present and future – which is found in both the Chinese translation and the Pāli Milindapañha.

**LANGUAGE OF THE ORIGINAL TEXT**

According to Dutt, the original language of the Milindapañha was Sanskrit, since in the Abhidharmakosā-vyakhya, Nāgasena is referred to as purvaka sthavira. The Sarvāstivāda school used Sanskrit for their Tripiṭaka. According to Rhys Davids, the Pāli version is not the original, but a translation of a work written either in Sanskrit or in some North Indian Prakrit. This is followed by Pelliot, Winternitz, Demieville and J. Radher.

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9 Dutt, *Buddhist Sects in India*, p. 135.


11 Dutt, *Buddhist Sects in India*, p. 135.

Horner says: “I imagine, then, that the two men conversed in Prakrit, and that the scribe took down his notes in that tongue, and in it wrote them out more fully afterwards.” She further points out that the dialogues were translated into Sanskrit later. Now, in order to clarify this point, let us take a look at the situation of Buddhist sūtras and how they were transmitted in the second century BCE.

It is generally accepted that the Buddha preached his doctrine in dialect. We are not sure whether this dialect was Pāli or not. But it is definitely not Sanskrit because the Buddha’s language policy is against it. However, this language policy against the use of Sanskrit in Buddhist sūtras relaxed after several centuries of the Buddha’s parinirvāṇa. This is due to the Sanskrit renaissance. According to Ji Xianlin, the Sanskrit renaissance started at first in the second century BCE. He says: “the Sanskrit renaissance is closely connected with the expansion of the Maurya empire. Emperor Asoka used to use Adhamagadhi as his official language, probably he met some difficulties later. The successors of Emperor Asoka and religious people wanted to find out a language which could be accepted by the people throughout the great empire. Sanskrit was the ideal language. It is like the first emperor of China, Qin Shi Huang, who unified language and writing etc. for the purpose of ruling the whole empire. It is also generally accepted that Sanskrit renaissance started in second century BC in India. The author of The Yoga-sastra, Patanjali, was born during that period, and the advent of The Great Commentary indicates the rising of Sanskrit. At this time, Sanskrit became more and more influential, so that the orally transmitted Prakrit Sūtras among different schools and different regions now gradually started to be

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14 See the story of two brothers in Cullavagga, V. 33.
15 Ji Xianlin 季羡林 and WANG Shuying 王树英, Ji Xianlin 季羡林 in Selected Works of Ji Xianlin on Buddhism, Beijing Shi 北京市: Hua yi chu ban she 華藝出版社, 2006, p. 398.
16 The Sanskrit names of the work and its author are suggested by Ven. Dr. K. Dhammajoti.
sanskritised.” Ji says again that this Sanskritisation of Buddhist sūtras took place gradually, and was not accomplished in one move. According to Roth’s estimate, the Sanskritisation took place during 1st century BCE to 1st century CE. Michael Coulson is also of the same opinion, he says: “In the early centuries CE, first in the north and later in the south, Sanskrit became the only accepted language both for administration and for learned communication. The Buddhist Asvaghosa (second century CE) is a significant figure in the process.”

According to the Mahāvamsa, the Pāli Tipiṭaka was written down in Sri Lanka during 89-77 BCE when King Vattagamani Abhaya was in power. The occurrence of this event is generally accepted by most scholars. Ji says: “Buddhist Sūtras written down in its original land might be a little earlier than this, about the end of the second century BCE.”

There is another opinion that the writing of Buddhist sūtras and their sanskritisation might have taken place at the same time. As discussed above, the dialogues between King Menander and Nāgasena must have taken place during the latter part of second century to first century BCE since Menander lived in this period. Again, according to scholars, the dialogues were written down a little while after Menander’s death, and not more than a century later. So the compiler of the work must have lived in the time of Sanskrit renaissance. Therefore he most probably compiled


JI, Selected Works, pp. 398.


Such as Rhys Davids, Winternitz, etc.
the dialogues in Sanskrit.

Which is Earlier, The Nagasena Bhiksu Sutra or the Milindapanha?

We may say that the Chinese version is older and closer to the genuine original. By observing the characteristics of the content of the dialogues and its style, the Chinese text is simple and moderate, and may reflect the genuine recorded historical dialogues between the Greek King Menander and Bhikṣu Nāgasena. However, the Pāli version had gone through a process of revision and interpolation. We agree with Sylvian Levy’s opinion that the present Pāli text is nothing but a later enlarged recension of the Pāli translation of the original Indian version from which is derived our Chinese text. This original, whether being in Sanskrit or a kind of Prakrit, was prevalent in Northwest India. To prove this, we have the following points in support of the above conclusion.

1. The Pāli text commits a gross anachronism by referring to the six heretical teachers, Purana Kassapa, Makkhali Gosala, Nigantha Nataputta, Sanjaya Belatthaputta and Pakudha Kaccayana as having conversed with King Milinda. These six heretical teachers were contemporaries of the Buddha, but Menander lived during the second or first century BCE.

2. The Pāli text refers to Abhidhamma eight times within the first three books. More importantly, it gives the exact titles of the seven Abhidhamma books as they exist in the present Pāli Tipiṭaka. But the Chinese text is silent on Abhidhamma and it only refers to sūtras.

3. The Pāli text refers to the terms like Tipiṭaka and Nikāya, while the Chinese text mentions only the Buddha, Dharma, Buddhāsūtra, or Sūtravinaya.

4. The Pāli text obviously belongs to the Theravāda school with all the references to Pāli Tipiṭaka. But the Chinese text is vague on the subject, it lacks of any characteristics of the school.

5. Genuine quality of the Chinese text; some details in the Chinese text compared with the Pāli text are more convincing and authentic. For instance, when Nāgasena preached to a layman, he started from dānakathāṁ then sīlakathāṁ, then saggakathāṁ ... at last he gave a talk on dhamma. This reflects the tradition of early days of Buddhism as found in the Mahāvagga.

6. Abundance of miracles in the
Pāli text compared with the Chinese text show its deviation from Early Buddhism which is simple and moderate. For in the birth story of Nāgasena, the Pāli text refers to even Kassapa Buddha, while the Chinese refers to only the present Buddha. (7) Moderation of the Chinese text; when Nāgasena was invited to meet the king on the following day, the Chinese text says that he went with 80 sramanas, but the Pāli text says that he went with 80,000 sramanas. And also with regard to the description of Sāgala, Nāgasena’s qualities, and Menander’s wisdom, the Pāli text excels over the Chinese text in much more length and richness. (8) Addition of the latter four books in the Pāli text; the content of the latter four books is not in concordance with the first three books. Scholars, like Kegon Mizuno are of the opinion that they are later additions. Besides, at the end of the third book, the concluding words “Milindapañhanam pucchavissajjanasamatta” conveys the impression that the conversation is over, and that the book has ended. (9) The introductory parts of both the Pāli and the Chinese versions differ considerably, especially regarding the former lives of Bhikṣu Nāgasena and King Menander. The Chinese version is simple while the Pāli version is richer in additional detail.
TRANSLATION CATALOGUE

CHINESE VERSIONS

Taishō no. 1670A. Nāgasena Bhikṣu Sūtra 那先比丘經. Translated by anonymous author.

Taishō no. 1670B. Nāgasena Bhikṣu Sūtra 那先比丘經. Translated by anonymous author.

OTHER LANGUAGE VERSIONS

Translations based on Chinese versions of the Nāgasena Bhikṣu Sūtra


Translations based on the Pāli version of the Milindapañha (unless noted)

(Pāli version is found in V. Trenckner, ed., Milindapañha. London: PTS, 1880.)

Cagnola, G., Dialoghi des Re Milinda. Milano: 1923. (Italian, from English)


Nyanatiloka, Die Fragen des Königs Milinda. Leipzig: 1919. (German)


Schrader, F. Otto, Die Frage des Königs Menandros. Berlin: 1905. (G


YAMAGAMI Sogen 山上曹源, [King Milinda’s Questions] 彌蘭陀王問經, 國譯大藏經,經部第12卷: 1918. (Japanese)
anagamin: The third stage on the fourfold path to enlightenment according to early Buddhist traditions. One who attains this level will no longer be reborn in the human realm, but will be reborn in the higher heavens to attain enlightenment. Other translations: “non-returner.”

Ananda: The cousin of the Buddha who became his personal attendant and is considered one of his ten great disciples. Ananda was considered the foremost in memory, and since he constantly accompanied the Buddha he was believed to have memorized all of his teachings. Thus, during first council of the sangha after the Buddha passed away, he was asked to recite the sutras for the attending members of the monastic community so they could canonize the Buddha’s teachings and preserve them for future generations. For this reason, all sutras traditionally begin with “Thus have I heard,” indicating to the reader that this is considered to be Ananda’s first-hand account to the council.

arhat: Literally meaning “worthy one”, it is a name for one who has eradicated all of their defilements and has become enlightened. They are distinguished from buddhas and pratyekabuddhas by the fact that arhats practice the teachings of a buddha, while buddhas and pratyekabuddhas attain enlightenment solely through their own efforts. Other translations: “saint”.

ayatana: See twelve ayatanas.

bhiksu: A fully ordained male member of the Buddhist monastic community. Other translations: “monk,” “mendicant.”

bhiksuni: A fully ordained female member of the Buddhist monastic community. Other translations: “nun.”

Brahman: This figure is an important Hindu deva who was regarded as the creator of the world. In Buddhist texts he is relegated to an inferior position, yet is still respected since he rules over the seventh heaven of Buddhist cosmology. In Buddhism this term generally refers to a title or
status rather than a particular deva.

**brahman**: The clerical and highest social class among the traditional four castes of India. In Buddhist texts brahmans are sometimes depicted as lay supporters of Buddhism, or as of significant social standing and thus deserving of respect, while in other texts they are criticized for being immoral. Being a brahman is a birthright and not an occupational choice. Other translation: “Brahmin.”

**Buddha**: A title meaning “Awakened One” used for a being who has perceived the true nature of all phenomena, has overcome all suffering, and who compassionately teaches these insights to others. It is one of the ten titles of a fully enlightened being. When capitalized and preceded by definite article “the” the term refers to the historical figure Siddhartha Gautama, and when it is pluralized or not capitalized it refers to anyone in the general class of fully enlightened beings. The Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha comprise the Three Jewels.

**Deva**: An inhabitant of the heavens that are above Mt. Sumeru. Any sentient being with the requisite amount of merit can be reborn as a deva. Life in the heavenly realms is generally considered to be utopian, however it is also transient, as all devas are mortal and subject to rebirth. Other translations: “god,” “deity.”

**Dharma**: (1) The teachings of the Buddha which lead one to nirvana. (2) A thought or idea, the sensory object of mental perception. Other translations: “mind-object.” (3) A constituent element of the phenomenal world. Dharmas comprise both the physical world as well as the internal psychological processes of a subject. Other translations: “phenomena,” or “thing.”

**Eastern Jin Dynasty**: Following the uprising of non-Chinese nomads in the north and the collapse of the Western Jin (265CE-316CE), the Chinese imperial clan along with the aristocracy and
many landowners and peasants fled to modern-day Nanjing in the south to form the Eastern Jin (317CE-420CE). Because the northern parts of China were controlled by non-Chinese chieftains, this period marks the growth of different cultural traditions in the north and south of China.

**eighteen dhatus**: The eighteen bases of perceptual activity which include the six sense faculties (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind), the six sensory objects (sight, sound, scent, taste, touch, thought), and the six perceptual awarenesses that arise from the contact between the sense faculty and its corresponding sensory object (visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, and mental consciousness).

**eighty subsidiary characteristics**: A later expansion of the thirty-two bodily marks which further detail the appearance of a buddha.

**five kinds of grains**: Five cereal crops that were considered sacred in ancient China. Sources vary as to what grains were included, but often listed are: rice, wheat, barley, millet, and soybeans (technically a legume, not a grain). Other translation: “five kinds of crops.”

**five precepts**: The first five precepts of the ten precepts.

**four dhyanas**: Four progressive states of deep meditative concentration, each of which is marked by the abandonment of certain mental conditions that limit one’s meditative abilities.

**hungry ghost**: Originally, in early Indian thought, this being was simply the spirit of a deceased person. In Buddhism, these spirits became a pitiful class of creature who would constantly suffer from starvation, or who would have the endless misfortune of having their food turn into some gross and inedible substance. They are considered to be a class of rebirth in Buddhism owing to particular karmic activities, thus not every deceased person will become a hungry ghost. Other translation: “hungry spirit.”

**Indra**: Vedic deva who is considered to be the king of the devas (his common Buddhist name was
Sakra). He resides in Trayastrimsa Heaven ruling over a court of thirty-two other heavenly beings. He is regarded as a model for kingship, embodying the ideal ruler who protects the teachings of the Buddha and his followers. In Buddhism this term generally refers to a title or status rather than a particular deva.

**Jetavana Anathapindika Park**: A monastic compound located on the outskirts of Sravasti where the Buddha was traditionally said to have spent nineteen rain retreats. The park was donated to the Buddhist monastic community by a wealthy merchant named Sudatta, who was more commonly known as Anathapindika, which means “one who gives to the needy”. The land was originally owned by the royal prince, Jeta, who agreed to sell the land for the amount of gold coins that were required to cover the ground of the entire park. When Anathapindika initially ran out of gold and gave instructions for more to be carted in, Jeta was moved by Anathapindika’s devotion to the Buddha and freely donated the uncovered patch of land. Together they built a meeting hall, a dining hall, residential halls, walkways, wells, and surrounded the park with a barrier wall. To honor the efforts of both Jeta and Anathapindika, texts refer to the park using both of their names. This site was excavated in 1863 by the English archaeologist Alexander Cunningham, and is located in modern day Saheth, India.

**Kalpa**: An extremely vast measurement of time used in ancient India. The length of time of a single *kalpa* is considered to be of an almost inconceivable duration. Other translations: “eon,” “cosmic age.”

**Karma**: Literally meaning “action”, it denotes all mental, verbal and physical activities that inevitably entail consequences. It is impossible to circumvent the consequences effected by karmic actions, although it is possible to alter their trajectory through further karmic actions. An evil deed is any karmic activity committed under the influence of greed, hatred, or delusion, while a virtuous deed is any karmic activity guided by generosity, compassion and wisdom. According to traditional Buddhist doctrine, karma is the sole determining factor in deciding a sentient being’s
rebirth.

**kasaya**: The robes of a Buddhist monastic originally made from discarded scraps of fabric. To distinguish themselves from the brahmanical caste who wore white robes, Buddhist monks and nuns in India wore yellow-orange colored garments.

**li**: A traditional Chinese measurement for longer distances. Its measure has changed drastically throughout Chinese history, but was roughly 1500 feet (450 meters) during the Tang Dynasty.

**Menander**: Menander I was an Indo-Greek king who lived in the middle of the 1st century BCE and ruled over Bactria in northwestern India. He traditionally is considered to have become a patron and lay practitioner of Buddhism, as is perhaps evidenced by coinage struck in his lifetime with the obverse showing the eight-spoked wheel of the dharma. His name in Pali was rendered as Milinda.

**Milan**: See Menander.

**naga**: A mythological class of snake-like creatures that are closely associated with water and rainfall. **Nagas** are thought to be cunning and with the ability to transmogrify into human form. Influenced by native snake species (like the King cobra), Indian artisans depicted nagas as either half-human half-snake, or as humanoids with a cobra hood shielding the back of their heads. In China, the Sanskrit term *naga* was translated by the Chinese word for dragon, thus nagas are sometimes depicted in that form. Other translations: “dragons,” “serpents.”

**Nagasena**: Literally “army of nagas,” Nagasena is a Buddhist monk who is wholly known for his conversations with the Indo-Greek king Menander I. Nagasena proves to be the only person who can adequately address and answer all of Menander’s questions about Buddhist doctrine.

**Naxian**: See Nagasena.

**nine apertures**: The nine openings in the body, i.e. the eyes, nostrils, mouth, ear canals, anus, and urethra.
ninety six doctrines: Doctrines and philosophies in India that were different from the teachings of the Buddha. The total of ninety-six was arrived at by adding together six major non-Buddhist teachers of the times along with ninety of their disciples (fifteen for each of them).

nirvana: The Buddhist goal of liberation from samsara and the cessation of all suffering caused by the extinction of greed, hatred and delusion. Nirvana literally means “blown out”.

parinirvana: The highest form of nirvana, which constitutes the total extinction of residual karmic elements, i.e. the five aggregates. This was the final state of enlightenment attained by the Buddha upon his death, in contrast with the enlightenment attained at Bodhgaya under the Bodhi Tree. Other translation: “nirvana with remainder.”

saddharma: Literally the “good dharma,” which refers to the teachings of the Buddha in general.

sakrdagamin: The second stage on the fourfold path to enlightenment according to early Buddhist traditions. One who attains this level will only have one more rebirth in the human realm before enlightenment.

samsara: The repetitious cycle of birth and death experienced by a sentient being until they attain enlightenment. This cyclic existence is marked by suffering as beings are continuously reborn in one of the six paths throughout the triple realm. Liberation from samsara leads one to enlightenment and the end of suffering.

sangha: The monastic community originally organized by the Buddha. Other translation: “Order.”

Sariputra: The chief disciple of the Buddha who was considered foremost in wisdom. He is regarded as one of the ten great disciples of the Buddha.

sramana: A general term used to denote a person who has shaved their head and renounced their worldly status and possessions to pursue a spiritual practice. Originally referred to any itinerant ascetic who rejected Brahmanical religious orthodoxy.
In Buddhist texts it sometimes refers specifically to a Buddhist monk or nun. Other translations: “renunciant,” “ascetic.”

**sramanera**: Literally meaning “small sramana,” a novice monk in the Buddhist sangha who has taken the ten precepts and is under the age of twenty. Upon reaching the age of twenty, the sramanera (or “sramaneri” for women) can fully ordain as a bhiksu or bhiksuni.

**Sravasti**: Sravasti was the capital city of the ancient northern Indian kingdom of Kosala located in modern day Uttar Pradesh. To distinguish it from a southern Indian kingdom that was also called Kosala, this northern Indian state was sometimes referenced by its capital city, thus being called the Kingdom of Sravasti. Prasenajit, the sovereign ruler of this kingdom, was a devoted follower and friend of the Buddha.

**srotaapanna**: The first stage on the fourfold path to enlightenment according to early Buddhist traditions. One who attains this level has assured their future enlightenment within seven more rebirths, and will only be reborn as a human, demi-god, or god. Other translations: “stream-enterer.”

**sutra**: Scripture which traditionally preserves the discourses of the Buddha. The earliest dialogues of the Buddha were preserved orally, and it is commonly held that his teachings were not committed to writing until the first century BCE. With the advent of Mahayana Buddhism new sutras were circulated in Northern India and Central Asia.

**ten precepts**: Ten rules or teachings intended to help train a monk or nun in ethical conduct. These precepts are taken voluntarily and can mark the initiation of a person into the sangha. The first five precepts are followed by lay practitioners. They include: 1) no killing; 2) no stealing; 3) no improper sexual behavior; 4) no false speech; 5) no consumption of alcohol; 6) not eating after noon; 7) not watching dancing, singing, or performances; 8) not adorning oneself with garlands, perfumes, or ointments; 9) not using a high bed; 10) not receiving gold or silver.

**thera**: Literally meaning “elder,” a title reserved
for aged and virtuous monks.

**thirty-two bodily marks:** Of those born with these marks those who embark on a path of religious practice will become a fully enlightened buddha, while those who embark on a secular political career will become all-powerful (‘wheel-turning’) kings. The marks of a buddha are considered more distinguished and complete than that of a king. The more famous marks include a prominent protrusion on the crown on the head, a whorl of white hair located between the eyebrows (often represented by a circle or jewel in iconography), and the depiction of Dharma wheels with one thousand spokes on the soles of the feet.

**three evil realms:** The three realms of rebirth that are considered to be the most despised and unfortunate, namely being reborn as a hell being, hungry ghost or animal.

**Tusita:** A heavenly realm known for being the location for the previous birth of Sakyamuni Buddha and the present location of the future Buddha, Maitreya.

**twelve ayatanas:** The six sense faculties (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind) and their corresponding six sensory objects (sight, sound, scent, taste, touch, thought). The five ayatanas refer to the first five pairs. See also **eighteen dhatu**. Other translations: “sense bases,” “sense spheres,” “awarenesses.”

**upasaka:** A male lay Buddhist.

**upasika:** A female lay Buddhist.

**vinaya:** The rules and codes for Buddhist monks and nuns.

**yojana:** A classical Indian measure for longer distances. It is quantified diversely in different sources, but ranges from 4.5 miles to 10 miles (7.2 to 16 km).
With the growing popularity of Buddhism around the world, access to its doctrine through reliable translations of its scriptures is of the utmost importance. Therefore, we have set as our pinnacle goal the production of a new standardized canon of Buddhist sutras in English. As scholars, teachers, and students of Buddhism, we recognize that the most valuable resources for Buddhist texts are the exhaustive editions of the Chinese Buddhist canon, yet of the hundreds of sutras in Chinese, only a fraction have been reliably translated into the English language.

In furthering our goal of publishing translations of Chinese sutras we would like to thank Ven. Guang Xing for the contribution of his translation and research on the Nagasena Sutra. This text is a welcome addition to our ongoing series of translations. His copious annotations to the translation have been preserved in a companion volume of endnotes.

Through the publication of these translations, we hope to allow a greater accessibility to Buddhist sutras, and circulate them to a much wider audience. We hope to appeal to not only the uninitiated, but also to the more accomplished student of Buddhist thought.

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