

Buddhism IN TRANSLATIONS

Passages Selected from the Buddhist Sacred Books
and Translated from the Original Pāli into English by

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the loose shreds of bark, and the unsound wood, it were to stand neat and clean in its strength. In exactly the same way doth the word of Gotama, free from branches and twigs, and from loose shreds of bark, and from unsound wood, stand neat and clean in its strength. O wonderful is it, Gotama! O wonderful is it, Gotama! It is as if, O Gotama, one were to set up that which was overturned; or were to disclose that which was hidden; or were to point out the way to a lost traveller; or were to carry a lamp into a dark place, that they who had eyes might see forms. Even so has Gotama expounded the Doctrine in many different ways. I betake myself to Gotama for refuge, to the Doctrine, and to the Congregation of the priests. Let Gotama receive me who have betaken myself to him for refuge, and accept me as a disciple from this day forth as long as life shall last."

The Aggī-Vacchagotta Sermon.

§ 14. KING MILINDA AND NĀGASENA COME TO AN UNDERSTANDING.

Translated from the Milindapañha (28th).

Said the king, "Bhante Nāgasena, will you converse with me?"

"Your majesty, if you will converse with me as the wise converse, I will; but if you converse with me as kings converse, I will not."

"Bhante Nāgasena, how do the wise converse?"

"Your majesty, when the wise converse, whether they become entangled by their opponents' arguments or extricate themselves, whether they or their opponents are convicted of error, whether their own superiority or that of their opponents is established, nothing in all this can make them angry. Thus, your majesty, do the wise converse."

"And how, bhante, do kings converse?"

"Your majesty, when kings converse, they advance a position, and whoever opposes it, they order his punishment,

saying, 'Punish this fellow!' Thus, your majesty, do kings converse."

"Bhante, I will converse as the wise converse, not as kings do. Let your worship converse in all confidence. Let your worship converse as unrestrainedly as if with a priest or a novice or a lay disciple or a keeper of the monastery grounds. Be not afraid!"

"Very well, your majesty," said the elder in assent.

§ 15. THERE IS NO EGO.

§ 15 a. — Translated from the Milindapañha (25th).

Then drew near Milinda the king to where the venerable Nāgasena was; and having drawn near, he greeted the venerable Nāgasena; and having passed the compliments of friendship and civility, he sat down respectfully at one side. And the venerable Nāgasena returned the greeting; by which, verily, he won the heart of king Milinda.

And Milinda the king spoke to the venerable Nāgasena as follows:—

"How is your reverence called? Bhante, what is your name?"

"Your majesty, I am called Nāgasena; my fellow-priests, your majesty, address me as Nāgasena: but whether parents give one the name Nāgasena, or Sūrasena, or Virasena, or Sīhasena, it is, nevertheless, your majesty, but a way of counting, a term, an appellation, a convenient designation, a mere name, this Nāgasena; for there is no Ego here to be found."

Then said Milinda the king,—

"Listen to me, my lords, ye five hundred Yonakas, and ye eighty thousand priests! Nāgasena here says thus: 'There is no Ego here to be found.' Is it possible, pray, for me to assent to what he says?"

And Milinda the king spoke to the venerable Nāgasena as follows:—

“Bhante Nāgasena, if there is no Ego to be found, who is it then furnishes you priests with the priestly requisites, — robes, food, bedding, and medicine, the reliance of the sick? who is it makes use of the same? who is it keeps the precepts? who is it applies himself to meditation? who is it realizes the Paths, the Fruits, and Nirvana? who is it destroys life? who is it takes what is not given him? who is it commits immorality? who is it tells lies? who is it drinks intoxicating liquor? who is it commits the five crimes that constitute ‘proximate karma’?¹ In that case, there is no merit; there is no demerit; there is no one who does or causes to be done meritorious or demeritorious deeds; neither good nor evil deeds can have any fruit or result. Bhante Nāgasena, neither is he a murderer who kills a priest, nor can you priests, bhante Nāgasena, have any teacher, preceptor, or ordination. When you say, ‘My fellow-priests, your majesty, address me as Nāgasena,’ what then is this Nāgasena? Pray, bhante, is the hair of the head Nāgasena?” —

“Nay, verily, your majesty.”

“Is the hair of the body Nāgasena?”

“Nay, verily, your majesty.”

“Are nails . . . teeth . . . skin . . . flesh . . . sinews . . . bones . . . marrow of the bones . . . kidneys . . . heart . . . liver . . . pleura . . . spleen . . . lungs . . . intestines . . . mesentery . . . stomach . . . faeces . . . bile . . . phlegm . . . pus . . . blood . . . sweat . . . fat . . . tears . . . lymph . . . saliva . . . snot . . . synovial fluid . . . urine . . . brain of the head Nāgasena?”

“Nay, verily, your majesty.”

¹ Translated from the Sārasaṅgaha, as quoted in Trenckner’s note to this passage:

“By *proximate karma* is meant karma that ripens in the next existence. To show what this is, I [the author of the Sārasaṅgaha] give the following passage from the Aṭṭhānasutta of the first book of the Aṅguttara Nikāya: — ‘It is an impossibility, O priests, the case can never occur, that an individual imbued with the correct doctrine should deprive his mother of life, should deprive his father of life, should deprive a saint of life, should in a revengeful spirit cause a bloody wound to a Tathāgata, should cause a schism in the church. This is an impossibility.’”

“Is now, bhante, form Nāgasena?”

“Nay, verily, your majesty.”

“Is sensation Nāgasena?”

“Nay, verily, your majesty.”

“Is perception Nāgasena?”

“Nay, verily, your majesty.”

“Are the predispositions Nāgasena?”

“Nay, verily, your majesty.”

“Is consciousness Nāgasena?”

“Nay, verily, your majesty.”

“Are, then, bhante, form, sensation, perception, the predispositions, and consciousness unitedly Nāgasena?”

“Nay, verily, your majesty.”

“Is it, then, bhante, something besides form, sensation, perception, the predispositions, and consciousness, which is Nāgasena?”

“Nay, verily, your majesty.”

“Bhante, although I question you very closely, I fail to discover any Nāgasena. Verily, now, bhante, Nāgasena is a mere empty sound. What Nāgasena is there here? Bhante, you speak a falsehood, a *lié*: there is no Nāgasena.”

Then the venerable Nāgasena spoke to Milinda the king as follows: —

“Your majesty, you are a delicate prince, an exceedingly delicate prince; and if, your majesty, you walk in the middle of the day on hot sandy ground, and you tread on rough grit, gravel, and sand, your feet become sore, your body tired, the mind is oppressed, and the body-consciousness suffers. Pray, did you come afoot, or riding?”

“Bhante, I do not go afoot: I came in a chariot.”

“Your majesty, if you came in a chariot, declare to me the chariot. Pray, your majesty, is the pole the chariot?”

“Nay, verily, bhante.”

“Is the axle the chariot?”

“Nay, verily, bhante.”

“Are the wheels the chariot?”

“Nay, verily, bhante.”

“Is the chariot-body the chariot?”

"Nay, verily, bhante."

"Is the banner-staff the chariot?"

"Nay, verily, bhante."

"Is the yoke the chariot?"

"Nay, verily, bhante."

"Are the reins the chariot?"

"Nay, verily, bhante."

"Is the goading-stick the chariot?"

"Nay, verily, bhante."

"Pray, your majesty, are pole, axle, wheels, chariot-body, banner-staff, yoke, reins, and goad unitedly the chariot?"

"Nay, verily, bhante."

"Is it, then, your majesty, something else besides pole, axle, wheels, chariot-body, banner-staff, yoke, reins, and goad which is the chariot?"

"Nay, verily, bhante."

"Your majesty, although I question you very closely, I fail to discover any chariot. Verily now, your majesty, the word chariot is a mere empty sound. What chariot is there here? Your majesty, you speak a falsehood, a lie: there is no chariot. Your majesty, you are the chief king in all the continent of India; of whom are you afraid that you speak a lie? Listen to me, my lords, ye five hundred Yonakas, and ye eighty thousand priests! Milinda the king here says thus: 'I came in a chariot;' and being requested, 'Your majesty, if you came in a chariot, declare to me the chariot,' he fails to produce any chariot. Is it possible, pray, for me to assent to what he says?"

When he had thus spoken, the five hundred Yonakas applauded the venerable Nāgasena and spoke to Milinda the king as follows:—

"Now, your majesty, answer, if you can."

Then Milinda the king spoke to the venerable Nāgasena as follows:—

"Bhante Nāgasena, I speak no lie: the word 'chariot' is but a way of counting, term, appellation, convenient designation, and name for pole, axle, wheels, chariot-body, and banner-staff."

"Thoroughly well, your majesty, do you understand a chariot. In exactly the same way, your majesty, in respect of me, Nāgasena is but a way of counting, term, appellation, convenient designation, mere name for the hair of my head, hair of my body . . . brain of the head, form, sensation, perception, the predispositions, and consciousness. But in the absolute sense there is no Ego here to be found. And the priestess Vajirā, your majesty, said as follows in the presence of The Blessed One:—

"Even as the word of 'chariot' means

That members join to frame a whole;

So when the Groups appear to view,

We use the phrase, "A living being."¹

"It is wonderful, bhante Nāgasena! It is marvellous, bhante Nāgasena! Brilliant and prompt is the wit of your replies. If The Buddha were alive, he would applaud. Well done, well done, Nāgasena! Brilliant and prompt is the wit of your replies."

§ 15b.—Translated from the *Visuddhi-Magga* (chap. xviii.).

Just as the word "chariot" is but a mode of expression for axle, wheels, chariot-body, pole, and other constituent members, placed in a certain relation to each other, but when we come to examine the members one by one, we discover that in the absolute sense there is no chariot; and just as the word "house" is but a mode of expression for wood and other constituents of a house, surrounding space in a certain relation, but in the absolute sense there is no house; and just as the word "fist" is but a mode of expression for the fingers, the thumb, etc., in a certain relation; and the word "lute" for the body of the lute, strings, etc.; "army" for elephants, horses, etc.; "city" for fortifications, houses, gates, etc.; "tree" for trunk, branches, foliage, etc., in a certain relation, but when we come to examine the parts one by one, we discover that in the absolute sense there is no tree; in exactly the same way the words "living entity" and "Ego" are but

¹ That is, "a living entity."

a mode of expression for the presence of the five attachment groups, but when we come to examine the elements of being one by one, we discover that in the absolute sense there is no living entity there to form a basis for such figments as "I am," or "I"; in other words, that in the absolute sense there is only name and form. The insight of him who perceives this is called knowledge of the truth.

He, however, who abandons this knowledge of the truth and believes in a living entity must assume either that this living entity will perish or that it will not perish. If he assume that it will not perish, he falls into the heresy of the persistence of existences; or if he assume that it will perish, he falls into that of the annihilation of existences. And why do I say so? Because, just as sour cream has milk as its antecedent, so nothing here exists but what has its own antecedents.¹ To say, "The living entity persists," is to fall short of the truth; to say, "It is annihilated," is to outrun the truth. Therefore has The Blessed One said:—

"There are two heresies, O priests, which possess both gods and men, by which some fall short of the truth, and some outrun the truth; but the intelligent know the truth.

"And how, O priests, do some fall short of the truth?

"O priests, gods and men delight in existence, take pleasure in existence, rejoice in existence, so that when the Doctrine for the cessation of existence is preached to them, their minds do not leap toward it, are not favorably disposed toward it, do not rest in it, do not adopt it.

"Thus, O priests, do some fall short of the truth.

"And how, O priests, do some outrun the truth?

"Some are distressed at, ashamed of, and loathe existence, and welcome the thought of non-existence, saying, 'See here! When they say that on the dissolution of the body this Ego is annihilated, perishes, and does not exist after death, that is good, that is excellent, that is as it should be.'

"Thus, O priests, do some outrun the truth.

"And how, O priests, do the intelligent know the truth?"

"We may have, O priests, a priest who knows things as they really are, and knowing things as they really are, he is on the road to aversion for things, to absence of passion for them, and to cessation from them.

"Thus, O priests, do the intelligent know the truth."

§ 15 c. — Translated from the *Mahā-Nidāna-Sutta* (256²¹) of the *Digha-Nikāya*.

"In regard to the Ego, Ānanda, what are the views held concerning it?"

"In regard to the Ego, Ānanda, either one holds the view that sensation is the Ego, saying, 'Sensation is my Ego;'

"Or, in regard to the Ego, Ānanda, one holds the view, 'Verily, sensation is not my Ego; my Ego has no sensation;'

"Or, in regard to the Ego, Ānanda, one holds the view, 'Verily, neither is sensation my Ego, nor does my Ego have no sensation. My Ego has sensation; my Ego possesses the faculty of sensation.'¹

"In the above case, Ānanda, where it is said, 'Sensation is my Ego,' reply should be made as follows: 'Brother, there are three sensations: the pleasant sensation, the unpleasant sensation, and the indifferent sensation. Which of these three sensations do you hold to be the Ego?'

"Whenever, Ānanda, a person experiences a pleasant sensation, he does not at the same time experience an unpleasant sensation, nor does he experience an indifferent sensation; only the pleasant sensation does he then feel. Whenever, Ānanda, a person experiences an unpleasant sensation, he does not at the same time experience a pleasant sensation, nor does he experience an indifferent sensation; only the un-

¹ From the commentary on the *Mahā-Nidāna-Sutta*, *Providence Manuscript*, folio *ghāu*, b, lines 4 and 5:—*Sensation is my Ego gives the heresy of individuality as based on the sensation-group; My Ego has no sensation, as based on the form-group; and My Ego has sensation; my Ego possesses a faculty of sensation, as based on the perception-group, the predisposition-group, and the consciousness-group. For these three groups have sensation through union with sensation, and possess a faculty of sensation on account of the inseparability of this union.*

pleasant sensation does he then feel. Whenever, Ānanda, a person experiences an indifferent sensation, he does not at the same time experience a pleasant sensation, nor does he experience an unpleasant sensation; only the indifferent sensation does he then feel.

“Now pleasant sensations, Ānanda, are transitory, are due to causes, originate by dependence, and are subject to decay, disappearance, effacement, and cessation; and unpleasant sensations, Ānanda, are transitory, are due to causes, originate by dependence, and are subject to decay, disappearance, effacement, and cessation; and indifferent sensations, Ānanda, are transitory, are due to causes, originate by dependence, and are subject to decay, disappearance, effacement, and cessation. While this person is experiencing a pleasant sensation, he thinks, ‘This is my Ego.’ And after the cessation of this same pleasant sensation, he thinks, ‘My Ego has passed away.’ While he is experiencing an unpleasant sensation, he thinks, ‘This is my Ego.’ And after the cessation of this same unpleasant sensation, he thinks, ‘My Ego has passed away.’ And while he is experiencing an indifferent sensation, he thinks, ‘This is my Ego.’ And after the cessation of this same indifferent sensation, he thinks, ‘My Ego has passed away.’ So that he who says, ‘Sensation is my Ego,’ holds the view that even during his lifetime his Ego is transitory, that it is pleasant, unpleasant, or mixed, and that it is subject to rise and disappearance.

“Accordingly, Ānanda, it is not possible to hold the view, ‘Sensation is my Ego.’

“In the above case, Ānanda, where it is said, ‘Verily sensation is not my Ego; my Ego has no sensation,’ reply should be made as follows: ‘But, brother, where there is no sensation, is there any “I am”?’”

“Nay, verily, Reverend Sir.”

“Accordingly, Ānanda, it is not possible to hold the view, ‘Verily, sensation is not my Ego; my Ego has no sensation.’

“In the above case, Ānanda, where it is said, ‘Verily, neither is sensation my Ego, nor does my Ego have no sensa-

tion. My Ego has sensation; my Ego possesses the faculty of sensation,’ reply should be made as follows: ‘Suppose, brother, that utterly and completely, and without remainder, all sensation were to cease — if there were nowhere any sensation, pray, would there be anything, after the cessation of sensation, of which it could be said, “This am I”?’”

“Nay, verily, Reverend Sir.”

“Accordingly, Ānanda, it is not possible to hold the view, ‘Verily, neither is sensation my Ego, nor does my Ego have no sensation. My Ego has sensation; my Ego possesses the faculty of sensation.’

“From the time, Ānanda, a priest no longer holds the view that sensation is the Ego, no longer holds the view that the Ego has no sensation, no longer holds the view that the Ego has sensation, possesses the faculty of sensation, he ceases to attach himself to anything in the world, and being free from attachment, he is never agitated, and being never agitated, he attains to Nirvana in his own person; and he knows that rebirth is exhausted, that he has lived the holy life, that he has done what it behooved him to do, and that he is no more for this world.

“Now it is impossible, Ānanda, that to a mind so freed a priest should attribute the heresy that the saint exists after death, or that the saint does not exist after death, or that the saint both exists and does not exist after death, or that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death.

“And why do I say so?”

“Because, Ānanda, after a priest has been freed by a thorough comprehension of affirmation and affirmation’s range, of predication and predication’s range, of declaration and declaration’s range, of knowledge and knowledge’s field of action, of rebirth and what rebirth affects, it is impossible for him to attribute such a heretical lack of knowledge and perception to a priest similarly freed.”