

THE KING AND THE PHILOSOPHER: Historical and Textual Analysis of the Milinda-Pañha¹

VEN. CHIPAMONG CHOWDHURY

A. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Introduction: The Texts and Its Origins

There are many acceptable reasons to consider that the “Milinda-Pañha Pāli” is one of the most popular and authoritative texts of Pāli Buddhist Literature, contributed by the king Milinda and the most notable monk Nāgasena. The work records the historical and philosophical conversation on various aspects of early thought and practices, in the form of series of questions and dilemmas raised by the King and the correct answers to them by the famous monk Nāgasena. The purpose of the present paper is not a doctrinal study of the text but rather as textual analysis and criticism.

Most translators of the *Milinda-Pañha* text generally render the title as *The Questions of King Milinda*. Venerable Bhikkhu Pesala objected to this in his retranslation of the text and offered an alternative translation, *The Debate of King Milinda*, as he thinks it is an appropriate rendition. However, when we closely study the textual analysis, conversations between two rivals, and more importantly the dexterous solutions of dilemmas by Elder Nāgasena we see that it is inappropriate to use the word ‘Debate’ for the Pāli word Takka (Tarka in Sanskrit), because the text simply does not illustrate nor bear any character of debate. There is also no sparring for victory among the disputants (King and Nāgasena) although Nāgasena has al-

ways been the hero of the text. What the dialogues between them display is that there is no winner and the defeated.

The origins and the date of its composition are hard to trace, because the text itself left no traceable date. However, numerous Buddhist historians and scholars have arrived at a consensus with regard to this important work, which is an integral source of Pāli Buddhist studies. It seems it was compiled some five hundred years after the Buddha’s Parinibbāna. The Aśokārāma built by the Emperor Aśoka is the only reference in the text (p.14) which suggests to us that the work would have been written after third century B.C, or just before the beginning of our Era. It is also assumable that the text was compiled later than the time of the conversation by an unknown author as many of the recorded conversations are spurious.

Location and the Language of the Text

The geographical reference within the text indicates that it was originally written somewhere in northwest India- either in Kashmir or the Punjab. Historically, a number of factors support this view- e.g. the Sarvāstivāda school, an early rival of the old Theravāda, is said to have flourished in Gandhāra and Kashmir during the period to which the Milinda is usually assigned, as noted by Dr. Dutta.

¹ Due to busy travel from one place to another (Colombo, Chennai, Dhaka, London and Kathmandu), I lost some of the discussions, and more importantly the endnotes, of the original hand-written work that I completed in Yangon, 2002. Finally, this revision was completed in Kathmandu where the relevant reference books were not accessible. Therefore, if there are any shortcomings or inaccuracies, especially the in the notes, I must bear responsibility for them alone. I wish to thank Prof. Min Bahadur Shakya for publishing this essay. I also would like to thank three Dharma friends, Sugeeta, Nirañjana, and Alina, for leaving me completely alone when I was concentrating on this work.

Due to the discovery of the Chinese translation of the 4th century *Nāgasena-Bhikṣusūtra* (*The Discourse of the Bhikṣu Nāgasena*), it can apparently be inferred that the Milinda-Pañha was originally written in Sanskrit. The Pure Land school (Sukhāvātī) of the Mahāyāna does not stray from the Pāli Milinda text as it contains numerous vulnerable and beautiful parables (*Seeker Glossary of Buddhism* p.377). The text of the Land of Bliss (Sukhāvātī) is originally written in Sanskrit (*J. Takakusu: The Essential of Buddhist Philosophy*, p.174).

While indicating its Sanskrit version other prominent Pāli scholars assume that the text was probably composed in either Gāndari or in one of the North Indian Prākṛts and translated at a very early date into Pāli. Unfortunately, since no version survived in any other Indic languages, except or exceptionally the Theravāda Pāli version preserved in South Asian regions, where it is treated with a standard authority, this remains to be openly doubted.

Identification of the King and the Philosopher: Their Early Stories

The King's Biography: The source, substantial information, and the events related to the early life of the King Milinda are meagre. There is no reliable account of his early biography about his birth, life, character and dominion. The textual references themselves disagree about early accounts of him.

According to the available sources that we have, however, he was apparently not only regarded as a successful ruler, but was also a very learned and keen scholar. He was, unlike any other kings in history, said to have mastered the various arts and sciences, and was highly skilled in the arts of Debate. This shows that he enjoyed intellectual discussions with other debaters to satisfy his intellectual curiosity.

The text, however, does not say anything about the other debaters. However, it is generally assumed that debaters with whom the king re-

futed would have been Hindu Brahmins or other Indian ascetics of his time. Our text says that no one could give an exact answer to what he wanted to know, except a young Buddhist protagonist Bhante Nāgasena. Thus, I would say, his haphazard meeting with this erudite Buddhist monk, who made many quips to the king's inquiries, was a turning point to the right track, as his mind was truly awakened.

Such a versatile scholar-king and a formidable debater was identified with the Indo-Greek King Menandar, who was considered a direct descendant of the Greco-Bactrian kings, whose dominion was perhaps founded by Alexander the Great. This corresponded to much of present day Afghanistan. There, however, are many diverse views among the scholars and historians regarding actual date of the Milinda (Menendras). If the king Demetrius ruled the above-mentioned region during 189-167 BC, Menandar would have exercised his political powers by 163-150 BC, as estimated by Lamotte. However, Rhys Davids and others date his life to be around 150-110 BC (Karl H. Potter, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. VII, *Abhidharma Buddhism*, see chapter on *Milinda*).

The actual birthplace of the king Menendras is also another fact that remains problematic. According to Lamotte, he was born in the Kalasi village, on the unspecified island of the Alansanda. The Kalasi village seems to be included in the district of Alexandria under Caucasus. Lamotte's apparent suggestion cannot be supported, because the actual discussion between the two great heroes, as the text itself refers to, took place in the city called Sigala in the eastern Punjab, a state of India.

Nāgasena's Story: It is no doubt that venerable Nāgasena is one of the earliest and most celebrated personalities to have appeared in the Buddhist tradition after the demise of the Buddha. His early life is mysterious, odd, and associated with miraculous events- like allegorical Christian Biblical myths. Within a short time and limited space I will try to briefly sketch the earlier life of our great champion, Bhante Nāgasena.

He was, like his predecessors or successors, of Brahmin origin and named Souttara. It is popularly believed that before appearing in the human world he was in heaven and only after a strong request made by venerable Assugutta did he descend to the human world and was conceived in the womb of a brahmin woman. At a relatively young age he is said to have mastered the three Vedic scriptures, the most authoritative Hindu texts. However, he startlingly found that Hindu Vedic religious texts were pith-less and finally came to the conclusion that these texts contain no gist at all.

This caused him to search for truth and wisdom and that he in fact discovered in the Buddhist tradition, and finally he ended up becoming a Bhikkhu- a Buddhist monk. In a very short time he mastered the entire Tripiṭaka- the Buddhist scriptures. During his first three months of rain retreat (Vassa) he intuitively realized the profundity of the dhamma and attained Arahantship- the ultimate of goal of the Theravāda Buddhists.

The Importance of the Text.

In order to evaluate the importance of the work, we are advised to understand the subject matter of the conversations and dialogues in the text. The Theravāda Milinda-Pañha that we have at present contains simple and astute questions and counter questions, beautiful similes and relevant parables. The doctrinal issues discussed in the text not only include the apotheosis of the Buddha, the Buddhisaṭṭa-concept, the various problems of arhant-hood, the roles of the Saṅgha-members and their socio-religious activities; but also an extensive discussion on Wisdom, Meditation, Ethics, Psychology, Buddhology, the concept of Life after Death, and other related philosophical topics. All the questions forwarded by the king are correctly and satisfactorily answered by Nāgasena.

The above mentioned topics of discussion by the great Buddhist sage Nāgasena and the king Milinda, have been a weighty textual book of Southern Buddhism, since its compilation into a

book entitled Milinda-Pañha Pāli. Thus, the text obviously stands in high repute in Theravāda Buddhist countries like Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, etc. The great fifth century AD Pāli commentator, Ācārya Buddhaghōṣa, cites frequently the Milinda-Pañha as an authority in his encyclopaedic treatise, the Visuddhimagga. The work becomes so important that, after the sixth council held in Yangon, it gained a canonical status, despite the work being a discussion between two disciples who lived almost 500 years after the Buddha's demise and compiled by an unknown disciple. The inclusion of it in the Khuddaka-Nikāya by the Burmese tradition shows that they treated the Milinda text as one of the most important Pāli texts in the field of Buddhist studies. The paramount importance of the work is noted by T.W. Rhys Davids, the first translator of the whole text into English. It occupies a unique position, second only to the Pāli Piṭaka, and perhaps also to the Path of Purity (Visuddhimagga).

Having thus, at least for a brief period of time, understood the historical standpoint of the Milinda-pañha and its significance, we shall now briefly turn to a textual analysis of the present work and make a critical assessment of it.

B. TEXTUAL AND DOCTRINAL ANALYSIS

The Place of the Milinda-Pañha in the Khuddaka-nikāya or Vice-versa?

Historically and chronologically, the Milinda-Pañha is believed to have been composed in the beginning of our (Christian) era, though the date of the work is uncertain as we have indicated above. Traditionally it is accepted that the Vinaya-piṭaka and Sutta-piṭaka were collected, edited, and finally compiled at the first meeting at Rājagaha after the Buddha's final parinibbāna. This account is recorded in the Cullavagga of the Vinaya (*etene va upāyene pañcanikāye pucchi: Vin.ii.p.287*). However, Cullavagga curiously enough does not define the five Nikāyas or their nature. On the other hand, *Sumaṅgalavilāsini*, the commentary

to Dīgha-Nikāya, gives a dogmatically² different account. In contradiction to other accounts, particularly Cullavagga and Samantapāsādikā (Vinaya Commentary), it explicitly states that the four Saṅgītis/Nikāyas were unanimously recited in the first council by the senior monks, and after rehearsal of the four texts, they began to recite Abhidhamma-Ṭīka (DA. p.14-15).

Thus authenticity of the Khuddaka-nikāya has been a keen subject of debate in Buddhist scholarship, although Oliver Abenayake critically examines it in his doctoral research, “Historical and Textual Studies of the Khuddaka.”

He, however, totally forgot to focus on the Milinda issues and other texts of the Khuddaka-nikāya that were added later by the Burmese tradition. Instead of restricting himself strictly and narrowly to the list of the fifteen books given by Buddhaghoṣa, he should have discussed all eighteen books that we have today and are available to the students of Buddhism.

On the other hand, the reluctance of putting the Khuddaka-nikāya in the Sutta-ṭīka as a fixed canon by Dīgha-bhānakas forces us to conclude that some bhānakas, who eventually became the preservers of entire Pāli texts, ignored the authority of the Khuddaka-nikāya, or at least they had a kind of aversion to accept it. In his studies in the commentarial literature, Dr. Adikaram rightly notes this problem, “In no commentary, as far as I am aware, is there any reference to the reciters of the Khuddaka-nikāya” (*Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon* p.25). The earliest occurrence of the Khuddaka-bhānakas is the Milinda-Pañha (*Miln-342*). In addition to this, at the end of the Milinda-text, we see that some fundamental questions are raised regarding the Khuddaka-nikāya (*Miln-* p. 281, 341, 350, 411, 414). From these occur-

rences, we can draw two tentative conclusions: (1) the Milinda-Pañha Pāli raises Khuddaka-nikāya to canonical stature, and (2) Nāgasena was aware of all bhānaka traditions of Indian origins.³

Until the time of Buddhaghoṣa there was perhaps no one who knew the actual number of the books that belong to Khuddaka-Nikāya. It was he who enumerated the fifteen books of the Khuddaka-Nikāya for the first time in the history of Pāli Buddhist literature (*pannarasappabhedo khuddakonikāyo/DA.I. 18, Kbu A. p.12*). However, here we see another disagreement among the Bhānakas, as the list and order of the texts are different from one bhānaka to another. The Sinhala translation of the Milinda (Sinhala Milinda Praśnaya) also mentions 15 books of the Khuddaka-nikāya. According to the Burmese tradition, the Khuddaka-Nikāya contains 18 books and the last one is the Milinda Pañha, as we noted above (See also : *M. Bode- Pāli Literature of Burma*, p.507f).

The earlier versions of the Khuddaka-nikāya, such as the Dhammapada, Suttanipāta, Thera and Therīgāthā, etc., are composed in poetry and mentioned in the Milinda-Pañha. The Suttanipāta, the fifth text of the Khuddaka-nikāya, is first referred to by name in the Milinda (pp.411-414). The next text, the Vimānavatthu (which describes the splendor of various celestials abodes belonging to different gods) was totally ignored by the Milinda Pañha. Another anthology of the Khuddaka-nikāya, the Dhammapada, was the most familiar text to the compiler of the Milinda-pañha/p.408. The earliest mentioned by name, according to the Malasekera, is the Milinda-pañha (*DPPN*, i.1114).

The above survey indicates the familiarity of some texts that belonged to the Khuddaka-nikāya that Nāgasena might have studied before meeting

² Historically, we know that at the two councils the Dhamma and Vinaya (or Sutta and Vinaya) were recited, not the Abhidhamma texts. The reference to the Abhidhamma by Dīgha Bhānakas in the Dīgha-nikāya-Aṭṭhakathā is therefore not acceptable, so their account of the first council seems to be a wrong account.

³ I use the word “Indian origins” because when Buddhism went beyond Indian territory it established its own native bhānaka systems. For example, after introduction into Sri Lanka, the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition had its own bhānakas who preserved the scripture of the Dhamma and Vinaya.

with the king, which assisted him to dispel the doubts of his opponent, the king. It also prompts us to conclude that the Milinda-pañha was one of the later additional works. Chronologically, the Milinda-pañha is followed by a number of commentaries on the different texts of the sacred scriptures (*Vapat: 2500 years of Buddhism p.209*). Hinuber's studies support this remark. He finds some quotations of the Milinda-pañha in the old purānātṭhakathā (*A Hand Book of Literature p.83*).

The Formation of the Contents:

The entire text, as it stands today, has six divisions/books and twenty-two chapters containing 162 questions and their answers. In these answers Nāgasena is always heavily dependent on the Pāli texts, occasionally with beautiful similes of his own creation.

The contents of the divisions differ significantly from each other. The second and third divisions, as well as some parts of the first division, can be considered the earliest stratum of the text. The fourth through sixth divisions seem to be later additions, and the Chinese translation of the Milinda-pañha did not include the fourth through sixth divisions.

Kathāvatthu and the Milinda-pañha: Contradictory View.

There are number of topics of controversy discussed in the Kathāvatthu which reoccur in the Milinda-pañha. Generally, the two authors of the two different works, maintaining firmly the traditional (Theravāda) position that are presented in both texts, agree in their views and interpretations. They do not, however, agree on certain points. For instance, Moggaliputta-Tissa, the author of the Kathāvatthu, denies the possibility of attainment of arahantship by a lay person with lay fetters when his opponents asks about the possibility of

lay arahantship (*Kath. pp.240-1*). I myself disagree with Tissa's explanation or answer, because some householders, under exceptional circumstances, attained arahantship in lay attire, e.g. Khemā, the wife of king Bimbisāra. On the other hand, Nāgasena honestly acknowledges to the king that the laity can attain arahantship if he/she practices diligently the path as taught by the Buddha (*Miln: 162*). However, there are only two ways open for a such a person: either he/she attains *parinibbāna* on that very day or becomes a monk or nun in a respective order immediately (*Ibid: 164*). As far as I am aware, there is no scriptural authority to substantiate this statement presented by Nāgasena. Perhaps, this idea was developed from the few incidents of some laymen and women alike who attained arahantship and expressed their wish to join the order (saṅgha) immediately afterwards or died at that very spot.

Let me present two more discrepancies between the two authors. The first concerns the doctrinal concept of Nibbāna. Tissa, explaining the theory of *ākāsa* (space), retains the Theravāda standpoint that *ākāsa* (the space element), unlike Nibbāna, is not unconditioned (*saṅkhātā/Kath-VI-6*). Nāgasena, accepting openly the Sarvāstivādin tenet, tells the king that both *ākāsa* and *nibbāna* are *asamkhātā dhātu*, they are unconstructed or uncompounded (*Miln-i. pxviii*), or neither space nor *nibbāna* is born of cause/Kamma.

The second contradiction concerns the principle of Kamma and its related subjects, specifically regarding the ritual practice of merit-transference. The king was curious to know about the transference of merit to departed ancestors when charitable acts are done in their names. He asks, "Do they obtain any benefit as a result?" Nāgasena not only expresses disagreement with the view accepted by the orthodox Theravāda in the Kathāvatthu/*Kath-VII-6*), but he also gives a completely different theory. He assures the king that some of the departed ones can gain benefit by performing the rite of merit-transference, while some do not. He then continues to give the names of *petas* (departed spirits) who are not in the position of receiving

benefits from donations which are made in their names (*Miln-294ff*).

Why, we may ask, does the author of the *Milinda-pañha* disagree with the views that are commonly accepted by Kathāvathu's author and vice versa? Both were Theravāda Buddhists seers and professed its doctrine, but why do they give different views? The possible answer we can offer is that the topics of controversy argued in the Kathāvathu were not of one or two persons but represent various conflicting schools of thought within Indian Buddhist fraternities, whereas the *Milinda-pañha* records the questions and dilemmas put forward by a keen seeker of the Dhamma and the clever answers to them by Thera Nāgasena.

Another point here to be mentioned is that Tissa intentionally remains silent about certain questions when they are asked by his antagonists. They are very important questions. Perhaps he does not have answers to them in his mind, and therefore avoided the answer. Nāgasena, however, looking with a broader perspective to the importance of the questions, answers all the questions raised by an interested outsider (king) in Buddhism.

Among the many charges against the early Buddhist ideal/arahant refuted in the Kathāvathu is the default in arahantship. The Kathāvathu displays two horizontal polarities, e.g. the supremacy of arahantship by the orthodox school (Theravāda) and the loss of prestige or fallacy in arahantship as is pointed out by rival schools. According to some Indian Buddhist schools of thought, an arahant may have a certain ignorance of the name and lineage (*nāmagottam*) of a woman and man, or of a right or wrong path (*maggāmagga*). In this discussion Tissa not only utters nothing, but he also closes the discussion to further debate. From his impassive mode and the sudden closing of the chapter to discussion by the compiler of the Kathāvathu (*Point of Cont*: p 117), we can reasonably assume that an arahant lacks certain knowledge, although we know he/she has no lack of any knowledge regarding the path and fruition. Thus, in the *Milinda-pañha*, Nāgasena solves this problem when he, without going into details, simply

admits that there is such a default in arahantship (*Miln-266-7*), because an arahant is incapable to know everything within his/her province but they know their liberation.

He further reveals to the king that an arahant is capable of transgressing certain monastic rules (*pātimokkha-sikkhāpada*) that he/she might not know of. At the same time, he contends that an arahant is incapable of committing the immoral actions: generally, the ten evil actions. Thus, Nāgasena seems to be far more clever than Tissa by willingly admitting that there is the possibility of an offence being committed by an arahant, while at the same time maintaining the superiority of arahantship over and over again. He says an arahant can never commit evil things that lead inevitably to worse Kamma and Vipāka (result).

Irrespective of whatever comparison is attempted, there are still vast, if not partial, disagreements (as well as agreements) between these two celebrated authors. Many scholars have noticed these discrepancies and undergone some studies as well. I myself studied the problems of arahant discussed in the Kathāvathu, Dr. David J. Kalupahana looked at the concept of human personality in his book (*A History of Buddhist Philosophy*, Chapter xii and xiii), and Dr. J.P McDermott examined Kamma in the Kathāvathu and Kamma in the *Milinda-pañha* respectively.

In this brief comparative study of the two texts, my own conclusion is that the *Milinda-pañha* logically goes beyond the Kathāvathu, although Kathāvathu is chronologically prior to the *Milinda-pañha*.

Development of Buddhology: A Doctrinal Analysis

It is beyond my interest to analyze each and every chapter or topic of discussion presented in the *Milinda-pañha*, since it contains a wide range of subjects, and requires a great amount of time for detailed study. However, before a brief study of Buddhology, it is pertinent to give a short state-

ment on the contents of the Milinda-pañha. The table of contents of the text, in the form of questions, counter questions, and dilemmas, offer numerous critical examinations that are not only about the apotheosis of the Buddha, Buddhissatta, arahants, and the roles and activities of the Saṅgha, but also covers an extensive discussion on doctrinal aspects of early Buddhist thought such as wisdom, kamma, rebirth, nibbāna, human personality (khandā), psychology of feeling, perception and thought moment, meditation, and the concept of non-substantiality (anatta). I have already mentioned them above.

To drive the doubt away from the king's mind, Nāgasena uses several effective devices including beautiful similes and parables, as the Buddha sometimes used in the Dvi-piṭaka.⁴ At last after convincing his mind, the king applauds him as dexterous.

Thus, unlike the controversial work of Moggaliputta-Tissa (Kathāvatthu), the text comprises a broad-cross section of purely Buddhist thought that displays the intellectual milieu between 150 BC and 400 AD, in which period a thorough and intuitive understanding of the Theravāda Buddha-Dhamma encountered critical issues. These critical issues or knotty problems of Buddhist thought eventually were solved in a scholastic way (Paṇḍitavāda) in the Milinda-pañha. At the end of the text, we see that the king eventually gives up his kingdom and duly attains arahantship.

Let us now turn to the main subject of our discussion, Buddhology, the development of Buddha-concept. Much more could be said about the Buddhas in the Milinda-pañha. All of the past Buddhas and the future Buddhas are waiting patiently or impatiently somewhere in the cosmic world to appear in the human world. In early Buddhist texts prior to the Milinda-pañha, the Buddhas are in fact parenthetically the same in their physical beauty, in power of contemplation and of reasoning, knowledge of emancipation, the

ten powers (dasabala), the four undefeatable confidences (cattaro-vesarāja), etc. Precisely speaking, all the excellent moral, physical and ethical qualities that are exclusively attributed to a Buddha are applicable to all Buddhas (*T. Endo- Buddha in Theravāda Buddhism* p. 36). Nāgasena also similarly maintains the same in his answer “there are no fundamental differences among the Buddhas, but they are all likely equal” (*Sabbe pi buddhā-buddhadhammehisamajamā –Miln-285*).

Throughout Pāli Buddhist history, it is believed that a single Buddha is sufficient enough to appear in the world at a particular time. Also, there can not be two Buddhas at the same time. The reference to this statement can be traced in early Pāli scriptures and these discourses are believed to have been given by the Buddha himself (*M.III.66, A.I 22, Vbh.-336*). Nāgasena also gives an almost identical statement, though his answers to king were a kind of hypothetical syllogism. He says, “it is because of the greatness of virtue of the omniscient (*Miln-236-39*).”

We also notice the invention of a number of new epithets of the Buddha in the Milinda-pañha. Some of these newly coined epithets are not shared in the canon. For instance, the terms mentioned at iii 157, 217, and 230 are not found in any preceding texts. Among numerous synonymous terms of the Buddha found in the Milinda, *devātideva* (the god of gods) draws our attention due to its resemblance to terms found in the canon. For example, the two almost identical words ‘deva’ and ‘atideva’ are mentioned in the Theragāthā (v-1179/489). A similar term, *devādideva*, occurs in several texts of the Khuddaka-nikāya, such as Vimānavatthu (p.62), Cullaniddesa (p.173) and Apadāna (p.253 and 460). In order to glorify the Buddha and gain more popularity it seems to me that Nāgasena would have borrowed this concept of the term.

It is also interesting to see the historical and linguistic link between *rājātirāja* and *devātideva*. The appellation of *rājātirāja* of 6th century BC in

⁴ I refer to the Dvi-piṭaka instead of the usual Tripiṭaka not in the sense that we do not have three collections but in the sense that the similes are usually mentioned in only the two collections of the Sutta and Vinaya Piṭaka, not in the Abhidhamma.

Persia, according to Asao Iwamatsu, led to the formation and adoption of the word *devātideva* in Buddhism (Endo-p.23).

Another noteworthy Buddhology development in the Milinda-pañha is the introduction of the Atthārasabuddha-dhamma-concept⁵ (eighteen special and extraordinary qualities of a Buddha/*Miln*-105,285). The term is not detectable in the Pāli canon, but they are overemphasized in the Mahāyānist literatures, as Dayal studies shows. He comments, “these eighteen attributes distinguish a Buddha from all other beings, and a bodhisattva should know and comprehend these qualities and characteristics of the Buddhas before he can appreciate the importance of striving for bodhi. (*The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Sanskrit Literature*, p.23)

Furthermore, Nāgasena upholds the importance of cult-worship and that strong faith in the Buddha can save a person from evil consequences, especially stopping rebirth in hell. He says, “If a person religiously and devotionally, at the moment of death, remembers the Buddha and his moral qualities he/she will be reborn in heaven (*maraṇakale caṇ ekaṇ Buddhagatam satim patilabheyya so devasu uppajjeyyāti*; *Miln*-80).

Let me add one extra doctrinal thing here. The present Pāli pātimokkha enumerates 227 monastic law/rules of a fully ordained monk, which he needs to follow strictly, not loosely. But in the Milinda-pañha we read about 150 Vinaya rules, and therefore it could be surmised that originally there would have been only 150 rules. This is also confirmed in the Aṅguttara-nikāya. Later they were gradually developed by Vinayadhara, the expert of the Vinaya texts.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Although I am fully aware of the fact that this study has many passages which require much revision and further enlargement, I intentionally de-

cidated to bring it to publication so that the public as well as an interested student of Buddhist studies can make it a stepping stone for study, particularly the comparative study between the so called Kathāvatthu and the Milinda-pañha, that I failed to do. It is, however, in my mind to do so.

Let me conclude the work with the following discussion. The intricate problem of soul (atta/jīva) has been ever present since the beginning of human speculation about it. The Buddhist thought not only denies the principle of soul/self that an ignorant person claims to have possessed but also vehemently reacts against the Vedantic and its subsequent Upaniṣadic theory of soul by proposing the Anatta-concept (non-self theory within an individual).

By introducing the new concept of Anatta, the Buddha intended to show realistically that, in the ultimate sense, there is no person/self found either in our physical body (rūpa) and mental property (nāma). Thus, the Elder Nāgasena, at his very initial meeting with the king, retained this anatta concept and proved, by means of illustrious simile of the chariot, that the human individual is designed only as a nominal identity. But in the real sense, upon analysis through meditation, there is no such thing as a person.

REFERENCES:

Milinda-pañho, ed. By V. Trenckner: London, Luzac, PTS, 1962 Reprint.

Milinda's questions, I.B. Horner, trns. 2 vols. Sacred Books of the Buddhist, XXII-XXIII, London: Luzac, 1963-4

Point of Controversies (Kathāvatthu) trans- Shwe Zan Aung and Mrs. Rhys Davids. London: Oxford PTS, 1993

⁵ See T. Endo's work: *The Theravāda Notion of the Eighteen Qualities of a Buddha. Recent Research in Buddhist Studies: Essays in Honour of Prof. Y. Karanadasa* ed., K.L Dhammajothi, Asangha Tilokaratne etc. Colombo.

- Milinda-Questions*. Mrs. Rhys Davids, London: Routledge, 1930
- Debate of the Milinda*, Bhikkhu Pesala, Delhi: MBP, 1998.
- T.W. Rhys Davids, trans. -
Questions of King Milinda, Two parts. New York: Dover, 1963
- Kamma in the Milinda-pañha*, JAOS, 97, 1977, p. 460-469.
- The Questions of King Milinda*. Ed, N.K.G. Mendis 1993, Kandy, BPS
- James. P. McDermott- *Development in the early Buddhist Concept of Kamma/Karma*, New Delhi: MMP, 2003 reprint, p. 104-126.

