

The Questions of King Milinda

*Translated from the Pali by T. W. Rhys Davids
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“This two-volume set, originally published as part of the historic

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series, "Sacred Books of the East" (Vols. xxxv as xxxvi), under the editorship of Max Muller, contains the complete Rhys Davids' translation of the Buddhist dialogues, *The Questions of King Milinda*. Of unknown authorship, perhaps written around the 2nd century A. D., the dialogues were preserved in Pali, and this is the only English translation of these significant ancient writings. The Milinda represents an important supplement to the Pali canon (the scriptures of Hinayana or Southern Buddhism) and clarifies many of the philosophic puzzles of the canon.

"The main body of the text is an account of the purported discussion between Milinda, Indian name for Menander, Greek king of Bactria (2nd or 1st century B. C.), and Nagasena, who provides

answers to the king's questions about the teachings of the Buddha. They deal with a wide range of metaphysical, ethical, and religious problems, such as the realization of nirvana, the existence or nonexistence of the soul, the higher mysteries of arahatship, the City of Righteousness, reincarnation, the doctrine of karma, etc. More speculative and expository than the Tri-pitaka or the earlier Pali writings, this work marks a broadening of interest within Buddhism and an important stage in the development of Hinayana philosophy.

"Today the Milinda is esteemed as an unquestioned authority by Hinayana communities in Ceylon, Siam, Burma, and Cambodia, and it is also revered by Chinese Mahayana Buddhists." (W. P. W.)
