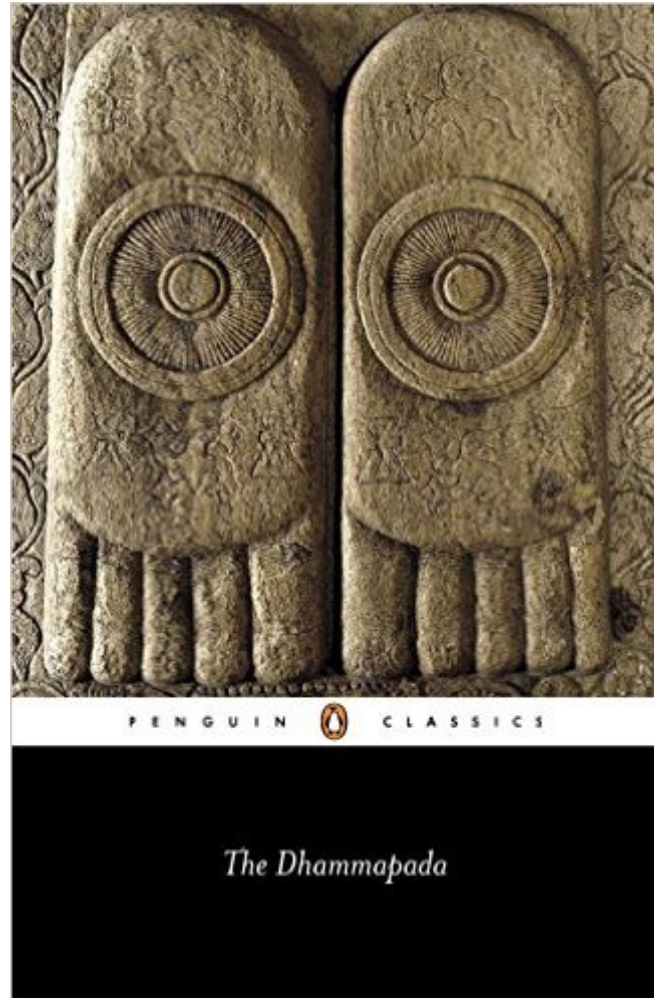


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The Dhammapada: The Path Of Perfection (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

One of the best-known and best-loved works of Buddhist literature, the Dhammapada forms part of the oldest surviving body of Buddhist writings, and is traditionally regarded as the authentic teachings of the Buddha himself, spoken by him in his lifetime, and memorized and handed on by his followers after his death. A collection of simple verses gathered in themes such as 'awareness', 'fools' and 'old age', the Dhammapada is accessible, instructional and mind-clearing, with lessons in each verse to give ethical advice and to remind the listener of the transience of life. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

The Dhammapada is one of the essential works of Buddhist scripture, and this book represents Juan Mascaro's translation of that timeless classic from Pali into English. Not knowing Pali, I cannot judge the linguistic accuracy of Mascaro's translation. But as a lover of both poetry and spiritual philosophy, I can say that this English text is a quiet masterpiece. The text is divided up into 423 short verses, each of which represents a teaching of the Buddha. This is one of those marvelous books which one can open at any page and begin reading. Often poetic, often practical, but always intriguing, the Dhammapada invites the reader to return again and again. Through its verses we can

hear the Buddha challenging us to look at life from a radically new perspective; we hear him encouraging us to break free from the psychological prisons which we too often help build ourselves. Also fascinating is Juan Mascaro's substantial introduction, in which he discusses the life of the historical Buddha and puts his legacy in a broad context that is both multifaith and multicultural. Scholars of comparative religion will probably be as interested in Mascaro's introduction as they are in the actual translation of the Dhammapada. In the Dhammapada, we read, "Better than a thousand useless verses is one single verse that gives peace" (verse 101). Juan Mascaro's version of the Dhammapada is certainly a beautiful work of literature. But it is also a profoundly moving spiritual classic. Whatever your religious inclination (or lack thereof), you just might find in this wonderful book some verses that do indeed bring you closer to inner peace.

The Dhammapada is one of the world's great religious classics, and its pithy, poetic style makes it very direct and inspiring. Like some of the other reviewers, I don't read Pali, and it's probably true that this isn't the most literal translation. However, I've read several translations of the Dhammapada and this has been my favorite for a long time. In any translation of a poetic nature, the translator must choose a certain balance between a strictly literal translation of the source material and a poetic rendering of the material in the target language, and Mascaro leans a little toward the latter. I've been a student of Buddhism for some years, though, and I find very few places where Mascaro's translation seems to be inaccurate --- even though there are other translations that may be a little more precise and literal. In any case, there are many Buddhist philosophical works where precision of terminology is critical, but, since the Dhammapada is a more general work consisting mainly of aphorisms, it's one work where a little poetic license seems acceptable.

I've read about 100 Buddhism books, and so far, I think this one (this translation of the Dhammapada) and the Dalai Lama's "A Flash of Lightning in the Dark of Night - A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life" are the best Buddhism teachings I've read to date. I read the earlier reviews by some stating this translation is not accurate. Maybe other translations are more literally word for word correct with the original; however, I feel that this translation conveys the teaching the best. Read the various translations that Riku Simonen presented in his post, forget about the accuracy of the translation, which one makes the most sense? Supposedly Buddha stated that a person should not follow any teaching based on blind faith, that all teachings should be questioned, and only the ones that are true to a person's heart should be followed.

Having read Max Muller's over 100 year misleading translation, Carter's and Palihawadana's philosophical, dry, but excellent translation, which, with annotations builds up whole buddhist philosophical system, Mascaro's translation is deeply disappointing. While I can't understand Pali, Carter's translation is -or at least seems to be very convincing translation. Mascarara's translation is beautiful and poetic but has same grave philosophical errors than Muller's outdated translations. Let's see one example. Chapter one, verse one is translated by Muller as: All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage. Mascaro's also misleading translation goes like: What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow: our life is the creation of our mind. If a man speaks or act with an impure mind, suffering follows him as the wheel of the cart follows the beast that draws the cart. But Carter's et al. translation reveals the (probably) true (philosophical) meaning of the verse: Proceeded by perception are mental states,*1 for them is perception supreme, from them perception have they sprung. If, with perception polluted*2, one speaks or acts, thence suffering follows. As a wheel the draughts wheel ox's foot. Annotations of Carter's book: *1 perception...mental states: the pure event of seeing, hearing, smelling etc. an object is 'perception'; the concurrent rise of attachment, hate, anger, desire etc. with regard to it - s the mental states. *2 polluted: that is, with mental states such as anger.

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