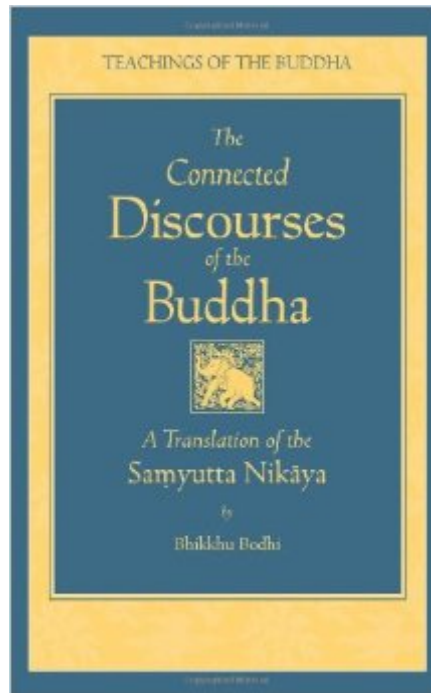


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The Connected Discourses Of The Buddha: A Translation Of The Samyutta Nikaya



Synopsis

This volume offers a complete translation of the Samyutta Nikaya, The Connected Discourses of the Buddha, the third of the four great collections in the Sutta Pitaka of the Pali Canon. The Samyutta Nikaya consists of fifty-six chapters, each governed by a unifying theme that binds together the Buddha's suttas or discourses. The chapters are organized into five major parts. The first, The Book with Verses, is a compilation of suttas composed largely in verse. This book ranks as one of the most inspiring compilations in the Buddhist canon, showing the Buddha in his full grandeur as the peerless "teacher of gods and humans." The other four books deal in depth with the philosophical principles and meditative structures of early Buddhism. They combine into orderly chapters all the important short discourses of the Buddha on such major topics as dependent origination, the five aggregates, the six sense bases, the seven factors of enlightenment, the Noble Eightfold Path, and the Four Noble Truths. Among the four large Nikayas belonging to the Pali Canon, the Samyutta Nikaya serves as the repository for the many shorter suttas of the Buddha where he discloses his radical insights into the nature of reality and his unique path to spiritual emancipation. This collection, it seems, was directed mainly at those disciples who were capable of grasping the deepest dimensions of wisdom and of clarifying them for others, and also provided guidance to meditators intent on consummating their efforts with the direct realization of the ultimate truth. The present work begins with an insightful general introduction to the Samyutta Nikaya as a whole. Each of the five parts is also provided with its own introduction, intended to guide the reader through this vast, ocean-like collection of suttas. To further assist the reader, the translator has provided an extensive body of notes clarifying various problems concerning both the language and the meaning of the texts. Distinguished by its lucidity and technical precision, this new translation makes this ancient collection of the Buddha's discourses accessible and comprehensible to the thoughtful reader of today. Like its two predecessors in this series, The Connected Discourses of the Buddha is sure to merit a place of honour in the library of every serious student of Buddhism.

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Customer Reviews

The Samyutta Nikaya -- Connected Discourses of the Buddha -- is an integral work of the Pali Canon of Buddhism, the Scripture of Theravada Buddhism. This work is also considered canonical by later schools of Buddhism. The Connected Discourses is a lengthy, difficult work which focuses on philosophical teachings and on meditation practice. It was probably written for advanced students unlike its companion volumes, the Mid-Length Discourses, (Majjhima Nikaya) and the Long-Length Discourses (Digha Nikaya) also available in translation from Wisdom Publications. This work has been lucidly and beautifully translated by the American scholar-monk Bhikkhu Bodhi who also edited the Majjhima. Students of Buddhism are forever in his debt. The Connected Discourses consists of five separate, lengthy books, each of which, except for the first book, concentrates on a specific aspect of the Buddha's teachings. All the teachings in the book center upon understanding of the four noble truths. Each book is arranged in chapters with the suttas generally, but not always, presented in groups of ten. The suttas are generally short and dense and lack the quality of story-telling found in the Long and Middle Discourses. Bikkhu Bodhi has laboriously translated the text and prepared a general introduction to the entire book and an introduction to each of the five parts. There are extensive footnotes, some of which are for the specialist and some of which are for the general reader, which draw in many cases upon the ancient commentaries to the text, together with a concordance and a bibliography. It is an inspiration to have this volume available for study. There are many famous discourses in this collection, and I will try to mention some briefly.

First of all, this is certainly not for someone trying to figure out what Buddhism is all about. There are many introductory books available for people who are curious about what the Buddha taught. But for serious students of the Dharma, of any sectarian leanings, the Pali canon is a marvelous source of wisdom. There are only two complete editions available of the Samyutta Nikaya. One is published by the Pali Text Society in the UK - 5 volumes of antiquated English for several hundred dollars.

Although I am a member of the PTS, there doesn't seem to be a need for any edition other than Bhikkhu Bodhi's. The Venerable BB is a well known and beloved scholarly monk in the Sri Lankan tradition who worked for many years with the Buddhist Publication Society to produce many excellent books (many of which are available for free on line - a simple Google search will locate them). So if you're interested in this complete collection basically the only choice is this one. I wanted to compare, however, this translator's style with that of several others whose work is available online or in print (a few books have been printed that contain only excerpts from the Samyutta Nikaya). So here are three versions of part of the same Sutta -- The Samiddhi Sutta. (SN 1.2.10) Ajahn Thanissaro (from the website Access to Insight): Then the devata, coming down to earth, said to Ven. Samiddhi, "You have gone forth while young, monk -- black-haired, endowed with the blessings of youth in the first stage of life -- without having played with sensual pleasures. Enjoy human sensuality, monk. Don't drop what is visible here-&-now in pursuit of what's subject to time." "My friend, I'm not dropping what's visible here-&-now in pursuit of what's subject to time."

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