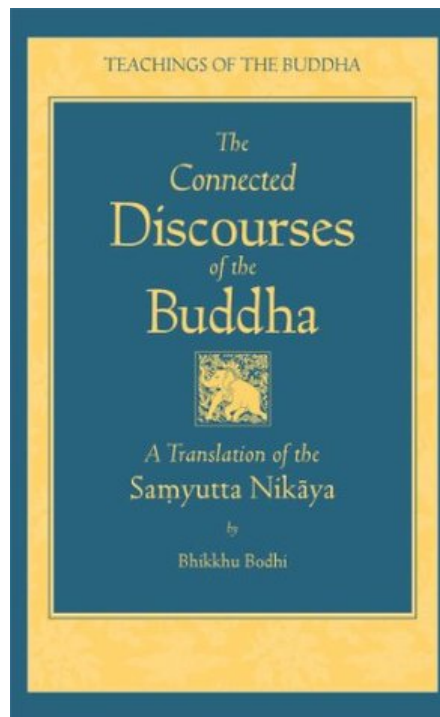




The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya

Bhikkhu Bodhi (Translation)

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The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya Bhikkhu Bodhi (Translation)

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.

The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya **Details**

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From Reader Review The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya for online ebook

Jayarava says

Extremely well translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi this collection of texts is a gold mine for any Buddhist. As usual Bodhi footnotes everything so that one can be very clear on what technical terms are being used, get insights into the commentarial tradition regarding most texts, and be aware of difficult and alternate readings of passages.

For a taste of some of the wonderfully varied material in the Sa'yutta you could read my write up of the "Anger Eating Yakkha".

This is not a collection to read cover to cover, it is far to repetitious for that, but if you are interested in a particular subject then it can be very useful. A few key dialogues are in here: for instance the Upanisa Sutta which is the locus classicus for Transcendental Dependent Arising (see also Bhikkhu Bodhi's essay on this sutta.)

Craig Shoemaker says

I think Bhikkhu Bodhi read and considered every criticism levelled at his previous offering, The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, and determined to make darn sure he didn't have to hear those criticisms again. The result of his enterprise is an extremely detailed and careful treatment of the second largest collection in the Sutta Pitaka, the Samyutta Nikaya. For this review I'll first discuss briefly the place of the SN in Pali literature, and then give an overview of how BB has treated it.

Along with the Digha, Majjhima, Anguttara and parts of the Khuddhaka Nikayas, the Samyutta Nikaya comes from the oldest strand of Buddhist texts, and is thus critical if one wants to have any hope of determining what the historical Buddha actually taught. It got its name from the fact that its various parts (called vaggas) are made up of suttas that tie directly to one another in terms of their format (the particular pattern or "template" they display) and subject matter. The resulting vaggas are characterized by their focus on, for example, verse sayings, or discourses on dependent arising, the aggregates, the sense bases, the eightfold path, or some other critical doctrinal point. There are also sections devoted to talks by and with certain individuals, famous and not so famous, such as Anuruddha or Channa or Samandaka.

The Samyutta Nikaya is thus at once very heterogeneous in the range of topics it covers, but also much more systematically organized than, say, the Majjhima or Digha Nikayas, where subject matter takes a back seat to other concerns. This makes it very easy to locate suttas on specific issues one is interested in, but it also has the effect of making many of the suttas sound monotonously similar, to the point where it's often tempting to skip ahead upon encountering--for the umpteenth time--the same iteration of terms one just read through a few pages back. As a result, BB has had to do a lot of condensing and made extensive use of ellipses, and indeed, because the suttas seem to bleed into and repeat one another, the tradition itself does not have a solid count of how many individual suttas make up the nikaya. The consensus seems to be around 2,900, give or take a couple dozen.

As noted, BB's translation is thorough. To give you an idea how thorough, I counted about 480 pages of endnotes! Now many of these are of interest only to philologists, but many more add significantly to the text in the form of traditional commentarial materials, as well as BB's own insights into the text. He also is

careful to note which sources he is using, as the various redactions from Burma, Sri Lanka or the PTS don't always agree with one another. This is something he was specifically criticized for not doing on the Majjhima Nikaya, so I think scholars in the audience will have fewer bones to pick this time around. In addition to the general introduction, each vagga also gets its own intro, where its particular themes are further discussed; I especially found his intro to the Khandhavagga illuminating. All in all Bhikkhu Bodhi has put an enormous amount of effort into this project and I'm starting to think that Buddhists all over the world owe him a medal or something.

Regarding the text proper: as I've said with previous reviews of translations, I am not a Pali scholar so am not in a position to critique him on specific word choices--except, perhaps, important doctrinal terms. In most cases his translations of such terms are quite standard and unexpected, though I was pleasantly surprised by his rendering of sakkaya not by the traditional "personality," but as "identity." I think this is an improvement and brings increased clarity and accuracy to important terms like sakkayanirodha or sakkayaditthi. The text, as a whole, is highly readable, beautifully presented, and does the best it can with the already noted copious repetitions. Any translator of Pali has to deal with this issue and there are only so many ways of doing it. I think BB has respected the text's integrity by preserving what needed to be preserved, by artful use of ellipses, and by leaving enough so one can reconstruct any particular passage from the clues on hand. And yet, we still have two weighty volumes!

Sparrow Knight says

Basic reference, refer to it on a regular basis.

Robin Friedman says

The Samyutta Nikaya

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. Bhikkhu 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. The first book of the Connected Discourses consists of verses spoken by an interlocutor of the Buddha, frequently a deva or other supernatural being, and the Buddha himself. These cover a range of subjects. Probably the best-known Sutta in this part is the Sutta of Rahitassa, 2:26, in which the Buddha teaches that the end of the world can never be reached by walking but can only be understood through reflection on "this fathom-high carcass endowed with perception and mind." Bikkhu Bodhi comments on this sutta that it "may well be the most profound proposition in the history of human thought."

The second book of the Connected Discourses deals in detail with the difficult doctrine of Dependent Origination which is basic to understanding the four noble truths and to the doctrines of non-self and impermanence. Sutta 12:23, sometimes titled "Transcendental Dependent Origination", is an important part of this collection which adds a component to the doctrine not found elsewhere in the texts. It applies the teachings of Dependent Origination to the pursuit of enlightenment itself rather than only to the explanation of why people ordinarily remain emeshed in a web of delusion and ignorance. This is a profound and important teaching.

The third book of the Connected Discourses includes teachings on the five aggregates (form, feeling, perceptions, volitional formations, consciousness) which are the components of sentient existence. Buddha presents an understanding of the aggregates as necessary to an understanding of the path of liberation. One of the three earliest "cardinal discourses of the Buddha" delivered just after his Enlightenment is included in this book, at 22:59 which includes the Buddha's first exposition of the doctrine of nonself.

The fourth book deals with the nature of the six sense bases (sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell, consciousness) which are the means through which people understand physical reality. This book includes another of the three cardinal discourses, the famous fire sermon, 35:28, which shows how people are emeshed in sense and need reflection and the Buddha's teachings for awakening.

The final book is the longest of the collection and discusses the path to liberation. It culminates in a discussion of the four noble truths and also includes lengthy treatments of meditation the seven factors of enlightenment, the role of faith in Buddhism, and practices for laymen. This book includes the earliest of the Buddha's teachings delivered to his five original disciples, 56:11, in which the Buddha explained the four noble truths and turned the wheel of Dhamma to make the principles of enlightenment known to the world.

This is an inexhaustible and difficult collection that requires patience and reflection to read. It probably is not suitable for the beginning student of Buddhism because of its spare, philosophical character and because of its length and manner of exposition, which new readers will find hard to follow. The book is not for casual reading but will appeal to those wanting to deepen their understanding of Buddhism's basic teachings and to develop their own practice. As with the suttas as a whole, the book is less an exposition of doctrine than a means for reflection. It is a gift to have these teachings available in English in Bhikku Bodhi's translation and guide.

Robin Friedman

Michael says

This is one of the four best books ever.

The other three books are: The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha, and the Long Discourses of the Buddha. The Connected Discourses, Middle Length, and Numerical were all translated by Bhante Bhikkhu Bodhi. The Long Discourses was translated by Maurice Walshe.

There are other translations of some or all of the contents of these books. Notable are the translations of Bhante Thanissaro Bhikkhu which are available in print and via the Internet from accesstoinight.org.

I have read the Connected Discourses and the other three books many times. The last few times I read these books on Kindle and wrote short annotations that I can read the next time around to deepen my understanding.

Now I have begun reading the Middle Length Discourses again.

The best books ever.

Steve Kemp says

Outstanding , Bhikkhu Bodhi does a superb job at translating these Discourses .
