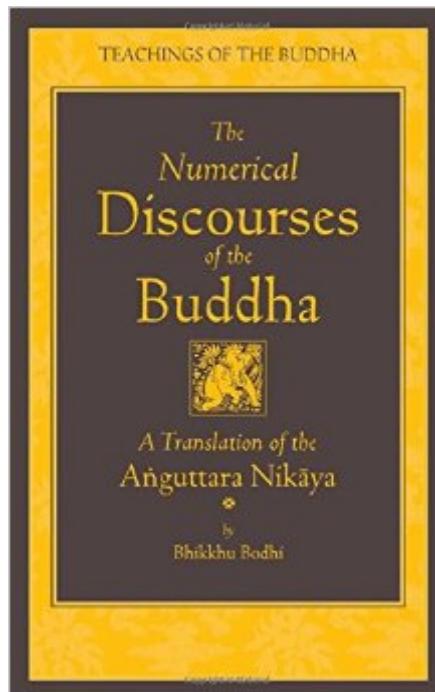


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The Numerical Discourses Of The Buddha: A Complete Translation Of The Anguttara Nikaya (Teachings Of The Buddha)



Synopsis

Like the River Ganges flowing down from the Himalayas, the entire Buddhist tradition flows down to us from the teachings and deeds of the historical Buddha, who lived and taught in India during the fifth century B.C.E. To ensure that his legacy would survive the ravages of time, his direct disciples compiled records of the Buddha's teachings soon after his passing. In the Theravada Buddhist tradition, which prevails in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, these records are regarded as the definitive "word of the Buddha." Preserved in Pali, an ancient Indian language closely related to the language that the Buddha spoke, this full compilation of texts is known as the Pali Canon. At the heart of the Buddha's teaching were the suttas (Sanskrit sutras), his discourses and dialogues. If we want to find out what the Buddha himself actually said, these are the most ancient sources available to us. The suttas were compiled into collections called "Nikayas," of which there are four, each organized according to a different principle. The Digha Nikaya consists of longer discourses; the Majjhima Nikaya of middle-length discourses; the Samyutta Nikaya of thematically connected discourses; and the Anguttara Nikaya of numerically patterned discourses. The present volume, which continues Wisdom's famous Teachings of the Buddha series, contains a full translation of the Anguttara Nikaya. The Anguttara arranges the Buddha's discourses in accordance with a numerical scheme intended to promote retention and easy comprehension. In an age when writing was still in its infancy, this proved to be the most effective way to ensure that the disciples could grasp and replicate the structure of a teaching.

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Customer Reviews

With this volume, Wisdom is four-fifths of the way to putting the Sutta Pitaka into modern English; only the Khuddaka remains. Maybe it will pop up in roughly another ten years? This book is literally the size of a brick. It's two and a half inches of thin paper stock counting out to over 1900 pages packed with information. As has come to be expected from Bodhi, the work is well tempered with a lot of thought behind translation decisions. It reads as lucidly as can be expected while trying to maintain the flavor of the original writing style. However, what surrounds the translation is just as interesting as the Nikaya itself. Bodhi leads in with a critical introduction that is over 50 pages. It overviews the structure of the AN and how it has historically been approached. Bodhi then outlines a dozen major themes in the work, bringing together topically teachings scattered throughout the Nikaya into a comprehensible and understandable whole. Given the non-linear nature of the AN, this is a good thing to read first, so that you don't feel lost later while reading. The introduction rounds out with a discussion of how women are portrayed, common structural features the reader will repeatedly encounter, then a discussion of the commentarial tradition on the AN and the AN's parallels in Chinese Buddhism. The real hidden gem, though, is on pages 75-84. Here, Bodhi provides an extensive thematic guide to the contents of the AN in point form with references to the text. Just look up the topic that you're interested in and you immediately have a list of the main passages in the AN where it's discussed. If you have a Christian background, you will recognize this as a topical concordance.

The Anguttara Nikaya is one of the five Nikayas (collections) that make up the Buddhist Pali canon. These discourses - almost all of which were spoken by the Buddha - have been carefully transmitted from generation to generation primarily by Buddhist monks. Buddhism is an oral tradition - like Hinduism - and one of the most important functions of the Buddhist monastic community was the memorization and transmission of the canonical literature. Indeed Buddhism - again like Hinduism - has a very systematic way of orchestrating the memorization of texts, somewhat akin to the way opera choruses learn their parts. Fortunately for us it is no longer necessary to enter an Asian monastery, learn the Pali language, and memorize the many thousands of pages of the Pali canon. We are blessed to have these translations - which were done mainly by Bhante (Bhikkhu) Bodhi - a remarkable Buddhist monk. Bhikkhu Bodhi is an American who at a relatively young age went to Sri Lanka. He has a most remarkable mind, one that has an affinity for languages, but also a

deep understanding of the teachings of the Buddha. It takes someone with both of these abilities to do justice to English translations. Having said that, of the Nikayas, if you are only going to read one of them I recommend the Majjhima Nikaya - the Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha. The Anguttara Nikaya should probably be read last. I would call it supplementary material to the main teachings as provided in the Middle Length Discourses. Still, I was somewhat surprised to find new material here, material that I had not read (to the best of my recollection) in the Long Discourses, the Middle Length Discourses, or the Connected Discourses.

without him we would not have these wonderful books translated for us except for the nearly century old translations by the Davids (still important and a great thing that they did them, but they are out of date and unreadable by today's standards). this one is another hit! as always bodhi's translation is thoroughly researched and very readable. complete with wonderful notes and easily navigable contents and index as well as a glossary. the collection itself is fantastic. HUGE, covering vast amounts of the buddha's teachings. indispensable. for any who do not know: this is one book from the pali canon, the oldest known surviving complete collection of the buddha's teachings. without this and it's counterparts in the other schools, there would be no buddhism. period. it wouldn't exist. this is literally what the buddha taught. the closest you will ever get too what THE actual buddha said and did is in these pages and/or it's counter parts in other schools that come from the same source and share much in common with each other. however there are not many (in fact i think there are zero) complete english translations of the others, and the only one that is well known and even available (albeit only in chinese or other asian languages) is a hodge podge of scriptures from different schools all put together to make a complete canon, while the pali canon is a surviving collection from only one school which makes it much more consistent. you can find bits and pieces of the agamas in english, but bodhi himself has already translated four out of five books from the main teachings of the pali canon (sutta pitaka).

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