

# Khuddaka Nikaya

## The Collection of Little Texts

The Khuddaka Nikaya, or "Collection of Little Texts" (Pali *khudda* = "smaller; lesser"), the fifth division of the Sutta Pitaka, is a wide-ranging collection of fifteen books (eighteen in the Burmese Tipitaka) containing complete suttas, verses, and smaller fragments of Dhamma teachings. While many of these have been treasured and memorized by devout Buddhists around the world for centuries, others have never left the private domain of Pali scholars; some have yet to be translated into English.

### Availability of English Translations

**Print:** Print editions of many of the books in the Khuddaka Nikaya are widely available from various sources. See the listings below under each book for some recommended editions.

**On-line:** The links, found on the website cited below from which this information was taken, will take you to recommended translations of texts from the Khuddaka Nikaya that are available on the cited website and elsewhere on the Internet.

### 1. Khuddakapatha — The Short Passages

A collection of nine short passages that may have been designed as a primer for novice monks and nuns. It includes several essential texts that to this day are regularly chanted by laypeople and monastics around the world of Theravada Buddhism. These passages include: the formula for taking refuge; the ten precepts; and the Metta, Mangala, and Ratana suttas.

#### Availability of English translations:

Print: The complete Khuddakapatha appears in *Handful of Leaves (Vol. 4)*, Thanissaro Bhikkhu, trans. (available from Metta Forest Monastery).

#### On-line: Translations by:

- Amaravati Sangha (excerpt)
- Buddharakkhita (excerpt)
- Narada (excerpt)
- Ñanamoli (excerpt)
- Piyadassi (excerpts)
- Thanissaro (complete)

## **2. Dhammapada — The Path of Dhamma**

This much-beloved collection of 423 short verses has been studied and learned by heart over the centuries by millions of Buddhists around the world.

Availability of English translations:

Print: Scores of English translations exist. The following are particularly recommended:

*Dhammapada: A Translation*, Thanissaro Bhikkhu, trans. (Barre, Massachusetts: Dhamma Dana Publications, 1998; available from Metta Forest Monastery).

*The Dhammapada: The Buddha's Path of Wisdom*, Acharya Buddharakkhita, trans. (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1996)

*The Dhammapada: Pali Text and Translation with Stories in Brief and Notes*, Narada Thera, trans. (Buddhist Missionary Society, India, 1978; available from Pariyatti Books).

*The Dhammapada: A New English Translation with the Pali Text and the First English Translation of the Commentary's Explanation of the Verses With Notes Translated from the Sinhala Sources and Critical Textual Comments*, John Ross Carter and Mahinda Palihawardana, trans. (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 1987).

On-line: Translations by:

Buddharakkhita

Olendzki (excerpts)

Thanissaro

Other translations abound on the Internet.

## **3. Udana — Exclamations**

A rich collection of short suttas, each of which culminates in a short verse uttered by the Buddha. Here you will find the parable of the blind men and the elephant (Ud 6.4); the story of Nanda and the "dove-footed nymphs" (Ud 3.2); and many memorable similes (e.g., "Just as the ocean has one taste — the taste of salt — so this Dhamma-Vinaya has one taste, the taste of release." (Ud 5.5)). Many gems here!

Availability of English translations:

Print: *Udana: Exclamations*, Thanissaro Bhikkhu, trans. (Valley Center, CA: Metta Forest Monastery, 2012); *The Udana and the Itivuttaka*, John D. Ireland, trans. (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1998).

On-line (complete translations): Anandajoti Bhikkhu, trans. and Thanissaro Bhikkhu, trans..

#### **4. Itivuttaka — The Thus-saids**

A collection of 112 short suttas, in mixed prose and verse form, each of which addresses a single well-focused topic of Dhamma. The Itivuttaka takes its name from the Pali phrase that introduces each sutta: *iti vuttam Bhagavata*, "Thus was said by the Buddha."

Availability of English translations:

Print: *Itivuttaka: This Was Said by the Buddha*, Thanissaro Bhikkhu, trans. (Barre, Massachusetts: Dhamma Dana Publications, 2001; found in *Handful of Leaves (Vol. 4)*, Thanissaro Bhikkhu, trans. (available from Metta Forest Monastery); *The Udana and the Itivuttaka*, John D. Ireland, trans. (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1998).

On-line: Translations by Ireland (excerpts) and Thanissaro (complete).

#### **5. Sutta Nipata — The Sutta Collection**

71 short suttas, including the Karaniya Metta Sutta (Goodwill/Loving-kindness), the Maha-mangala Sutta (Protection), and the Atthaka Vagga, a chapter of sixteen poems on the theme of non-clinging.

Availability of English translations:

Print: *The Group of Discourses (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)* K.R. Norman, trans. (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 2001); *The Sutta-Nipata*, H. Saddhatissa, trans. (London: Curzon press, 1985). Excerpts from the Sutta Nipata also appear in *Handful of Leaves (Vol. 4)*, Thanissaro Bhikkhu, trans. (available from Metta Forest Monastery).

On-line: Selected suttas.

#### **6. Vimanavatthu — Stories of the Celestial Mansions**

83 poems, each explaining how wholesome deeds led to a particular deity's rebirth in one of the heavenly realms.

Availability of English translations:

Print: *Minor Anthologies (Vol IV) — Vimanavatthu: Stories of the Mansions, and Petavatthu*, I.B. Horner, trans. (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1974).

On-line: Selected suttas.

## **7. Petavatthu — Stories of the Hungry Ghosts**

51 poems, each explaining how unwholesome deeds led to the rebirth of a being into the miserable realm of the "Hungry Ghosts" (*peta*).

Availability of English translations:

Print: *Minor Anthologies (Vol IV) — Vimanavatthu: Stories of the Mansions, and Petavatthu*, I.B. Horner, trans. (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1974).

On-line: Selected suttas.

## **8. Theragatha — Verses of the Elder Monks**

## **9. Therigatha — Verses of the Elder Nuns**

These two books offer exquisitely beautiful personal accounts, in verse form, of the lives of the early monks and nuns, often culminating in a lovely simile to describe their experience of Awakening. These verses depict — in often heart-breaking detail — the many hardships these men and women endured and overcame during their quest for Awakening, and offer deep inspiration and encouragement to the rest of us.

Availability of English translations:

Print: *Elders' Verses*, prose translation by K.R. Norman (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1969-1971) and *Psalms of the Early Buddhists*, verse translation by C.A.F. Rhys Davids (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1909 and 1937). A paperback edition of the Therigatha is available in *Poems of Early Buddhist Nuns*, C.A.F. Rhys Davids and K.R. Norman, trans. (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1989). Selections from the Theragatha and Therigatha also appear in *Handful of Leaves (Vol. 4)*, Thanissaro Bhikkhu, trans. (available from Metta Forest Monastery).

On-line: Selections from the Theragatha and Therigatha by various translators.

## **10. Jataka — Birth Stories**

547 tales that recount some of the Buddha's former lives during his long journey as a Bodhisatta aspiring to Awakening.

Availability of English translations:

Print: *The Jataka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, various trans., E.B. Cowell, ed. (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1913). Several short anthologies are also available, including the "retelling" of selected Jataka tales by Ken & Visakha Kawasaki in a series of Bodhi Leaf booklets published by the Buddhist Publication Society.

On-line: An online edition of Cowell's edition is available at the Internet Sacred Text Archive. Several Jataka stories are loosely translated in Ken & Visakha Kawasaki's very readable series of short booklets.

## **11. Niddesa — Exposition**

This book, traditionally ascribed to Sariputta, is a series of commentaries on sections of the Sutta Nipata. The first part, the Mahaniddesa, is a commentary on the Atthakavagga; the second, the Culaniddesa, a commentary on the Parayanavagga and the Khaggavisana Sutta (Sn 1.3).

Availability of English translations:

Print: None known.

On-line: Selected suttas.

## **12. Patisambhidamagga — Path of Discrimination**

An analysis of Abhidhamma concepts. The Path of Discrimination (Patisambhidamagga) is the richest discourse by Arahant Sariputta Thera on the Buddha's Teachings in the questions-and-answers format. A.K. Warder succinctly described the most important feature of this great work by saying : "it expounds the way or path of 'discrimination' in its various aspects and tries to show exactly how understanding takes place in a practical sense, not simply in theory."

The book consists of thirty treatises. They span the various kinds of knowledges (associated with learning, virtue, concentration, dependent origination, comprehension, rise & fall of phenomena, dissolution, appearance of terror, equanimity about formations, and so on), views, breathing meditation, the five faculties, liberation, action (kamma), paths, truths, lovingkindness, powers, voidness, foundations of mindfulness, insight, and so on. (Description courtesy of Hugo G, Tep Sastri, and Han Tun.)

Availability of English translations:

Print: *The Path of Discrimination*, Ven. Ñānamoli, trans. (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1982).

On-line: None known.

### **13. Apadana — Stories**

Biographies, in verse, of the Buddha, 41 Paccekabuddhas ("silent" Buddhas), 549 arahant bhikkhus and 40 arahant bhikkhunis. Many of these stories are characterized by flowery paeans celebrating the glory, wonder, magnificence, etc. of the Buddha. The Apadana is believed to be a late addition to the Canon, added at the Second and Third Buddhist Councils.

Availability of English translations:

Print: Some excerpts are included in various volumes published by the Pali Text Society.

On-line: None known.

### **14. Buddhavamsa — History of the Buddhas**

Biographical accounts of Gotama Buddha and of the 24 Buddhas who preceded him.

Availability of English translations:

Print: *Minor Anthologies (Vol III) — Buddhavamsa: Chronicles of Buddhas and Cariyapitaka: Basket of Conduct*, I.B. Horner, trans. (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1975).

On-line: None known.

### **15. Cariyapitaka — Basket of Conduct**

Stories, in verse, of 35 of the Buddha's previous lives. These stories, purportedly retold by the Buddha at Ven. Sariputta's request, illustrate the Bodhisatta's practice of seven of the ten paramis (perfections).

Availability of English translations:

Print: *Minor Anthologies (Vol III) Buddhavamsa: Chronicles of Buddhas and Cariyapitaka: Basket of Conduct*, I.B. Horner, trans. (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1975).

On-line: None known.

The following books are included only in the Burmese edition of the Tipitaka; in the Sinhala and Thai editions they are regarded as paracanonical.

## **16. Nettippakarana**

## **17. Petakopadesa**

These two short books are "different from the other books of the Tipitaka because they are exegetical and methodological in nature" {GT p.138}. The Nettippakarana is "considered an important text that explains the doctrinal points of Buddhism" {HPL p.100}.

Availability of English translations:

Print: *The Guide* (Nettippakarana), Ven. Ñānamoli, trans. (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1962); *Pitaka Disclosure* (Petakopadesa), Ven. Ñānamoli, trans. (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1964).

On-line: None known.

## **18. Milindapañha — Questions of Milinda**

This collection of sutta-like passages recounts a long series of dialogues concerning profound points of Dhamma between the arahant Ven. Nagasena and the Bactrian Greek king Milinda (Menander). The king, a philosopher and skilled debater, poses to Ven. Nagasena one question after another concerning the Dhamma, each of which Ven. Nagasena masterfully answers, often with unusually vivid and apt similes. Like so many stories from the Pali canon, this one has a happy ending: the king is so deeply inspired by Ven. Nagasena's wisdom that he converts to Buddhism, hands over his kingdom to his son, joins the Sangha, and eventually becomes an arahant himself.

The Milindapañha has long been revered by Theravada Buddhists around the world because it addresses many questions of Buddhist doctrine of the sort that often come up in the course of Dhamma study and meditation practice: "Are pleasant feelings skillful or unskillful?" "What is the difference between someone with attachment and someone without?" "Can an arahant ever break a Vinaya rule?" "Is it better to perform an unwholesome act knowingly or unknowingly?" "How far away is the Brahma-world?" "Why are some people healthy and others ill; some people attractive and others ugly; some rich, and others poor?" All told, the king asks some 237 questions[1] along these lines, making this one of the most comprehensive and useful Buddhist FAQs[2] in existence.

Availability of English translations:

Print: *Milinda's Questions*, I.B. Horner, trans. (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1963 [2 vols.]). A paperback anthology of passages from I.B. Horner's translation is available in *The Questions of King Milinda: an Abridgement of the Milindapañha*, N.K.G. Mendis, ed. (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1993). A modern abridged edition is *The Debate of King Milinda* by Bhikkhu Pesala (Penang: Inward Path, 2001).

On-line: Selected passages. Pesala's abridged translation is also available online.

**Notes**

1. As reckoned by Bhikkhu Pesala in *The Debate of King Milinda* (Penang: Inward Path, 2001).

2. Frequently Asked Questions: A document containing a series of common questions and answers concerning a particular topic.

Comments for some of the books have been drawn from other sources as follows:

- *The Buddhist Religion: A Historical Introduction (4th ed.)*, by Robinson & Johnson (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1996)
- *Guide to Tipitaka*, by U Ko Lay (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1990) {"GT"}
- *Handbook of Pali Literature*, by Somapala Jayawardhana (Colombo, Sri Lanka: Karunaratne & Sons, 1994) {"HPL"}
- *Pali Literature and Language*, by Wilhelm Geiger (New Delhi: Oriental Books, 1978) {"PLL"}

**Source:** "Khuddaka Nikaya: The Collection of Little Texts", edited by Access to Insight. *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 21 December 2013, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/index.html> . [This formatting has been produced by Alexander Peck.] It is highly recommended to go to the website cited above for the many links embedded in the article.

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