

# THREE ALTERNATE DIVISIONS OF THE BUDDHA'S WORDS

TRANSLATED FROM SUMANGALAVILĀSINĪ BY

ĀNANDAJOTI BHIKKHU



# **Three Alternate Divisions of the Buddha's Words**

translated from the  
Commentary to the Dīghanikāya, Sumaṅgalavilāsinī  
by

**Ānandajoti Bhikkhu**

## **Preface**

The Teachings of the Buddha are now available to us divided into Three Baskets (Tipiṭaka) and this is the arrangement we have become used to. A fairly full analysis of this arrangement can be found elsewhere on this website.

This was not the only way to to arrange the material, however, and the earliest division, found in the discourses themselves, was the nine-fold division, which is enumerated and described in the second section below.

Besides this, two others types of classification were known to the commentators, that into the five nikāyas, which forms the first of the alternatives below; and that into the 84,000 dhammas, which comes at the end.

Ānandajoti Bhikkhu  
(August, 2014)

## **Pañcanikāya-Buddhasāsanam** **The Five Collections of the Buddha's Teaching**

### **Katham nikāyavasena pañcavidham?**

What is the five-fold collection?

### **Sabbam-eva cetam:**

All of this:

#### **Dīghanikāyo,**

The Long Collection,

#### **Majjhimanikāyo,**

the Medium Collection,

#### **Saṃyuttanikāyo,**

the Thematic Collection,

#### **Aṅguttaranikāyo,**

the Increasing Factor Collection,

#### **Khuddakanikāyo ti**

the Supplementary Collection,

### **pañcappabhedam hoti.**

these are the five segments.

## **1. The Long Collection**

### **Tattha, katamo Dīghanikāyo?**

Herein, what is the Long Collection?

### **Tivaggasaṅgahāni Brahmajālādīni catuttimsa suttāni.**

The thirty-four discourses compiled in three sections beginning with Brahmā's Net.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Catuttimseva suttantā, tivaggo yassa saṅgaho,**

Thirty-four discourses, compiled in three sections,

#### **esa Dīghanikāyo ti, paṭhamo anulomiko. ti**

this is the Long Collection, the first in order.

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<sup>1</sup> For more detail on the names of these discourses, and sections listed below, see my Basic Structure; and also An Analysis of the Pali Canon by Russell Webb (BPS, Kandy, 2011).

**Kasmā panesa Dīghanikāyo ti vuccati?**

Why is this called the Long Collection?<sup>2</sup>

**Dīghappamāṇānaṃ suttānaṃ samūhato nivāsato ca,**

Because of being an aggregate and abode of long length discourses,

**samūhanivāsā hi Nikāyo ti vuccanti.**

because an aggregate and abode is said to be a Collection.

“Nāhaṃ, bhikkhave, aññaṃ ekanikāyam-pi samanupassāmi

“I do not see, monastics, any other collection

evaṃ cittaṃ yatha-yidaṃ, bhikkhave:

so diversified as this is, monastics:

tiracchānagatā pāṇā,”

animals and (other) breathing beings,”<sup>3</sup>

**poṇikanikāyo cikkhallikanikāyo. ti**

the collection that is prone, the collection on the earth.<sup>4</sup>

**Evam-ādīni, cettha sādhakāni Sāsanato lokato ca.**

Beginning thus, herein the collections (are made) from the Teaching and from the world.<sup>5</sup>

**Evam sesānam-pi nikāyabhāve vacanattho veditabbo.**

Thus for the rest of the collections also the meaning of this word should be understood.

## 2. The Medium Collection

**Katamo Majjhimanikāyo?**

What is the Medium Collection?

**Majjhimappamāṇāni pañcadasavaggasaṅgahāni**

The one hundred and fifty-two medium length (discourses) compiled in fifteen sections

**Mūlapariyāyasuttādīni diyadḍhasatam dve ca suttāni.**

beginning with the Discourse on the Root Instruction.

**Diyadḍhasatasuttantā, dve ca suttāni yattha so,**

One hundred and fifty discourses, and two discourses therein,

**Nikāyo Majjhimo pañcadasavagga-pariggaho. ti**

The Medium Collection is enclosed in fifteen sections.

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<sup>2</sup> The explanation that follows is not about the length, but about the word *collection* (*nikāya*).

<sup>3</sup> Quoting SN 22.100.

<sup>4</sup> This appears to be said to explain *tiracchānagatā pāṇā* in the quotation.

<sup>5</sup> Or: from nature, as we might say.



### 3. The Thematic Collection

#### **Katamo Saṃyuttanikāyo?**

What is the Thematic Collection?

#### **Devatāsaṃyuttādivasena kathitāni Oghataraṇādāni**

Regarding the Theme<sup>6</sup> about Deities, beginning with the Crossing the Flood (Discourse) and so on there are said to be

#### **satta suttasahassāni satta ca suttasatāni dvāsaṭṭhi ca suttāni.**

seven thousand discourses and seven hundred discourses and sixty-two discourses (7,762).<sup>7</sup>

**Sattasuttasahassāni, sattasuttasatāni ca,**  
Seven thousand discourses and seven hundred discourses,

**dvāsaṭṭhi ceva suttantā, eso Saṃyuttasaṅgaho. ti**  
and sixty-two discourses, this is the Thematic Collection.

### 4. The Increasing Factor Collection

#### **Katamo Aṅguttaranikāyo?**

What is the Increasing Factor Collection?

#### **Ekekāṅgātirekavasena kathitāni cittapariyādānādāni**

The factors that increase one by one<sup>8</sup> beginning with the discourses on overcoming the mind<sup>9</sup> here are said to be

#### **nava suttasahassāni pañca suttasatāni sattapaññāsañ-ca suttāni.**

nine thousand discourses, five hundred discourses, and fifty seven discourses (9,557).<sup>10</sup>

**Nava suttasahassāni, pañca suttasatāni ca,**  
Nine thousand discourses, and five hundred discourses,

**sattapaññāsa suttāni, saṅkhyā Aṅguttare ayan.-ti**  
fifty seven discourses, this number is reckoned in the Increasing Factor (Collection).

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<sup>6</sup> It is not mentioned in the definition but there are fifty-six themes that comprise the collection.

<sup>7</sup> Despite this number Bhikkhu Bodhi counts much less, at 2,904 discourses in the collection (p. 3).

<sup>8</sup> Up to collections of eleven factors.

<sup>9</sup> This refers to a set of ten discourses that open the collection. They do not have individual titles, but are in the Rūpādivaggo, Bodily form and so on Section. They each contain a phrase: *...cittāni pariyādāya tiṭṭhati...*, *...overcoming the mind...*

<sup>10</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi counts a total of 8,122 discourses in his translation (p. 18), though he says the exact number is difficult to calculate owing to the high number of repetitions; he gives a lower figure of 3,872 for the discourses independent of the repetitions.

## 5. The Supplementary Collection

### **Katamo Khuddakanikāyo?**

What is the Supplementary Collection?

### **Sakalaṃ Vinayaṭṭakam, Abhidhammaṭṭakam,**

The whole Basket of Discipline, the Basket of the Abstract Teaching,

### **Khuddakapāṭhādayo ca pubbe dassitā pañcadasappabhedā,**

and the fifteen segments beginning with the Supplementary Readings<sup>11</sup> shown previously,

### **ṭhapetvā cattāro Nikāye, avasesaṃ Buddhavacanaṃ.**

and except for the four Collections, the rest of the Buddha's Words.

### **Ṭhapetvā caturo pete Nikāye Dīghā-adike,**

Except for the four Collections beginning with the Long (Collection),

### **tad-aññaṃ Buddhavacanaṃ, Nikāyo Khuddako mato.” ti**

(all) other Buddha's Words, are understood to be the Supplementary Collection.”

### **Evaṃ nikāyavasena pañcavidham.**

Such is the five-fold collection.

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<sup>11</sup> Khuddakapāṭha, Dhammapada, Udāna, Itivuttaka, Suttanipāta, Vimānavatthu, Petavatthu, Theragāthā, Therīgāthā, Apadāna, Buddhavaṃsa, Cariyāṭṭaka, Jātaka, Niddesa, Paṭisambhidāmagga. These fifteen books are what has historically been counted as the Khuddakanikāya, but at the Sixth Council three more were added to the list: Milindapañha, Nettippakaraṇa, Peṭakopadesa.

## **Navāṅga-Buddhasāsanam** **The Nine-Fold Division of the Buddha's Teaching**

**Katham āṅgavasena navavidham?**

What is the nine-fold division?

**Sabbam-eva hidam:**

All of this:

**Suttaṃ,**  
Discourse,

**Geyyam,**  
Prosimetrum,

**Veyyākaraṇam,**  
Explanation,

**Gāthā,**  
Verse,

**Udānam,**  
Exalted Utterance,

**Itivuttakam,**  
Thus-Said,

**Jātakam,**  
Birth-Story,

**Abbhutadhammam,**  
Wonderful Thing,

**Vedallan-ti**  
Elaboration,

**navappabhedam hoti.**

these are the nine segments.

## 1. Sutta, Discourses

### **Tattha, ubhato-Vibhaṅga-**

Herein, both Analyses,<sup>12</sup>

### **Niddesa-**

(both) Expositions,<sup>13</sup>

### **Khandhaka-**

(both) Chapters,<sup>14</sup>

### **Parivārā,**

the Appendix,<sup>15</sup>

### **Suttanipāte: Maṅgalasutta-**

and in the Discourse Collection:<sup>16</sup> the Discourse on the Great Blessings,<sup>17</sup>

### **Ratanasutta-**

The Discourse on the Treasures,<sup>18</sup>

### **Nālakasutta-**

The Discourse concerning Nālaka,<sup>19</sup>

### **Tuvaṭṭakasuttāni ca,**

The Discourse on being Quick,<sup>20</sup>

### **aññam-pi ca suttanāmakam Tathāgatavacanam, Suttan-ti veditabbam.**

and other words of the Realised One named as discourses (*sutta*), so should Discourses be understood.

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<sup>12</sup> Bhikkhusuttavibhaṅga and Bhikkhunīsuttavibhaṅga of the Vinayaṭṭaka.

<sup>13</sup> Mahāniddeśa and Cullāniddeśa, early Canonical commentaries on the Suttanipāta.

<sup>14</sup> Also a pair, comprising the Mahākhandhaka and Cullakkhandhaka, but otherwise divided into twenty-two chapters (*vagga*).

<sup>15</sup> The last book of the Vinayaṭṭaka, and therefore it is notable that all the present Vinayaṭṭaka is said to be encompassed by this term.

<sup>16</sup> The fifth collection in the Khuddakanikāya, which will be mentioned again below.

<sup>17</sup> Sn 2:8.

<sup>18</sup> Sn 2:1.

<sup>19</sup> Sn 3:11.

<sup>20</sup> Sn 4:13.



## 2. Geyya, Prosimetrum

**Sabbam-pi Sagāthakam suttam, Geyyan-ti veditabbam,**

All the discourses (mixed) with verses, so should Prosimetrum be understood,

**visesena Samyuttake sakalo pi Sagāthavaggo.**

and especially almost<sup>21</sup> the entire Chapter with Verses in the Themes.<sup>22</sup>

## 3. Veyyākaraṇa, Explanations

**Sakalam-pi Abhidhammapiṭakam,**

The entire Abhidhamma Basket,

**niggāthakam suttam,**

all discourses without verses,

**yañ-ca aññam-pi aṭṭhahi aṅgehi asaṅgahitam Buddhavacanam,**

whatever Buddha words were uncollected in the other eight divisions,<sup>23</sup>

**tam Veyyākaraṇan-ti veditabbam.**

so should Explanations be understood.

## 4. Gāthā, Verses

**Dhammapadam,**

The Dhamma Verses,<sup>24</sup>

**Theragāthā,**

the Verses of the Elder Monks,<sup>25</sup>

**Therīgāthā,**

the Verses of the Elder Nuns,<sup>26</sup>

**Suttanipāte no suttanāmikā suddhikagāthā ca,**

in the Discourse Collection<sup>27</sup> those not called Discourses, which are purely in verse,

**Gāthā ti veditabbā.**

so should Verses be understood.

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<sup>21</sup> Almost (*pi*) is said as parts of the first Theme on Devatā would better fit into Gāthā.

<sup>22</sup> Comprising now the First Major section of the Samyuttanikāya.

<sup>23</sup> So we have a catch-all for anything that doesn't fit the other categories.

<sup>24</sup> Second book of the Khuddakanikāya.

<sup>25</sup> Eighth book of the Khuddakanikāya.

<sup>26</sup> Ninth book of the Khuddakanikāya.

<sup>27</sup> Fifth book of the Khuddakanikāya.

## 5. Udāna, Exalted Utterance

**Somanassañāṇamayikagāthā paṭisaṃyuttā dve asīti suttantā,**

The eighty-two discourses<sup>28</sup> having verses connected with the production of well-being and knowledge,

**Udānan-ti veditabbaṃ.**

so should Exalted Utterance be understood.

## 6. Itivuttaka, Thus-Saids

**“Vuttaṃ hetam Bhagavatā,” ti-ādinayappavattā dasuttarasatasuttantā,**

The over one hundred and ten discourses<sup>29</sup> having the introductory formula: “This was said by the Fortunate One,”

**Itivuttakan-ti veditabbaṃ.**

so should the Thus-Saids be understood.

## 7. Jātaka, Birth Story

**Apaṇṇakajātakādīni paññāsādhikāni pañcajātakasatāni,**

The more than five hundred and fifty birth stories<sup>30</sup> beginning with the Unquestionable Birth Story,

**Jātakan-ti veditabbaṃ.**

so should the Birth Story be understood.

## 8. Abbhutadhamma, Wonderful Things

**“Cattāro me, bhikkhave, acchariyā abbhutā dhammā Ānande,” ti-ādinayappavattā,**

(The discourse) having the introductory formula: “There are these four wonderful and marvellous things about Ānanda, monks,”<sup>31</sup>

**sabbe pi acchariyabbhutadhammapaṭisaṃyuttasuttantā,**

and all the discourses connected with wonderful and marvellous things,

**Abbhutadhamman-ti veditabbaṃ.**

so should the Wonderful Things be understood.

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<sup>28</sup> There are now only eighty discourses in the Udāna, which comprises the third book of the Khuddakanikāya.

<sup>29</sup> There are now one hundred and twelve discourses in this collection, which comprises the fourth book of the Khuddakanikāya.

<sup>30</sup> There are now only five hundred and forty-seven birth stories in this collection, which comprises the thirteenth book of the Khuddakanikāya.

<sup>31</sup> AN 4.129, it also occurs within the Mahāparinibbānasutta, DN 16.

## 9. Vedalla, Elaboration

### **Cullavedalla-**

The Short Elaboration,<sup>32</sup>

### **Mahāvedalla-**

the Great Elaboration,<sup>33</sup>

### **Sammādiṭṭhi-**

the Right View,<sup>34</sup>

### **Sakkapañha-**

Sakka's Questions,<sup>35</sup>

### **Saṅkhārabhājanīya-**

the Classification of the Processes,<sup>36</sup>

### **Mahāpuṇṇamasuttādayo,**

the Great Discourse on the Full Moon<sup>37</sup> and so on,

### **sabbe pi vedañ-ca tuṭṭhiñ-ca laddhā laddhā pucchitasuttantā,**

and all the discourses having questions about the attainment of knowledge and satisfaction,

### **Vedallan-ti veditabbam.**

so should Elaboration be understood.

### **Evam āṅgavasena navavidham.**

Such is the nine-fold division.

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<sup>32</sup> MN 44.

<sup>33</sup> MN 43.

<sup>34</sup> MN 9.

<sup>35</sup> DN 21.

<sup>36</sup> Mrs. Rhys Davids identifies this with MN 120, Saṅkhārupapattisuttam, but doesn't explain why. The Burmese editors fail to identify it.

<sup>37</sup> MN 109.

## **Caturāsītisahassavidha-Buddhasāsana** **The Eighty-Four Thousand divisions of the Buddha's Teaching**

### **Katham Dhammakkhandhavasena caturāsītisahassavidham?**

What are the sections of the Teachings in the eighty-four thousand-fold division?

### **Sabbam-eva cetam Buddhavacanam:**

This is the whole of the Buddha's Words:

#### **Dvāsīti Buddhato gaṇhim, dve sahasāni bhikkhuto,**

Eighty-two (thousand) are taken from the Buddha, and two thousand from the monastic,<sup>38</sup>

#### **caturāsīti sahasāni, ye me Dhammā pavattino. ti**

eighty-four thousand, that is the Dhamma set rolling by me.

### **Evam paridīpita-Dhammakkhandhavasena caturāsītisahassappabhedam hoti.**

So this is the explanation of the sections of the Dhamma in the eighty-four thousand-fold division.

## **1. Discourse**

### **Tattha, ekānusandhikam suttam eko Dhammakkhandho.**

Herein, a discourse having one topic is one section of the Dhamma.

### **Yam anekānusandhikam tattha anusandhivasena Dhammakkhandhagaṇanā.**

When there are various topics contained therein each topic is accordingly counted as one section of the Dhamma.

### **Gāthābandhesu pañhāpucchanam eko Dhammakkhandho, vissajjanam eko.**

In verse composition the asking of a question is one section of the Dhamma, the answer another.

## **2. Abstract Teaching**

### **Abhidhamme ekam-ekam tikadukabhājanam,**

In the Abstract Teaching, each is divided into triplets and pairs,

### **ekam-ekañ-ca cittavārabhājanam,**

and each is divided into the chapter on mind (and so on),

### **ekam-eko Dhammakkhandho.**

each one is a section of the Dhamma.

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<sup>38</sup> The Theragāthā Commentary defines this line as: *Dhammasenāpati-ādīnam bhikkhūnam santikā adhigacchim; acquired from the monastics (like) the General of the Dhamma (Ven. Sāriputta), and so on.*

### 3. Discipline

**Vinaye atthi vatthu, atthi mātikā, atthi padabhājanīyaṃ,**

In the Discipline there is the basis, there is the rule, there is the word explanation,

**atthi antarāpatti, atthi āpatti, atthi anāpatti, atthi tikacchedo.**

there is derived offense, there is the offense, there is the non-offense, there is the triad.

**Tattha, ekam-eko koṭṭhāso ekam-eko Dhammakhandho ti veditabbo.**

Herein, it should be understood that each portion is each one section of the Dhamma.

**Evaṃ Dhammakkhandhavasena caturāsītisahassavidhaṃ.**

Such is the the sections of the Dhamma in the eighty-four thousand-fold division.