

TRANSLATING BUDDHIST SUTRAS

[A reflection on the writings of K.R. Norman and other scholars on Pali literature and related topics]
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1. INTRODUCTION

1. Three basic factors

Without a knowledge of the ancient Buddhist languages, one who is interested in Buddhism is entirely dependent on translations. Even though the early Buddhist texts in Pali or Sanskrit are more easily available today than ever before, not many people have actually mastered these texts in their original languages. To bring the Buddha Dharma to the masses, one must therefore translate the Buddhist scriptures.

There are three basic factors to be considered in translation. Before one can translate from one language into another, one must (a) have a *text* which one wishes to translate; (b) one must *understand* the meaning of that text; and (c) one must then *transmit* that understanding to readers who usually do not know the original language. In this essay we shall discuss these factors in relation to two of the most important translation traditions of Buddhism—the Chinese Buddhist tradition (mainly based on the Sanskrit) and the English tradition (based on both the Pali and the Sanskrit)—as our background.

2. What is translation?

In his *Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Language* (CUP, 1987:57), David Crystal defines ‘translation’ as the neutral term where the meaning of expressions in one language (the ‘source’ language) is turned into the meaning of another language (the ‘target’ language), whether the medium is spoken, written or signed. Strictly speaking, here a *translator* is one who works with the written language, while an *interpreter* works with the spoken or sign language.

The translator must not only know what the text means, but he must also ‘place the text under discussion in its historical context, both in the broad sense of tracing continuities and discontinuities with the earlier tradition, and in the narrower sense by seeing how a given text fits into the larger corpus of its author.’ (Griffiths, 1981:19).

This is the first important guideline especially in the translation of historical and religious texts.

Having understood the text, the translator then has to transmit that understanding in a readable manner, that is, ‘in a style of language which is acceptable to the speakers of that language and intelligible to non-specialists, and at the same time reflects all the nuances of the original, so that the readers of the translation experience the same reactions as the original hearers or readers’ (Norman, 1984:77). In short, the translator has to transmit the sense-contents of the texts he is translating to his reader.

3. The ‘vanity of translation’

Some poets, invoking Shelley, have likened translation to subjecting a violet to chemical analysis. Robert Frost gives a working definition of poetry as ‘what gets left out in translation’. Such critics have attempted to demonstrate that they have had grave doubts about translation. In our own time, exponents of the ‘new criticism’ have, insisting on the inseparability of form and content, questioned the possibility of translation [J. E. Springarn 1910; J.C. Ransom, *The New Criticism*, 1941]. Inspired by the Romantic poets—such as Shelley’s notion of ‘the vanity of translation’—the neo-Romantic critics further drew their support from many linguists and linguistic philosophers who have denied the existence of synonyms or asserted that a word in context has a unique and unmatched meaning.

Yet Shelley was himself an accomplished translator, and it seems that he was primarily stressing the impossibility of exact correspondence between source and target texts, rather than rejecting translation. Shelley believed that ‘the plant must spring again from the seed, or it will bear no flower’. Some elements in the source text elude the net of the target language; others stretch it. The process has to be controlled by the translator, who must be a careful critic and a creative writer: he must locate the ‘seed’ and make it grow. Although translations are commonly abused and translators undervalued, the literary translator has at all times been extremely

influential, and a branch of literary criticism concerned with translation brings close analysis of language as a basis of ‘comparative literature’ [see e.g. H.A. Mason, *Humanism and Poetry in the Early Tudor Period*, 1959].

4. Problems of translation

The fundamental aim of translation—especially in the case of religious translation -- is to provide semantic equivalence between source language and target language, and a balance between ‘emic’ meaning and ‘etic’ interpretation. Niels Nielsen made a useful distinction between the last two terms:

‘The *emic* (inside) *meaning* of a religious tradition is a description of that tradition by its adherents using their own language and their own categories and systems of organization.... In practice, most investigators use *etic* (outside) *interpretive categories* devised within their scholarly disciplines in addition to emic categories.... Emic and etic approaches can be complementary and mutually corrective.’ (1983:6)

Every translation, however, entails a loss of information. No translator could provide a translation that is a perfect parallel to the source text in such respects as rhythm, onomatopoeia, puns and cultural allusions; for even parallels never meet. It has been said that ‘nothing worth translating can be translated’ (G.M. Young, *On Translating English*, 1941:209). It is said that every translation is a new work. This is especially true in the translation of a work of literature where almost inevitably something of the author’s original intent must be lost. In such cases, the translation is said to be a better work than the original, an opinion sometimes expressed about Edward Fitzgerald’s ‘translation’ of the ‘Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam’; or, the Thai rendition by King Rāma VI (Vajiravudh) of Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*. The import of this Italian saying haunts the translator like a spectre: *Traduttore traditore*, ‘The translator is a traitor’!

The 20th-century French philosopher M. Merleau-Ponty notes that different languages are ‘so many ways of “singing the world”... several ways for the human body to sing the world’s praises and in the last resort to live it. Hence the full meaning of a language is never translatable into another.’ (*The Phenomenology of Perception*, London, 1978: 187). It therefore follows that there is no such thing as a ‘best’ translation; for otherwise, one could dispense with the original text!

In short, concludes K. Lipman in his Preface to his *Primordial Experience*, ‘a translation into English should “sing” in English (not Tenglish, for example)’ (1987:xxiv). ‘Translationese’, Lipman continues, ‘does not enrich our language, it insults it.’ (ib). In other words, a translation should not reflect the syntactical structure of the original language unless the translator feels that a particular syntax carries an important semantic component.

5. ‘Intuitive’ translation

In the early years of the translation of Buddhist works into English, scholars faced many difficulties. Most of the scholars did not fully understand the language of the original texts, much less the Buddhist doctrine; they were not even Buddhists (not openly, anyway). Most of these early translators did not have formal training in the textual languages. ‘Self-taught, or taught by native scholars whose standard of proficiency in teaching was not necessarily high, they were forced, in the days before such aids as good dictionaries and grammars in a European language existed, to translate by the “intuitive” method, whereby they examined the context and deduced from that what the meaning must be.... The wonder is not that these intuitive translators were sometimes incorrect, but that they were correct so often.’ (Norman, 1984:77).

The historical and cultural background of a translated text is often different from that of the reader. The difference of even one generation poses some difficulty, what more a text that is separated by more than two and a half millennia and that comes from a culture alien to the reader’s. It is likely that the reader would attempt to understand a text in the light of his own cultural background, unless he makes an effort to rediscover the background of the original audience.

The translator’s endeavour to bridge the historical and cultural gap between the text and the reader sometimes leads to amusing, if not bizarre, results. Problems often arise when words are taken out of their cultural context, and explained by means of an equivalent from the translator’s background. Norman quotes an amusing example from M.R. Kale’s translation of Kalidasa’s *Vikramorvaṣīya* [11th ed Delhi, 1967:217] where the Sanskrit word *vimāna* in translated as ‘balloon’.

Norman suggests that *vimāna* could be rendered ‘flying palace’. Kale, however, conscious of the fact that ‘flying palace’ would mean little to his contemporary readers, decided to make his translation up-to-date ‘in the sense that he not only translated the word,

but also translated its cultural background too' (Norman, 1984:77). Such a method, however, Norman adds, necessitates a continual 'updating', as it is always essential to produce an interpretation which accords with the reader's background (ib).

6. Target language

Translation is perhaps the most complex of all literary tasks; as such, the translator not only needs to know the source language well; but he must also have a thorough understanding of the field of knowledge covered by the source text, and of the social, cultural, or emotional connotations that need to be specified in the target language if the intended effect is to be conveyed.

One who does not speak English or who is not adept in it will face great difficulties in trying to render Pali work or a work in one's mother tongue (be it Siamese, Chinese or whatever) into English. To overcome such a difficulty, one could produce a *joint* work, in which one person makes a preliminary translation, and an English stylist produces the final version, as in the case of Kathāvatthu translation by Shwe Zan Aung and C.A.F. Rhys Davids (PTS, 1915:li-iii).

Although this method of joint effort has many advantages, it is not without its faults. Norman quotes the case of G.H. Schokker and the *Pādatāditaka*, which Schokker translated from the Sanskrit into Dutch, and a native English then translated it into English (Dordrecht, 1976:vii). The English translation produced such solecisms as 'offer' for 'offering' in the phrase 'surrounded by crows which have settled down when the offer was thrown down' [1976:111, because the English translator could not check against the original, while the Dutch translator was not sufficiently competent in English to be able to check the final revision (Norman, 1984:78).

7. Use of local languages

An incident is related in the Vinaya where two monks complained to the Buddha that other monks of various origins were distorting the Buddha's Teachings in using their own dialect (*sakāya niruttīyā*). The duo therefore proposed that the Teaching be transmitted in Vedic verse (*chandaso*). The Buddha turned down the request; instead, he pronounced: 'I allow you, monks, to learn the Buddha Word in your own dialect.' (*anujānāmi bhikkhave sakāya niruttīyā Buddha, vacanaṃ pariyāpunituṃ*, V 2:139; Geiger, PLL 1968:6 f).

[In her *Book of Discipline*, I.B. Horner renders the Vinaya passage as 'I allow you, monks, to learn the speech of the Awakened One according to his own dialect.' (V:H 5:194 & n1). In a private communication (28/11/1975), however, she agrees with my translation.)

Furthermore, in the **Araṇa, vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 139) the Buddha advised the monks to adopt local languages wherever they taught (M 3:234 t). One of my first erroneous notions to be corrected as a young monk during my monastic training in Thailand was regarding the Buddha's language—that 'the Buddha did *not* speak Pali'. Indeed, the word *pāli* itself does not appear in the Pali Canon, but is a Commentarial term. It may well be the language used in the Asokan Council, but the Buddha himself probably spoke in the vernacular and dialects of the region of his ministry, be it Magadhī or otherwise.

Emperor Asoka himself despatched Buddhist missionaries to various places within India and abroad. Buddhist scriptures were translated into both Indic and non-Indic languages as a matter of course. In the case of the Theravada, however, this practice was not followed. When Buddhism reached Sri Lanka, the scriptures were transmitted in Pali. Although the sutras were sometimes translated into Sinhalese, Pali remained the orthodox liturgical language. This was also the case in Burma, Thailand, Khmer and Laos.

Tradition has it that at the time of Buddhaghosa (early 5th century), the ancient Pali Commentaries had disappeared from India (Mahv 37:227-229; Sads, JPTS 1890:53 & Law 73). The Commentaries introduced by the Arhat Mahinda into Sri Lanka received extensive treatment and was expanded in the hands of the Sinhalese monks. It was this commentarial literature, known as the *Sīhal'atthakathā* (the Sinhalese Commentaries), that Buddhaghosa and others later translated into Pali. The Sinhalese version was then put to the torch in a huge bonfire.

II. THE SACRED TEXTS

8. Pali

One of the first decisions that a wouldbe translator must make is the choice of a text to translate. If one chooses an early canonical sūtra ascribed to the Buddha or one of his disciples, then one must aim to assess the meaning which the text had for the

Buddha's contemporaries. One must then transmit this meaning to English-language readers. Unlike the non-specialist, scholars understand that even an early canonical sutra is itself a translation, and forms which have been left untranslated can sometimes be seen. In his note on Theragāthā verse 1229, Norman points out that in the line *sacce atthe ca dhamme ca āhu santo patiññhitā*, 'sacce' is probably in the locative case, while 'atthe' and 'dhamme' are in the nominative case (Tha:N 292).

In order to establish the original meaning of the text, or at least its meaning for the original audience, the translator must reverse his translation or 'back-translate' the text into Pali as close as possible to that which is believed was spoken at the time of the Buddha. This is what is known as 'reversible translation', the latest views of which can be seen, for example, in H. Bechert's work (1980).

Such an attempt involves employing all the resources of linguistic and literary criticism to establish the original form of the text chosen for translation, which requires a knowledge of the languages of north India (at the Buddha's time and the centuries immediately after the Mahāparinirvāna), and an understanding of Sinhalese is a great advantage here. An 'important group of north Indian languages is Middle Indo-Aryan, to which Pali belongs. Another language the translator should know is Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit (BHS), since much of the early Buddhist texts is related to or taken from Sanskrit, while parallel versions of many Pali canonical texts exist in BHS.

9. Textual traditions and variant readings

The translator may, however, take a short cut and work on the Pali text 'as is', but even this has its own problems. The canonical texts have been transmitted to us through a number of traditions, at times independent, at times commingled in a confusing manner. Indeed the manuscripts and printed editions based upon such textual traditions that are now available in the Burmese, Khmer, Laotian, Siamese, and Sinhalese, all have variant readings. The **Pali Text Society** (PTS) has, however, made great efforts to provide an eclectic presentation of such texts by basing their texts upon manuscripts and editions from various traditions and providing exhaustive variant readings in their texts.

In hoping to further simplify his task, a translator may restrict himself to, say, the Siamese tradition. There are problems even here, since many sūtras are found in more than one place in the Canon, and a comparison will show that they do not always agree, or do not agree totally. A translator must decide how useful such a parallel version can be helpful to him, or whether he could ignore it (or them).

K.R. Norman brings our attention to a specific example: a comparison between those verses ascribed to Vaṅṅisa which are found in the Theragāthā (Tha 1209-79), the Saṃyutta Nikāya (S 1: 185 f), and the Sutta Nipāta (Sn 451-54 = Tha 1227-30, Sn 343-58 = Tha 1263-78), shows that the verses preserved by the Reciters (*bhāṇaka*), or preservers, of the Saṃyutta and Khuddaka Nikāyas do not agree in every way, though it is possible that Vaṅṅisa repeated his verses in different ways on different occasions, so that all the various traditions are correct (1984:78 f). The same may apply to those verses in the Sutta Nipāta which have variant readings included among the explanations given in the Niddesa (Norman, 1983:129).

It is possible that both the Sutta Nipāta text and the readings in the Niddesa are equally authentic. Such a belief, however, presents difficulties when we come to consider the Sutta Nipāta Commentary where still more variant readings and different explanations are given. This shows that in the Mahāvihāra tradition of Sri Lanka, used by the Sn Commentator, there were preserved readings and explanations in addition to those which had been preserved in the Niddesa. Such problems have to be understood before one decides to translate. Even if one decides to use a particular text (say, the Sutta Nipāta of the Siamese tradition) without reference to the Commentaries and parallel versions, one must still decide which edition one will translate, or how one would be influenced by the variant readings listed in the footnotes of that edition.

10. Vernaculars

It is sometimes argued that the orthodox use of Pali amongst the Theravadins contradicted the Buddha's instructions, since the use of Pali as a means of religious transmission was not based on local knowledge and conditions. In the Theravāda countries of southern and southeast Asia, however, both monks and laity were familiar with Buddhism in the Pali original. The Theravadins believe that the Buddha Word should be communicated without any of the misunderstandings that can result from translation.

Furthermore, Theravadins usually insist upon the thoroughly human character of the Buddha, and they therefore regard his utterances as human utterances. As such one does not face the problems which arise when translating some Mahayana texts, that sometimes expounds a teaching which seems to contradict that found elsewhere in the Buddha's teachings. The Mahayana, of course, would deny any such variance: 'If it was pointed that the Buddha's discourses contained different teaching, then they explained it as

teaching meant only for the simple, or they replied that the higher doctrine had been proclaimed by Buddha in one of the heavens and was intended to be promulgated later.' (Thomas, 1951:213).

The situation was different when Buddhism reached the region of present-day Afghanistan and Central Asia. There it was translated into the local languages. This was especially true of the Mahayana, since Mahayana Buddhists felt, and still feel, that the purpose of transmitting Buddhism was to impart its true spirit that lies beyond the written word. Modern explorations and excavations in Central Asia have uncovered numerous ancient Buddhist texts. Among them are scriptures written in Sanskrit and other Indic languages, as well as Chinese, Tibetan and such extinct languages as Uighur (of the Turkic group), Sogdian and Saka (or Khotanese) (both of the Iranian group), and Agnean (or Tokharian A) and Kuchean (Tokharian B) (both from western China). Many of these scriptures in Central Asian languages, as well as in various Indic languages, are believed to have been taken to China and translated into Chinese.

11. Early Chinese translations

It is said that Buddhism was introduced into China in 67 CE, although it might have been earlier, around the beginning of the Common Era. At the start, however, not many Chinese believed in Buddhism, and those who did were mostly the immigrants and merchants who had come from Central Asia. At that time, it was not necessary to translate the Buddhist scriptures in Central Asian languages into Chinese. But by the second or third generation, the mother tongues of the immigrants were forgotten, and it became necessary to translate the Buddhist scriptures into Chinese. By that time, too, the indigenous Chinese had gradually accepted Buddhism, and Chinese translations of the scriptures became more necessary.

It is believed that the first Chinese translation of Buddhist scriptures was made during the reign of the Later Han emperor Mingdi (reigned 57-75 CE). The monks Kaśyapa Mataṅga and Dharmarakṣa were said to have jointly translated **the Sutra of Forty-two Sections** (Si-shi-er Zhang Jing). The terminology and style of the translation, however, indicate that it is more likely to belong to the period of the Three Kingdoms (220-280 CE).

The oldest extant Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures were made by the Parthian monk Anshigao (An Shih Kao, died c 170) and Lokakṣema of Kushan (147-185). They faced various difficulties working during a time when Chinese Buddhist terminology had not yet been established. As such, they used many terms that are unfamiliar to us. The Noble Eightfold Path (bazheng dao), for example, was translated as the Eight Paths of Practice (badao xing). Furthermore, the verse portions of the texts were translated into prose.

Lokakṣema's translations include many unique transliterations, some of which do not correspond to the correct Sanskrit words. It is therefore assumed that his original texts were not in Sanskrit but in some Indic vernacular or Central Asian language. While Anshigao mainly translated non-Mahayana ('Hīnayāna') sūtras, Lokakṣema's translation were chiefly Mahayana works. [The term 'Hīnayāna' here refers to Buddhists works other than the Mahayana, not in any pejorative sense.]

12. Importance of translation

The flood of translations of Classical works (especially the Greek classics) that began to overwhelm Europe in the 15th century led to the Renaissance, a 'rebirth' of learning, which was the tap root of modern Western education. Chinese Buddhist culture, too, was founded on translations that began in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE.

The first Chinese translations were not always accurate but certainly practical. To attain their main objective of bringing the Dharma to the masses, the early Buddhist translators of China culled relevant sections from various sutras and compiled them, for example, into forty-two entries in the Sutra of Forty-two Sections. Buddhist stories were also effective in bringing the Dharma to the practical, even materialistic, Chinese people. Stories of the Buddha's life in simple language, such as the poem Lalita, vistāra, inspired the people. [Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia* was based on the Lalita, vistāra.]

A second kind of story is the Jātaka which relates the Buddha's past lives. The Sutra of the Six Perfections (Ṣaṭ, pāramitā, -samgraha Sūtra) is an anthology of Jātaka stories. The Avadāna constitutes a third category of stories; it deals with the past lives of the Disciples. All these categories of stories basically teach the law of karma -- that a good moral cause produces a good effect and that evil reaps evil. The Dharmapada, a verse anthology of simple ethics, was another popular translated text.

13. Progress

By the end of the 3rd century, the average Chinese Buddhist had at least some general knowledge of Buddhism. But many of the important Buddhist doctrines were still difficult to them. Despite the various difficulties that face a new religion in a land that already had an ancient indigenous culture, the Chinese made great efforts to understand Buddhism.

In their enthusiasm, or perhaps desperation, to make Buddhism more familiar to their people, some Chinese Buddhists attempted to interpret Buddhism through the more familiar and somewhat similar Taoist terminology of Laozi. This attempt to interpret Buddhism in Taoist terms is known as *keyi* (or 'ko-i') Buddhism. Later, however, when the Chinese came to understand Buddhism in a more sophisticated manner, especially through the efforts of Dao-an (312-385), they began to reject *keyi* Buddhism.

14. Dao An

Amongst the early monks of China, it was Dao An who rendered the greatest service to Chinese Buddhism. He strove hard to present Buddhism in the correct manner and turned the Buddhists away from *keyi* Buddhism. It was Dao An who insisted that Chinese monks (who until that time had retained their own surnames) take the surname Shi, the first syllable of Śākya, the name of the Buddha's clan. He made this gesture based on the Buddha's teaching that no matter what caste that the Buddha's disciple comes from, one becomes an equal with other disciples of his and is a 'Sakyan son' (*sākya.putta*, e.g. V 2:238; cf. V:H 2:xliv).

Noticing that the external lifestyle of the ordained monks appeared almost no different from that of lay people, Dao An introduced standard garments for monks and established precepts and regulations in an attempt to upgrade Chinese monastic life to that of the pristine monks of India.

In 374 Dao An made another important contribution to Chinese Buddhism. He compiled the Zongli Zhongjing Mulu (Comprehensive Catalogue of the Sutras) the first **catalogue** of all the sūtras that had been translated into Chinese. He and his disciples collected five or six hundred copies of sutras from various parts of China. Many of these sūtras did not have titles. In the original Indian manuscripts, the titles were usually written on the last page. If the last page was lost, as it often happened, the title of the sutra would also be lost. To such untitled sutras, Dao An gave new titles that reflected their content. [Mizuno 1982:50 102 ff]

A further innovation made by Dao An was the division of the Chinese translations into **fascicles** (juan). The Chinese translation of the Lotus Sutra, for example, is divided into 28 chapters in eight fascicles, but the Indian original was divided only by chapter. The fascicle system was practical because at that time Chinese sutras were written on long sheets of paper intended to be bound as hand scrolls, or individual fascicles, and the paper was cut to the proper length for a scroll so that the reader could conveniently open and read.

15. Translators and pilgrims

During the centuries of translation of sutras brought to China from India and Central Asia, some six or seven thousand fascicles were completed. Of the over 200 prominent translators that laboured at their task, the four most prominent were Kumārajīva (344-413), Pāramārtha (499-569), Xuanzang (602-664) and Amoghavajra (705-774).

Although Xuanzang and Amoghavajra each translated a large number of sutras, the translations of **Kumārajīva** (a master of both Hinayana and Mahayana doctrines) have had the greatest influence on Buddhism in China and Japan. The Chinese did not truly understand Buddhism until Kumārajīva had translated sutras, lectured and written his commentaries. Through his outstanding scholarship, Kumārajīva pointed out errors and omissions in earlier translations, and clarified obscure points.

Like Kumārajīva, most of the early sutra translators were Indian or Central Asian monks who had brought sutras into China. Starting around the 5th century, many Chinese pilgrims began to make pilgrimages to India seeking the True Dharma and bringing back copies of ancient texts. The most important of such Chinese pilgrims who visited India were Faxian, Xuanzang and Yijing. In the course of their travels, such monks made contact with Buddhists in Central Asia, India, Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia and provided us with valuable information on Buddhist life in those places and times.

16. Mahayana sutras

Not long after the death of Kumārajīva, all the Four Āgamas of the Chinese canon were translated. Of the Vinaya texts, Kumārajīva himself translated the Ten-Category Vinaya of the Sarvastivada, and later translators worked on the Four-Category

Vinaya of the Dharmaguptaka, the Five-Category Vinaya of the Mahishasaka, and the Mahasanghika Vinaya -- these comprise the Chinese Vinaya Pitaka.

Although a great number of Mahayana sutras had been translated by the time Kumārajīva arrived in China, he translated the more important ones. His most important translation is the **Avataṃsaka Sūtra** (Flower Garland Sutra). Like the Flower Garland Sutra, other texts, such as **the Prajñā, pāramitā sutras**, **the Saddharma, puṇḍarīka Sutra**, **the Vimalakīrti Sūtra**, and **the Sukhāvati Sūtra**, were translations of early Mahayana sutras.

Soon after Kumārajīva's death, the **middle-period Mahayana sutras** began to be translated. Among such sutras are the six-fascicle Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra, jointly translated by Faxian and Buddhahadra (359-429); the Tathāgata, garbha Sūtra, translated by Buddhahadra; the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra, and the Mahāsaṃnipāta Sātra, the Bodhisattva, bhūmi, and others, translated by Dharmakṣema (385-433); and **the Śrīmālā, devī Siṃhanāda Sūtra**, **the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra**, **the Sutra of Continuous Stream-of Emancipation** (Xiangxujie Tuo Jing), and others, translated by Guṇabhadra (394-468).

17. Xuanzang

The influence of Xuanzang, (602-664) on east Asian Buddhism is second only to that of Kumārajīva. Xuanzang translated more scriptures into Chinese than any other translator. Of the 32 volumes of the Taishō Daizōkyō, the definitive Chinese Canon assembled by the Japanese, almost seven full volumes, or more than a fifth of all the surviving Chinese translations of sutras, are attributed to Xuanzang. (Kumārajīva's extant translations is only about a quarter of that number.)

Of the four prominent early translators of Chinese texts—Kumārajīva, Pāramārtha, Xuanzang and Amoghavajra—only Xuanzang was Chinese. The others were either Indian or Central Asian who were familiar with Indic languages. Although Xuanzang was neither Indian nor Central Asian, he mastered various Indic and Central Asian languages and translated more texts and better ones than any of the others.

While the early Mahayana texts presented Buddhism mostly on the practice of *faith* (which later led to the development of the Tiantai and Sanlun schools), middle-period Mahayana works, like those translated by Xuanzang, emphasized on *philosophy*. Xuanzang himself wrote the massive **Treatise on the Doctrine of Consciousness Only** (Cheng Wei Shi Lun), in which he summarized the teachings of the Indian masters of this tradition.

On his return from pilgrimage, Xuanzang was very fortunate to have the devout patronage of the Tang emperor, Taizong (T'ai-tzung). The emperor, however, often interrupted Xuanzang's work to question him regarding the countries to the west. In order to avoid further interruptions, Xuanzang resorted to academic diplomacy: he compiled a detailed account of his travels in the twelve-fascicle 'The Great Tang Records of the Western Regions' (Datang Xiyuji) and presented it to the emperor in 646.

18. Comprehensive translation

An interesting story was mentioned regarding the translation of the **Mahā, prajñā, pāramitā Sūtra** (the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra), the Sanskrit original of which contains 200,000 verses—and the Chinese translation takes up three full volumes of the Taishō Daizōkyō. Xuanzang was about 62 when he began translating the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra with the assistance of his pupils. They relied on three different Sanskrit manuscripts that he had brought back from India.

Since the sutra was very long and repetitious, his disciples felt it would not appeal to the Chinese literary mind. They suggested that it would be better to concentrate on the essence of the sutra and omit the repetitions, as Kumārajīva had done. Xuanzang was uncertain if he should follow his pupils' suggestion to abridge the translation.

While considering the problem, Xuanzang had nightmares. He dreamt that he had to climb a steep and dangerous mountain road or was being attacked by fierce animals, and he would wake up in cold sweat. In the end, he decided that the sutra should be translated in its original entirety. That night, he dreamt that the Buddha and Bodhisattvas appeared, emitting radiant rays of light from between their eyebrows, and showed their great joy to him, and he revered them with candles and incense.

It is not because of any subconscious apparition of archetypal images that has prompted me to retain the repetitive passages (*peyyālā*) and refrains of the Pali passages of the *Book of Discourses* (my translation of the Sutta Nipāta), for I was not visited by any such vision! The repetitive passages in the Pali Canon have been retained for three reasons. First, Pali texts such as the *Book of Discourses* serves not only as a textbook for the training of the lay ministry, but sutras or excerpts from it are often read during puja

(worship service). Such a public reading of the sacred texts must be complete, without any lacuna or cross-reference, because they serve as lessons for reflection and memorization.

Second, even the casual reader will find it easy and profitable without having to skim the pages to another part of the book to look up a passage and fill in the lacuna -- a rather discouraging distraction that may save paper but tax the patience of the unenlightened. Third, the *Book of Discourses* does not have that many repetitious passages as, for example, the *Dīgha* or *Majjhima Nikāyas*. [But see §38 below.]

19. Sponsored translations

One of the most important factors contributing to the success of the Chinese translations at such an early period was imperial sponsorship. During the Tang dynasty, there were special government-sponsored translation bureaus. Such a sponsorship contributed to the high standard of the Buddhist translations.

When Xuanzang translated the 100-fascicle *Yogācāra, bhūmi Śāstra*, he himself translated the Sanskrit manuscript into Chinese. A recorder then transcribed the oral Chinese translation. A Sanskrit reader checked the Sanskrit characters, and an ideogram verifier confirmed the accuracy of the written Chinese. A meaning verifier carefully studied and discussed the meaning of the individual translated sentences, and a sentence arranger put them in correct order. The whole project is overseen by a revision supervisor.

After Xuanzang's time the Chinese translation process became even more elaborate. During the Sung dynasty (960-1126), the government-sponsored translation bureau followed a **nine-phase system** [Mizuno, 19 82: 101 f]:

- (1) The monk who brought the Sanskrit manuscript to China would read it aloud in Sanskrit.
- (2) A copyist transcribed the Sanskrit as it was read out.
- (3) A translator then rendered the Sanskrit into Chinese.
- (4) The Chinese translation was verified by comparing it with the Sanskrit original.
- (5) Chinese editors polished the translation so that it would appeal to the Chinese readers.
- (6) The translation was examined for correctness of contents and for inconsistencies.
- (7) A special group of officials chanted the Sanskrit original. (In earlier times, the chanting of sutras was probably not associated with sutra translation, but as translation work became standardized, the chanting became a necessary formality.)
- (8) If the sutra had been translated into Chinese before, the earlier translation was referred to, to assess the merits and demerits of the former translation and to discover any error in content so that the new translation would be more reliable.
- (9) The final group supervised and inspected the whole translation project at each stage and saw to the project's smooth progress.

III. UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

20. Sanskrit into Chinese

In their efforts to translate Buddhist scriptures from Indic languages into Chinese, the early monks and translators faced many difficulties. The main reason for this was that the languages belonged to completely different language stocks. Another source of difficulty was that the philosophy and culture of the Indians and the Chinese were vastly different. These translators not only discovered that it was nearly impossible to find Chinese synonyms for the words and concepts, but they were confronted by a very basic difference between thought and its expression in the two languages.

It was in the face of such immense difficulties that plagued the translation of sutras into Chinese that the Chinese monk Dao An (who actively promoted sutra translation before Kuma-ra.1 -iva came to China), conceived the concept of 'five losses and three difficulties'. Later, during the Tang dynasty (618-907), the master translator Xuanzang explained the 'five kinds of untranslatable words'.

21. The five losses

Dao An's theory of the 'five losses' referred to five points in which the meaning of the original was lost through translation. The first of these losses was caused by **reversing the word order** in the Indic texts to conform to Chinese grammar. The formula for the first of the Three Refuges, for example, in Chinese is 'zi guiyi fo' ('I take refuge in the Buddha'), whereas the Pall original literally reads: 'To the Buddha for refuge I go' (*buddham saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*).

The second ‘loss’ was the **simplicity** of the Indic original. In their effort to impress their readers, the Chinese often employed an ornate, polished style. Third, when the Indian masters wished to stress a point, they repeated a sentence or passage several times. Furthermore, the early Buddhist oral tradition had numerous **repetitions** to facilitate easy memorization. The Chinese, unimpressed by this style, deleted such repetitions.

Fourth, Indic writing often had ‘nested’ passages, i.e. a **passage within** a passage, or a sentence within a sentence. It was not unusual, for instance, to find a long explanatory passage of over a thousand characters introduced in the middle of another passage so that the original point appears obscured. Such ‘diversions’ were generally deleted in the Chinese translations. As such, the complex meaning of the Indic original was lost in the Chinese. Fifth, the Chinese translations omitted **repetitive commentaries** or identical explanations that appeared in subsequent passages.

22. The three difficulties

Over and above the ‘five losses’ incurred on Chinese translations of Indic texts, Dao An further mentioned the ‘three difficulties’. The first difficulty was due to the fact that **the graceful and inflected Sanskrit**, for example, had to be rendered into plain monosyllabic Chinese.

The second difficulty was regarding the **subtlety of language**. The Sanskrit passages expressed very subtle nuances reflecting Indian thought of the Buddha’s time. The Chinese translations had to be clear and acceptable to the contemporary and practical Chinese, and still reflect the nuances of the original Sanskrit texts.

The third difficulty is a universal one—that of **erroneous translation**. Dao An believed that careless translation was due to the irresponsibility of translators who were ignorant of the Buddha Dharma. This difficulty referred to a need for the translators’ proficiency in the Dharma if they are to truly transmit the sutras.

23. Theory of translation

A good translator is a disciplined and inspired one. Discipline in translating usually comes from an understanding the *theory* of translation. Western linguists generally credit Etienne Dolet (1509-1546) for the first formulation of a theory of translation. In 1540, Dolet published a brief but unsurpassed statement of translation principles. Dolet, himself an excellent translator and a brilliant student of the classics, summarized the **fundamental principles of translation** under these five headings:

- (1) The translator must understand perfectly the content and intention of the author whom he is translating.
- (2) The translator should have a perfect knowledge of the language which he is translating and an equally excellent knowledge of the language into which he is translating.
- (3) The translator should avoid the tendency to translate word for word, for to do so is to destroy the meaning of the original and to ruin the beauty of expression.
- (4) The translator should employ the forms of speech in common usage.
- (5) Through his choice and order of words, the translator should produce a total overall effect with the appropriate ‘tone’.

[This summary is based on the analysis by Edmond Carey, *Etienne Dolet*. Babel 1. 1955b: 17-20.1]

24. Levels of translation

John Dryden (1680) felt that there were three basic types or levels of translation: (1) metaphrase, (2) paraphrase, and (3) imitation. By *rnetaphrase* is meant a verbatim or word-for-word or line-for-line translation, each word (or occasionally morpheme) in the source language is translated by a word (or morpheme) in the target language.

The result of word-for-word translation is often nonsensical, especially when idiomatic constructions are used. For example, *Bhagavatā saddhiṃ sammodi; sammodanīyanam katham sārāṇīyam vītisāretvā* (Sn p 50) rendered verbatim reads: ‘the Blessed One with having exchanged friendly greetings; having exchanged friendly greetings word courteous having finished’!

In his great concern for translation, Dryden regrounded the Western classics in a contemporary idiom. Unaware of modern conceptions of the relation between form and content, he eagerly advocated reasonable freedom, demanding that the translator should

first 'know what is peculiar to the author's style', and then 'tis time to look into ourselves, to conform our genius to his, to give his thoughts either the same turn, if our tongue will bear it, or, if not, to vary but the dress, not alter or destroy the substance'.

This kind of translation, called **paraphrase** by Dryden, is a sort of literal translation where the linguistic structure of the source text is followed, but is normalized according to the rules of the target language. The original work is carefully kept in view, but the sense rather than the words are followed. The Sutta Nipāta passage (Sn p50) then reads: 'they exchanged friendly greetings with the Blessed One. Having exchanged courteous words of friendly greeting...' (Sn:P 19:4-5), or according to T.W. Rhys Davids: 'after exchanging with him the greetings and compliments of friendliness and courtesy' (D:R 1:69::D 1:52).

25. Imitation

Many modern translators, however, do not share Dryden's conviction that human nature is everywhere the same. Like modern critics, they are concerned with the phenomenology of a given work, and have paid more attention to **imitation** as a mode of translating (at least lyric poetry), and have often worked in between two languages (even to the extent of creating a synthetic language), rather than to reconstruct one on the foundations of another.

By 'imitation' is meant, in modern times, a free translation that 'Ignores the linguistic structure of the source language, and an equivalent is found based on the meaning it conveys. The translator assumes the liberty not only to vary the words and sense, but also to leave both if the spirit of the original seems to require it.

Ezra Pound's *Homage to Sextus Propertius* (a comment on the British empire in 1917, by way of Propertius and the Roman empire; in *Quia Pauper Amavi* (1919) and Robert Lowell's *Imitations* (free renderings of European poets, 1961) are representative of the imitation principle of translation. Louis Zukovsky's translations of Catullus have created 'an even more striking synthetic language that mimes or mouths the Latin of the original in a way that is deliberately indecent' [Fowler, 1973:201].

26. Technical terms

Early Buddhist terms (unlike those of the monastic period onwards) have general or elastic meanings. For example, *uj.)adhi* (substratum of existence) (Sri 33c 33d 11 364a 34c 546c = 572a 728ce = 105 lac 789c 1057b) is here translated as 'life-basis'. While the technical term *upādi* applies only to the Five Aggregates, *upādhi* includes the Aggregates as well as the defilements (*kilesa*) [Sn:P n2:16c]. The general terms which the Buddha first used to convey his teachings became in due course more exact technical terms.

In their fervent endeavour to simplify a translation or to render a Pali passage more 'English', some translators have often avoided using technical terms or what some of them have branded as 'translationese' or Buddhist Hybrid English. Yet it is the introduction of such technical terms (like samadhi and Nirvana) into English that enriches it or, for that matter, any language that is willing to absorb such technical terms. On this point, Conze remarks:

The authors of the Buddhist Scriptures were in fact unwilling or unable to state their message without a liberal use of technical terms. We may regret this, but to pulp the holy scriptures and regorge them in colloquial, strictly non-technical, English would only turn precise spiritual teaching into vague and insipid uplift. The Scriptures as they stand cannot be read without some mental effort, and they demand a minimum of intellectual agility and attainment.' (1959 introd.)

27. Technical sense

There are many technical terms in Buddhism, which may cause difficulties when they are rendered in a free non-technical manner. For example, the Sanskrit word *snataka* (*P nahātaka*, 'having bathed') specially refers to a brahmin who has performed the ceremonial lustrations required after finishing his studentship as a brahmachari (celibate) under a teacher, just before taking up household life as a grihastha (householder). The term was adopted by the Buddha, who rejected the brahminical meaning, and gave it a Buddhist sense of being spiritually (as against ritually) pure. Norman remarks that 'to use the simple word 'washed' as a translation sounds banal in English when used of the Buddhist elite, but the archaic and dialect word 'washen' [M: H 1:334] sounds somewhat comical.' (1984:84)

As it is difficult to determine whether the technical sense of a Buddhist term was acquired at an early or a late stage of Buddhism, it is 'important to try to put the text that is being translated into its socio-cultural context. For, it is possible that in earliest Buddhism,

such word might still have had their non-technical meaning, eg *nibbuta* and *nibbana* might still have meant ‘quenched’ and ‘quenching’ in early Pali texts (Tha:N xxxiii).

Another kind of ‘technical’ problem concerns the translation of technical terms and scientific names, especially when they appear in poetry. One such Sanskrit passage, quoted by Brough, translated with the most precise identification of the flowers mentioned, reads:

(The bees think that) Your hands are *Nelumbo nucifera*, that your cheeks are buds of *Bassia latifolia*, that your eyes are blossoms of *Nymphaea stellata* var. *cyanea*, that your lips are *Pentapetes phoenicea* (or *Terminalia tomentosa*).

‘And how,’ asks Brough, ‘shall we convince the English reader that there is any poetry here at all?’ (1968:22). A gentler rendition may read thus (though the last-named species may not have been correctly identified):

Your hands are the lotus, Your cheeks are buds of the bassia, your eyes are blossoms of the water-lily, your lips are the Indian almond.

28. Word for word?

Sanskrit and Pali are far richer in synonyms than English. As such, it is not always possible that one and the same Pali word should always be translated by the same English word when used in the same sense, as advocated, for example, by Ñāṇamoli (A.K. Warder in Intro to P:N 1982:vi). Sometimes, even an English near-synonym cannot be found for a Pali term, as in the case of ‘lotus’, mentioned by Brough [27].

One could, of course, suggest Norman, augment and differentiate one’s translation to some extent by the use of adjectives, eg ‘blue lotus’, ‘white lotus’, etc (1984:83). This means that a translator often has to resort to words which are not in common use. But Norman warns that ‘since the use of poetic and archaic words in an English translation gives to that translation a nuance which is almost certainly not in the original Pali, such words should not in general be used.’ (id)

29. Special problems

Pali, though simpler than Sanskrit but similar, is a highly inflected language, with a grammatical structure similar to Latin and Greek, all of which belong to the Indo-European family of languages. For example, a Pali simplex like *nipuṇ’attha,dassjṃ* (Sn 176a 177a 377c) has to be rendered in English as a phrase: ‘who shows (one) subtle meanings’. Such simplex compounds, being generally compact and concise, can provide Pali verse with structural qualities of poetic vitality which are difficult to be rendered into English.

Another feature of Pali poetry which cannot be adequately matched in translation is the abundance of Pali synonyms and near-synonyms. Sanskrit may have some fifty expressions for ‘lotus’ (Brough, 1968:31), and Pali perhaps just as many, but the English translator has only ‘lotus’. Such synonyms paint a richness into the texture of Pali poetry which cannot be matched in English.

‘Nor is there any remedy,’ adds Brough, ‘in seeking to translate ‘literally’, giving ‘water-born’ for *ambujam* and *vārijam*, or ‘mud-born’ for *pañkajam*: since on the one hand such expressions, though etymologically accurate, are fantastic in English, while the Sanskrit words [and Pali words, one might add] are normal; and on the other hand, the Sanskrit words do in fact mean ‘lotus’, and nothing else.’ (1968:32, parenthesis added). Another example is the Pali compound *salil’ambu,cārī* (Sn 62b) which is resolved as *salile* (in the water) + *ambu,cārī* (that which fares in the water, ie a fish) and reads literally as ‘that which fares in the water in the water’! One has to content with ‘a fish fares in water’.

Similarly, there are numerous Pali figures of speech such as puns, alliteration, assonance and word-play, eg *varo varaññū varado varāharo* (Sn 234a), which is difficult, if not impossible, to be rendered into English with similar effect. Such tropes have been listed in the footnotes of the *Book of Discourses* (Sn:P) and sometimes discussed at length in the endnotes.

30. Cultural shift

Cultural differences often lead to a situation where a word or expression which in its original context is quite appropriate, but may sound bizarre or risible to another generation of audience. Brough points out that expressions which are complimentary in the Indian background may not be so when translated into English. ‘We cannot, while retaining our gravity, address the lady in a serious love-poem as...’Lady with fine buttocks’, or ‘Girl with well-rounded hips’, or other similar terms of endearment, well-intended

though they undoubtedly are.’ (1968:33). In some places, such expressions could be replaced by acceptable near-synonyms, or in some cases, simply as ‘You’ or ‘She’.

The interesting compound *dipad’uttamañ* (Sn 83c 995f 998f) has been technically rendered by Fausboll as ‘the best of bipeds’, a translation which once raised polite laughter during a public sutra reading in which the expression occurred. Hare translates it as ‘man supreme’, while Saddhatissa has ‘the noblest of men’. Chalmers renders it more generally: ‘foremost of all mankind’. Some may protest that these three translations are gender-biased. K.R. Norman, similarly, renders the term as ‘supreme amongst two-legged (men)’. In the *Book of Discourses*, we have rendered *dipad’uttamañ* literally (ie as a paraphrase) as ‘supreme amongst the two-legged’.

Norman remarks that an epithet of the Buddha, *narāsabha* (‘bull among men’), may seem risible to modern Buddhists, but adds that ‘if, however, our intention is to give the meaning as it might have appeared to the Buddha’s contemporaries, then we must try to deduce whether such an epithet meant more to them than ‘powerful’, irrespective of the effect upon twentieth century readers.’ (1984:85).

Brough, however, warns that ‘if we are translating into English, we are also attempting to produce an English poem, and must therefore pay some heed to what is and what is not acceptable in English. Naturally there is no law against the incorporation of exotic concepts and attitudes...but sometimes there is indeed a limit, and if we transgress it, we risk bathos at the least.’ (1968:36). The walk of a young woman, for example, is sometimes compared with that of an elephant. Although this analogy is not altogether derogatory, in English verse the result may sound comic or worse. A similar comparison to a goose is less difficult, says Brough, provided one understands that it is the graceful Indian wild goose. Translators may spoil the effect of this comparison if they substituted the swan for the goose (presumably because they felt that swans are more ‘poetical’). But there are no swans in Sanskrit or Pali literature.

IV. TRANSMITTING THE MEANING

31. Buddhist Hybrid English

Having chosen the text for translation and understood its meaning, the translator then goes on to put that meaning into clear readable English. But this is not always easy for both non-English speakers and native English speakers. In their struggle to express ancient wisdom in modern words, the translator sometimes fall into the excess of what is termed ‘Buddhist Hybrid English’, which in a paper of the same name, Griffiths describes as ‘a bastardized form of the English language so hag-ridden by Sanskrit syntax that almost every sentence is constructed in the passive, [and] every technical term is translated by a series of hyphenated poly-syllables’ (1981:19).

In moments of exasperation, scholars and translators like R. Gombrich admit that ‘we are not very good at English’ (1978:27) but, he further observes, in reference to individual scholars, ‘the work of these great scholars who would surely castigate any lapse from Sanskrit or Tibetan idiom in others or in themselves, makes me wonder yet again why it is that in our own field *English* style is held of no account.’ (1977:132).

32. Literal translation

In the attempt to present a text faithfully in translation, the translator often has to render it literally. A literal rendition, it is commonly known to specialists and non-specialists alike, can be a one-sided affair. For a long time, translators (especially the men) have been painfully aware that translation is like a woman: if it is beautiful, it cannot be faithful; if it is faithful, it cannot be beautiful. Gombrich even goes to the extent of asserting that a literal translation is ‘an intellectual fallacy and an aesthetic monstrosity’ (1978:27).

In his interesting paper ‘On Translating from Pali’, K.R. Norman admits that, to some extent, he himself sometimes resorts to Buddhist Hybrid English (1984:82 f). Of the quality of English he uses in the two volumes of *Elders’ Verses*, he writes:

I have therefore tried as far as possible to produce a literal, almost word-for-word translation. In some places this has resulted in a starkness and austerity of words which border upon the ungrammatical in English, but it will, I hope, when considered alongside the original Pali adequately convey my understanding of the therā’s words.

(Tha:N 1969:xxxii, Thi:N 1971:xxxiv)

Norman goes on to explain that he wrote in this way as a reaction against the ‘intuitive’ method of translation, a polite reference to the often cavalierly inaccurate efforts by pious non-scholars to translate Pali sutras. ‘Not only was I trying to understand the grammar and syntax of the Pali, but I was also trying to show my readers the way in which I understood it, so that they could, if they wished, put my translation against the original and see precisely ‘how I was taking the Pali’ (1984:83).

Norman is not the only translator to admit to the ‘deficiencies’ in his English style. Conscious that the Atthasālinī is a difficult text, Pe Maung Tin says of his translation: ‘I have therefore tried to be as literal as possible even to the extent of sometimes sacrificing style to clearness.’ (DhsA:TR 1920:xliv). The *Book of Discourses* (Sn:P), too, often resorts to a literal rendition of the Sutta Nipāta, and to keep it ‘English’, I have employed such devices as the amplification apparatus, rearrangement of verse lines, and so on.

33. Problems of free translation

When a translation is too free, it runs the risk of giving the reader an impression that is foreign to the original text. The problem becomes especially serious when the translator attempts to bridge the historical and cultural gap that separate the text and the reader by introducing familiar terms, that is familiar to the readers but out of context with the original text. For example, asks Norman (1984:84), what does ‘canker-waned’—a translation of *khīṇāsava* adopted by N.A. Jayawickrama in his ‘Epochs of the Conqueror’ (PTS, 1968)—mean to the non-specialist?

There are cases, however, where a free translation may serve well. A well-known example is the expression *kalam karoti* (lit ‘does one’s time’, i.e. die): *kalam akasi* (did die, Sn 343c); and *kala,kiriya* is better paraphrased as ‘my time will be up’ (Sn 694b). Another example is *kala,katam*, an adjective meaning ‘dead’ (Sn 586c); in other contexts, however, it must be paraphrased, as *petam kala,katam*, ‘the departed whose time is done’ (Sn 590c), and ‘the departed when their time is done’ (Sn 807d).

On the whole, however, free translation may sound very beautiful in English but, free as it is, such a translation entails some sense drop-out in the process. A free translation of the Sutta Nipata passage quoted above (Sn p50) will read (somewhat abridged though): ‘exchanged courtesies with him’ (D:W 93::D 1:52). Compare further K.J. Saunders’ metrical and rhyming but *free* rendition (A) of Sn 77 with its paraphrase (13):

- (A) A Farmer 1, good sir, indeed.
 Right Views my very fruitful seed;
 The rain that waters it is Discipline.
 Wisdom herself my yoke and plough.
 (Brahman, do’st take my meaning, now’?)
 The pole is maiden Modesty,
 And Mindfulness the axle-tree;
 Alertness is my goad and plou.-lisliare keen!
(The Heart of Buddhism, 1915:20)
- (B) Faith is the seed, discipline the rain,
 Wisdom is my yoke and plough,
 Moral shame the pole, the mind the (yoke’s) tie,
 Mindfulness my ploughshare and goad. (Sn:P 77)

In (A), Saunders has ‘padded’ the translation almost beyond recognition. While it is possible to avoid **padding**, some degree of reworking or paraphrasing is often inevitable; and sometimes also a rearrangement of the order of ideas can also be very helpful towards the construction of the new formal pattern (Brough, 1968:28 f). As an example is given here from the *Book of Discourses* (Sn:P):

| | | |
|--|--|-----------------|
| Yo mātarāṃ vā pitarāṃ vā jīṇṇakāṃ gata,yobbanāṃ pahu santo na bharati... | Whoever, being able, does not support Mother or father who are aged, Past their youth... | (Sn 124abc=cab) |
|--|--|-----------------|

The rearrangement of the lines are reflected in the footnotes.

34. Verse or prose?

When dealing with Pali verse, the translator will have to decide whether he will translate it into English verse or English prose. In his introduction to ‘Poems from the Sanskrit’, Brough says that ‘good prose is better than bad poetry, and even a plain prose rendering

is probably preferable to a vapid version in verse.’ (1968: 19). Both Brough and Norman agree that a translation that is poor poetry may well persuade the reader that the original must be of the same standard of mediocrity. Norman adds that ‘the verse form in English is properly the province of poets, so that no one should try to write poetry unless he is a poet.’ (1984:83). In the case of prose translation, however, says Brough, ‘the basis of judgement is different, since there only the sense-content of the original, and not a poetical form, is presented as evidence’ (1968:19).

A number of scholars, including Norman, have criticized the English translation of the Jātakas (CUP, 1895-1907), where the verses have been freely translated, and ‘where poor poetry masks a worse translation’ (Norman, 1984:83). Some critics might even say that the Jātaka verse translations are good poetry but bad translation—a case of beauty devoid of faithfulness!

Due to the nature of early Buddhist poetry, ‘its translators do not have to transmit its poetic beauty so much as its sense-content. For the most part, the monks who composed Pali verses were not poets, except for a few exceptions. They composed in verse simply because that was the medium for epigrams, gnomic sayings and didactic literature. ‘It is doubtful whether such verses conveyed much of a poetic nature to the hearers, and the amount lost when a prose translation is adopted is correspondingly less’ (Norman, 1984:82).

35. Free verse

A technical imprecision of the term ‘poem’ and its derivatives, however, is allowed by its etymology: Greek *poesis* (lit ‘making’). The contrast here is between that which is *constructed* and that which is natural. Traditionally, ‘poetry’ has narrowed to the sense of a ‘verbal making’ (as opposed to *poesis* in the other art forms), but is still more general than ‘verse’ (which is a line of poetry). Unlike a line of prose (which is usually incomplete), a line of verse has an active relationship with the page in its being self-sufficient. The French poet Paul Claudel (1868-1955) calls the primordial line of verse ‘an idea isolated by blank space’ (quoted in *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms*, 1973:203).

Ideally, then, the translator here should be a poet as well; but this raises a problem: one cannot really translate a poem: there’s many a slip ‘twixt the poem and the translator’s pen. It is often said that a translation is a new work altogether. One thing is certain: not only is verse the province of poets, but writing verses needs time and inspiration, what more of translating Pali verse into English verse; that is, if one is an English-speaking poet at all.

Out of caution and convenience, most modern translators have rendered the Sutta Nipāta verses simply as prose or ‘verse prose’, that is, prose translation written out in verses following its original structure. Although **the present translation** is largely inspired by the ‘paraphrase’ principle (such as that of John Dryden’s), that is, **rendering** sense for sense, free verse¹ has been used in place of the Pali verse in an effort to reflect the Sutta Nipāta’s original verse form by the separateness and monumentality of the stanza, even if this is merely a reflection on the rippling surface of an untried beginner’s pool.

One’s attempt at being poetic may not, however, always be successful or even possible, for some of the more difficult verses resist versification or ‘poetization’, and have to be rendered more literally. Here, as elsewhere, some conscious effort has been made to use **Saxon words** where they are better (yet without being ‘Anglo-Saxon’). This is not because they are Saxon—philology as such has nothing to do with the appreciation of Buddhist literature—but for its greater immediacy in impact. Latin words would be more useful in informative and ratiocinative writing, for which a purely Saxon vocabulary would be insufficient. That the Saxon language originated and developed in an agricultural community makes it a comfortably effective vehicle for putting old Buddhist poetry into a creative modern language. For example, instead of rendering *ananuyoga* (M 3:232/139.8) as “disengagement”, it sounds simpler and clearer to use “letting go”. In other words, use good old simple English!

36. Name, type or quality

Sometimes it pays *not* to translate, especially when a word, passage or text is polysemous (ie it has more than one meaning). At certain stages in their work, experienced translators often ask themselves the question: when does a word cease to describe its referent and become a mere name or sign? The translator must then decide whether to treat these terms as referring to a proper name, a type or a quality.

¹ Free verse has no regular metre or line length, and depends on natural speech rhythms and the ‘Counterpoint’ (metrical variation). Cuddon’s *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 1976, Penguin, 1977 sv.

The word *buddha* occurs more than 40 times in the Sutta Nipāta verse. In some cases it is used as a proper name ('the Buddha'), or it refers to a type (ie an enlightened person), or is descriptive of the experience it tries to name (ie 'enlightened'). This list represents the different senses of the term *buddha*; those terms with more than one sense have been bracketed:

As a proper name or title, '**the Buddha**': Sn 83b 134a 157d 161d 167c 202a 252a 276d 357b 377d 383d 401d 408a 429d 454a 486a (545a) (558d) 571a 696a 993a 999b (1005b) 1126d 1127a 1128b 1129b 1133a.

As a type, '**an enlightened one**': Sn 81c 85a 86d 386d 480c (486a) 513c 517d 523a (545a) (558d) (622c) (643c)(696a)(1005b).

As a quality, '**enlightened**': Sn (622c) (643c) 646c.

As both proper name and as a type: (486a) (545a) (558d) (696a) (1005b).

As both a type and a quality: Sn (622c) (643c).

37. Mistranslations

In the early days of Western endeavour at the translating of Buddhist texts, difficult or unfamiliar Buddhist technical terms posed great difficulties 'since we are unable to translate them adequately with our Western Christian terminology' (Stede, PED 736.1). Translators who were Christian missionaries often resorted to terms like 'church' for Saṅgha, 'sin' for evil (*pāpa*, *akusala*), and 'soul' for self or mind (*atta*), and thus presented Buddhism in a Christian light for a Christian-schooled audience. Western scholars who are more sympathetic to Buddhism or who understand the inter-lingual intricacies involved, prefer to leave untranslated such terms as *asava*², *tathāgata*³ and *saṅkhāra*⁴.

But the temptation to translate words - especially difficult ones - and the human propensity for **transmitting information** is always there. As their familiarity with the Buddhist texts grew, some scholars have resorted to the original Sanskrit or Pali terms and names. A generous translator would usually mention *both* the original Indian names as well as their translation, eg Vyaggha.pajja is rendered 'Tiger-foot' and Dīghajānu is 'Long-knee' (A:H 4:187::A 4:280). In the Mahāyānasūtras, however, breath-taking names of Buddhas like Sarva,loka,bhaya-c,chaṃbhitatva,vidhvaṃsana,kara are mercifully rendered as 'He Who Demolishes the Fear and Terror of All the Worlds' (Lotus Sutra, ch 7, tr L. Hurvitz, 1976:147).

Translators often complain that critics have the habit of criticizing the translations of what they (the critics) regard as untranslatable terms, but have offered nothing better. When it is difficult to choose between inadequate translations of a term, Mrs C. A. F. Rhys Davids' rationale is that 'as a choice of evils, it is better that a word be left untranslated, suggesting too little, than that it suggest what was never there.' (S:RW 3:v; cf xii).

Some scholars simply adopt native transliterations of scriptural terms and names. In Bigandet's *Life or Legend of Gaudama* (London, 1911-12), for example, we find names like Phralaong [an honorific denoting the Bodhisattva], Thoodaudana [Suddhodana] and Thawattie [Sāvathī] familiar perhaps only to Burmese ears. Fortunately, the English language has accepted, or is gradually accepting, a growing list of important Buddhist terms like Arhat, Buddha, deva, Dharma, karma, Nirvana and samsara: they are found in any good English dictionary. Such terms and proper names are best left untranslated if they have been anglicized. Translators should, however, take pains to discern familiar terms, such as karma and samsara, from any brahminical or Hindu connotations so that readers are not misled.

38. To translate or not to translate?

A conscientious translator is sometimes troubled by the dilemma of whether or not to translate a Pali word, that is, if an English synonym or near-synonym is available. Even a common but central Pali term like *dukkha* cannot be satisfactorily rendered into English:

There is no word in English covering the same ground as *Dukkha* does in Pali. Our modern words are too specialised, too limited, and usually too strong.... We are forced, therefore, in translation, to use half-synonyms, no one of which is exact. *Dukkha* is equally mental and physical. (PED 324g)

In such a situation, the translator is left with only these options: choose the best near-synonym, concoct a neologism (perhaps in well-hyphenated Buddhist Hybrid English), or adopt the term untranslated.

² C.A.F. Rhys Davids, S:RW 3:v; K.R. Norman, SnT 0:10c(2).

³ ib.

⁴ sv PED.

Untranslated words are only intelligible to a specialist or someone who knows the language of the original text. If that is the case, why make the translation at all, when one could read the original? L. de La Vallée Poussin received both praise and criticism for leaving the term *tathāgata.garbha* untranslated. He was praised by those who felt that he thus avoided the pitfalls of ‘bad’ philology encountered by those who translated it wrongly (Guenther 1981: 123.8). Many would, however, share Norman’s sentiments that ‘we are left to wonder whether La Vallée Poussin actually understood the meaning of the term and, if he did, what use it was to his readers to be deprived of that knowledge’ (1984:84).

When a translator leaves words untranslated, there usually results a failure of communication, which he perhaps does not realize: He may have searched the English language for an equivalent to a particular Pali word and, failing to find one, has left the Pali word untranslated. He knows, within limits, the meaning of the word; it is only the one-to-one equivalent he cannot find. He can therefore understand his own translation, because he subconsciously inserts his own interpretation every time he comes to the untranslated word. (Norman, 1984:84)

The non-specialist, however, cannot do this because he does not know the meaning, unless there is a footnote or amplification apparatus, which may be lengthy or awkward. The footnote, however, explains the meaning of the word only the first time it occurs—should the reader miss this or is unaware of the convention, he may have some difficulty understanding the passage.

Even then the practice of inserting such useful footnotes or amplification apparatus is rarely followed or systematically done, and if included, would only be practicable in a scholarly work, not one for the layperson. Such a practice further necessitates the translator’s giving a long commentary, often longer than the translation itself. This method has been adopted by K.R. Norman in his translations of the Theragāthā and Therīgāthā, and for my own translation of the Sutta Nipāa (the *Book of Discourses*). (While Norman dealt exclusively with grammatical notes and textual exegesis, I have concentrated more on doctrinal commentary.) It is, however, a tedious method: Norman’s annotations to his translation of the Sutta Nipāta has yet to be published (although his *The Group of Discourses*, Volume I appeared in 1984, and the annotated *The Group of Discourses*, Volume II in 1992).

39. Untranslatable words

Even when the translator provides commentarial notes, he should be careful not to leave too many words untranslated. If he does so, he might end up with a ‘translation’ that is hardly English. On the other hand, the alternative is not always satisfactory. The translator must therefore choose between an annotated but untranslated Pali term or an English rendition whose meaning is not likely to have much significance to the reader.

This choice between adopting a Pali term or its translation, is not, however, much of a problem for the traditional (eg Myanmar, Siamese or Sinhalese) or monastery-trained Buddhist scholar, as many Pali technical terms are found in their native vocabulary. These terms have been left untranslated early in their Buddhist history, and have been accepted into the national vocabulary. The Pali term *dhamma*, for example, is part of all south-east Asian languages. In Myanmar (modern Burma), it has been exploited by the evangelists to render into Burmese the word ‘Logos’ in the opening sentences of the Gospel of John: ‘In the beginning was the *Dharmma*, too, have their own Buddhist vocabulary and translation tradition. The master translator, Xuanzang, explained that there are ‘five kinds of untranslatable words’. They pertain to five instances in which Indic words are not translatable into Chinese. Briefly, the **five kinds of untranslatable words** are:

- (1) Those words **whose meanings are so profound** that they defy a single, simple term, eg *dharaṇī* (tuoloni), a mantra used in meditation.
- (2) Words that are **polysemous**, ie they have many meanings, eg *bhagavat*, which has a number of meanings, and if only one sense is conveyed into Chinese, the other meanings will be lost.
- (3) Indian terms for which the Chinese has **no equivalents**, such as the names of places, animals, plants, and minerals that are unknown to the Chinese.
- (4) Words that have been **traditionally transliterated**, ie transcribed phonetically, eg *anuttara.samyak.sambodhi* (Onouduoluo sanmiao sanputi).
- (5) Words which will lose their special meanings if translated into Chinese, eg *prajñā* (boze), which is generally translated as wisdom (zhihui), but such a commonplace translation drains the word of its more profound meaning.

40. Amplification

Epithets and names like Sugata, Tathāgata and Māra, though common in Buddhist writings, are not easily understood by the non-specialist, if they are left untranslated or unexplained. The **amplification method** is used (eg in Sn:P) to familiarize the beginner with such terms. Two of the amplified epithets of the Buddha are ‘Sugata [the Well-gone]’ and ‘Tathāgata [the Thus Come One]’. The personification of evil is referred to as ‘Māra [the Evil One]’. In such instances, the amplification is a synonym or explanation, and sometimes elaboration, of the main term.

The amplification also acts as a *quailfier* (ie an adjective) for difficult terms, eg *nivaraṇā* is rendered as ‘mental hindrances’ (Sn:P 1:17a); or *modifies* them (as an adverb), eg *tasa vā thāvarā vā* becomes ‘be they frail [with fear] or firm [in spirit]’ (Sn:P 8:4b). In some cases, amplification is necessary to prevent a wrong connotation, as in *khemato* (‘as security’) (Sn 424b) in ‘Having seen renunciation as [spiritual] security’ (Sn:P 27:20b).

Amplification is very useful in clarifying metaphors, eg *v,igata.rqjaih* is translated as ‘without the dust [of defilements]’. Alternate translations demanded by variant readings are sometimes shown by way of an amplification, eg *dhī,r-atthu [idha] jīvitam* (Sn 440b) reads ‘Shame upon life [here]!’: *idha* is found in the European texts but not in the Siamese.

41. Polysemy

In his Foreword to the PED, T.W. Rhys Davids remarks that ‘no one need now to use the one English word ‘desire’ as a translation of sixteen distinct Pall words, no one of which means precisely desire’ (PED vii). The 16 words that can translate as ‘desire’ are probably: *attha*, *abhijjhā*, *abhinhāra*, *abhiḷāsa*, *ākankhā*, *āsa*, *āsamsā*, *icchā*, *kāma*, *chanda*, *taṇhā*, *patthāna*, *lobha*, *mano,ratha*, *rāga*, and *ruci*. In some contexts, the terms *taṇhā*, *lobha* and *rāga* are themselves synonyms. The amplification apparatus is useful here for clarifying and distinguishing the relevant or intended sense of a polysemous English translation of the Pali term.

Another example of polysemy is the English translation of the Pall words for ‘wise’, of which there are many. However, by amplifying the translations, their connotations are delimited so as to reflect the sense of original term:

dhīra (Sn 45b 46b) = [steadfastly] wise, [self-reliant] wise;
mantā (159d) = [wise] thinker; [or simply:] thinker (916b);
medhavī (323b 1008c= 1125e) = [prudently] wise (also: intelligent);
paṇḍita (I 15b 523b 526d, 59 Id 72 Id 802d 806c 1007d = I 125b) = [circumspect(ly)] wise (also: clever, intelligent);
paññavā (174b) = wise [in insight];
viññū (39c 317c 396b 403d) = the wise [who knows];
vida (177c 996d 677a) = wise [in knowledoe], wise [in knowing], tile wise (one) [who knows]; knower (as in *loka,vidū*, knower of the worlds);
vīmaṁsī (Sn 877b), wise [thrOUGH investioation] (= *pandito* SnA 554);
sapañña (90b) = full of insight; and
sappañña (591c) = one with insight.

The amplification of a translated expression should be guided by the oral tradition, the canonical text and/or the Commentaries. Of the first priority here is the oral tradition of living Buddhist masters. Only when both Canon and Commentary are silent, should one then provide one’s own interpretation (*attano.mati*, VA 239 ff; cf Miln 148), remembering not to create bad karma for oneself.

42. Parenthesis

In some situations the amplification apparatus may prove cumbersome or unnecessary. An amplification is, in a way, extra information regarding the main term. As such the line or sentence should still make sense even without the amplification. This, however, is not the case with parentheses.

Where the Pali term or passage has a pregnant meaning—one that is not clearly evident in a direct English translation - the context is provided by a **parenthesis**—signified by round brackets: For example, *ārādhaye, dakkhiṇeyyehi tādi* (Sn 488d = 509b) translates as ‘Such a one achieves (the result) because of those giftworthy ones’ (Sn:P 31:51d = 73b). Unlike amplification (which is optional), a parenthesis is required in the English by its context though the sense is implicit in the Pali.

A parenthesis sometimes indicates an interruption in the natural development of the passage - as in Sn 30, where the narrator interrupts the dialogue between the Buddha and Dhaniya to describe a thunderstorm that arose (Sn:P 2:13). A parenthesis may also enclose a special reading that is an integral part of the text (such as a hypermetrical remark identifying the speaker in a verse), eg '(The Blessed One:)' in Sn:P 2:12 (Sn 29).

A parenthetical remark, either by way of a commentary or an interpretation, can be useful, sometimes indispensable, to render the translation intelligible and acceptable to the contemporary reader. For didactic purposes, it is important to distinguish between what is Indian tradition and what is Buddhist truth. A case **in point is this** passage from the **Sigālovāda Sutta** (D 31) on one of the duties of parents to their children: 'They arrange for (his marriage to) a suitable wife [ie, they give their consent to a suitable marriage partner for their child]' (*paṭirūpena dārena samīyojenti*, D 3:189). (Another example is the interpretation of the precept against sexual misconduct in the Veludvāreyya Sutta, S 5:354/55.7.8.)

Arranged marriage was common in ancient India, and the Buddha did not consider it a serious problem then, and took a practical stand; in other words, he was limiting his address to Indian society then. Unless it is only a socio-anthropological or historical survey, such passages have to be reinterpreted if they are to be of any use for upgrading the standard of our lives today. After all, the purpose of Buddhism is to improve the quality of human life (if not all life), not the universal preservation of Indian tradition (except perhaps for the Indians). [55]

43. Compound problem

Now we turn to a few examples of grammatical difficulties. In Pali, nouns (including participles, adjectives and pronouns) are very frequently combined in compounds (*samāsa*). English words like 'madhouse' (house for the mad) and 'fourteen' (four and ten) are compounds. Pali Compounds, however, are very much more complex, and many a translator often trips here. A compound like 'fourteen' is known in Indian grammar as *dvandva* (or copulative compound) and one like 'madhouse' is called *tatpurusha* (or determinative compound).

The earlier Western translators sometimes mistranslate *dvandva* and *tatpurusha* compounds. A *dvandva* was taken to be a *tatpurusha* and vice versa. Take, for example, the *dvandva* *maccha,mamsa* from the **Amagandha Sutta** (Sn 249a). Fausboll (1881), Hare (1945; also at A:H 4:130. 1) and Norman (1984) takes the compound to be a *tatpurusha* and translates it as 'flesh of fish'. Even the PED explains the term as 'flesh of fishes'. In fact, *maccha,mamsa*, being a *dvandva*, should be rendered as 'meat and fish' (Chalmers 1932) or 'fish and meat' (Saddhatissa 1985; Piyasilo 1989). The alternate translation (by I. B. Homer and W. Rahula) to Norman's is given as 'flesh or fish' (cf V 1:237, 3:172; esp Horner's note at V:H 4:325.3). The Royal Siamese translation gives the same translation (*plā lae' nya*).

The compound *mamsa.bhojana* is found in the refrain of the **Amagandha Sutta** (Sn 242d... 248d). All the modern translators of the Sutta Nipāta take it as a *tatpurusha*: 'eating of flesh' (Fausboll; Norman), 'savours of flesh' (Hare), 'eating of meat' (Saddhatissa) and 'taking of meat' (Piyasilo). The Royal Siamese translation, however, renders the compound as a *dvandva*: 'meat and food' (*nyva lae' phōchanā*).

A common important Buddhist term, *chanda,rāga* ('passionate desire' Sn 364d) has often been mistranslated. The term occurs as a prefix at Sn 204a (*chanda. viratto*, having discarded passionate desire) and 1086c (*chanda. vinodanam*, discarding of passionate desire). Saddhatissa similarly translates it as a *tatpurusha*: 'strong desire for objects' (Sn:S). It also occurs in the Vibhaṅga (Vbh 390) where U Tittihila translates it as 'lustful wish' (Vbh:T). Nyanatiloka's Buddhist Dictionary defines it as 'lustful desire' (3rd ed 1972:48 88).

Many Western translators of the Sutta Nipāta have, however, rendered *chanda,rāga* as a *dvandva*: 'wish and passion' (Fausboll; Hare) and 'passion and desire' (Norman). The term also occurs elsewhere in the Canon, but has been similarly taken as a *dvandva*: 'desire and passion' (Rhys Davids ad D 2:5, 3:289) where M. O'C. Walshe, however, correctly translates as 'lustful desire'. In the Saṃyutta, Mrs Rhys Davids (S 1: 198) and F.L. Woodward (S 4:108) both render it as 'desire and lust'. In the Aṅguttara, Hare uses 'passion and desire' (A 4:400). (*cf kāma,rāga*, sensuous lust or sense-desire, which PED explains as 'lustful desire, lust'.)

44. Symbolic adaptation

Terms like *brahma,cariya*, *paññā* and *saṅkhāra* pose some problems in translation because none of them can be translated by a single English term. The term *brahma,cariya* has been variously translated as the 'best life' (T.W. Rhys Davids in Dialogues of the Buddha 2: 316), the 'higher life' (Chalmers in *Buddha's Teachings*), the 'God-life' (E.M. Hare in *Gradual Sayings and Woven*

Cadences), and ‘Brahma-farers’ (I.B. Homer in *Book of Discipline*). None of these terms unfortunately describe what the term refers to. Current translators, fortunately, are becoming more aware of the proper meanings of the term and has variously rendered it as the ‘Divine Life’ (Ñānamoli in *Minor Readings*), the ‘pure and celibate life’ (H. Saddhatissa in his Sn:S), and the ‘holy life’ (K.R. Norman in his Sn:N).

Throughout the *Book of Discourses*, *brahma.cariya* has been translated as ‘the holy life’ (Sn 274a 292a=294c 326c 354a 396a || 696d 396c 428a 463b 566c 567a 655a 693a 1128c). As a Buddhist technical term, *brahma.cariya* refers to the life of a monk. For a lay follower, it means the keeping to the rule of celibacy. The term is pre-Buddhist, and is used as such (meaning the ‘celibacy’ of a student) at Sn 292a=294c, 428a, and 655a. This adoption of a pre-Buddhist term by the Buddha is an example of his penchant for ‘symbolic adaptation’ or skillful means of using familiar terms to convey his ‘Dharma’ (which is itself another pre-Buddhist term).

45. Flexible terminology

Although the well-known term *saṅkhāra* has its cognate in the Epic and Classical Sanskrit as *saṃskāra* (meaning ‘preparation’, ‘sacrament’) and in philosophical literature ‘former impressions’, ‘disposition’, it is one of the most Buddhist of terms, and a most difficult one, too. [On *saṃskāra*, see Wintemitz HIL 1:272, Sarma’s tr 254]. Although the term *saṅkhāra* is mentioned four times in the relatively late **Dvayatānupassanā Sutta** (Sn 731c || 732c 731b 732b 75 1d) and only once elsewhere (Sn 372c), it is not yet a technical term. In all these contexts, it simply means ‘that which is constructed’ or ‘conditioned things’. In the course of time, its meaning grew in technical detail I Sn:P n3:14c].

Another interesting term is *atta*, which in its non-technical sense means (a) ‘grasped’ or ‘seized’ (eg *atta,daṇḍa*, the rod seized, Sn 935a) and (b) ‘the mind’ (eg *atta.mano*, joyful at heart, Sn 45d). As a technical term, *atta* means ‘self’ (eg Sn 501). The term has been discussed in detail elsewhere [Sn:P n3:11d]. By the time the Buddha passed away, he had formulated and explained very clearly some of the most important concepts in the human language. And yet the Buddha was not a theoretician or academician: he used words to express himself and benefit others without being trapped by language (M 1:500; cf M 1: 108; S 3:138).

Such a state of affairs show that in the early years of the Buddha’s ministry, he was confronted with a certain insufficiency of term; with which to convey his message. By the time the Nikāyas came into being, a functional philosophical and psychological terminology had already evolved. The Commentaries themselves clearly recognize that some words have different meanings, that one word has the duty of many, and often list various such examples before stating which meaning is intended ‘here’. In the *Visuddhi.magga*, for example, Buddhaghosa gives a full analysis of *saṅkhāra* (Visin 536 ft). The Indian scholar S.N. Dasgupta remarks that:

The Buddha was one of the first few thinkers to introduce proper philosophical terms and phraseology with a distinct philosophical method and he had often to use the same word in more or less different senses. Some of the philosophical terms at least are therefore rather elastic when compared with the terms of precise and **definite meaning** which we find in later Sanskrit thought. (1922 1:86. 1; cf M:H I:xxv)

46. Gender-neutral language

In the *Book of Discourses*, we have tried our best to avoid the language of sexual bias. Terms like *jana*, *nara*, and *purisa* have been translated as ‘person’, while *manussa* is rendered as ‘human (being)’, and *puggala* as ‘individual’. The Pali pronoun *so* and *tam*, though usually rendered ‘he’ and ‘him’, have been translated in the *Book of Discourses* as ‘one’, ‘that (person)’, or ‘such a one’ depending on the context.

Although the neutral pronoun ‘one’ is helpful, it is not always applicable. Where the context clearly applies to a man, or demands a masculine pronoun, no gender-free language is used eg ‘like a king leaving the kingdom he has conquered’ (Sn 46; cf Sn 106 108 110), unless one translates *rāja* as ‘ruler’ rather than ‘king’. (Even if one uses ‘rāja(h)’, the context is still masculine.)

Grammarians and scholars are not certain or in agreement as to how far the advocacy of nonsexist language will succeed in discouraging the use of the unmarked masculine pronoun. What is clear is that the feminist movement in language has made many language users aware of the problem of sexual bias which was overlooked by earlier generations.

One attempt to introduce a nonsexist language is the use of the sex-neutral pronoun 's/he' and the word 'wo/man' for woman and man. It is uncertain how far such experimental forms as these will come into general use, especially when 's/he' is only a written form with no corresponding spoken form; and still more seriously there is no objective or possessive forms.⁵

47. The golden mean

It is impossible to translate verbally and well at the same time. 'Tis like dancing on ropes with fetter'd legs! A man may shun a fall by using caution, but the gracefulness of motion is not to be expected. (John Dryden)

So declared Dryden, who proposed the golden mean of paraphrase, insisting that 'Imitation and verbal version are in my opinion the two extremes, which ought to be avoided.'

One might equate the 'middle way' of Buddhist translation with the **paraphrase**, insofar as it is done sense for sense yet keeping to the letter as closely as possible. Word-for-word translation should be avoided if it costs the spirit of the text. It should be limited to only special terms that defy translation or a literal rendition is acceptable - eg *pavassa deva* (imperative + vocative) in the refrain of the **Dhaniya Sutta**; a literal translation gives a dramatic effect: 'O rain, therefore, rain if you wish!' (Sn 18d... 29d).

Another good example of paraphrase is the translation of *bahu-s.suta* (Sn 58a 316d 320b 322b 323b) as well-learned' or 'deeply learned'. Verbatim, *bahu-s.suta* means 'heard much'. A modern equivalent of the term would be 'well-read', but its sense is more restricted than 'well-learned'. 'Learned', on the other hand, is a good translation for *sutavī* (Sn 70b 90b 37 la 534a).

48. Rules of translation

In his *Principles of Translation* (1760, Edinburgh), Charles Batteaux proposed 'rules' that involved the preservation of word order wherever possible, the conservation of the order of ideas, the use of the same length of sentences, the duplication of conjunctions, and the avoidance of paraphrase (here Batteaux means a free translation). Batteaux was not opposed to alterations if they were fully justified, but he was cautious and deeply concerned with the reproduction of form.

To a large extent, the *Book of Discourses* has followed the principles both of Dryden's and of Batteaux's. In other words, we regard the process of translating a religious text as important as the final product. One has here to rely not merely on the words of the Teachings but on what they point to. A good translation, therefore, is not only an academic endeavour, but more importantly, it is an intuitive transmission. This is one of the principles of Buddhist hermeneutics reflecting the instructions of the **Sama.citta Sutta**: 'Those who, by taking the discourses rightly and interpreting according to the letter, conform to both letter and spirit - such are responsible for the profit, for the welfare of the masses, for the profit, for the welfare of devas and humans. Moreover, such monks beget merit and establish this true Dharma.' (A 1:70)

49. Aids to understanding

A knowledge of Pali alone is not sufficient to produce a good translation of a Pali text. The words may be rendered into English but the sense-content has not been transmitted. Ideally one should have an experiential and mature command of the Dharma— better still, be an enlightened Buddhist accomplished in the Four Analytic Skills, ie in meanings, ideas, language and ready wit (A 2:160).

Otherwise, one has to resort to at least four aids for the understanding of a Pali text. The first, and most **important, aid is the oral tradition** handed down in the monastic lineage. This tradition is difficult to obtain nowadays, but there are remnants of it here and there in the Theravada communities and monks of the Khmer, Laotian, Myanmar, Siamese and Sinhalese orders. These monks have learned the meaning of the texts from their teachers, and the lineage may go back to the Buddha himself. There is a good chance that these traditional commentators of our times may be able to interpret difficult passages in the texts and to decide between the relative merits of alternative meanings.

The second aid to understanding a Pali text are the **Commentarial traditions** which date back to some centuries after the Mahaparnirvana—Buddhaghosa lived during the early 5th century, while Dhammapala the 6th century. There is reason, however, to believe that some of the exegeses contained in these traditions date back earlier, perhaps even to the Buddha's own time (Norman, 1980:73). Since the Commentaries are much later than the texts themselves, it is probable that they are the product of a different

⁵ An informative reading here would be *A Grammar of the English Language* by R. Quirk and others (Longman, 1985:5.105 6.10 56 & index: sex-neutrality/bias).

socio-cultural background. For this reason, the information provided by such Commentaries is sometimes misleading or incorrect. In most cases, however, the Commentaries are very helpful in clarifying difficult passages (especially in the first 4 Nikayas).

50. Other traditions

The third aid is found in the textual versions of their other **non-Theravada Buddhist schools**, especially the Prakrit or Sanskrit traditions, or the Chinese and Tibetan translations. It is however, important to note that even the Prakrit and Sanskrit versions, like the Pali texts, are translations. There are, for example, two Prakrit versions of the Dharmapada, a Sanskrit version (the Udana.varga) in two recensions, a Tibetan translation (which seems to differ somewhat from the Sanskrit versions), and four Chinese versions (Mizuno, 1979: ch 22).

In theory, these various textual traditions may help in the understanding of the Pali text. In practice, however, parallel versions sometimes raise problems rather than solve them, eg where the Pali Jātaka text has the word *chambhī* (J 4:3 10: *so bajjhatā pāsasatehi chambhī*, ‘Let him be bound, fearful, with hundreds of bonds’), the Sanskrit parallel in the Jatakamala has *ṣaḍbhiḥ*, ‘by six’—probably due to the copyist’s error (Norman, 1984:81 & n42): the Commentary, however, does include the number ‘six’ in the explanation (ib 4l). Although it is possible to deduce the way in which such variants can occur, It is not always possible to decide which of the readings is more likely to be the original one.

The fourth aid to the understanding of a Pali text is, interestingly enough, the **non-Buddhist traditions**, eg the Jain and the Vedic texts of the same period. The Buddha sometimes borrowed brahminical terms and revalued them. As such, if we find in a Pali text a word which also occurs in a non-Pali text of that period, it is likely that the word has been used in the same sense as in those texts, unless there are clear indications that they are being used in a different sense.

We can therefore look at texts written on similar subjects at the same time in neighbouring parts of India, by thinkers who were facing similar problems, and employing languages with a similar structure and vocabulary. If we find similar words, phrases or ideas in such contemporary sources, then it seems likely that their usage is similar, and their meaning, is also similar. If the meaning can be clearly seen, then this may help us to understand a passage in Pali where the meaning may be obscure. (Norman, 1984:81 f)

51. Buddhist hermeneutics

Each of the ancient Buddhist schools probably had their own aids to the understanding of their textual tradition. One of the most famous of such hermeneutical traditions is perhaps that of the Yogacara school of Asanga, that is, the four ‘reliances’ (*pratisaraṇa/paṭisaraṇa*) or basic principles of Buddhist hermeneutics (Dharma.sangraha 53; Mahāvīyutpatti 74 (1546-49)). They are discussed in some detail in the Mahāyāna Sūtrālaṅkāra (Msl 18:31-3 (1,7 & Comy)) and more clearly expounded in the Bodhisattva, bhūmi (Bbh 256.23-257.22). The Four Reliances are as follows:

- (1) One should rely on the Teaching (*dharma/dhamma*) rather than on an individual (*pudgala/puggala*).
- (2) One should rely on the meaning (*artha/attha*) rather than mere words (*vyañjana*) of a teaching.
- (3) One should rely on comprehensive wisdom (*jñāna/ñāṇa*) rather than ordinary knowledge (*vijñāna/viññāṇa*).
- (4) One should rely on those teachings whose meaning is definitive (*nītārtha/nīt’attha*) rather than provisional (*neyārtha/neyy’attha*). (Dhsg 53; Mvy 74)

In the First Reliance, the term ‘Teaching’ (*dharma/dhamma*) should also be taken on a higher level as referring to the universal characteristic of non-self or Emptiness. ‘Personality’ (*pudgala/puggala*) here also means an ‘abiding entity’ which does not exist in reality. The general meaning of the First Reliance is that one should not be tricked by the false notion that there is any sort of permanent entity anywhere in this world or outside it—all is non-self.

The Second Reliance exhorts one to hold the spirit of the Teaching above its letter. In **the Kinti Sutta** (M 103), the Buddha advises the monks that ‘although they [the monks] differ as to denotation, there is agreement as to connotation’ (M 2:239) [ie regarding the 37 Factors of Enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*, MA 4:29)]. The Teaching has to be properly interpreted and practised in harmony with the current cl rcu instances. It should not be taken as a fixed dogma. This Reliance is a warning against putting a superficial externality that hides the lack of spirituality. One should translate sense for sense and not merely word for word.

In the Third Reliance, the term *jñāna/ñāṇa* is usually translated as ‘knowledge’ in its broadest; but in the context here, it specifically refers to wisdom (ie *paññā*). The term *vijñāna/viññāṇa* usually rendered as ‘consciousness’ or cognition, which generally refers to an automatic response to sense-stimuli. The meaning of this Reliance is that one has **to apply wisdom above knowledge**.

In the Fourth Reliance, the term *nītārtha/nū'attha* means literally 'with meaning already guided', ie the meaning has been pointed out; *neyārtha/neyy'attha* means 'with meaning still to be guided', ie the meaning needs to be pointed out (A 1:60; cf Nett 21). Nyanamoli says that they can be paraphrased by 'with explicit meaning' and 'with implicit meaning' respectively, though recollecting that 'meaning' here means 'meaning-as-aim' (Nett:N 36.117/3). One should expound the **explicit meaning** rather than the implicit or 'secret' teachings.

Underlying these Four Reliances is the truth which needs to be shown to the world for its benefit. The Four Reliances emphasize on spiritual openness. A sectarian Buddhist or one who is not a Dharma-based translator, cannot accurately translate the sacred scriptures. At best, the sectarian or inere scholar can only convey the text without the spirit. Even without the polish of the letter, an 'uneducated' but Intuitive Buddhist is still capable of transmitting the true spirit of the Buddha Word; such a person is like a maestro without a good musical instrument, yet still able to perform well. But with a good command of the letter, the same simple Dharma-spirited worker shines above the literati—like a virtuoso who performs perfectly on an excellent instrument.

52. Quality of translation

Linguists employ three ways of testing the quality *of* a translation: back-translation, knowledge testing and performance testing. In back-translation or 'reversible' translation, one renders a text from language A into language B. A different translator then renders the B text into A, and the resulting A text is then compared with the original A text. If the two texts are virtually identical or very close, then the original translation is of a high quality (that is, provided that the second translator did not improve upon the work of the first in the reverse process).

In knowledge testing, speakers of language B are tested on the content of the translation (eg using a questionnaire), and the same questions are put to speakers of A. If the results correspond, the translation must be good.

In performance testing, speakers of language B are asked to carry out actions or Instructions based on the text (eg in a repair manual); speakers of A are also asked to do the same. The results can then be compared to determine translation efficiency. This process, however, takes up a lot of time and requires expert supervision if clear results are to be obtained.

53. Annotations and phrasing

Besides the main text of a translation, one of the most useful parts of a book is its annotations. The *Book of Discourses* has two main types of annotations: the footnotes and the endnotes. While the footnotes are found at the bottom (or 'foot') of each page, the endnotes follow each sutra.

The **footnotes** of the *Book of Discourses* were originally meant to be marginal notes on Pali grammar and translation. These notes grew so large that it became unfeasible to put them at the page margin. They have become footnotes. The footnotes deal with grammar and translation; as such, they have to refer to very specific words or passages, which is easy enough for the verses (which were numbered and lettered).

It is, however, difficult to refer to the Unmarked English prose passages (except perhaps by the line). For a more accurate system of referring to the translation prose, a numbering system has been introduced for each English sentence or a part of it, corresponding to the Pali phrasing. This system of running numbers means that the stanza standard references, too, have to be renumbered. In the *Book of Discourses*, the traditional Sutta Nipāta reference numbers have been retained within square brackets on the right margin.

The footnotes provide the following information on the translation:

- (1) *Variant readings* from various traditional Pali texts and suggested readings by editors and scholars.
- (2) *Alternate translations* where a passage is polysemous or has a doubtful reading.
- (3) *Identical or parallel passages* are listed.
- (4) *Difficult or interesting Pali words* are hyphenated to show how they are formed, usually with their etymologies. Such words are often discussed and examples of their usages given where applicable.
- (5) *Word or sentence arrangement* of the English translation, if different from the Pali text, is noted and coded.
- (6) *Cross-references* to other notes.
- (7) *Errors* in previous translations are pointed out where relevant.

54. Endnotes

The **footnotes** of the Book of Discourses provide mainly technical information on Pali grammar and translation. As the footnotes are limited to the page, longer grammatical notes or technical commentary sometimes extend into the endnotes, which are the traditional footnotes that we find in most scholarly works. The endnotes deal mostly with proper names, doctrinal terms, history and related topics. Where relevant, especially in terms of history, doctrine or development of ideas, two or more passages -would be cross-referenced or discussed in the endnotes. Endnotes also add information which may be generally useful to the understanding of the historical and Cultural background of the person or topic in question. The beginner or the researcher may find them to be the most interesting, indeed the most valuable, section of the book.

The main objective behind the endnotes here is to provide enough information to the reader so that, after mastering them, one will not only understand the translated Sutta Nipāta, but will also have a good foundation of Buddhist doctrine. A secondary aim of the endnotes is to educate the local reader especially in a non-sectarian approach to Buddhism and In Buddhist culture.

The endnotes, which are much larger than the translated texts which they explain, really form a separate book in themselves. They will in due course be indexed and incorporated into Buddhist dictionaries and study guides. Many of these endnotes are complete articles in themselves. My critics may rightly say that the endnotes contain a lot of extra, even extraneous, material. The aim here, it must be stressed, is not merely to translate the Sutta Nipāta, but also to explain it and educate the reader.

55. Interpretation

We have already mentioned the significance of reinterpreting certain passages so that Buddhist truth is made to rise above Indian tradition. Such an interpretation may be done. in the form of a parenthetical remark [42], or by way of a commentary. Buddhism is interpreted is like playing music merely by reading the notes: a master performer always interprets the music s/he plays.

There are some who may argue that one should only inform others about the Dharma, not interpret it. One writer even goes to the extent of saying, with good intentions surely, that ‘we should be careful to take the sutras quite literally ... to interpret is to deny (‘... when he says black what he really means is...’).’ (Bodhesako, 1984:69). The last time I came across a similar sentiment (if literally taken) was when I was studying the Bible in my pre-Buddhist days. To continue the musical analogy, it might be said that one should not interpret, or would not be good at interpreting, music unless one is a maestro or virtuoso: the interpretation of the Buddhist texts should be left to the expert, or better to the true Buddhist practitioner.

To interpret means to ‘expound or make clear the meaning of’. One should read the sutras not only to understand them but also to live them, if not at least live by them. While it is difficult enough to at once understand a sutra, it is even harder for many people to live by it, what more to ‘experience’ it. Yet even as one reads a sutra, or any material for that matter, one is at once interpreting it (that is, “as long as one is undrowsing”, as the Metta Sutta (Khp 9.9) says).

The Buddha himself interprets his own teachings. To illustrate difficult points or important values, the Buddha often uses analogies, stories and other literary devices. In the **Daru-k,khandha Sutta**, for example, the Buddha ‘saw a great log being carried down Ganges’s stream’ and uses it as a lesson:

‘This bank’, O monk, is a name for the sixfold personal sense-sphere. ‘That bank’, O monk, is a name for the sixfold external sense-sphere . (S 4:179 ff)

What is interesting is that the Buddha does not say what the ‘great log’ stands for. Any intelligent and mindful person will interpret the ‘great log’ as representing oneself or one’s mind, as is Obvious from the sutra context.

56. Commentarial tradition [§(D)iv(3)]

There is a whole Buddhist tradition of interpretation, or hermeneutics, namely, the Extra-canonical works (like the Milinda.pañha and the Nettippakarana) and the Commentaries. In the Canon itself, we find one sutra interpreting another one disciple (eg Ānanda who was only a Stream-winner then) interpreting the Buddha and other Arhats, for example, in the **Subha Sutta (D 10)**, **Atthaka.nagara Sutta (M 52)**, **Bahitika Sutta (M 88)** and **Ghosita Sutta (S 4:113)**. The Buddha himself recognizes the ability of some of his disciples to interpret or explain in detail what he has taught in brief, and he declares Mahā Kaccāna to be the foremost in this respect (A 1:23).

To interpret a sūtra is not to read into it, but to read between the lines, as the context demands it. This is not to say that the Buddha was not clear in his teaching, but rather that one is oneself relating to the sutra within the purview of one’s knowledge and experience.

It is because of one's spiritual immaturity that one has no choice, but to interpret a sūtra. The Buddha, however, interprets a teaching because of the deficiency of language.

After all, a sutra is in itself a conventional arrangement of words and ideas. The Buddha and the ancient masters have provided us with various means with which to correctly interpret a sutra or any teaching for that matter. In the Vinaya, the Buddha lays down Four Great Criteria (or Authorities) (*mahā padesa*) for resolving issues regarding monastic discipline (V 1:250 f; Petk 21).

The Vinaya Commentary further mentions the **Fourfold Discipline** (*catubbidha vinaya*) which speaks of the authority of:

- (1) the sūtra itself (*sutta*),
- (2) what is in accordance with the Sūtras (*suttānuloma*),
- (3) the doctrine of the teachers (*acāriya, vāda*), and
- (4) one's own opinion (*attano, mati*). (VA 239 ff; cf Miln 148)

In this case, the term 'sutta' may refer to a Vinaya rule or to a Sūtra text (of the Sutta Pitaka). [§(D)(4)1:10]

The **Four Great Criteria** (*mahāpadesa*) in another method of authenticating the Buddha's Teaching. Should anyone declare that 'this is the Dharma, this is the Vinaya, this is the Teacher's Teaching,' that one has heard it:

- (1) directly from the Buddha himself (*buddhāpadesa*) [IV 2:98], or
- (2) from the Order (*saṅghāpadesa*) of elders with a chief [V 2:93], or
- (3) from a number of learned elders (*sambahula, therāpadesa*) [V 2:98], or
- (4) from a single learned elder (*eka, therāpadesa*) [V 2:98].

then, instructs the Buddha, 'neither approving nor disapproving, but carefully studying the sentences [DA *saṃsandetabbāni*]...if the sentences are traceable in the Sutra, verified by the Vinaya, then one must conclude that this is the Blessed One's utterance, and this has been well understood by the monk.' (D 2:123 f = A 2:167 f)

57. Accuracy and naturalness

One has to interpret before one can translate, and one has to interpret correctly, or at least as correctly as possible. In the translation of a religious work (such as a Pali text)—if one must make a choice—accuracy is the more crucial than naturalness or beauty of language. The success of such a translation (as in any kind of translation) depends on the purpose for which it was made, which in turn reflects the needs of the people for whom it was intended. It should not only transmit the meaning of the original text but it should also be in harmony with the nature and needs of the times of the translator. The beauty of a passage has been fully transmitted when the readers see the spirit of the passage.

A translation of a religious text should be checked and revised about every five to ten years to keep in touch with the times. A new translation of an original text, however, has to be continually made at least every fifty years (ie about three generations, as I.B. Horner once mentioned to me in a private communication). The frequency of translating is therefore as important as the translation itself. The best alternative to translation is of course to learn the language of the original text itself so that one could master the pristine teachings oneself in their own terms. As such it makes more sense for a translator to be as fluent in the source language (eg Pali and Buddhist Sanskrit) as in the target language.

58. Paraphrasing the sūtras

In the *Pali Buddhist Review* (13 1976:184 O~ the editor featured a letter by Roger Tite, one of its subscribers, in which was given some suggestions for making the Pali sutra more readable. As the suggestions reflect both the anguish and aspiration of many scholars and students of Buddhism alike, they are reproduced here:

- (1) A number of phrases and passages which are often used should be written down in alphabetical order, both for use in summarizing and for later checking.
- (2) A simple cross-index should be prepared for longer passages so that, in a similar way, work can be avoided by repeating the summary in earlier sutras which can thus be found quickly.
- (3) All sutra-summaries must be written out in full. The PTS edition often has a section replaced by a cross-index note. For example, sutra 71 might quote in the middle '...see sutra 27, lines 31-39, but substitute Ānanda for Kassapa...'. This should be avoided in a Proper summary. (Of course, if one sutra repeats another except for a change of names, one could write: 'Sutra 26, the same as for

sutra 24, except that the Buddha talks to Ānanda and not Kassapa', and then merely give the different ending. This will avoid referring back for possibly vital pieces (if information.)

- (4) The final paraphrase should include: (a) in index in number order of the subject-matter of each sutra (together with cross-references to sutras dealing with the same topic): and (b) a cross-index (for scholars) of identical passages.

The Pali Buddhist Review editor then goes on to add that Silacara's totally neglected work, *The First Fifty Discourses*, represents the only published anthology of length which endeavoured to reproduce part of the Sutta Piṭaka in an appealing style of language, by eliminating those tedious repetitions which characterize the contents of the Majjhima Nikāya in particular.

V. CONCLUSION

59. Bahasa Malaysia translation

Malaysian Buddhists have their own fair share of pioneer effort in the compilation of dictionaries of Buddhist terms and translation of Buddhist works into Bahasa Malaysia (BM)—recently called 'Bahasa Melayu' (1992 note)—the national language of Malaysia. We nevertheless have an advantage in that one of the most important roots of BM is Sanskrit. From a random list of 500 BM words, a Western scholar, Hugh Brennan has worked out that Sanskrit forms about 37% of its vocabulary, ie the largest of all the BM roots (**Straits Times**, Singapore, 1989).

In May 1980, I drafted a list of basic guidelines for the translating of Buddhist terms and texts into Bahasa Malaysia. The 1980 guidelines for 'Buddhist Bahasa Malaysia' (BBM) were revised in 1989 and published by PUSAKA Dharma (Pusat Kemajuan Dharma or the Centre for the Promotion of Dharma, a department of the Friends of Buddhism Malaysia) as 'Rules and Guidelines Regarding Translation and Neologism of Buddhist Bahasa Malaysia Terms' (**Pedoman Bahasa Malaysia Buddhis**, 1989c). Briefly, these Rules and Guidelines are:

- (1) Translate the original Buddhist term, ie the Sanskrit or the Pali, eg: bhikkhu is 'biksu' in BM.
- (2) Use the available BM word or words which convey the sense of the original Buddhist term and which does not have any definite Unbuddhistic connotation, eg phala (karmic fruition) is 'pahala' in BM (but the BM term has a positive connotation only).
- (3) Use the BM **transliteration** of the Buddhist term where available, provided that such a BM term has no definite unbuddhist connotation, eg *nibbāna* is 'Nirwana' in BM.
- (4) Where a neologism is necessary, use the **Sanskrit** term as the rule, eg Dharma.
- (5) The form of the BBM term shall be modified in accordance with BM phonology to reflect the sound of the original Buddhist term as necessary, eg *prajnya* (BM for *paññā*).
- (6) Where BM has no equivalent word for a Buddhist term, that term shall be **imported** and it shall maintain its original Indian form provided that (a) it retains Its original pronunciation, and (b) agrees with BM phonology, eg Vinaya, Tripitaka. All diacritics of the imported term shall be omitted in the BM cognate.
- (7) Where the imported BBM term [see rule 5] does not agree with BM phonology, it should be modified accordingly, thus:
 - (a) BM element. Part of the term may be BM and part of it non-BM, eg *punarjanman/punabbhava* becomes 'punarjadi' (rebirth) in BBM; *viññāna/viññāna* is 'sedarderia' (consciousness).
 - (b) Gemination of consonants. Although gemination, or doubling, of letters is not native to BM, it is acceptable in imported terms, eg Buddha, Buddhisme.
 - (c) Elision of consonant. In some cases, it may be necessary to elide a letter or a syllable to maintain the BM phonology, eg se 'jarah (history) becomes 'sejarawan' (historian).
- (8) When coining new words (where BM has no equivalent forms), the neologism shall keep to the rules of the host language - and the rules of sandhi - insofar as it conveys the Buddhist sense and keeps to BM phonology. (Cf Rule 7.) For example, 'swabawa' for the Sanskrit/Pali svabhava.
- (9) Use royal language in reference to the Buddha and to royalty. The common terminology, however, may be used where it serves better to convey the Buddhist message, eg 'was born' = 'diputerakan'.
- (10) The **grammatical form** of the etymon shall be maintained in the BBM equivalent, eg *buddham saraṇam gacchāmi* (I go to the Buddha for refuge) becomes 'Saya mengadapi (Begawan) Buddha untuk perlindungan.'

Along with the 'Rules and Guidelines' was published the **Kosa Kata Buddhis** (1989b), a glossary of over 600 Buddhist terms (English-BM, BM-English)—the first dictionary of the kind—which, besides defining BBM terms, also coined a number of new ones (eg sedarderia = *OjimalvinfiCina*, sedarindera = citta). The Kosa Kata was followed in the same year by a revised and enlarged list

of over 1000 terms in the Kamus Buddhis Caturbahasa (1989 j in the format of Sanskrit-Pali-English-Bahasa Malaysia with an English-Sanskrit index.

60. Buddhist translatorship

Buddhist translation work and lexicography are more than Just an academic exercise or organizational activity. They involve a spiritual effort to ‘know Dharma, make Dharma known’. Such an endeavour has to be inspired by the Buddhist spirit. Listed here are the Five Principles of Buddhist Translatorship and Scholarship based on the Three Jewels and the Threefold Training:

- (1) **Moral conduct.** A translator shall be free from desire for personal gain, and shall cultivate humility and a willingness to listen to the opinions of others.
- (2) **Mental cultivation.** A translator shall persevere in the development of a calm and clear mind so that one could look within oneself to one’s Buddha-mind for guidance.
- (3) **Wisdom.** A translator shall always be willing to learn so that the Dharma-eye arises in one whereby one could ascertain and determine the true principles of the Buddha Dharma.
- (4) **Fellowship.** A translator shall work with other Dharmafarers in the true spiritual friendship and consult virtuous Buddhist elders to duly certify one’s work whenever possible.
- (5) **Compassion.** A translator shall endeavour to make the Dharma known by publishing., or cause to publish, or support the publication of such works that have been duly certified.

61. Why translate?

61.1 Translation progress

K.R. Norman closes his article ‘On Translating from Pali’ with a short but important section on ‘why do we translate Pali?’ According to him, people translate Pali for the following reasons:

- (1) They are interested in Pali as a language or Pali literature as literature, and they wish others, not capable of reading the texts in the original language, to have a chance of knowing something about them and their contents.
- (2) They have read translations of Pali texts and are not satisfied with what they have read, but believe that they could make the contents known more accurately, ie they think they can do better than their predecessors.
- (3) They wish to proselytize, as they regard the texts to be revealed truths which they wish to make known to others in order to persuade them to join their religion. (1984:85 f)

In the last case, Norman doubts how far it can be consistent with the need to be impartial, which is essential if one is to be accurate in one’s translation. ‘Is it possible simultaneously to be impartial and to wish to proselytize?’ he asks. Should not a history of the Borgias be written by a Pope like Rodrigo Borgia (Alexander VI)?

As a free-market religion, Buddhism has no single authorized versions of the Buddhist scripture though various Buddhists countries and communities (like Thailand) have produced their own canon. Of all the world religions, Buddhism has perhaps the highest number of adherents, admirers and adventurers who would translate or attempt a translation of the Buddhist texts: the Dhammapada, for example, is the most translated Buddhist texts. Some important contributions to Buddhist studies and translations have been made by Roman Catholic scholars (such as Etienne Lamotte and Heinrich Dumoulin). The most important contribution to Pali studies is of course that of the Pali Text Society founded by T.W. Rhys Davids in England in 1881.

Since then, Buddhist studies and translation work has grown in leaps and bounds. Even then the Buddhist texts are very extensive—the Pali Canon itself is estimated to be **over 11 times the Bible**—that it takes great faith, patience and some bookish sense to be able to effectively digest them even in an abridged translation. Moreover, only recently have we more authoritative translations of Buddhist texts done by practising Buddhists themselves. Such important translations include:

- o **the Long Discourses of the Buddha** (Dīgha tr. Maurice Walshe, Kandy: BPS, 1995),
- o **the Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha** (Majjhima tr. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, Boston: Wisdom, 1995) and
- o **the Connected Discourses of the Buddha** (Saṃyutta tr. Bhikkhu Bodhi, Boston, 2000).

61.2 Unfinished symphonies

Of the Pali Canon, only the Aṅguttara Nikāya now awaits a new authoritative translation, and with its completion, **the four Nikāyas**, embodying the early teachings of the Buddha would be complete. Sadly, there are a number of other major “Unfinished Symphonies” in Buddhist academia today. One such unfinished masterpiece is the *Critical Pali Dictionary* (CPD) [30], begun in 1924.

The Pali Tipiṭakam Concordance (PTC) started in 1950 under the editorship of Edward Miles Hare and was published by the Pali Text Society. After his death in 1958, work on the Concordance was painfully slow. To date (after more than 40 years) the PTC has only reached Vol. III (P-Bārāṇaseyyaka, 1993). This Concordance is useful because it lists (according to the Indian word order) all the occurrences of a Pali word or phrase in the Pali Canon so that they could be located easily.

Another unfinished work is *the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, begun in 1955 Sri Lanka as part of the Buddha Jayanti (Buddhist Era 2500), of which only the first few volumes have been completed to date.

The PTS has begun publishing a new Pali-English dictionary, entitled *A Pāli Dictionary*, Part I (A-Kh) by Margaret Cone (2001) and projected to be in three volumes.

It would probably take many more lives for one to enjoy the full Pali textual apparatus (text, commentaries, dictionaries, concordances, etc) to be completed. However, for the moment, various efforts at mining the wealth of the Pali texts are going on in private rooms, in open classes and on the Internet. The Pali Centre of Singapore, for example, has launched a series of “Pali Without Grammar” courses to encourage a direct study of the texts. The vision behind this programme is that the best way to study, practice and teach Buddhism is to know the early texts themselves. As one immerses oneself in such an effort, one’s journey toward self-realization becomes clearer and nearer *thokam thokam*.

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APPENDIX

62. Trilinear Translation of Pali texts

62.1 Why trilinear translation?

A trilinear translation employs three lines of texts: (a) the original text (in our case, Pali); (b) the gloss or literal (word-for-word translation); and (c) the idiomatic or free translation. Where either (a) and (b), or (a) and (c) are used, the system is called an **interlinear translation**, that is, where a word by word translation (or gloss) (the target language) of an original text (the source language) is given below it. This is useful for a technical study of the forms of the source text. However, in itself, a gloss is not often comprehensible, but merely aids in the analysis and interpretation of the words and phrases constituting the source text.

For this reason, it is useful to have a third line, the free or idiomatic translation in the target language. This method is very effective in the technical study of the original text especially for one who is not familiar with the source language. However, this method can be rather awkward since one has to read three lines at a time as it were. One solution is to have an interliner translation one page and the free translation on the opposing page, or the inter-linear translation in column a and the free translation in column b. Whichever way, these styles are a formidable task for the translator who works alone, but good exercise for a serious student.

62.2 Clarity

One important benefit of an interlinear translation of Pali texts is that it shows the nature of canonical Pali, which is not always grammatical. A very common example is *viharati* (“he stays, sojourns”), which is often either translated as in the past tense (“stayed”) or in the past continuous (“was staying”). Secondly, it also graphically shows the pregnant wealth of many Pali words which often need more English words to translate. Thirdly, contextual usages of Pali terms are more apparent (like the word *dhamma* which means different things in different contexts). Fourthly, the Pali sentence length and structure will also be evident.

The translator or editor has to decide which line of the interlinear or trilinear text needs to be given priority. For a Pali class, perhaps, the Pali line needs to be highlighted (printed in bold or larger font than the other line/s). In a trilinear, the gloss line (as a rule the second line) is best given a very small font size (like 9 or 10 points where the Pali is 12 points) and using a different font (like

Arial Narrow) for better contrast. I have used 11-point Times New Roman font for the free translation for easier reading. I'm stuck with Times New Roman because I use Times Norman for the Pali text.

62.3 Resolution of compounds

Here I must add it is important to have a consistent and clear way of denoting the parts of a compound. I began by using the period or dot to break compounds, but since the Velthuis system of Pali spelling appropriated the dot, I had to resort to the **comma**, so *dhamma.cakka-p,pavattana* became *dhamma,cakka-p,pavattana*. The **hyphen** means that the letter should be pronounced with the preceding syllable. I use the circumflex ^ to denote equal conjunct vowels like a+a, i+i, u+u, as in *cittânupassī* = *citta anupassī*. However, in other cases, I use the apostrophe, e.g. *aniccā'nupassī* = *anccā anupassī*. Other examples can be found in the trilinear Anapanasati Sutta I have done.

I have also decided to use the **open quote** only once right at the beginning of the quote, which is then broken into short paragraphs and single-sentence paragraphs, with a **final close quote**. Otherwise, it looks unwieldy to the contemporary eye (mine anyway). This is especially useful since we have long quotes by the Buddha and other interlocutors in the sutras. Nothing is more discouraging than having to dredge through a page-long paragraph of pious translation (not to mention bad grammar, misspellings, etc.).

62.4 Quotation marks

All this is not new, but merely a refinement of techniques already in use by various scholars. I am trying to popularize them to the Pali amateurs who are also serious about the practice aspect of Buddhism. For this reason, I have called my translation series (my own self-training actually), "**The Living Word of the Buddha**" (the biblical overtone is unavoidable, even advantageous, since we share the same language and that English comes before the English Bible).

This a short note on interlinear translation and some translation tips that would hopefully generate greater interest in a more effective and attractive way of translating Pali into another language.

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