

Translating Pali Buddhist Texts into English: Two Example Texts

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Abstract

This paper will discuss various structural- linguistic and cultural difficulties in the translation of Pali Buddhist texts into English. The translation of Pali Buddhist texts into English began in the second half of the 19th century. In this paper two texts that have been translated frequently into English since the 19th century will be investigated. The shorter text, the Last Words of the Buddha, is widely known to English-speaking people who have read about Buddhism and it is frequently quoted in English translation. The other text is a representative extract of three verses from the Dhammapada in the Pali Canon. The Dhammapada is the most frequently translated Pali Buddhist text in English, and new translations continue to appear. The English translations of both of these texts often differ substantially from each other and have changed considerably over the past 150 years. The paper will focus on the linguistic-structural and cultural difficulties of translating 2500-year old texts from an ancient Indian language, especially considering that these texts

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originate in a philosophical-religious and cultural system quite foreign to any Western system.

The paper will look, first, at the shorter text, the Final Words of the Buddha in Pali, and at a selected number of English translations. Second, the extract of the three verses from the Dhammapada in Pali will be looked at along with a selected number of English translations. The focus will be on the linguistic and structural dissimilarities between Pali and English as exemplified in the selected original texts and the selected translations. In addition, cultural problems in translating ancient Indian texts into English will be considered as well.

Keywords: translation; Pali Buddhist texts; Final Words of the Buddha; Dhammapada; linguistic differences; cultural differences

การแปลพุทธธรรมจากภาษาบาลีเป็นภาษาอังกฤษ: สองตัวอย่างเนื้อหา

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้จะอภิปรายโครงสร้างทางภาษาศาสตร์และความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรมที่ก่อให้เกิดความยากลำบากในการแปลพุทธธรรมจากภาษาบาลีเป็นภาษาอังกฤษ การแปลดังกล่าวนี้มีมาในช่วงหลังของคริสต์ศตวรรษที่ 19 บทความนี้ตรวจสอบพุทธวจนะจากสองเนื้อหาที่ได้รับการแปลเป็นภาษาอังกฤษหลายสำนวน ตั้งแต่คริสต์ศตวรรษที่ 19 คือปัจฉิมโอวาท เป็นข้อความสั้นๆ ซึ่งเป็นที่รู้จักดีของชาวตะวันตกที่อ่านหนังสือพุทธศาสนาฉบับภาษาอังกฤษและยังเป็นข้อความที่ถูกกล่าวถึงบ่อยครั้ง ในสำนวนแปลภาษาอังกฤษ อีกเนื้อหาที่จะกล่าวถึงเป็น คาทาสามบท จากธรรมบทในพระไตรปิฎก ธรรมบทได้รับการแปลบ่อยครั้งจากภาษาบาลีเป็นภาษาอังกฤษหลายสำนวน สำนวนแปลจะมีความแตกต่างโดยสิ้นเชิงและมีความคลาดเคลื่อนจากต้นฉบับมาเป็นลำดับรวม 150 ปี บทความนี้มุ่งที่จะศึกษาโครงสร้างทางภาษาศาสตร์และความยุ่งยากทางวัฒนธรรมในการแปลภาษาอินเดียโบราณซึ่งมีอายุรวม 2500 ปี โดยให้ความสำคัญกับเนื้อหาซึ่งมาจากแหล่งกำเนิดศาสนาเชิงปรัชญาและระบบวัฒนธรรมที่แตกต่างจากระบบวัฒนธรรมตะวันตกเป็นอย่างมาก อันดับแรกบทความจะพิจารณาเนื้อหาที่สั้นกว่าคือปัจฉิมโอวาทแล้วจึงพิจารณา คาทาสามบทจากธรรมบท จากสำนวนแปลภาษาอังกฤษจำนวนหนึ่ง จุดเน้นจะเป็นด้าน

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ภาษาศาสตร์และโครงสร้างที่ต่างกันระหว่างภาษาบาลีกับภาษาอังกฤษและกล่าวถึง
ปัญหาทางวัฒนธรรมในการแปลภาษาอินเดียโบราณเป็นภาษาอังกฤษด้วย

คำสำคัญ: การแปล; พุทธธรรมภาษาบาลี; ปัจฉิมโอวาท; ธรรมบท;
ความแตกต่างทางโครงสร้างภาษา; ความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรม

1. Introduction

Beginning in the early 19th century in Europe Buddhism in its various Asian forms, both contemporary and ancient, with its enormous corpus of texts, became more and more known especially among scholars and intellectuals, but also among Christian missionaries and other Westerners, who were interested in studying Buddhism and its texts in order to learn of the religion of those they sought to convert to Christianity. In Sri Lanka, after the beginning of occupation by the British in the late 18th century, CE, Christian missionaries began to arrive, along with colonial administrators. The British colonial occupation of Sri Lanka brought about the first extensive colonial contact of a European empire with a people whose form of Buddhism was that of the Theravada tradition, with its corpus of texts in Pali. Later this extensive Western contact with Theravada Buddhism would extend to Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. Western attempts to fit Buddhist traditions into Western categories, beginning in the early 19th century, continued for decades after as Western contact and knowledge of Asia increased (Cohen, 2000, pp. 150-151). There was confusion and perplexity evident in the writings of early Western observers of Buddhism. It did not seem to fit neatly into any category they were familiar with. Was Buddhism a religion or philosophy? Was it theistic or atheistic or non-theistic? Was it like Protestantism or Roman Catholicism. Both of these were claimed in two articles by two different authors in a popular American magazine *Atlantic Monthly*, published in 1869 and 1870, respectively. (Cohen, 2000, p. 151)

In the second half of the 19th century, translations of Buddhist texts in Pali into English, and other European languages, started to appear in print. The interest in Buddhism and in Pali was shared by many Christian missionaries

along with European and North American scholars and intellectuals. The missionary interest was motivated by the need to understand the culture of the population in order to facilitate conversion to Christianity. A number of scholars who studied Buddhism were motivated initially by Christian scholarship. Two of the most prominent of British scholars of Buddhism in the late 19th century and early 20th century were Max Mueller and T. W. Rhys Davids. Rhys Davids later became a Buddhist (Weragoda Sarada Thero, 2016). Both of these men were translators of Buddhist texts.

Western interest in Buddhism and other Asian philosophies and religions continued and became more widespread in the second half of the 20th century, after the end of Second World War. The academic discipline of Buddhist studies developed too during this period. In the 1960s and 1970s large numbers of younger people in the West adopted certain aspects of Buddhism as they understood it.

Many English-speakers in the West interested in Buddhism and who read the increasing number of books published about Buddhism and the various Buddhist traditions, became familiar with two texts translated from Pali. These two texts were, "The Last Words of the Buddha" as recorded in the Majjhimanikaya, a book of the Suttapitaka. This text is quite short, one short verse. The other text, a longer one, found in the Khuddanikaya in the Suttapitaka, is the Dhammapada, a collection of the sayings of the Buddha, in 26 chapters with a total of 423 verses. The Dhammapada has been translated many times into other languages, including English. The British monk and scholar Ven. Sangharakshita in the introduction to his translation of the Dhammapada (Sangharakshita, 2000) writes that in 2000 that there had been more than thirty translations of the Dhammapada in English (5). Since then more translations continue to appear, one of which by Anandajoti Bhikkhu (Dhamma Verses) appearing in 2016.

This paper will consider the translations of these two texts, “The Last Words of the Buddha” and a short excerpt from the Dhammapada, into English. The shorter text, “The Last Words of the Buddha” and three verses from the Dhammapada in translation will be compared with the original Pali versions. The comparison will focus on the linguistic-structural differences between Pali and English and how this is reflected in the translations. The two short Pali texts will be analyzed structurally from a linguistic perspective using the methodology of “basic linguistic theory” as developed by R. M. W. Dixon (2010-2012) in his recent three-volume exposition, *Basic Linguistic Theory*. In addition, reference will be made to cultural differences between ancient Indian culture and that of modern individualistic Western culture to further illustrate some of the problems and difficulties encountered by English-speaking translators of Pali Buddhist texts.

2. Pali and English: A Brief Discussion of the Structural Differences

Pali is a literary form of a northern Middle Indic language spoken approximately 2500 to 2000 years ago in northern India. It is somewhat less complex in phonology and nominal and verbal morphology than Sanskrit. The oldest extant corpus of Buddhist texts is in Pali and it can be presumed that Pali is identical or very close to the dialect or dialects used by the Buddha in his decades of teaching. This literary form is characterized, in comparison with English, by a complex verbal and nominal morphology. The nominal morphology is characterized by the extensive use of case forms and nominal compounds. The verbal morphology is characterized by the widespread use of participles

rather than dependent clauses. The nominal case forms indicate various syntactic relationships which are expressed in English by sentence word order and prepositions. The use of prepositions is relatively rare in Pali, in comparison with English. In addition, various syntactic relationships can be expressed by the use of nominal compounds, a feature which is not as frequent in English. Participles in Pali are frequently used to express what in English are expressed by the use of subordinate clauses usually introduced by conjunctions. These structural differences result in a conciseness of expression in Pali that is more or less impossible in English, as will be seen below, in the two texts under discussion.

3. The Last Words of the Buddha in Pali and English Translation: A Structural Comparison.

The Last Words of the Buddha are found in the Mahaparinabbana Sutta of the Majjhimanikaya in the Tipitaka.

Vayadhammā sankhārā, appamādena sampādethā'ti (Murti, 1960, p. 18).

"Composite phenomena are subject to decay, with heedfulness strive on."

The Pali contains four words while the English translation, by the present writer, contains ten. This already presents a problem in translation as will be discussed further.

An interlinear grammatical glossing of the text follows below. The explanation of the grammatical abbreviations, based on the "Leipzig Glossing Rules," are given in the appendix.

| | |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Vayadhammā sankhārā, | appamādena sampāde-thā'ti |
| Vaya -dhamm-ā | san-khār-ā |
| Decay-phenomena-NOM. PL. | together-making-s-NOM.PL |
| “formations decay by nature.” | |
| appamād-ena | sampāde-thā=ti |
| heedfulness-with INS.SG | strive.on-IMPR.2PL-QUOT |
| “strive on with heedfulness, he said.” | |

3.1 Selected English Translations of the Last Words of the Buddha

The following are a sample of the translations of the last words of the Buddha, listed in chronological order, with the earliest by Rhys Davids from 1881, to the most recent one known to the present writer by Roebuck from 2010.

1. “Decay is inherent in all component things! Work out your salvation with diligence!” (Rhys Davids, 1881, p. 114)
2. “... all the constituents of being are transitory; work out your salvation with diligence.” (Warren, 1896, p. 109)
3. “All conditioned things are impermanent. Work out your salvation with diligence.” (Conze, 1951, p. 16)
4. “All component things must grow old. Work out your own salvation with diligence!” (Humphreys, 1951, p. 40)
5. “Decay is inherent in all component things; Work out your salvation with diligence.” (Murti, 1960, p. 18)
6. “Transient are conditioned things. Try to accomplish your aim with diligence.” (Rahula, 1967, p. 138)
7. “The forces have the nature of cessation. (You should succeed through care.) (Warder, 1980, p. 80)

8. “Conditioned things are perishable by nature. Diligently seek realization.” (Robinson & Johnson, 1982, p. 34)

9. “It is the nature of conditioned things to decay, but if you are attentive, you will succeed.” (Harvey, 2013, p.27)

10. “Conditioned things are by nature perishable. Attain your goal through awareness.” (Roebuck, 2010, p. xix)

4. Discussion of the Differences between the Pali Original and the English Translations

One can easily notice the large difference in the number of words in the English translations compared to the four words in the Pali original. The average number of words in the ten selected English translations above is 12.3. There are two main reasons for this difference. First, there is the differing structure of the two languages. English relies heavily on prepositions, conjunctions, articles, etc, to make explicit the grammatical and conceptual relationships between words, while Pali relies much more on nominal case endings, compound formations, and participles along with sentence particles. Second, there is the major difficulty in transferring, or translating, the concepts expressed in the Pali into a modern Western European language, such as English, which has evolved in a very different historical and cultural setting.

The first line of the Pali, *vayadhammā sankhārā*, consists of two compound nominal formations, which agree in number. They are juxtaposed next to each other without any connector, something which is relatively rare in English. The translation above is required to use a verbal form to convey the relationship between the two elements: “formations decay by nature.” The

major conceptual problem here in translating into English is the word *dharmā*. The Pali word *dharmā* (Sanskrit *dharma*) is notoriously difficult to translate into English. The Pali *sankhārā* also presents difficulties too in translating the Pali word into English and is very difficult to render in English (Bhikkhu Bodhi 2005). See Bhikkhu Bodhi 2005 for a discussion of the meaning and English translation of *sankhārā*.

One can notice especially the difference in the translations of the last two words in the Pali, especially the last word of the phrase. The earlier translations of *appamādena sampādehā ti* use some version of “work out your salvation with diligence.” This particular emphasis on “salvation,” a quintessential Christian concept, is striking. The early translators seem to have used what they saw as the nearest Christian equivalent concept to the Pali verb form *sampādehā ti*. The later translators, beginning with Rahula (1967), a Sri Lankan monk and scholar of Buddhism, reflected in their translations an awareness that this is not an accurate translation. From a grammatical perspective, *sampādehā ti* is a verb form without a patient (direct object) while the earlier translations transform the verb form into a verb phrase with an object as complement. The more recent translations, then, reflect the awareness that “salvation” is primarily a Christian concept and that it is not an adequate translation of the bare verb form of the Pali text.

K. R. Norman has discussed in some detail the problem of interference of Christian concepts in translating from Pali into English in an article on translating Pali into English. This problem of Christian interference occurs by using a seemingly conceptually similar word or phrase in the English translation, but the English word or phrase is actually loaded with Christian meaning and connotations.

If a decision is made to provide an English equivalent for every Pāli word, then problems arise from the fact that any English words which he uses [i.e. the translator] are considered by the reader in the light of his own cultural background. For most English reader this means a Christian background, whether they are Christians themselves or not. The most convenient English equivalents may well be misleading because they have a Christian connotation, e.g. “monk”, “nun”, “monastery”, or “Lent” (which is used by some translators as a translation for *vassa-vāsa* “rainy period residence”). Even when a word is not specifically Christian, nevertheless it often has Christian undertones, which a reader may find hard to discard, e.g. “sin”, “faith”, etc., since despite themselves Christian readers tend to give Christian values to such words. (Norman, 2017, p. 7)

5. Three Verses from the Dhammapada

The Dhammapada, from the Khudanikāya in the Tipitaka, is probably the most frequently translated whole text in English. The Dhammapada is a collection of the Buddha’s sayings totaling 423 verses grouped by topic into 26 chapters. One of these chapters is the eleventh chapter, *Jarāvaggo* “Old Age.” As the title of this chapter indicates, the Buddha discussed growing old and the approach of death in the context of his wider teachings on impermanence and suffering (*dukkha*) and the way to overcome attachment to what is impermanent by nature and the way to overcome suffering. In this section, the first three verses of the chapter on Old Age will be analyzed grammatically followed by a discussion of the differences between the Pali original and a selection of older and more recent translations into English.

The first and best known of the early translations was done by the German-British scholar of ancient Indian texts, Max Mueller, whose translation of the Dhammapada into English first appeared in 1881 and has been reprinted a number of times into the 20th century.

5.1 Three Verses from the Dhammapada: Grammatical Analysis and English Translations

The three verses from the Dhammapada, the first three verses of Chapter 11 (Jarāvaggo-On Old Age) selected for grammatical analysis are the following with an English translation.

11. Jarāvaggo Verses 146, 147, 148

146. ko nu hāso kim ānando niccaṃ pajjalite sati
andhakārena anaddhā padīpaṃ na gavessatha
147. passa cittakatam bimbaṃ arukāyaṃ samussitam
āturaṃ bahusamkappaṃ yassa n'atthi dhuvam ṭhiti
148. parijijñāma idaṃ rūpaṃ rogaṇiḍḍhaṃ pabhaṅguraṃ
bhijjati pūṭisamdeho maraṇantaṃ hi jīvitam

5.2 English translation:

146. What is this laughter, what is this delight, forever burning (with desires) as you are? Enveloped in darkness as you are, will you not look for a lamp?
147. Look at the decorated puppet, a mass of wounds and of composite parts, full of disease and always in need of attention. It has no enduring stability.

148. This body is worn out with age, a nest of diseases and falling apart. The mass of corruption disintegrates, and death is the end of life. (Richards, 2016)

5.3 Grammatical Analysis

146. ko nu hās-o kim ānand-o
 what then laughter-NOM.SG. why joy-NOM.SG
 nicca-ṃ pajjalit-e sat-i
 constant-ACC.SG. burning-LOC.SG. being-LOC.SG.
 andhakār-ena anaddh-ā
 by.darkness-INST.SG. wrappd-NOM.PL.
 padīpa-ṃ na gavessa-tha
 lamp-ACC.SG. not seek-PRS.2.PL.
147. pass-a citta-kata-m bimba-ṃ
 see-IMPR.2SG mind-made.ACC.SG. puppet-ACC.SG
 aru-kāya-ṃ samussita-m
 sore-heap-ACC.SG. raised-ACC.SG.
 ātura-ṃ bahu-samkappa-ṃ
 sick-ACC.SG. much-thought-ACC.SG.
 yassa n'-atthi dhuva-ṃ ṭhiti
 which-DAT.SG. not-is permanent-ACC.SG. stability.NOM.SG.
148. parijjñā-m idaṃ rūpam
 worn.out-NOM.SG. this-NOM.SG. form-NOM.SG
 roga-niḍḍha-ṃ pabhaṅgura-m
 disease-nest-NOM.SG frail-NOM.SG.
 bhijja-ti pūti-sam-deho
 is.broken-PRS.3SG. rotten-together-body-NOM.SG.

marañ-anta-m hi jīvita-m

death-end-NOM.SG. indeed life-NOM.SG.

5.4 Selected Translations into English.

Given below is a selection of English translations of the three verses of the Dhammapada from Chapter 11 (On Old Age), verses 146, 147, 148. They are given here in chronological order of first appearance. Max Mueller's translation and edition of 1881 is the oldest and the most recent is Anandajoti Bhikkhu's translation and edition of 2016. This selection of translations is followed by a discussion of some of the differences with some mention of the structural differences between the Pali originals and the English translations.

146. How is there laughter, how is there joy, as this world is always burning?

Why do you not seek a light, ye who are surrounded by darkness?

147. Look at this dressed-up lump, covered with wounds, joined together, sickly, full of many thoughts, which has no strength, no hold!

148. This body is wasted, full of sickness, and frail; this heap of corruption breaks to pieces, life indeed ends in death. (Mueller, 1881)

146. Why is there laughter, why is there joy, while this world is always burning?

Why do you not seek a light, you who are shrouded in darkness (ignorance)?

147. Behold this painted image, a body full of wounds, put together, diseased, and full of many thoughts in which there is neither permanence nor stability.

148. This body is worn out, a nest of diseases and very frail. This heap of corruption breaks to pieces, life indeed ends in death. (Radhakrishnan, 1950, p. 108)

1. (146) What laughter can there be, what joy can there be when everything is always ablaze? Being enwrapped in darkness, you are not seeking a lamp!
 2. (147) Behold this decorated idol, with its body full of wounds, held up together, diseased, full of many thoughts, which has no steady position.
 3. (148) This form utterly decayed, a nest in which diseases are caught, easily liable to break off, a heap of petrified things, this breaks off. Indeed, life is only what has death as its terminus. (Raja, 1956, p. 43, 45)
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[11. Beyond Life]

146. How can there be laughter, how Can there be pleasure, when the whole world is burning? When you are in deep darkness, will you not ask for a lamp?
 147. Consider this body! A painted puppet with jointed limbs, sometimes suffering and covered with ulcers, full of imaginings, never permanent, for ever changing,
 148. This body is decaying! A nest of diseases, a heap of corruption, bound to destruction, to dissolution. All life ends in death. (Mascaro, 1973, p. 56)
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146. What is this laughter, what is this delight, forever burning (with desires) as you are? Enveloped in darkness as you are, will you not look for a lamp?
 147. Look at the decorated puppet, a mass of wounds and of composite parts, full of disease and always in need of attention. It has no enduring stability.
 148. This body is worn out with age, a nest of diseases and falling apart. The mass of corruption disintegrates, and death is the end of life. (Richards, 2016)
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1. (146) What mirth is there, what joy, while constantly burning? Shrouded in darkness, why not seek a light?

2. (147) See this image, created by mind, a mass of wounds, diseased, pensive, impermanent and unstable.
3. (148) This material form is decayed, a nest of disease, frail. This putrid body is destroyed, for life ends in death. (Cleary, 1995, pp. 50-51)
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146. What laughter, why joy, when constantly aflame? Enveloped in darkness, don't you look for a lamp?
147. Look at the beautified image, a heap of festering wounds, shored up: ill, but the object of many resolves, where there is nothing lasting or sure.
148. Worn out is this body, a nest of diseases, dissolving. This putrid conglomeration is bound to break up, for life is hemmed in with death. (Thanissaro, 2011)
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[X1. Decay]

146. What mirth can there be, what pleasure, when all the time (everything) is blazing (with the threefold fire of suffering, impermanence, and insubstantiality)? Covered (though you are) in blind darkness, you do not seek a light!
147. Look at this painted doll (i.e., the body), this pretentious mass of sores, wretched and full of cravings (or: much hankered after), nothing of which is stable or lasting!
148. Wasted away is this body, a nest of disease, and perishable. The putrid mass breaks up: death is the end of life. (Sangharakshita, 2000)
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146. What laughter is there, what joy when all is perpetually ablaze? enfolded in darkness, do you not seek a lamp?
147. Look at this beautiful image composed of wounds amassed. Full of sickness, yet desired by many, it has neither permanence nor constancy.
148. Worn out is this body, a frail nest of disease. This festering mass breaks apart, for life has death as its end. (Wallis, 2004, p. 32)
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146. Why the laughter, why the joy, When flames are ever burning?
Surrounded by darkness, Shouldn't you search for light?

147. Look at this beautiful body: A mass of sores propped up, Full of illness,
[the object] of many plans, With nothing stable or lasting.

148. This body is worn out --- So fragile, a nesting ground for disease. When
life end in death, This putrid body dissolves. (Fronsdal, 2005, p. 39)

146. What's the laughter, why the joy? When the world is ever burning?
Plunged into darkness, Won't you look for a lamp?

147. See this painted shape --- A compressed mass of sores, Diseased, with
many imaginings --- In which there's no permanent abiding.

148. This form is worn out, A nest of diseases, very frail, This mass of decay
will break down, For life ends in death. (Roebuck, 2010, p. 31)

146. Why this laughter, why this joy, when the world is constantly burning,
why, when enveloped by darkness, you still do not seek for a light?

147. See this beautiful manikin, a heap of sores that is raised up, sick,
imagined in many ways, which has nothing stable or firm

148. This body is worn out, a nest of disease, perishing, putrid, the body comes
to destruction, for the end of life is in death. (Anandajoti Bhikkhu, 2016,
pp. 143-145)

6. A Brief Discussion of the Differences between the Pali Original and the English Translations and How to Understand the Dhammapada Verses

The Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā (Roebuck, 2010, p. xi-xii), a commentary on the Dhammapada in Pali, attributed to the greatest commentator of the Pali canon, the Sri Lankan monk and scholar Buddhaghosa of the 4th or 5th century CE provides an extensive collection of stories and commentaries to the verses of the Dhammapada. Some of the more recent translations draw from the Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā and give brief summaries of the commentarial stories which explain the context and the intended audience of the individual verses, for example Roebuck (pp. 113-225). The translation by Anandajoti Bhikkhu of 2016 gives a brief summary of the story for each verse along with the Pali original followed by the English translation. This arrangement of commentarial material, but in a more extensive form, is also given by Weragoda Sarada Mahathera in his translation, along with the Pali original.

Without the aid of some kind of commentary for each verse it is difficult to understand the intended meaning and the context of the verse. Without the commentaries or stories behind the individual verses, the verses seem gathered together loosely on the basis of being more or less on the same topic as given in the name of the chapter. These explanations in the form of short narratives are indispensable for English-speaking readers from non-Buddhist societies who have no familiarity with the traditional stories as collected in Buddhaghosa's magisterial commentary. They add depth to the understanding of the verses and explain the frequent apparent disconnection between the verses. The Dhammapada is an anthology of the Buddha's saying and can be fully understood by knowing the story that underlies them.

For example, the verse 147 of Chapter 11 (On Old Age) seems to entreat the listener or reader to consider his own body subject to eventual decay and death. The commentary on this verse, however, presents a different intended recipient of the teaching. This isn't to deny the wider application of the lesson in the verse. In the story behind the verse gives the context. A monk has fallen in love with a beautiful courtesan who has become a follower of the Buddha. She becomes sick and dies. The Buddha requests that the dead body of the courtesan be left uncremated for a few days. The Buddha then gathers together a number of people including the monk who has fallen in love with the courtesan to view the decaying corpse. Then he speaks the words of the verse on the transience of the body. Viewing the corpse of his object of infatuation and hearing the words of the Buddha cure the monk of his infatuation and gives him great insight into reality. (Roebuck, 2010, p. 163; Anandajoti Bhikkhu, 2016, p. 144)

The verse begins with the word *passa* 'see, look at,' a second person singular imperative verb form, and is addressed specifically to the monk. In the previous verse (146), however, the only finite verb form in the verse, the final word of the verse in the Pali *gavessatha* 'seek, look for,' is a second person plural form. This grammatical difference is not apparent in the English translations since standard English makes no distinction between singular and plural for second person pronouns or verb forms. The distinction between singular and plural is clear in the Pali original. The story behind this verse is about a group of women who went drunk to hear the Buddha and acted accordingly until they heard the words of this verse. (Roebuck, 2010, p. 162; Anandajoti Bhikkhu, 2016, p. 143)

In the last verse of the selection, verse 148, there is again only one finite verb form, a third person present tense form *bhijjati* 'is broken' In Pali it

is an active form, not a passive form. Buddhadata's dictionary gives two English equivalents: 'to be broken or destroyed'. (Buddhadatta Mahathera, 1957, p. 199) The translations above of this verb form are varied, ranging from 'breaks to pieces, breaks off, bound to destruction, disintegrates, is bound to break up, breaks apart, dissolves, will break down,' to 'comes to destruction.' This variation in the translation of this one single verb form reflects the difficulty of translating from Pali to English and perhaps reflects on the part of every translator a certain dissatisfaction with previous translations. The explanation for this verse is the Buddha's reminding a 120-year old nun who stumbles and falls down before him of the inescapable death that awaits everyone. (Roebuck, 2010, p. 163; Anandajoti Bhikkh, 2016, p. 145)

One difficulty in particular in translating these verses is how to convey the nuances in the Pali original into English. This is basically impossible to do without a glossing and reference to the Pali original which most translations don't do. Two examples of this are found in verse 147. The second word of the verse *cittakatam* is a compound form, composed of *citta* usually translated into English as 'mind' and *katam*, a participle form of the verb *kar-*, *karoti* 'to do, make.' The compound can be translated literally as 'made by the mind' but has been translated variously in all but one of the translations given above as 'adorned, dressed-up, beautiful, beautified, painted, decorated.' Only Cleary translates it according to a more literal reading as 'created by mind.' Buddhadata's dictionary gives two translations: 'adorned; made by the mind'. (Buddhadatta Mahathera, 1957, p. 103) The Pali Text Society (PTS) dictionary gives the English translation as 'adorned, dressed up'. (Rhys Davids & Stede, 1986, p. 266) This dictionary and Buddhadata's both give another possible English equivalent for *citta*: the PTS dictionary has 'variegated, manifold, beautiful; tasty, sweet, spiced...' (Rhys Davids & Stede, 1986, p. 265), that is, an adjective form, and Buddhadata's dictionary has also 'variegated; manifold; beautiful' and as a

noun 'a painting; picture'. (Buddhadatta Mahathera, 1957, p. 103) Any English translation cannot help but obliterate these possible nuances of the Pali.

Another example of possible nuanced meanings in the original Pali in verse 147 is the fourth word of the verse *arukāyaṃ*, which is a compound noun: *aru* 'sore(s)' and *kāyaṃ* 'heap.' Another meaning of *kāya* is 'body.' Buddhadatta's dictionary gives three English equivalents: 'a heap; a collection; the body'. (Buddhadatta Mahathera, 1957, p. 82) This interplay between 'heap' and 'body' as possible referents in the Pali *kāya* is lost in the English translations above in which the translations give mainly 'mass' or a circumlocution. Only Raja has 'body' ('...body full of wounds'). Since the verse is focused on the impermanence of the body, the differing possible meanings of *kāya* in Pali is unfortunately not possible in the English translations.

7. Conclusion

With the loosening of the bonds of Christianity, beginning in the 18th century CE, over the hearts and minds of and ways of thinking of increasing numbers in the West of educated people and intellectuals, there has arisen since the 19th century an increasing interest in Eastern philosophies and religions, not least in Buddhism. However, the Christian background remains strong in Western languages, including English.

Along with the weakening hold of Christianity, there is a new attraction which has gained strength in the 20th century and into now the 21st century: an individualistic consumer ethos, which has through advertising conveyed over all the public media available gained enormous power over the consciousness and outlook of Westerners, and increasingly others. This began in the United

States and became increasingly dominant there in the second half of the 20th century with the introduction and spread of television as the newest most powerful media

The 20th century has been labeled the century of the self, of the consuming self. This self is seen as autonomous and sovereign, imbued with free will and choice. This immediate gratification of the self, in the here and now, has come to dominate and even replace other social relationships.

The Western self is a continuation of the Christian, especially Protestant, view of the soul, an eternal entity, created by God, and destined for either heaven or hell into eternity. The conceptual reference of the contemporary consumer self is a continuation of the earlier conception of the soul, but now it is seen as increasingly independent of all traditional Western religion (i.e. Christianity in its various forms) and now appears in a new guise, a secular, non-religious one, dominated by commercial consumerist culture.

Both of these Western conceptions of the sovereign self or soul, that of Christianity and that of consumerist individualism, have been the backdrop of the reception and the interpretation of the Buddhist tradition and the Buddhist textual traditions in the West. The British monk Ven. Sangharakshita in the introduction to his translation of Dhammapada sees in the Buddhist tradition an alternative to this ensnarement in the isolated self.

He writes:

This latest translation of the Dhammapada goes forth from the secluded, peaceful valley where most of the work on it has been done into a world which is far from peaceful. It goes forth, in particular, into a Western world increasingly dominated by the forces of greed, as represented by consumerism, hatred, as represented by ruthless economic

competition, and delusion, as represented by a variety of ideologies from scientism to religious fundamentalism. Thus it goes forth into a world greatly in need of the qualities of simplicity, contentment, kindness, gentleness, serenity, and self-control inculcated by the Buddha in the Dhammapada ... (6).

Appendix: List of Standard Abbreviations

1 first person 2 second person 3 third person

A agent-like argument of canonical transitive verb ABL ablative

ABS absolutive ACC accusative ADJ adjective ADV adverb(ial)

AGR agreement ALL allative ANTIP antipassive APPL applicative

ART article AUX auxiliary BEN benefactive CAUS causative CLF classifier

COM comitative COMP complementizer COMPL complete

COND conditional COP copula CVB converb DAT dative DECL declarative

DEF definite DEM demonstrative DET determiner DIST distal

DISTR distributive DU dual DUR durative ERG ergative EXCL exclusive

F feminine FOC focus FUT future GEN genitive IMP imperative

INCL inclusive IND indicative INDF indefinite INF infinitive INS instrumental

INTR intransitive IPFV imperfective IRR irrealis LOC locative M masculine

N neuter N- non- (e.g. NSG nonsingular, NPST nonpast)

NEG negation, negative NMLZ nominalizer/nominalization NOM nominative

OBJ object OBL oblique P patient-like argument of canonical transitive verb

PASS passive PFV perfective PL plural POSS possessive PRED predicative

PRF perfect PRS present PROG progressive PROH prohibitive

PROX proximal/proximate PST past PTCP participle PURP purposive

Q question particle/marker QUOT quotative RECP reciprocal REFL reflexive
 REL relative RES resultative S single argument of canonical intransitive verb
 SBJ subject SBJV subjunctive SG singular TOP topic TR transitive
 VOC vocative
 (The Leipzig Glossing Rules 8-10)

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