

PREFACE

After the lapse of several centuries, Tibetan lo-tsa-bas /translators/ are again active in the Sacred Land of Buddhism.

Tibetan readers throughout Inner Asia and all those interested in Tibetan Literature will be grateful to the Rev. dGe-hdun Ches-hphel for having given them an excellent Tibetan translation of the one of the Buddhist classics - the Dharmapada.

The translator is not only a Tibetan scholar of eminence, but a distinguished poet as well, and his translation combines scholarly exactitude with a high ^{literary} artistic value.

The translation of the Dharmapada is not included in the Tibetan bKah-hgyur, but a number of verses in a slightly different wording are found in the Udāna-varga and other texts, as for instance in the Vinaya. In the gLeñ-Mbum of dGe-hdun-grub, the first Dalai bLa-ma of Tibet, one finds on p.425 a translation of verses 1 and 2 of the Dharmapada / a slightly different translation of the first two pādas of verse 1 is found on p.383b/. Verse 173 of the Dharmapada is found in a slightly different wording on p.46b of the same work, and verse 176 on p.142b. The differences in the wording may be due to ~~the existence of~~ different recensions of the Dharmapada current in Northern India and Nepal.

The translator had to follow, of course, the rules laid down by the ancient Tibetan translators and embodied in the Sanskrit-Tibetan dictionaries / the Mahavyutpatti or Bye-brag-tu rtogs-par byed-pa, Tg.sNa-tshogs, No.4346, and the sGra-sbyor bam-po gnis-pa, Tg.sNa-tshogs, No.4347/, which enjoined translators not to change the order of words in verses, unless it was absolutely necessary

When translating Sanskrit prose into Tibetan, the translators were permitted to give a free translation of the Sanskrit original. Honorific expressions were to be used in all passages referring to the Buddha, the Bodhisattvas and Śravakas. The translators were explicitly forbidden to coin new terms. When this was unavoidable, they were directed to report the matter to a special Tribunal called bCom-ldan-hdas-kyi rin-lugs-kyi hdun-sa / The Tribunal of the Doctrine of the Blessed One / attached to the Royal Palace / See Padma dkar-pohi Chos-hbyuñ, p.102b and 103b/. The translators were further advised to follow the Tibetan translations of the Ratnamegha-sūtra / dKon-mchog-sprin, Kg.mDo-sde, No.231, translated by Ratnaraksita / Rin-chen-htshe/ and Chos-nid tshul-khrims / and the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra / Laṅkar-gsëgs-pa, Kg.mDo-sde, No.107, translated by Ngos Chos-grub/. The translation of Tantric texts could be undertaken with the king's permission only. These rules were promulgated by king Khri-ldesron-btsan / Rai-pa-can, 817-836 A.D./ in the Palace of Hon-ljan-do / situated south of Lha-sa / in the year of the Horse / rta-le, 826 A.D./ ^{even since} and have been followed by all Tibetan translators. / See Padma dkar-pohi Chos-hbyuñ, p.103a; Bu-ston Chos-hbyuñ, trans. by E.Obermiller, II, p. 196/.

May this volume be followed by a series of similar volumes which will help to bring about a revival of the ancient cultural bounds between Bhārata and the Land of Snows.

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