Wisdom Masterclass

The Art of Translating Tibetan
Thupten Jinpa on The Art of Translating Tibetan

COURSE PACKET

Produced in partnership with Tsadra Foundation
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1. Introduction to Translation, Part 1

Welcome to your Masterclass with Thupten Jinpa! In this first lesson, you’ll hear Jinpa’s thoughts on the following points: (1) the importance of translation in general and, more specifically, how for Tibetan Buddhism in fact translation has been the very basis of its emergence; (2) what exactly a translator does, or to put it another way, what we mean by the word translation; and (3) the translator’s twin obligation of fidelity to the original and the need to make that work accessible in the target language. He concludes with some general observations on the specific challenges of translating from Tibetan into English.

As far as why translation is important, Jinpa gives some thought-provoking key reasons such as:

1. Translation enables communication across language and cultural boundaries.

2. It enables members of one language community to learn, experience, enjoy, and be impacted by the work of someone outside their own familiar linguistic and cultural world.

3. Perhaps most important, it allows a deep cultural encounter between civilizations represented by the different languages, thus shaping each other (e.g., translation of Greek classics into European languages, translation of the Bible, and modern translations of European literature).

4. In fact, Jinpa says he would argue that, for some of the world’s great civilizations, translation has been a key basis for their formation itself. Two examples are Western Christianity and Tibetan Buddhism.
“The job of a translator is, as far as possible, to be the ideal medium for whatever you are bringing from the source language for the audience into the target language.” — Thupten Jinpa

_Suggested Reading_

**Read Now:**

- [Ralph Waldo Emerson on books](#)
- [John Dryden on translation](#)

**Recommended Books:**

- _Of Dramatic Poesy and Other Critical Essays by John Dryden_

**Recommended Videos and Presentations:**

- [Watch Thupten Jinpa discuss his life work and recent publications with professor Donald Lopez, Jr.](#)
- [Working with the Medium of the English Language with Thupten Jinpa and Wulstan Fletcher](#)
2. Introduction to Translation, Part 2

In this lesson you’ll learn:

- how Tibetan translators navigated the twin obligations;
- how the remarkable ninth-century lexicon སྒྲ་སྦྱོར་བམ་པོ་གཉིས་པ་ (sGra-sbyor bam-po gnyis-pa) laid out eight specific recommendations for translation;
- Sakyapandita’s nine points on translation in his Gateway for Becoming a Learned;
- the importance of thinking of translation at the level of sentences, not words;
- about Goethe’s three epochs of translation;
- some key lessons from Jinpa for translators;
- and much more.

The Twin Obligations

There is a general consensus among those who have thought seriously about the art and craft of translation that there are two fundamental obligations of a translator: fidelity to the original and the need to make the work accessible in the target language. Put another way, there is the obligation to the author to be true to their intent and work, and the obligation to the reader to make what you produce accessible. There is a fundamental tension between these two inviolable obligations, and the force each exerts pulls the translator in opposite directions.

Eight Specific Recommendations for Translation

The remarkable ninth-century lexicon སྒྲ་སྦྱོར་བམ་པོ་གཉིས་པ་ (sGra-sbyor bam-po gnyis-pa) laid out eight specific recommendations that will help a
translator satisfy the twin obligations:

1. The question of word order and syntax (including in verse)
2. Terms with multiple meanings, e.g., Dharma, Gautama
3. Names of places, flora, and fauna
4. Writing complex numbers in letters, e.g., three and a half, two-fifths; and the French soixante-dix, quatre-vingt
5. Grammatical particles
6. Synonyms
7. Use of honorifics in Tibetan translation
8. Creation of new terms

Sakyapandita’s Nine Points on Translation in his Gateway for Becoming a Learned

1. Some translators use archaic Tibetan while others use contemporary terms, leading to confusion on the part of the reader.
2. Some translators leave the original Sanskrit word untranslated, while others render it into Tibetan, thus causing confusion.
3. Some confuse literal translation for a translation of the meaning.
4. Some translate terms into the vernacular of their own birthplace, making it difficult for others to understand.
5. Some mistranslate Sanskrit synonyms.
6. Some make errors in parsing the different components of Sanskrit sentences.
7. Some translate by simply “shooting in the dark.”
8. Some translate with ignorance of larger cultural meaning, such as myths associated with certain names.
9. Some fail to recognize specific additions not present in the original Sanskrit but introduced by the Tibetan translators (བཅོམ་ལྡན་འདས། ཡེ་ཤེས། ཕྱག་རྒྱ། འི་ིེས་ཤེས་སུ་).  

Suggested Reading:

Read Now:

• Sakyapandita’s biography on the Treasury of Lives
- Sakyapandita’s *A Jewel Treasury of Wise Sayings (The Tibetan Book of Everyday Wisdom*, page 33) in the Wisdom Experience

- St. Jerome: The Bible Translator

- *Is That a Fish in Your Ear? Translation and the Meaning of Everything* by David Bellos

**Recommended Books:**

*Ordinary Wisdom: Sakya Pandita’s Treasury of Good Advice*, translated by John T. Davenport—a popular guide to the art of living

*The Dharma’s Gatekeepers* by Jonathan Gold—learn more about *Gateway for Becoming a Learned*

For those of you interested in learning more about the ongoing discussion of translation theory and practice, here is a suggested reading list:

**Buddhist Studies and Translation:**


3. Translating Concepts and Terms: Reality, Part 1

In this lesson, Jinpa delves into key terms used in the Buddhist sources for describing the nature of reality. He examines how different translations of these key words bring significantly different connotations to those words. He delves into terms like *existence*, *conditioned* and *unconditioned*, *unique attributes*, and *generic attributes*.

**Terms on Reality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ཆོས།</td>
<td>dharma</td>
<td>reality, phenomena, teaching, law, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ཆོས་དང་ཆོས་ཅན།</td>
<td>dharma, dharmin</td>
<td>attributes and attribute-bearer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ཆོས་དང་ཆོས་ཉིད།</td>
<td>dharma, dharmatā</td>
<td>phenomena and their nature (reality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>འོད་པ།</td>
<td>asti</td>
<td>existence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དངོས་པོ། དངོས་མེད།</td>
<td>bhāva, abbāva</td>
<td>things, nonthings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>རང་མཚན། སྤྱི་མཚན།</td>
<td>svalakṣaṇa</td>
<td>unique particulars, general characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤྱི། བྱེ་བྲག</td>
<td>sāmānya, višeṣa</td>
<td>universal and particulars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan</td>
<td>Sanskrit</td>
<td>English</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>རིགས།</td>
<td>jāti</td>
<td>type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>གསལ་བ།</td>
<td>vyakti</td>
<td>individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>མཚན་ཉིད། མཚན་གཞི།</td>
<td>laksana, laksya</td>
<td>defining characteristic and its bearer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བཅིག ཐ་དད།</td>
<td>eka, nānā/bhinna</td>
<td>one and many/identical and distinct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དེ་ཁོ་ན་ཉིད། དེ་བཞིན་</td>
<td>tattva, tathatā</td>
<td>suchness, reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>འསོག་ཐོགས་པས་ དོན་དམ་</td>
<td>sthiti</td>
<td>mode of existence, mode of being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དོན་དམ་བདེན་པ།</td>
<td>dharmatā</td>
<td>reality, real condition of existence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ཀུན་རྫོབ་བདེན་པ།</td>
<td>paramārthasatya</td>
<td>ultimate truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སུམ་བཤད་པ་</td>
<td>samvṛttisatya</td>
<td>conventional truth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Translating Concepts and Terms: Reality, Part 2

How do the words we use—and the way we translate them—affect our understanding of reality? In this lesson, Jinpa investigates the translation of the terms affirmation and negation, including how phenomena can be both positively and negatively identified; and also the terms conditioned and unconditioned. He explains to us the three categories of phenomena that make up conditioned reality: the material world; subjective emotions and thoughts, or consciousness; and abstract ideas. He also discusses:

- The nature of Buddhism’s interest in understanding reality
- The important role of understanding dependent origination
- The concepts of suchness or thusness (tattva in Sanskrit, བསྟན་འཛིན་ེ་ in Tibetan) and thatness (tathātā in Sanskrit, བསྟན་འཛིན་པ་ in Tibetan)
- The use and translation of the terms ultimate truth (paramārthasatya, ཆུ་མེད་བདེན་པ།) and conventional truth (saṃvṛttisatya, འབྲས་ནི་བདེན་པ་)
5. Getting Behind the Words with Gavin Kilty

In this lesson, meet Gavin Kilty: a renowned translator with a fascinating and unique philosophy of translation. In this first conversation with Gavin, he introduces us to this philosophy with his concept of “getting behind the words”—a profoundly deep practice for translation that goes beyond, as he says, just “taking the words from one language-shelf and moving them to another language-shelf.”

Gavin Kilty has been a full-time translator for the Institute of Tibetan Classics since 2001. Before that he lived in Dharamsala, India, for fourteen years, where he spent eight years training in the traditional Geluk monastic curriculum through the medium of class and debate at the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics. He also teaches Tibetan language courses in India, Nepal, and elsewhere. In 2017 he won Tsadra Foundation’s Shantarakshita Award for his translation of A Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages (Library of Tibetan Classics, Wisdom Publications, 2013).

Suggested Reading

Read Now:

A Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages, by Tsongkhapa, translated by Gavin Kilty, in the Wisdom Experience
Recommended Book:

*The Splendor of an Autumn Moon: The Devotional Verse of Tsongkhapa*, translated by Gavin Kilty

Suggested Videos:

- [Special Address by Gavin Kilty](https://example.com), Winner of the 2017 Shantarakshita Award for Excellence in Translation

Make a gift to the Library of Tibetan Classics and support the translation and preservation of the treasures of Tibetan literature. Learn more here.
6. Going Beyond Language and Translation as the Rebirth of the Text with Gavin Kilty

In this lesson, our conversation with Gavin Kilty will go deeper into his remarkable philosophy of translation. Gavin explains the intermediate stage of translation, where the translator really comes into their own, and also the process by which a translator can identify equivalent meaning in the target language. He also discusses:

- how to balance the source text and the current culture when determining how to translate a word;
- the challenge of placing punctuation and breaking text into paragraphs when translating from Tibetan; and
- how to recognize what may be present, but not explicit, in the source text (e.g., paragraph breaks; the implicit “I”).
7. Literalism and Translating Terms with Gavin Kilty

In this lesson, Jinpa and Gavin explore the following questions:

- Does a translator need to have meditative practice experience that’s relevant to the text they’re translating?
- How should we approach taking passages literally, or not, when translating?
- Which genres does Gavin find the most difficult or enjoyable to work with?
- How can we find the tone and nuance of a text when we are not a native speaker?
- When Gavin is translating, does the genre of the text affect how to approach the translation process (e.g., when a text is intentionally oblique)?
- When a certain translation of a term has been assimilated, but a more accurate translation is then presented, what should we do?
8. The Responsibility of the Translator with Gavin Kilty

What is the responsibility of a translator? In this session, Jinpa and Gavin explore this question in depth, discussing the following:

- How much agency can a translator take?
- How can one stay attentive to the original intentions of the author?
- How do we balance loyalty to the author and loyalty to the target language?
- And finally, Gavin’s advice for beginning translators.
In the first part of this lesson, Jinpa guides us through essential terms used in Buddhist philosophy and psychology having to do with the territory of mind, consciousness, and the mental faculty. We learn about how certain terms are used interchangeably, yet can also carry different meanings and senses with respect to usage and philosophical orientation.

In the second part of this lesson, Jinpa guides us through essential terms found in Abhidharma literature, which represents some of the earliest systematic Buddhist thinking. We learn about how knowledge of Abhidharma taxonomy is essential for the translator, as all subsequent Buddhist thinking and literature develops from Abhidharma terminology and classifications.

On Mental Terms

General terms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>བོད།</td>
<td>buddhi</td>
<td>cognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>རིག་པ།</td>
<td>vidyā</td>
<td>awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>རིག་ལ།</td>
<td>jñāna</td>
<td>consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan</td>
<td>Sanskrit</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སེམས།</td>
<td>citta</td>
<td>mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དཀྲ་ཤེས།</td>
<td>manas</td>
<td>mental faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དྲུག་པ་སེམས།</td>
<td>vijñāna</td>
<td>consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སེམས་དང་སེམས་བྱུང་།</td>
<td>citta, caitasika</td>
<td>mind &amp; mental factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བྱུང་བསམ་པ་འཁོར་ སེམས་བྱུང་།</td>
<td>prabhānavijñāna, caitta</td>
<td>primary awareness vs. concomitant factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དབང་ཤེས་དྲུག་པ་སེམས།</td>
<td>indriyajñāna, manoijnāna</td>
<td>sensory vs. mental cognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བྱུང་བསམ་པ་འཁོར་ སེམས་བྱུང་།</td>
<td>vikalpa, avikalpa</td>
<td>conceptual vs. nonconceptual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>འཛིན་མོག་</td>
<td>abhimukhi</td>
<td>manifest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤྱི་དབང་</td>
<td>anusaya</td>
<td>latent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤྱི་དབང་</td>
<td>vāsanā</td>
<td>imprints</td>
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</table>
Abhidharma: Fifty-One Mental Factors (Forty-Eight in Abhidharmakosa)

5 Omnipresent factors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
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<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>རྡོ་རྗེ་བ།</td>
<td>vedana</td>
<td>Feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>འདུ་ཤེས།</td>
<td>saññā</td>
<td>Discernment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སེམས་པ།</td>
<td>cetanā</td>
<td>Intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>འགྲོ་ལ་བྱེད་པ།</td>
<td>manaskāra</td>
<td>Attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ཞེས་རབ།</td>
<td>sparṣa</td>
<td>Contact</td>
</tr>
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</table>

5 Determining factors:

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<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tr>
<td>འདུན་པ།</td>
<td>chanda</td>
<td>Aspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>མོས་པ།</td>
<td>adhimokṣa</td>
<td>Appreciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དྲན་པ།</td>
<td>smṛti</td>
<td>Mindfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བློ་གཉེན་པ།</td>
<td>samādhi</td>
<td>Concentration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>མི་དོན་བེན་པ།</td>
<td>prajñā</td>
<td>Intelligence (wisdom)</td>
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4 Variable factors:

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<th>English</th>
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<td>གཉིད།</td>
<td>middha</td>
<td>Sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>འགྱོད་པ།</td>
<td>kankṛtya</td>
<td>Regret</td>
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<tr>
<td>རྟོག་པ།</td>
<td>vitarka</td>
<td>Investigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དཔྱོད་པ།</td>
<td>vicara</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
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11 Virtuous factors:

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<th>English</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>བདད་པ།</td>
<td>śraddhā</td>
<td>Faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>གནས།</td>
<td>hrī</td>
<td>Self-regarding shame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བོད་པོ་དོན་།</td>
<td>apatvāpya</td>
<td>Other-regarding shame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ལོགས་ཆགས་མེད་པ།</td>
<td>alobha</td>
<td>Nonattachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བེས་མི་མེད་པ།</td>
<td>adveśa</td>
<td>Nonhatred (loving-kindness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བོད་པོ་དོན་།</td>
<td>amoha</td>
<td>Nonignorance (wisdom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>འབྲོ་བཞི་མེད་པ།</td>
<td>avibhimsa</td>
<td>Nonharmfulness (compassion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བོད་པོ་དོན་།</td>
<td>virya</td>
<td>Joyful effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བོད་པོ་དོན་།</td>
<td>praśrabdhi</td>
<td>Pliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བག་ཡོད།</td>
<td>apramāda</td>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 6 Root Afflictions:

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>བཏང་སོམས།</td>
<td>upekṣā</td>
<td>Equanimity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>འདོད་ཆགས།</td>
<td>rāga</td>
<td>Attachment</td>
</tr>
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<td>བཁྲོ།</td>
<td>pratigha</td>
<td>Anger</td>
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<td>ནང་རྒྱལ།</td>
<td>māna</td>
<td>Conceit</td>
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<tr>
<td>མ་རིག་པ།</td>
<td>avidyā</td>
<td>Ignorance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>འགྲོས་པ།</td>
<td>vicikitsā</td>
<td>Negative doubt</td>
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<tr>
<td>དྲེ་གྱི།</td>
<td>drṣṭi</td>
<td>Distorted view</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Secondary Afflictions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tr>
<td>བཏང་སོམ།</td>
<td>krodha</td>
<td>Belligerence</td>
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<tr>
<td>བཟོས་སྐྱིབས།</td>
<td>upanāha</td>
<td>Vengefulness</td>
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<td>mrakṣa</td>
<td>Concealment</td>
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<td>Spite</td>
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<td>Jealousy</td>
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<td>Avarice</td>
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<td>བཏང་སོམ།</td>
<td>māyā</td>
<td>Pretense</td>
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<td>English</td>
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<tr>
<td>རྒྱགས་པ།</td>
<td>mada</td>
<td>self-satisfaction</td>
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<td>རྣམ་པར་འཚེ་བ།</td>
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<td>cruelty</td>
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<td>distraction</td>
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<td>pramāda</td>
<td>lack of conscientiousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བརྗེད་ངེས་པ།</td>
<td>muṣitasmṛtitā</td>
<td>forgetfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>གཡོ།</td>
<td>śāṭhya</td>
<td>dissimulation</td>
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<td>anapatrāpya</td>
<td>other-regarding shamelessness</td>
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<tr>
<td>བྷིིན་བེ་བ།</td>
<td>anapatrāpya</td>
<td>other-regarding shamelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བྲླེ ཐྭ།</td>
<td>styaña</td>
<td>inconsideration, mental dullness</td>
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<tr>
<td>མྱི་མི་དོ།</td>
<td>auddhatya</td>
<td>excitement</td>
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<td>aśraddhya</td>
<td>lack of faith</td>
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<tr>
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<td>kauśīdya</td>
<td>laziness</td>
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<tr>
<td>བྲེིན་བེ་བ།</td>
<td>pramāda</td>
<td>lack of conscientiousness</td>
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<tr>
<td>བྲེིན་བེ་བ།</td>
<td>muṣitasmṛtitā</td>
<td>forgetfulness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Suggested Reading

Recommended Book:

*Ornament of Abhidharma: A Commentary on Vasubandhu’s Abhidharmakosa* — chapters 8 and 10
(Abhidharmakosa 2.23-33 and 2.67-73)

- FPMT Masters Program in Translation: A Necklace for Those of Clear Awareness by Yeshe Gyaltsen.
In this lesson, we experience Jinpa guiding a workshop of professional translators. As participants discuss their respective translations of a famous hymn to Maitreya written by Tsongkhapa, we learn about the nuance, technique, and approach to translating poetic literature.

Hymn to Maitreya, by Tsongkhapa

མཉེས་གཤིན་བྱམས་པས་རྟག་ཏུ་བརླན་ཡང་ནག་པོའི་རྩ་ལག་སྲེག།
ཤིན་ཏུ་བཅད་དཀའི་ཐོང་བ་བཅད་ཀྱང་སྙིང་རྗེས་དམ་དུ་བཅིངས།།
ཞི་བའི་བཏང་སྙོམས་རྒྱུན་དུ་ལྡན་ཡང་བདག་པས་གཞན་ལ་གཅེས།།
འཇམ་དབྱངས་ཞབས་ལ་གུས་པས་བཏུད་ནས་མི་ཕམ་མགོན་ལ་བསྟོད།།

THE ART OF TRANSLATING TIBETAN, WISDOM PUBLICATIONS, INC. © 2020
In this lesson, Jinpa shares with a workshop of professional translators his own translation of Tsongkhapa’s famous hymn to Maitreya. We learn about Jinpa’s technique and personal approach to translating poetic literature, and receive a unique window into Jinpa’s process as he responds to questions presented by workshop participants.
In these lessons, Jinpa instructs a workshop of professional translators as he shares his translation of a selection from Gyaltsap Je’s famous commentary on Dharmakirti’s *Pramāṇavārttika*. Through Jinpa’s instruction, along with the questions and insights of workshop participants, we learn about the technique and process of translating Tibetan prose.

**Prose Translation (Sample #2: Gyaltsap Jé, Illuminating the Path to Liberation)**

དེ་ལ་འདིར་བདག་ཅག་གི་སྟོན་པ་ཆོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་ལྐོག་ཏུ་མ་གྱུར་པའི་སྤྱན་མངའ་བ། བདག་རིག་པའི་བག་ཆགས་མ་ལུས་པ་དྲུང་ཕྱུང་བ། སེམས་ཅན་མ་རིག་པའི་རབ་རིབ་ཀྱིས་མིག་ཉམས་པར་གྱུར་པས་ཐོག་མ་མེད་པ་ནས་ཕྱིན་ཅི་ལོག་ཏུ་ལྟ་བ་ལ་གོམས་པ། བདག་མེད་པ་ཕྱིན་ཅི་མ་ལོག་པར་མཐོང་བའི་ལམ་ཐར་པར་འགྲོ་བ་དང་མཐུན་པ་ལས་ཉམས་པ་སྐྱབས་མེད་པ་སྐྱོབ་པར་མཛད་པའི་སླད་དུ། བདག་མེད་པ་ཕྱིན་ཅི་མ་ལོག་པ་ཉེ་བར་སྟོན་པ་ལྷུར་མཛདཔ། ལན་དང་གྲགས་པ་སོགས་ལ་མི་ལྟ་བར་མཐའ་དག་སྡུག་བསྔལ་ལས་སྒྲོལ་བར་བཞེད་པའི་ཐུགས་རྗེ་ཆེན་པོ་མངའ་བ། སངས་རྒྱས་བཅོམ་ལྡན་འདས་དཔེ་ཟླ་མེད་པ་དེས། འགྲོ་བ་མྱ་ངན་ལས་འདས་པའི་གོ་འཕང་ལ་དགོད་པའི་སླད་དུ། དྲང་བ་དང་ངེས་པའི་དོན་གྱི། གསུང་རབ་མཐའ་ཡས་པ་ཞིག་བཀའ་སྩལ་ལ། དེ་ཡང་ཕྱིས་རབས་ཀྱི་གདུལ་བྱ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ཚད་མར་གྱུར་པའི་སྐྱེས་བུས་དགོངས་པ་བཀྲལ་བ་ལ་མ་ལྟོས་པར་རང་དབང་དུ་རྟོགས་མི་ནུས་པས། དགོངས་པ་འགྲེལ་བར་ལུང་བསྟན་པའི་ཤིང་རྟ་ཆེན་པོ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་དགོངས་པ་ཕྱིན་ཅི་མ་ལོག་པར་བཀྲལ་ཏེ། དེ་ལ་བདག་ཉིད་ཆེན་པོ་ཡབ་སྲས་གཉིས་ཀྱིས་གསུང་རབ་ཀྱི་དགོངས་པ་ལ་གཞི་བདེན་པ་གཉིས་དང་། ལམ་ཐབས་ཤེས་གཉིས་དང་། འབྲས་བུ་སྐུ་གཉིས་སུ་གནས་པར་གཟིགས་ཤིང་། གཞན་དག་སྟོན་པ་དང་བསྟན་པ་གཞན་དུ་ཡོད་པར་རྟོག་པ་དང་། བློའི་ནོར་གྱིས་དབུལ་བ་དག་ལུང་ཙམ་སྒྲུབ་བྱེད་ཡིན་གྱི་ལུང་གི་གནོད་སྒྲུབ་ལ་མ་ལྟོས་པར་རིགས་པས་གྲུབ་པ་མི་
སྲིད་སྙམ་དུ་དོགས་པ་བཀག་ནས་དངོས་པོའི་སྟོབས་ཤུགས་ཀྱིས་ཞུགས་པའི་རིགས་པས་ཐུབ་པའི་བསྟན་པ་དང་སྟོན་པ་ཉིད་སྐྱོན་དང་བྲལ་བར་སྒྲུབ་པར་མཛད་ལ། དེ་ཡང་གཏན་ལ་འབེབས་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ཚད་མ་རྣམ་པར་དག་པའི་རྗེས་སུ་འབྲངས་ནས། ཚད་མ་ཡང་དག་དང་ལྟར་སྣང་ལེགས་པར་ཕྱེ་ཞིང་། དེ་ཕྱེ་བ་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་བདེན་པ་གཉིས་ཀྱི་རྣམ་དབྱེ་ཡང་འབད་མེད་དུ་འགྲུབ་པར་གཟིགས་ནས་སྤྱིར་གསུང་རབ་མཐའ་དེ་གཅིག་པ་འགྲེལ་ཞིང་གཙོ་བོར་ནི་ལྷག་པ་ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་བསླབ་པ་གཏན་ལ་འབེབས་པ་མངོན་པའི་བསྟན་བཅོས་མང་དུ་མཛད་ལ། དེ་ལ་བདག་ཉིད་ཆེན་པོ་དཔལ་ཆོས་ཀྱི་གྲགས་པས་ལུས་ལྟ་བུ་དང་ཡན་ལག་གི་བསྟན་བཅོས་སྡེ་བདུན་མཛད་ལ། ལུས་ལ་རྒྱས་འབྲིང་བསྡུས་གསུམ་ལས་ཐོག་མར་རྒྱས་པའི་བསྟན་བཅོས་རྣམ་འགྲེལ་འདི་མཛད་དོ།།
15. How Tibetan Texts Were Produced

When translating a text, it can be important to take into consideration its production. For example, in Tibet the multiple stages of printing a woodblock text from an author’s manuscript meant there were several steps during which errors could have been introduced to the text. Jinpa advises translators to be practical when reading revered texts, considering it part of the translator’s responsibility to the community to be critical of the text when necessary.

Tibetan texts are often written down by scribes and then each letter is carved into wooden blocks, backward, page by page, and then printed by using the blocks as an ink stamp on long single sheets of paper that remain unbound, but are stacked between two simple covers and then often wrapped in cloth. The scribal and carving processes can both introduce errors and changes from the original manuscript and translators need to be careful to consider the possible (miss)spellings a text provides.

Here is an example of the woodblock itself with closeup and the printed page:

Title page of a Lhasa blockprint of a Tibetan calendar for the year Water Pig (1923–24). Photo by Dieter Schuh. This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. Source.
Tibetan texts are often written down by scribes and then each letter is carved into wooden blocks, backward, page by page, and then printed by using the blocks as an ink stamp on long single sheets of paper that remain unbound, but are stacked between two simple covers and then often wrapped in cloth. The scribal and carving processes can both introduce errors and changes from the original manuscript and translators need to be careful to consider the possible (miss)spellings a text provides.

Here is an example of the woodblock itself with closeup and the printed page:
15. How Tibetan Texts Were Produced
Related Materials

What does Tibetan printing look like?

- Watch: National Geographic Expeditions, Sera Monastery Printing House, Lhasa, Tibet
- Watch: Tibetan Paper Making

Open Access Book on Tibetan Printing

- Learn more about the history and culture of the Tibetan book with specialist professor Benjamin Nourse at the rare book school: https://rarebookschool.org/courses/history/h140/.
16. The Use of Particles in Tibetan Texts

In this session Jinpa discusses the use of particles in Tibetan grammar, underscoring the difference between their organization in English by function and their organization in Tibetan by usage. He shares how one and the same particle, *de*, can function as a definite particle as well as, in some contexts, a third-person pronoun; he also describes how the preciousness of paper as a resource affected the use of conjunctions in Tibetan. In addition, we see how important it is to account for the seven cases in Tibetan grammar even while we translate into a modern English style that has fewer cases.

Some key ways Tibetan differs from English:

- No formalized punctuation marks, other than the stroke; no full stop or period!
- No spaces between words—in fact, no comprehensive formalized word classification
- No paragraph breaks
- No relative pronoun lead sub-clauses, except in works translated from Sanskrit
- No plural nouns
- Often no clear differentiation between direct and indirect quotes
- No comprehensive formalization of the particles from the standpoint of their functions
- Use of the definite article *་* *(the)* also for the third-person singular pronoun *(his/her/they)*, as well as for the demonstrative pronoun *(that)*; and in some cases operating as a subject marker
- Frequent use of abbreviations that are in fact compound words, e.g., སྔ་དགོང་། སྒྲ་དོན། ཚིག་དོན།
- Use of conjunctive particles དང་། ཞིང་། ཅིང་། as well as བོ (usually a...
locative or accusative particle) at the end of a sentence as endings (because of Tibetan writers’ preference for flowing, fluid prose)

- Errors introduced by scribes as well as carvers, especially scribal misplacement of the stroke ༑། leading to misreadings
17. Translating Concepts and Terms: Meditation, Part 1

In this lesson, Jinpa discusses terminology specific to Buddhist meditation practice. Jinpa guides us in understanding the nuance behind terms as they appear in Tibetan literature, as well as in their relationship to the actual practice of meditation.

On Meditation and Practice

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<th>English</th>
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<td>dhyāna</td>
<td>meditation/meditative stabilization</td>
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<td>samādhi</td>
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<td>śamatha</td>
<td>tranquility</td>
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<td>འཇོག་སྒོམ།</td>
<td>sthāpyabhāvanā</td>
<td>absorptive meditation</td>
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<td>vicarabhāvanā</td>
<td>discursive (analytic) meditation</td>
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<td>smṛti</td>
<td>mindfulness</td>
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<td>རིགས་བཞིན།</td>
<td>samprajñāna</td>
<td>meta-awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བཏང་སྙོམས།</td>
<td>upekṣa</td>
<td>equanimity (nonapplication)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དྲེའི་།</td>
<td>sukha</td>
<td>bliss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བདེ་བ།</td>
<td>praśrabdhi</td>
<td>pliancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དེ་བུ་།</td>
<td>ekāgra</td>
<td>single-pointedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བེ་བུ་།</td>
<td>akalpana/nirvikalpa</td>
<td>nonconceptuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤྱོད་བུ་།</td>
<td>prakāśa</td>
<td>clarity, luminosity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དེ་བུ་།</td>
<td>cittasthiti</td>
<td>mental abiding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this lesson, Jinpa continues his discussion of terminology specific to meditation practice. Here, he delves more deeply into specific terms, including those relating to the faculties employed during meditation. Jinpa guides us in understanding the depth and subtlety behind how these terms relate to meditation.
In this lesson, Jinpa introduces us to renowned translator and founding member of the Padmakara Translation Group, Wulstan Fletcher. In conversation, these two master translators of Tibetan literature offer us exquisite personal guidance into the practice and theory of translation.

In this lesson, Jinpa and Wulstan discuss the subtleties and challenges of translating poetry and verse. Jinpa and Wulstan offer us practical and nuanced guidance in approaching poetics, as well as share insights and advice from their personal experience translating this genre.

**Suggested Reading:**

དུག་གསུམ།

༄༅། །བདེ་བ་ཆེན་པོ་འདོད་ནས། །
འདོད་ཆགས་གྲོགས་སུ་བཀུག་པས། །
བདེ་ཆེན་ཐོབ་རྒྱུ་མེད་པར། །
འདོད་མེས་བདེ་བ་ཚིག་སོང་།

དགྲ་པོ་འདུལ་དགོས་བསམ་ནས། །
ཞེ་སྡང་གྲོགས་སུ་བཀུག་པས། །
ཞེ་སྡང་ཕྱོགས་བཞིར་ཟུག་ནས། །
ཐམས་ཅད་དགྲ་རུ་ལངས་བྱུང་། །
དགྲ་རྣམས་སྲེག་པར་འདོད་ནས། །
ཁོང་ཁྲོའི་མེ་ལྕེ་སྤར་བར། །
རང་གཞན་བདེ་རྒྱུ་བཅས་པ། །
དེ་མ་ཉིད་དུ་ཚིག་སོང་། །
སྡུག་བསྔལ་སྤོང་དགོས་བསམ་ནས། །
ལུང་པ་གཞན་དུ་ཕྱིན་པས།   །
སྡུག་བསྔལ་གསར་པ་ཞིག་གིས།   །
ཕྱག་ཕེབས་གནང་བྱུང་གསུང་གིས།   །
ངལ་བ་འབྲས་མེད་མཐོང་ནས།   །
གཏི་མུག་གཉིད་དུ་ཡུར་བས།   །
དལ་བརྒྱད་འབྱོར་བཅུའི་རྟེན་བཟང་།   །
དོན་མེད་སྟོང་ཟད་ཕྱིན་སོང་།   །
མྱུར་མགྱོགས་གནམ་གྲུར་བསྡད་ནས།   །
ཉིན་མཚན་མེད་པ་ཕྱིན་ཀྱང་།   །
ད་དུང་འཁོར་བའི་མཚོ་ལས།   །
ཐར་རྒྱུ་མེད་པ་གང་རེད།   །
སྡུག་མསྔལ་གནོན་པའི་དབང་ཆ།   །
དཔོན་ཆེན་རྣམས་ལ་མི་འདུག   །
བདེ་བ་ཉོ་བའི་ཐབས་ཀྱང་།   །
འབྱོར་ལྡན་རྣམས་ལ་མི་འདུག   །
སྲིད་པ་སྣང་བར་བྱེད་པའི།   །
ཉིན་བྱེད་འོད་སྟོང་ལྡན་ཡང་།   །
གཏི་མུག་བློ་ཡི་མུན་པ།   །
སེལ་བའི་ནུས་པ་མི་འདུག   །
སྨན་མཆོག་རིལ་བུ་གཅིག་གིས།   །
འཁོར་འདས་ཐོབ་པ་བྱུང་ན།   །
ས་ཆེན་གསེར་དུ་བསྒྱུར་ནས།   །
རིན་དུ་ང་ཡིས་ཕུལ་ཆོག   །
སྤྱི་ལོ་༡༩༨༦ ལོར་རྡོ་དགོན་གསང་བདག་རྡོ་རྗེས་བྲིས།།   །།
The Three Poisons

Wishing to achieve Great Bliss,
I called desire my friend.
And yet Great Bliss I did not find
And craving burned my joy.

I planned to tame my enemies
And called on hatred as my friend.
But everywhere it caused such pain
That enemies are all I have.

These enemies I wished to burn.
And kindled flames of hate.
My own and others’ joy was burned
Together with its cause.

I wished to leave behind my pain,
And went off to another land.
New suffering was waiting there
And said “How nice to see you.”

I saw no profit for my toil.
A fool, I’ve dozed my life away.
Eight freedoms, ten advantages—
A wasted chance with nothing gained.

On my plane and flying fast,
I’ve travelled night and day.
How come I have not crossed by now
The ocean of samsara?

Presidents are powerless
To put an end to pain.
The richest in the world don’t have
The means to buy their happiness.
The sun shines down a thousand rays
And lights up all the world,
And yet it cannot drive away
The dark from stupid minds.

If through one great remedy
Samsara I could leave,
The whole world into gold I’d change
And pay it as the price.

Dogon Sangdak Dorje, 1986

Seven-Line Prayer

In Orgyen’s land upon its northwest rim,
On lotus, pistil-cup, and stem,
Wondrous, supreme mastery you found
And as the Lotus-Born you are renowned.
A ring of many dakinis encircles you,
And you footsteps practicing we follow you.
To grant your blessings come we pray.

Guru Padma Siddhi Hung
Madhyamakavatara – VI, 84–86

Advancing irreversibly upon the “Clearly Manifest,”
Such Bodhisattvas understand the triple world as merely consciousness.

Because they know there is no self or permanent creator,
They understand that the creator is the “mind alone.”

In order to increase the wisdom of the wise
And clarify his thought, the Buddha, knowing all, expounded
In the Sutra of the Journey into Lanka diamond words
That crush the heathen teachings lofty like the mountains.

For in their books and treatises,
The heathen teachers postulate creators, personal or otherwise.
But since he found no evidence for them,
The Buddha said that mind alone is maker of the world.
Since he maintains a tradition that upholds the conventional existence of things, in which positive assertions are made using “autonomous” arguments and where emphasis is given to the figurative ultimate, Shantarakshita is regarded as a Svatantrika teacher. Nevertheless we do not consider that his view is inferior to that of the Prasangikas. For having inaugurated the tradition that unifies the approaches of Chittamatra and Madhyamaka, and thus englobes the entire Mahayana, he is in full accord with the ultimate union of the two truths: the ultimate expanse that dwells in neither extreme. In this respect, there is no difference whatsoever between the views of Chandrakirti and Shantarakshita.

Now according to the view of Chandrakirti, appearances are directly purified as they stand. All false, illusory configurations of conventional phenomena dissolve into the ultimate expanse. This profound view resembles the manner in which primordial purity is established in the texts of the Great Perfection. For this reason, in our tradition of the vidhyadhara lineage, this view is considered ultimate. This is something to which a lowly being like myself can only aspire.
In this lesson, Jinpa and Wulstan share their approaches to the translation of prose. Through their illuminating conversation, we gain insight into the process and technique each translator employs in relation to translating prose. We also learn how to approach the particular challenges presented in translating prose.
22. Introduction to Translating Verse

In this lesson, Jinpa introduces us to the translation of Tibetan verse and poetry. Jinpa guides us in understanding the distinction between verse and poetry, and illuminates the diversity of verse genres found in Tibetan literature; including songs and liturgical texts. Jinpa also introduces us to the history and tradition of Tibetan poetry, as well as different poetic forms.

**On Verse (tshigs bcad)**

a. Lines of Advice  \(zhul gdams/ bslab bya\)
b. Experiential songs  \(mgur/ glu\)
c. High poetry (kavya style)  \(snyan rtsom\)
d. Wise Sayings  \(legs bshad\)
e. Letters  \(springs yig\)
f. Liturgy (hymns, supplications, rites)  \(zhul ‘don\)
g. Root texts  \(rtsa ba\)
h. Summary verses  \(sdom\)

**Recommended Video:**

- [An Act of Bardo: Translating Tibetan Poetry with professor Lama Jabb](#)
23. Verse Case Study #1: A Song of Milarepa

In this lesson, Jinpa guides us through a line-by-line translation of a song by the famed Tibetan yogi Milarepa. We learn about the function of meter, rhythm, and how the particular form and style of Milarepa’s poetic song creates both an overall aesthetic, and an effect on the reader.

Poetry Translation (Sample #1)

I bow at the feet of Marpa the kind.
Within the mountain hermitage, my body,
Inside the temple, my breast,
At the top of a triangle, my heart,
The stallion of mind rides like the wind.

To catch him, what lasso will catch him?
To tether him, to what stake will I tether him?
If hungry, what food will I give him?
If thirsty, what drink will I give him?
If cold, in what corral will I board him?

To catch him, catch with the lasso of nonduality.
To tether him, tether with the stake of meditative absorption.
If hungry, feed him the lama’s oral instruction.
If thirsty, water him at the river of mindfulness.
If cold, board him at the corral of emptiness.

For a saddle and bit I use method and wisdom.
For crupper and girth I strap changeless stability.
I fasten the reins of the life-force subtle winds.
Upon him rides the young child of pristine awareness.
For a helmet he wears the Great Vehicle mind generation
And dons armor of study, contemplation, and meditation.
On his back he carries the shield of patience.
In his hands he wields the long spear of the view.

Suggested Reading

- *The Life of Milarepa* by Tsangyön Heruka
24. Verse Case Study #2: The Book of Kadam

In this lesson, Jinpa guides us through the translation of verses of advice by Atiśa. We learn how the power of Atiśa’s poetic verses rests in the repetition of certain forms throughout the text. Jinpa also reveals the importance of engaging the intent and context of an author’s voice when approaching translation.

Poetry Translation (Sample #2)

Sample #2: Tibetan text, pp. 214–15:

འབྲོམ། འཁོར་བའི་ཉེས་དམིགས་ཤེས་ན་བཤགས་ཐབས་ཡིན།།
འཁྱག་པའི་མཚོ་ལ་བྱ་རྣམས་ཡིད་མི་འཆགས།།
མེ་ཤོར་ནགས་ལ་རི་དཔོག་ཡིད་མི་འཆགས།།
ཕྲ་མེན་མ་ལ་བུ་ནི་ཡིད་མི་འཆགས།།
ཕ་རོ་འབུས་བཤིགས་བུ་ནི་འཆགས་མི་འགྱུར།།
དུར་ཁྲོད་ནགས་སུ་དགའ་བ་ག་ལ་སྐྱེ།།
བཙོན་ཁང་གནས་སུ་སྡོད་ནི་ག་ལ་དགའ།།
མེ་ཡི་འོབས་སུ་བསིལ་སེམས་ག་ལ་སྐྱེ།།
དགྲ་བོ་མཐོང་ན་དགའ་བ་ག་ལ་འབྱུང་།།
འཆི་ནད་ཅན་ལ་ཡིད་བདེ་ཇི་ལྟར་སྐྱེ།།
བརྩོ་བསྲེག་དམྱལ་བ་བདེ་བར་སུ་ཞིག་འཛིན།།
ཡི་དྭགས་འབྱོར་པ་ཅན་དུ་གང་ཞིག་འཁྲུལ།།
བྱོལ་སོང་རང་དབང་ཅན་དུ་ཇི་ལྟར་གནས།།
འཐབ་རྩོད་ན་ལྷ་མིན་ཇི་ལྟར་འཐོབ།།
འཆི་ལྟས་ལྟུང་བས་ལྷ་ཡང་སྡུག་བསྔལ་ལོ།།
“The Father Teachings” from *The Book of Kadam* (pp. 362–63)

Drom, understanding the defects of samsara is a means of purification;
To a frozen lake, birds are not attached;
To a burnt forest, animals are not attached;
To a demoness in disguise, men are not attached;
To a father’s corpse rotten with maggots, a son is not attached.
How can joy arise on a charnel ground?
How can one be joyful living in a prison?
How can a cooling sensation arise amid a fire?
How can joy arise seeing an enemy?
How can mental happiness arise in the terminally ill?
Who would consider the blazing hells blissful?
Who would confuse the hungry ghosts with the wealthy?
How can the beasts live with freedom [of self-control]?
If there were no conflicts, how would the demigods fight?
When early portents of death occur, the gods suffer, too.

The root of all this is actually the three poisons.
Without these three, evil karma has no platform.
Suggested Reading

Read Now

The Book of Kadam in the Wisdom Experience

Atiśa’s biography at the Treasury of Lives

Recommended Books

Wisdom of the Kadam Masters, translated and introduced by Thupten Jinpa
25. Verse Case Study #3: A Poem of Tsongkhapa

In this lesson, Jinpa guides us through a translation from a selection of Tsongkhapa’s famous poem *The Crown of Brahma*. We learn about the influence of Indic metaphors and mythology on Tibetan literature, as well as how skillful translation can grasp the meaning of a poem even when particular Tibetan forms aren’t replicable in English.

*Poetry Translation Sample #3*


As the multipetaled lotus in a crystal-clear lake
is bathed in beauty by rays of the sun,
as the moon in a cloudless, evening sky
beautifies the jasmine grove,
So your body is beautified by marks of perfection,
stealing the mind of those who gaze upon it.
Maitreya, my guide, may your lotus feet,
life after life, beautify the crown of my head.

“Brahma’s Diadem” (*The Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*, p. 183)

As sunlight opens lotuses in clear lakes,
as the clear sky star lord makes lily gardens bloom,
so the sight of his body, wreathed in auspicious signs,
captivates beings’ hearts, the moment they see it.
May the lotus feet of my Savior, Lord Maitreya
grace the crown of my head in all my lives!

Sample #3 Tibetan:

དང་བའི་མཚོ་ལ་འདབ་བརྒྱ་པ་སྟེ་དེ་ཉིད་ལ་ཡང་ཉིན་བྱེད་འོད།།
དག་པའི་མཁའ་ལ་རྒྱུ་སྐར་མགོན་ཏེ་དེས་ཀྱང་ཀུན་དའི་ཚལ་ལ་བཞིན།།
མཚན་དཔེའི་ཕྲེང་བས་གང་སྐུ་མཐོང་མ་ཐག་ཏུ་འགྲོ་བའི་ཡིད་འཕྲོག་པ།།
བྱམས་མགོན་ཞབས་པད་སྐྱེ་ཞིང་སྐེ་བར་བདག་གི་གཙུག་ན་མཛེས་གྱུར་ཅིག།
26. Translating Different Genres

In this lesson, Jinpa guides us in understanding how the specific nature of genre influences the approach to translation, and the importance of recognizing the genre of a text. We learn about the different genres of Tibetan literature, as well as how to navigate the dynamic of making translation accessible while at the same time remaining faithful to a text’s meaning.

On Different Genre Of Texts

Treatises (བསྟན་བཅོས།)
- Independent monographs (verse or prose)
- Commentary on an existing work (prose)

Instructional texts (ཁྲིད།)
- Independent monographs
- Commentary of an existing work
- Edited from notes taken at a teaching

Monastic textbooks (ཡིག་ཆ།)
- General presentations (སྤྱི་དོན།)
- Analytic explanation (མཐའ་དཔྱོད།)
- Word-by-word exposition in syllogisms (རྩ་ཊིཀ)
Sadhana (སྒྲུབ་ཐབས།)

Biographies (རྣམ་ཐར།)

Historical works (ཆོས་འབྱུང་། རྒྱལ་རབས།)

Memorandums (བརྗེད་བྱང་།)

Edited from notes (ཟིན་བྲིས་)

Verse (ཞིགས་བཅད།)

a. Lines of advice (ཞལ་གདམས་བསླབ་བྱ།)
b. Experiential songs (མགུར།)
c. High poetry (kavya style) (སྙན་ངག་གི་རྩོམ།)
d. Wise sayings (ལེགས་བཤད།)
e. Letters (སྤྲིངས་ཡིག)
f. Liturgy (hymns, supplications, rites) (ཞལ་འདོན་)
g. Root texts (རྩ་བ་)
h. Summary verses (སྡོམ་)
27. Literality in Translation with Anne C. Klein

In this lesson, Jinpa introduces us to Anne C. Klein, former chair of religious studies at Rice University, founding director of Dawn Mountain Tibetan Buddhist Temple, and author/translator of seven books. They discuss the onus on translators of a too rigid literality and what this can mean when translating for an English-speaking audience that has different cultural understandings than a Tibetan audience. Prof. Klein explains when she feels the need to become more spacious and free in her translations, rather than focus on being “right.” She also discusses her translation of chantable recitation texts that match the meter of the original, thus allowing them to be sung to traditional Tibetan melodies.

Anne C. Klein is professor and former chair of the Religion Department at Rice University. She is also a founding director and resident teacher of Dawn Mountain, a center for contemplative study and practice in Houston. Her publications include Path to the Middle (SUNY Press), Unbounded Wholeness, coauthored with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche (Oxford University Press), Knowledge and Liberation (Snow Lion Publications), and most recently Khetsun Rinpoche’s Strand of Jewels (Snow Lion Publications).
28. Considering Genre in Translation with Anne C. Klein

In this session Jinpa and Anne C. Klein discuss how a translator can consider genre in their work. Prof. Klein shares what she has considered in her translation of the term ཆོས་དབྱིངས། (Wyl. chos dbyings, Skt. dharmanātha) in various contexts, sharing the various options she could choose depending on the text’s genre or audience.

III.

དབྱིངས།
ཆོས་དབྱིངས།
ཆོས་ཀྱི་དབྱིངས།
དོན་དམ་བདེན་པ།
གནས་ལུགས།
ཡེ་ཤེས་
JINPA AND ANNE discuss the aesthetics of translation of poetic or chantable works. In doing this, Prof. Klein takes account of the meter of the original, and also how the specific melody of the practice goes with the English, all of which relates to how words impact the body and thus the overall feel of the poem. She then shows us a particular case of what a chantable English sadhana can look and sound like.

New, experimental translations of the Chö Ying Dzö (ཆོས་དབྱིངས་མཛོད་or Chos dbyings mdzod)

In each case below, we offer first a new translation without regard to syllabic count, and in the second, the verse translated into Chantable English, requiring either 7 or 9 syllable lines, in accordance with the Tibetan original. This means it can be chanted to the same melody as the Tibetan.

A demonstration of moving from simple to chantable verse:

Spacious arena, by nature simply there
With no in or out, it suffuses everywhere.
Never bounded, beyond bonds of high and low
Not broad or narrow, awareness clear as space
Expansively free of focus, thought and frills.

**CHANTABLE (9 SYLLABLE LINES):**

Natural realm, ever simply there  
No in, out; suffuses everywhere  
Boundless and beyond what’s high or low  
Not broad, or narrow, awareness sheer  
Expanse free of focus, thought, and frills.

Magical birth from the unborn realm  
You cannot determine or disband.  
Can’t call it “this,” no sign of a thing  
Panoramic, skylike nature, just  
There, unborn. No past, future, start, end.

THE ART OF TRANSLATING TIBETAN, WISDOM PUBLICATIONS, INC. © 2020
Awakened mind, essence of all swirl and peace
Unrisen, unborn, undetermined—just there.
Come from nowhere, gone to no place
Leaning neither past nor future—expanse of awakened mind,
Wholly suffusing the coming and the going.

**Chantable:**

Awakened mind, essence of swirl and peace
Not risen, born or fixed, simply present
Come from nowhere, also goes nowhere
Leans not to or fro, wake- mind’s expanse
Suffusing all coming and going

No start, end or midway: the isness of reality,
Naturally pure, a sky-like expanse.
No start or end and beyond what’s gone or coming
Unborn, unceasing, no sign of things
Nor going, nor coming, nor calling it “this”.

**Chantable**

No start, end or middle, real’s isness
Naturally pure, sky-like expanse.
No start, end; passed what’s gone or coming
Unborn, unceasing, no sign of things
Not gone, not come, no calling it “this”.

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Jinpa begins this session by asking Anne C. Klein about the current state of the field of Tibetan studies. Prof. Klein also gives practical advice to aspiring translators who are starting in this work. They also discuss how the words that we use in translations matter, even for common terms like དགེ་བ་ (Wyl. dge ba), or virtue.
31. What Is the State of Tibetan Translation? (Panel Discussion, Part 1)

In this lesson, Jinpa guides our panel of expert translators—Wulstan Fletcher, Anne C. Klein, and Gavin Kilty—in discussing the state and progress of Tibetan translation. Panelists discuss the benefits and influence of modern technology in facilitating a rapid amount of translation in a relatively short period of time, the challenges facing future translation efforts, and offer ideas about texts those efforts should pursue.
32. How Do We Prioritize What Is Translated?  
(Panel Discussion, Part 2)

In this lesson, Jinpa guides our panel of expert translators—Wulstan Fletcher, Anne C. Klein, and Gavin Kilty—in discussing the future of Tibetan translation, and the question of what translation efforts should be prioritized. Panelists discuss the dynamics of preservation for future generations, what translations are most needed currently, and how the interest of readers influences what texts are translated.

Suggested Reading

- Article: “Buddhist Hybrid English” by Paul J. Griffiths (The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies 4, no. 2, 1981) (Clicking link will initiate PDF download)
- Learn more about the Padmakara Translation Group
- Learn more about Tsadra Foundation

Make a gift to the Library of Tibetan Classics and support the translation and preservation of the treasures of Tibetan literature. Learn more here.
In this lesson, Jinpa and the panel of expert translators explore the topic of translating and distributing restricted material. They discuss the matter of ensuring practitioners have access to necessary tantric texts, as well as the karmic implications of this material being readily available to the general public. They also consider questions such as whether translators must have experience or realization with respect to these texts in order to translate them, and whether it’s necessary for a translator to have the reading transmission for a text before translating it.

Suggested Reading

**Tibetan Resources**

- བོད་ཀྱི་རྫ་སྤྲོད་པའི་ཁྲིད་རྒྱུན་རབ་སྣ་མེ་ལོང་
  by Kelsang Gyurmé
- *bod skad kyi brda sprod gsar bsgrigs smra sgo’i lde mig* by Thupten Jinpa
- *chos kyi rnam grangs*
- *Dharma Dictionary*—Tibetan-English dictionary, dharma glossaries, and resources.
- Dungkar Rinpoche’s dictionary
- *English-Tibetan Dictionary of Modern Tibetan* by Melvyn C. Goldstein
- *Esukhia*—Tibetan Language Learning, Translation, and Research
- *Glossaries for Buddhist Studies*
- *GoldenDict*—Online and offline Tibetan dictionaries combined
• *The Illuminator, Tibetan-English Encyclopaedic Dictionary* by Tony Duff
• *Index for Spices in Tibetan Script*
• Mahavyutpatti
• Nathan Hill Lexicon of Tibetan Verb Stems
• *Rangjung Yeshe Dictionary*
• *Rigpa Shedra*—an online encyclopedia of Tibetan Buddhism
• Steinert Online Tibetan Dictionary and App
• THL Tibetan Historical Dictionary
• THL Tibetan to English Translation Tool
• THL’s Online Tibetan Phonetics Converter—Tibetan or Wylie to Phonetics Converter
• THL’s Online Tibetan Transliteration Converter—Convert Wylie to Unicode Tibetan
• *A Tibetan Verb Lexicon* by Paul G. Hackett
• Tshigdzo Chenmo

Sanskrit Resources

• *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary* by Franklin Edgerton
• *Digital Dictionaries of South Asia*—Sanskrit Dictionary
• *Monier Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary*
• Tibetan-Sanskrit Dictionary by J. S. Negi

English Language Suggested Reading

• *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* by Lynne Truss
• *Grammar and Style for Examination Candidates and Others* by Michael Dummett
• *Love and Liberation: Autobiographical Writings of the Tibetan Buddhist Visionary Sera Khandro* by Sarah H. Jacoby
• *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* by Ezra Pound
• *Modern English Usage* by H. W. Fowler
• *Name and Nature of Poetry* by A. E. Housman
• *A Writer’s Companion* by Richard Marius
• Find more resources on Tsadra Foundation’s resources page
34. Is It Time to Standardize?  
(Panel Discussion, Part 4)

In this lesson, Jinpa and our panel of expert translators—Wulstan Fletcher, Anne C. Klein, and Gavin Kilty—discuss the prospect of standardization in Tibetan translation. We learn about how contemporary translation efforts are different from those in historical Tibet, where patronage and political decree oversaw translations. Panelists entertain the distinction between standards being implemented, arising organically, and what it might mean for key terminology in Tibetan to be standardized.

Suggested Reading

- Learn more about 84000
- Learn more about the Nālandā Translation Committee

Recommended Tools

- The Tibetan and Himalayan Library Translation Tool
35. How Can the Internet Assist Translators? (Panel Discussion, Part 5)

In this lesson, Jinpa and our panel of expert translators—Wulstan Fletcher, Anne C. Klein, and Gavin Kilty—discuss the impact of the digital world on translation. Panelists discuss the prospect of interactive digital media as useful tools, how digital archives may serve the dissemination of translated teachings and transmissions, and how digital media can enliven and interact with printed media.

Suggested Reading

- Read *Mind Training in the Wisdom Experience*
- Learn more about *Mind & Life Institute*
36. How Should We Be Training Young Translators? (Panel Discussion, Part 6)

In this lesson, Jinpa and our panel of expert translators—Wulstan Fletcher, Anne C. Klein, and Gavin Kilty—discuss the reality and nature of training the next generation of Tibetan translators. Panelists consider prospects of training focused on systematic Tibetan language training, as well as technical translation skills training. Each panelist offers their thoughts and guidance for how the education of future translators might unfold, and what practical realities are needed to encourage translators in training.
37. A Case Study in Publishing: The Library of Tibetan Classics

Thupten Jinpa addresses how the final stage of publishing is an important step for translators to consider. He shares his experience publishing the Library of Tibetan Classics series at Wisdom Publications and how aesthetics and careful copyediting by the publisher are vital to the process of making translated works available to readers.

Recommended Videos: Learn more about this and related topics from presentations at the Translation and Transmission Conferences:

The Editorial Process Throughout Creation and Completion Stages

Publishing Translations: Q & A with Two Buddhist Publishers

Editing for Practitioners: Presenting Liturgies, Commentaries, and Songs of Realization

Make a gift to the Library of Tibetan Classics and support the translation and preservation of the treasures of Tibetan literature. Learn more here.
38. A Case Study in Editing: 
*The Library of Tibetan Classics*

In this session Thupten Jinpa addresses editorial issues for translators, such as how to format texts when they are translated from Tibetan into English and other ways to make a text more readable. As a case study he shares with us the editorial considerations behind the creation of the *Library of Tibetan Classics* series with Wisdom Publications.

*Make a gift to the Library of Tibetan Classics and support the translation and preservation of the treasures of Tibetan literature. Learn more here.*
In a rare “behind the scenes” glimpse, Jinpa shares with us his own personal method for translating Tibetan texts. He outlines three stages of approaching a translation: first producing a literal translation, then making the English more fluid with an eye toward the reader’s experience, and finally returning months later to edit and consult the original Tibetan once more. He also shares how having a background in the subject matter and broadening one’s horizon of reading are essential for any translator.
40. Interpreting Case Study:
His Holiness the Dalai Lama

In this lesson, Jinpa discusses the distinction between translation and interpretation: translation as the practice of translating texts, and interpretation as the translation of spoken Tibetan in person. Though the objective of both types of translation is the same, Jinpa guides us through the particular challenges presented by each practice. Jinpa shares and discusses footage of his own live interpretation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, offering us a unique window into the art and practice of interpretation.
In this lesson, Jinpa invites us to reflect on our time participating in the course. Jinpa encourages us to reflect on our strengths and weaknesses as translators, as well as offers us advice and guidance in cultivating the skills and practices necessary to become the best translators we can be.

“Now there has been forty years of publishing Tibetan texts in English, I think the time is right to begin adopting a much more mature approach.”
—Thupten Jinpa
Our thanks to Tsadra Foundation for their support of this project.