



Advice from the Tradition

October 22-24, 2013

Bodh Gaya

Day One: Advice from His Eminence Ratna Vajra Rinpoche

(Speech in Tibetan, Translated into English)

First of all, I would like to offer my Tashi Delek to Kyabje Rinpoches, scholars, translators and all those who are involved in the composition, compilation and translation of texts.

Important to Provide Access to Buddha's Words through Translation

Everyone expresses the importance of translating the texts and I agree with it. The innermost essence of the buddhadharma, the sole source of happiness and wellbeing of beings is the precious Kangyur. Any form of Buddhist teaching must have its root in the words of the Buddha. Hence, as explained earlier, Kangyur is the universal gem for all of us and it is very essential to translate them into other languages. The reason is, until now, even though people have interest in the vast and profound teachings, because of not knowing the language, they have been facing difficulties in understanding the meanings of the texts. So it is very important to translate them into the languages people can access.

As presented earlier, we face many difficulties while translating texts from one language to another. It is not easy at all. So it is very important to translate after understanding the words and meanings thoroughly, and it should be done through the collaboration of lotsawas and panditas. Most of our texts have: "it is thoroughly edited and finalized," meaning the text has been well edited and revised by a lotsawa-pandita partnership. The scriptures say that the texts were not just translated from Sanskrit, but were also edited and finalized. Hence, it is very important to revise the texts once they are translated into modern languages.

Rely on the Meaning of the Word instead of its Literal Equivalence

It is also important not to make a mistake in choosing the right "reliance" among the "four reliances." As it is said, "Never rely on words, rely on the meaning". While translating, in some cases like *bcom ldan 'das*, it is more understandable and accurate to leave it as Buddha (Sanskrit) than translating it into English. On the other hand, if each and every part of the name - *bcom*, *ldan* and *'das* - is translated separately into English, when we read the name in Tibetan, we won't be able to figure out which word gives the meaning of which part of the name.

In general, the teachings of Buddha are of expedient and definitive meaning. So it is important to understand which meaning a particular teaching expresses before translating them into English. I also find it important to understand the whole text and not just concentrate on the literal meaning of the words while translating the texts.

In fact, it is difficult to translate texts into any language. Moreover, it is difficult to find the exact English equivalence of the Tibetan words. So, as explained earlier, it becomes necessary to have a dictionary, which everybody can use as a source of reference. However, it is not easy to make a dictionary. We must finalize the contents of the dictionary by enduring pains and difficulties, just like the lotsawas and panditas of the past. Otherwise, if it is decided by one or two people, there would be the problem of words matching or not matching with the actual meaning.

Conclusion

To sum up, it is absolutely necessary to translate the words of the Buddha, the source of temporary and ultimate wellbeing of beings, into Western languages. However, it is important to translate them precisely by enduring hardships and being careful. I have nothing more to say. Thank you!