

CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATION OF A CANONICAL TEXT: OBSERVATIONS BASED ON SOME PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS

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Canonical texts are translated for a variety of reasons. The Tipitaka is translated with the intention of spreading the Dhamma or as a part of scholarly work. When the translator is focused on literal translations he/she is concerned with Pali Grammar and when a free translation is attempted he/she is aiming his work at beginners of Dhamma Studies. The aim of this paper is to identify the problems faced by translators when they translate the canon into any language. Confidence in the accuracy of the translation invariably rests primarily on the translator's own confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. However biased translators who are not themselves convinced of the validity of the teachings may be influenced by their own religious translation extremes consciously or unconsciously. Language skills, knowledge of language usages, patterns, idioms, syntax, similes, metaphors, etc. of both languages, Pali language and target language are very important in the Translation. In this context, the translator faces difficulties regarding how to translate technical terms inherent in the Tipitaka. The translator often has to resolve whether technical terms can be accurately translated or whether to retain them in their original form. Here, at least, the translator needs to understand the distinctive characteristics of both languages. Understanding Buddhist teachings plays a vital role in this process. Such a translation should not be a word by word translation but an idiomatically meaningful one. The message of the Teacher should be communicated to the listener or reader as authentically as possible. The translation should be close to the reader as a native speaker. In this context, the translator needs to see that the language, as well as the doctrine, norms, culture, setting and tradition are consistent in both languages. Sometimes the translator is preoccupied with one's personal views and violates the original meaning. Translating the Tipitaka presents major challenges; these include: finding capable unbiased scholars qualified in both languages, establishing a scholars' group to discuss complex issues arising from the translation, the validity of the translation and confirmation of the accuracy of the translation.

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