

Khyentse Foundation Translators' Conference

“Translating the Words of the Buddha”

Mid-Conference Update, 18 March 2009

On Monday morning, the conference began with an introduction by the conference chair, Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche, followed by statements (see attached) from HH The Dalai Lama, HH Sakya Trizin, HH The Karmapa, and the late HH Mindrolling Rinpoche. These were followed by a keynote by Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche (see attached), in which he laid out his aspiration for the conference.

I'd like to suggest over the next few days we start a process of mapping out exactly what needs to be done during our lifetimes and beyond, in order to ensure the preservation of Tibetan Buddhist texts. Basically, our agenda is to write the agenda for an ongoing translation conference, one that never closes, as all the attendees continue to consult and work together in pursuit of one goal.

Sitting in the Mañjushri Hall at Deer Park Institute, the group of more than 50 Rinpoches, translators and scholars began the process of turning Khyentse Rinpoche's aspiration into a 100-year vision, under the guidance of a professional facilitator. After several hours considering and debating the merits a dozen alternative draft statements, the group reached consensus on the following 100-year vision:

To translate and make universally accessible the Buddhist literary heritage

In particular, the group wanted to include the entire buddhist canon, not just texts from the Indo-Tibetan tradition, and also to ensure that access to texts is not limited because of distance or lack of funding.

On Tuesday morning, the group heard presentations from Orgyen Tobgyal Rinpoche, Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche (attached), and John McRae (on the BDK Tripitaka Project). There was also the first part of a four-part video from Peter Skilling (on translation of the Kangyur, see attached notes) and a letter from Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche (attached), in which he committed:

... To direct 15 translators from the Dharmachakra Translation Committee to begin work on the Kangyur project ... and to train an additional 10 to 15 translators over the next five years. In this way, we will be in a position to provide 50% of the translators needed to complete the translation of the Kangyur within a 10 to 15 year period.

The group then articulated a 25-year goal that they felt would mark a significant step towards the vision:

To translate and make accessible all of the Kangyur and many volumes of the Tengyur and commentaries

A number of questions had been raised on the first day about the practicality of translating of the Kangyur, and whether this project might potentially divert resources away from other important translation tasks. However, participants came to feel that this vision would inspire and excite the entire translation community – including both translators and sponsors – and that far from diverting resources, it would actually support and catalyse other translation activities.

The group then turned its attention to defining a 5-year goal: What needs to happen in the next five years to ensure adequate progress towards the 25-year goal? After a lively debate, they agreed:

To translate and publish a representative sample of the Kangyur, Tengyur and Tibetan commentaries and to establish the infrastructure and resources necessary to accomplish the long term vision

Shortly after the 5-year goal was defined, Khyentse Rinpoche announced that the Khyentse Foundation has pledged to finance the translation of the 8,000-verse Prajñāparamita Sutra; on behalf of Tsechen Kunchab Ling, Khenpo Kalsang Gyaltsen pledged to translate the 25,000-verse Prajñāparamita Sutra; and on behalf of Kangyur Rinpoche's Foundation, Tulku Pema Wangyal Rinpoche pledged to translate the entire Prajñāparamita – both the sutras and the related shastras. (Dr. Phillip Stanley of Naropa University estimated that the texts included within these commitments comprise 22% of the Kangyur and 9% of the Tengyur.)

Over the next three days, the group will discuss the details of how the 5-year goal can be achieved. Specifically, they will identify the most important issues to be resolved, and begin the process of finding solutions and devising practical next steps.

Attachments:

- Address by Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche
- Address by Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche
- Letter from Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche
- Notes from presentation by Peter Skilling
- Participant list
- Link to Facebook Group