



Diamond Mountain University

Sacred Classics Translator Program, Fall Term 2006

Answer Key, Homework, Class 5

Name:

Date:

Grade:

1) What was the most unusual Tibetan phrase in Master Chandrakirti's root text that we exhaustively searched in the ACIP database in order to find some elucidation of the meaning? Did we find an explanation of this phrase? How did we end up translating it?

སེམས་ཀྱི།

sem ta

It appears in the line: RDZOGS PA'I BYANG CHUB SEMS LTA DANG PO LA GNAS KYANG.

Given the context it seemed almost certain that the phrase is a reference to the first bodhisattva level. Being such an obscure phrase, we considered it irresponsible, however, to translate it as such without first seeking scriptural confirmation. Yet we were unable to find a single explanation of this specific phrase in either the Tengyur or Sungbum of the ACIP digital library. Further, the phrase doesn't appear in the Sanskrit-Tibetan dictionary either. If it were available we could have looked at the original Sanskrit manuscript of Master Chandrakirti's text to see if there had been a translation error.

In such circumstances a translator must simply translate the phrase as seems most appropriate. Here, we translated it "the state of mind that looks towards". The whole sentence was translated as "Even a person who has only just reached the first state of mind that looks towards total enlightenment."

2) Briefly explain the translation principle that was taught in the context of Master Chandrakirti's uncomfortable use of the verb "PHAM BYA" in his root text.

A translator should not anticipate the ensuing resolution by an author of a tension that the author has deliberately introduced at a certain part of his or her text, and which he or she is going to resolve subsequently. Otherwise the translator is thwarting the author's deliberate use of a certain word to create an effect.

Here Master Chandrakirti uses the verb PHAM BYA meaning "to defeat" or "to overwhelm" in describing those who have reached the first bodhisattva level in comparison to Hinayana arhats. Such strong language is uncomfortable for the reader and it would be tempting to translate the verb in a softer way such as "to surpass". Master Chandrakirti subsequently explains in his autocommentary that he means "to outshine" but it would be inappropriate to reduce the tension in his root text by translating the verb in accordance with his explanation rather than as he deliberately presents in his root text.

3) Master Kedrup Tenpa Dargye then summarizes how he will explain the transcendent spiritual qualities that a bodhisattva attains upon reaching the first bodhisattva level – mainly reaching a wholly new level in the art of giving. Briefly describe the difference in worldviews with which a realized bodhisattva does their giving compared with other beings.

A realized bodhisattva consciously gives to others because they want to increase the economic prosperity of every being. They give with the wisdom that their act of giving is empty of self-existence and is available to be an act which bring economic well-being to the entire world.

Those without this worldview may be generous as a result of karmic seeds from having been generous in past lives, in which case they practise giving not out of a reasoned belief in karma and emptiness but because of this instinct or habit. Eventually this habit wears out which is why we see some people become less generous as they get older.

Other people may become inspired to become generous during their lifetime due to exposure to other teachings than explanations of karma and emptiness,

and may set up endowments or foundations in their later years for example. Neither of these latter examples of giving constitute the perfection of giving and according to Buddhist worldview they cannot have the power to help all living beings.

4) What is the remarkable reasoning given by Master Kedrup Tenpa Dargye for why enlightened beings first teach the perfection of giving to ordinary beings?

Ordinary beings are mostly concerned with achieving a higher rebirth because of the wish for material comfort. They are not initially capable of living virtuously for the sake of a more lofty ideal. Enlightened beings skillfully respond to this level of motivation by first teaching such beings the practice of giving because it is the karmic cause of the material wealth they seek.

This is why a teacher may reach out to the business community and teach that they will make more money if they are more generous and kind to others. Appealing to this lower motivation and emphasizing that giving leads to material wealth is not only entirely appropriate but is indeed necessary to bring certain people onto the path. From this foundation a teacher will bring them up over time to the bodhisattva motivation.