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Dhammapada Traditions and Translations

The *Dhammapada* is probably the most frequently translated Buddhist text in the world today. This article looks at the history of translations of the *Dhammapada* since it was first translated into English in the nineteenth century. I start by comparing the little known first English translation by Daniel Gogerly from 1840 with the influential 1870 translation by Max Müller. The paper then examines the main translations which have appeared since the mid-twentieth century. I show how they represent Buddhist, Hindu and other views on the *Dhammapada* and that they continue to be influenced by the pioneering nineteenth-century translations. I argue that translations of the *Dhammapada* are conditioned not only by the viewpoints of the translators but also by the existence of a tradition of translating the *Dhammapada*. Both factors I conclude have contributed to the importance placed on the *Dhammapada* as a representative Buddhist text.

Introduction

The earliest English language translations from the Pāli Buddhist text of the *Dhammapada* were published in 1840 by Daniel Gogerly in the journal called the *The Friend* in Colombo.¹ Since that time, the *Dhammapada* has become probably one of the most frequently translated religious texts in the world. There have been over eighty different translations into English, and it has been translated into most of the world's major languages.² In this paper, I will start by considering what the *Dhammapada* is and then examine Gogerly's translation and its relationship to the *Dhammapada* translations published by Max Müller between 1870 and 1881 and more recent translations. I will then show that Gogerly's *Dhammapada* translation is based on an interpretation of it made by the monks, or ex monks, who were teaching Gogerly Pāli. The importance of this, I will suggest, is that it means his translation represents

1. While writing this paper I prepared an edition of Gogerly's *Dhammapada*, which is now available online. See Daniel John Gogerly, "The *Dhammapada* or 'Footsteps of Religion' by Daniel John Gogerly" [http://www.bodhgayanews.net/Gogerly_Dhammapada.htm] 2007.

2. For a partial list of *Dhammapada* editions, see Peter Friedlander, "A list of *Dhammapada* translations," (<http://www.bodhgayanews.net/Dhammapada.htm>) 2007).

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the way the text was understood before the Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka. I will then locate Gogerly's and Müller's translations in terms of the current debate about the interaction between the Christians and Buddhists during the nineteenth century in Sri Lanka. These translations are important to us today, I will suggest, as they relate to the origins of the modern dichotomy between popular and academic understandings of Buddhist texts. The paper then discusses how the *Dhammapada* became identified as the representative text of Buddhism and the ways in which later translations of it have interpreted the meaning of its text.

Dhammapada or *Dhammapadas*?

The first question that needs to be addressed is what is the *Dhammapada* and how does it relate to Buddhist literature. In essence, the text which is being translated here is a collection of traditional sayings, more than a half of which are found elsewhere in the Pāli canon, while some of the others are found in other ancient Indian texts, such as the epic called the *Mahābhārata*; however, it is likely that many of them were part of a common stock of ancient Indian sayings, and the versions in the *Dhammapada* and elsewhere in the canon may have been drawn independently from this stock.³

The popularity of this kind of an anthology of verses can be seen from the existence of other similar texts in the Pali canon itself, such as the *Udāna*. The popularity of *Dhammapada*-like texts can also be seen in other Buddhist textual traditions. These include a version in Gāndhārī Prakrit, another Prakrit version often called the Patna *Dhammapada*, several versions in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, and a parallel in portions of a text called the *Mahāvastu*. In addition, there are versions in Tibetan of a very similar work called the *Udānavarga*, which apparently go back to more than one source.⁴ There are also multiple versions of the *Dhammapada* and the *Udānavarga* in Chinese.⁵ From this it is clear that the *Dhammapada* was not found only in its Pāli version as preserved in the Theravāda tradition but also in other Buddhist traditions.

There are also texts that indicate the importance of the *Dhammapada* as seen in the Buddhist tradition. An important example of this can be found in a work published in 1995 by Bhikkhu Kuala Lumpur Dhammajoti. In this work the author made a study of Chinese *Dhammapada* traditions and a translation of

3. For a discussion of the relationship of the *Dhammapada* to other Indian literatures, see K. R. Norman, *The Word of the Doctrine (Dhammapada)* (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 2000 [1997]), xix. Also see Wilhelm Rau, "Bemerkungen und nicht-buddhistische Sanskrit-parallelen zum Pāli-Dhammapada," in Claus Vogel, ed. *Jñānamuktāvalī Commemoration Volume in Honour of Johannes Nobel on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday Offered by Pupils and Colleagues* (Delhi: International Academy of International Culture. Sarasvati-vihāra series 38, 1963), 159–75.

4. Norman, xx–xxi. Also see W. Woodville Rockhill, *Udanavarga: a collection of verse from the Buddhist canon/compiled by Dharmatrata; translated from the Tibetan of the Bkah-hgyur; with notes and extract from the commentary of Pradjñavarman* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1883).

5. Dhammajoti, *The Chinese Version of the Dhammapada* (Kelaniya: The Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies, 1995), 26. See also Charles Willemen, *The Chinese Udānavarga: A Collection of Important Odes of the Law Fa Chi Yao Sung Ching. Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques 19* (Brussels: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1978).

the earliest Chinese version of the *Dhammapada*, the *Fa Jyu Jing*, which dates from around 224 CE. He also translated the introduction to the *Fa Jyu Jing*, which explains how it was made by an Indian monk called Ju Jiang Yen who had a manuscript of a version of the *Dhammapada* with him when he arrived from India in Wu Chang in 224 CE. He then made a translation of it into Chinese, which was collated by a Chinese monk Jy Chien. The original introduction to the translation indicated what the Indian monk said of the importance of the following text:

In India, those beginners who do not study [first] the *Dharmapada* are said to have skipped the proper order. This [text] is a great inspiration for the beginners, [as much as] a recondite treasure for those who want to get deep into the dharma. It serves to enlighten, clear up doubts and induce men to be independent. With only little effort, what one learns from it embraces a vast amount. Truly, [this *Dhammapada*], may be said to be a wonderful and important [text].⁶

This is probably the oldest extant passage commenting on the importance of the *Dhammapada* and shows how it has been a key Buddhist text for novices and others for almost two millennia now.

The importance of the *Dhammapada* in pre-modern times in Southeast Asian countries such as Sri Lanka and Burma is also evident from the way that it was one of the texts that was expected to be learned by heart by all Buddhist novices. Speaking of this in 1914, Sumangala Thera said,

The students who could prove their thorough understanding of the *Dhammapada* and its Commentary were, in the time of the Mahāvihāra fraternity, entitled to the popular degree called “*Khuddakabhāṇakā*.” Hence, it is no wonder that even now, after the lapse of centuries, this book is highly venerated and esteemed in Ceylon as a textbook to be used for novices. They must satisfy the elders by their proficiency in it before gaining the higher ordination, or *upasampadā*. As a result of this laudable custom, there is in Ceylon no fully ordained bhikkhu who cannot recite the *Dhammapada* by heart from beginning to end. Moreover, its stanzas are very often quoted by Buddhist preachers as texts on which their sermons are based.⁷

However, given that Pāli was not actually a vernacular in Sri Lanka and South East Asia, it would only have been monks who could have understood the original text. The laypeople would only have been able to understand the commentaries on it in Sinhalese or Burmese, etc., and there is also a long tradition of making vernacular commentaries on it in Sinhalese and Burmese.

The tradition of making commentaries on the *Dhammapada* in Sri Lanka are said to go back to when Buddhism was first introduced to the island. Around the time when Buddhaghosa was translating a number of Sinhalese texts into Pāli, around 450 CE, some of the existing Sinhalese traditions of stories and commentaries on the *Dhammapada* were translated back into Pāli.⁸ Although

6. Dhammajoti, 47.

7. See: Sumangala Thera, *The Dhammapada* (London: Published for the Pali Text Society by Oxford University Press, 1914), v. This is also mentioned by H. Kaviratna, *Dhammapada: Wisdom of the Buddha* (Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 1980), xv.

8. See: Eugene Watson Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends translated from the original Pali of the Dhammapada commentary* (London: Pali Text Society, 1979 [original edition 1921]).

popular tradition attributes these to Bhuddhaghoṣa on stylistic grounds, a number of modern scholars have doubted this attribution. By the thirteenth century, the Pāli commentaries were again being translated back into Sinhala; in particular, a text by a monk called Dharmasena called the *Saddharma Ratnavaliya* attained great popularity.⁹ The wealth of Sinhalese commentaries can be sensed from there being at least ten similar works in existence in manuscript form in the twentieth century.¹⁰

The First Missionary Translators in Sri Lanka

The British gained control of the coastal regions of Sri Lanka in 1796 and then of the central highlands in 1815. During this period, British people began to settle in Sri Lanka and among these were Methodist Missionaries. One of the most influential early figures to study Buddhism in Sri Lanka was the Methodist Minister Spence Hardy (1803–1868) who arrived in Sri Lanka in 1825. The first major work he published was *Eastern Monachism*, which appeared in 1850. In the preface to this he said:

In the month of September, 1825, I landed in the beautiful island of Ceylon as a Wesleyan Missionary, and one of the first duties to which I addressed myself was, to acquire a knowledge of the language of the people among whom I was appointed a minister. After reading the New Testament in Singhalese, I began the study of the native books, that I might ascertain, from authentic sources, the character of the religion I was attempting to displace.¹¹

Spence Hardy then described the *Dhammapada* in the following way:

The Dhammapadan, or Dampiyāwa, the Paths of Religion, written upon 15 leaves, with nine lines on each page, and 1 foot and 8 inches long. It contains 423 gāthās, which appear to have been spoken on various occasions, and afterwards collected into one volume. Several of the chapters have been translated by Mr. Gogerly, and appear in *the Friend*, vol. iv. 1840. The Singhalese paraphrase of the Paths, is regarded by the people as one of their most excellent works, as it treats upon moral subjects, delivered for the most part in aphorisms, the mode of instruction that is the most popular among all nations that have few books at their command, and have to trust in a great degree to memory for their stores of knowledge. A collection might be made from the precepts of this work, that in the purity of its ethics could scarcely be equalled from any other heathen author.¹²

Spence Hardy also mentions that novice monks have to learn the Pāli text of the *Dhammapada* by heart before their ordination, and that the Sinhala paraphrase the “*Dhampiyāwa*” is also very popular.¹³ From this it can be seen that the *Dhammapada* was a key Buddhist text in Sri Lanka in this period.

9. For an account of the patterns of translation from Sinhalese to Pāli and then back to Sinhalese, see Ranjini Obeyesekere, *Jewels of the Doctrine: Stories of the Saddharma Ratnavaliya* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), ix–xxx.

10. See Kaviratna, 176–77. These include: *Dhampiyā* (Sinhalese), *Dhammapada Attha Kathā* (commentary on the legends), *Dhammapada Sannaya*, *Dhammapada Vyākhyāva*, *Dhammapada Varnanā*, *Dhammapada Kathā*, *Dhammapada Atuvāva*, *Dhammapada Purāna Sannaya*, etc.

11. R. Spence Hardy, *Eastern Monachism: an account of the origins, laws, discipline, sacred writings, mysterious rites, religious ceremonies and present circumstances of the order of mendicants founded by Gotama Budha* (London: Partridge and Oakey Paternoster Row, 1850), v.

12. Spence Hardy, 169.

13. Spence Hardy, 28.

Daniel Gogerly (1792–1862) arrived in Ceylon in 1818, initially to simply run the printing press at the Methodist mission but was then in 1823 ordained as a Methodist minister. In the 1830s he began to learn Pāli and from 1838 onwards began to publish articles and translations in the Methodist journal *The Friend*. In 1840, he published a series of selections from the *Dhammapada* in *The Friend*, which were then reprinted again, with revisions, in its successor, *The Ceylon Friend*, in 1881 and then again as edited by Bishop in Gogerly's collected works published in 1908.¹⁴ Bishop's work contained translations of the first 255 verses of the *Dhammapada*, and a note that Gogerly had left the last eight chapters untranslated. Although it was not the first complete published translation, it certainly must be regarded as the first substantial translation of the *Dhammapada*.

It is important to note that Gogerly, like his colleague Spence Hardy, was studying Buddhism in order to assist in his efforts to convert Buddhists to Christianity. In her recent (2007) study of Buddhism and Christianity in nineteenth-century Sri Lanka, Harris pointed out that the nub of his interest was to find ways to prove to Buddhists that they were not as wise as they thought.¹⁵ He was also particularly known as an advocate of the view that Buddhists were nihilists, who did not believe in the Creator God or the soul, and sought annihilation as their goal.

***Dhammapada* Translations from 1855 to 1881**

The next major steps in translation of the *Dhammapada* into Western languages happened between 1855 and 1881. In 1855, the Danish scholar Viggo Fausbøll (1821–1908) published a critical edition of the Pāli text, and a translation into Latin.¹⁶ Then in 1860, Albrecht Weber (1825–1901) published a German translation of the *Dhammapada*.¹⁷ I will not be able to deal here further with these Latin and German translations but instead will turn to the seminal work of Max Müller as his translations of the *Dhammapada* are still available for sale today.

In 1870, Max Müller (1823–1900) published the first complete English translation of the *Dhammapada* as part of a larger work on the “parables of Bhuddhaghosa,” that is, the stories which accompany the *Dhammapada* text.¹⁸ Müller, in the introduction to the 1870 edition, which he wrote in the summer of 1869,¹⁹ explains how the parables were translated by Captain Rogers, who had translated them from the Burmese *Dhamma Pada Vatthu* on a furlough

14. A. S. Bishop (ed.), *Ceylon Buddhism: Being the Collected Writings of Daniel John Gogerly, 2 Vols* (Colombo and London: The Wesleyan Methodist Bookroom & Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co, 1908).

15. E. Harris, *Theravāda Buddhism and the British Encounter* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 63.

16. V. Fausbøll, *Dhammapadam/ex tribus codicibus Hauniensibus Palice edidit, Latine vertit, excerptis ex Commentario Palico notisque illustravit V. Fausbøll* (Londini: Apud Williams & Norgate, 1855).

17. A. Weber, *Das Dhammapadam: die älteste buddhistische* (Leipzig, 1860).

18. T. Rogers, *Buddhaghosa's Parables, translated from Burmese by Captain T. Rogers, R. E. with an Introduction, containing Buddha's Dhammapada, translated from Pāli by F. Max Müller* (London, 1870).

19. Rogers, liii.

after spending some years in Burma where he had learned the vernacular.²⁰ Müller also wrote that he had hoped to find that the Burmese versions of the stories were translations of the Pāli stories, attributed to Buddhaghosa, but was disappointed to find that they were not, being rather “abstracts” as he put it. Moreover, he indicated that he “felt disappointed at the character of the Burmese translation” as they were vernacular stories, not translations of Pāli stories, he considered them to be of limited value but still interesting in terms of the study of Buddhism and of fables.²¹ The first story in the Captain Roger’s translation is on how an elderly monk, called “Kakkhupala Mahathera” (*Cakkhupala Mahāthera*), became blind and stepped on some ants killing them, but as there was no intention of ill will he was blameless, and this is said to explain the meaning of the first verses in the *Dhammapada*.²² It appears likely that Müller’s translation of the verse as a moral teaching was in fact influenced by his familiarity with this Burmese vernacular version of the story.

In the introduction to his 1869 translation, Müller refers on a number of occasions to Gogerly. The first reference is included in his account of previous translations he has studied, he gives pride of place to Fausbøll, then mentions Weber, Gogerly, Upham, Burnouf, and “others.” In a footnote, however, he refers to the mention of Gogerly in Hardy’s 1850 publication, not Gogerly’s translation itself.²³ Moreover, when Müller does refer to Gogerly, it is for his publications such as his translation of the *Brahmajāla sutta* and his researches on the question of the status of a Creator God in Buddhism.²⁴ This was an issue which greatly concerned not only missionaries like Gogerly and Spence, but also Müller himself, who in 1870 said, while discussing the Buddhist denial of a Creator God, “In no religion are we so constantly reminded of our own as in Buddhism, and yet in no religion has man been drawn away so far from truth as in the religion of Buddha.”²⁵ The only other reference to Gogerly in the introduction to Müller’s translation is in regard to the name of the text; Müller says that Gogerly translated it as “The Footsteps of Religion” and Spence Hardy translated it as “The Paths of Religion,” which he says he broadly agrees with, but then points out that in his view the best translation is “Path of Virtue,” the title he himself adopts.²⁶ In the only clear reference to Gogerly as a translator he says,

Gogerly, though not to be trusted in all his translations, may generally be taken as a faithful representative of the tradition of Buddhists in Ceylon, and we may therefore take it for granted that the priests of that island take *Dhammapada* to mean, as

20. Rogers, v.

21. Rogers, viii.

22. Rogers, 1–11.

23. Max Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Religion; with a paper on Buddhist Nihilism, and a translation of the Dhammapada or “Path of Virtue”* (New York: Charles Scribner and Company, 1872), 152.

24. Müller, *Lectures*, 172.

25. Max Müller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion: Four lectures delivered in the Royal Institute in 1870* (London: Longman & Green, 1882), 171.

26. Müller, *Lectures*, 186–87.

Gogerly translates it, the vestiges of religion, or, from a different point of view, the path of virtue.²⁷

It is important to note that he understands Gogerly as presenting a faithful translation of how Buddhist monks themselves understood the verses at the time. This is, I suspect, however, a form of veiled criticism, as Müller regarded the text and the commentary as the true arbiters of the meaning of the text, not contemporary Singhalese understandings.

In his often illuminating notes on his translations, he refers only once to Gogerly. He comments on how Gogerly and D'Alwis translate "mind precedes action" in regard to the first verse.²⁸ It seems though that possibly he is referring to Gogerly as cited in Spence,²⁹ rather than Gogerly himself. The next mention of Gogerly is in a footnote to the title of chapter two, *appamāda*, which he noted was translated as "religion" by Gogerly.³⁰ He also mentions Gogerly's "Lecture on Buddhism" in regard to the meaning of *nāma-rūpa* in verse 221.³¹ There are no further mentions of Gogerly at all in his notes to his translation. He occasionally refers to Hardy, and a few times to D'Alwis, but mostly to Fausbøll, Burnouf, and Weber. Indeed, he often compares how Fausbøll and Weber have translated a verse, but never after the first verse mentions Gogerly's version. So the extent to which Gogerly was an influence on Müller in this translation seems to have been very marginal indeed.

In 1878, two more translations were published, a French translation by Fernand Hù,³² which I will not deal with here, and an English translation by Samuel Beal from a Chinese version of the *Dhammapada*. Beal refers to two previous translations, by Fausbøll and Müller, and in a footnote mentions that Mr Gogerly has also translated 350 of its verses; however, his source for this is Hardy's 1850 publication, not Gogerly himself, so it seems possible that he had not seen Gogerly's translation.³³

The next stage in the development of *Dhammapada* translations took place in 1881 when Müller published a further revised version of his translation in the Sacred Books of the East Series.³⁴ The introduction to the 1881 edition of the translation was also a substantially new work, including a long account of the history of the Pāli canon; however, it still contained some similar sections to the 1869 introduction. Gogerly again is mentioned in relation to the title, but only in passing in a section somewhat similar to that from 1869 about the title of the work.³⁵ In new material, though in regard to the translation, he

27. Müller, Lectures, 187.

28. Müller, Lectures, 193.

29. Spence, 28.

30. Müller, Lectures, 200.

31. Müller, Lectures, 256.

32. Fernand Hù, *Le Dhammapada: avec introduction et notes par Fernand Hù, suivi du sutra en 42 articles, traduit du Tibétain, avec introd. et notes par Léon Feer* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1878).

33. Samuel Beal, *Texts from the Buddhist canon, commonly known as Dhammapada, with accompanying narratives. Translated from the Chinese* (London: Trübner & Co, 1878), 1.

34. Max Müller (ed.), *The Sacred Books of the East, Vol. X: The Dhammapada Translated from the Pāli by F. Max Müller and The Sutta-Nipāta Translated from the Pāli by V. Fausbøll* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1881).

35. Müller, Sacred Books, xlvii.

indicated that it was a revision of his 1870 translation, revised in response to reviews and incorporating the latest scholarship, and having consulted two versions published in 1878, the French translation by Fernand Hû and Samuel Beal's translation from the Chinese.³⁶ He also repeats his mention of Gogerly having translated some sections of the work, but again mentions only the reference to this in Spence's 1850 publication.

There are several interesting differences in footnotes, in regard to verses 153–154. In the 1881 edition he mentions Gogerly's and Spence Hardy's translations,³⁷ whereas in the 1872 edition he did not mention Gogerly's translation; however, again he seems to be referring to Spence quoting Gogerly, rather than Gogerly's translation itself. I will also show below that there is hardly any mention of Gogerly's translations in the footnotes to Müller's translation, which shows that there is very little evidence for Gogerly's translation having influenced Müller to any great degree. Two possible explanations for this might be proposed. First, he may not have compared his translations to it because he saw it as not worth mentioning as it was not a scholarly translation as he saw Gogerly as relying too heavily on contemporary Sri Lankan tradition. Second, it is possible that he had never actually seen it. There is no way of telling for certain, he clearly had read a number of Gogerly's articles, so he might well have been able to have read it; however, Müller also indicated elsewhere that Gogerly's works were not well known in Europe, and in a lecture he gave on Buddhism in 1862, he said regarding Pāli studies in Ceylon after the death of Burnouf:

The exploration of the Ceylonese literature has since been taken up again by the Rev. D. J. Gogerly (died 1862), whose essays are unfortunately scattered about in Singhalese periodicals and little known in Europe; and by the Rev. Spence Hardy, for twenty years Wesleyan missionary in Ceylon. His two works, "Eastern Monachism" and the "Manual of Buddhism," are full of interesting matter, but as they are chiefly derived from Singhalese, and even more modern sources, they require to be used with caution.³⁸

So while basically Gogerly's was the first English translation of the *Dhammapada* due to it appearing only in Singhalese publications, it remained largely unknown in Europe. The conclusion that I would draw from this is that despite Gogerly's translation being a significant step in the translation of the *Dhammapada*, it never attracted much public attention.

Gogerly's and Max Müller's Translations Compared

There is not space in a paper like this to reproduce the whole of Gogerly's translation. Instead I will take here some key verses and then compare them with two other translations. The first will be Müller's translation, which has been discussed above and, as a kind of control, the best modern academic translation available, which was by K. R. Norman and was first published in 1997.

36. Müller, *Sacred Books*, xlix.

37. Müller, *Sacred Books*, 43.

38. Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop: Essays on the Science of Religion, Volume I* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, And Co., 1876), 192.

For the purposes of illustrating the nature of the translations, I will start with the first two verses, verses 153–154, and verse 183, all of which are regarded as significant in the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition. In this way, I will hopefully show the tenor of Gogerly's translation and notes and how it varies from later translations.

1. Mind precedes action. The motive is chief: actions proceed from the mind. If any one speak or act from a corrupt mind, suffering will follow the action, as the wheel follows the lifted foot of the ox.
2. Mind precedes action. The motive is chief: actions proceed from the mind. If any one speak or act from a pure mind, enjoyment will follow the action, as the shadow attends the substance.³⁹

The same verses read in Müller's translation.

1. All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage.
2. All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him.⁴⁰

Norman's translation is as follows.

1. Mental phenomena are preceded by mind, have mind as their leader, are made by mind. If one acts or speaks with an evil mind, from that sorrow follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox.
2. Mental phenomena are preceded by mind, have mind as their leader, are made of mind. If one acts or speaks with a pure mind, from that happiness follows him, like a shadow not going away.⁴¹

It is notable that Gogerly cites as authority for his translation, what he was told and in his note on the verse said:

This verse is frequently quoted to show that no action is criminal unless it proceeds from an evil motive, and it is illustrated by the case of a blind priest, who, while walking, unconsciously trod on a number of insects and killed them. His case was reported to Buddha, who decided that as the evil was not intended the priest was guiltless.⁴²

Müller, however, bases his authority on his own scholarship, and in discussing the verse and arguing against Gogerly's understanding dismisses both it, and tradition based on the commentary attributed to Buddhaghōṣa, in favour of his own insight.

I do not deny that this may have been the traditional interpretation, at all events since the days of Buddhaghōṣa, but the very legend quoted by Buddhaghōṣa in

39. Bishop, 250.

40. Müller, Lectures, 193, and Müller 1881, 1–2.

41. Norman, 1.

42. Bishop, 250.

illustration of this verse shows that it's simpler and purely moral interpretation was likewise supported by tradition on Buddhaghōṣa's commentary.⁴³

Verses 153–154 are also often cited as according to tradition they were the first verses uttered by the Buddha upon his enlightenment. Gogerly translated,

153. Painful are continued transmigrations: therefore traversing a variety of states of existence seeking for the architect of the house I found him not:

154. But now I see the architect and say, "Again thou shalt not build the house. Thy rafters are all broken. Thy roof timbers scattered abroad. My mind having attained to the complete extinction of desire,* I shall no more be reproduced."

*Visaṅkhāra-Nirvāṇa.⁴⁴

Müller adopted what seems to us now an odd choice of word to express the idea of "house;" he used the word "tabernacle."

153–154. Without ceasing shall I run through a course of many births,

Looking for the maker of this tabernacle, — and painful is birth again and again. But now, maker of the tabernacle, thou hast been seen; thou shalt not make up this tabernacle again. All thy rafters are broken, thy ridge-pole is sundered; the mind, being sundered; has attained to the extinction of all desires.⁴⁵

This is slightly different in the 1881 version, and it is notable that in one case, the translation is now closer to Gogerly, apparently incorporating his footnote, that *visaṅkhara* is to be understood as meaning *nirvāṇa*.

Müller also provided an extensive footnote in the 1881 edition, which shows the ways in which he was comparing translations, and is one of the rare instances where he mentions Gogerly; in part, the note reads as follows:

Gogerly translated: Through various transmigrations I must travel, if I do not discover the builder whom I seek. Spence Hardy: Through many different births I have run (to me not having found), seeking the architect of the desire-resembling house/Fausboll:

* Multiplices generationis revolutiones percurreram, non inveniens, domus (corporis) fabricatorem quaerens/And again (p. 322): Multarum generationum revolutio mihi sub-eunda esset, nisi invenissem domus fabricatorem/Childers: I have run through the revolution of countless births, seeking the architect of this dwelling and finding him not D'Alwis: Through transmigrations of numerous births have I run, not discovering, (though) seeking the house-builder.⁴⁶

Norman translates these verses like this.

153. I have run through the journeying-on of numerous births, without respite, seeking the house-maker; birth again and again is painful.

154. O house-maker, you are seen. You will not make the house again. All these rafters are broken, the house-ridge is destroyed. The mind, set on the destruction (of material things), has attained the termination of cravings.⁴⁷

Finally, verse 183 is a very succinct teaching regarding the essence of Buddhism, and Harris reports it was often cited by informants in nineteenth-

43. Müller, *Sacred Books*, 2.

44. Bishop, 275–76.

45. Müller, *Lectures*, 236.

46. Müller, *Sacred Books*, 42–43.

47. Norman, 22.

century Sri Lanka in regard to the Buddhist teachings. These then are Gogerly's, Müller's, and Norman's translations of this popular verse.

183. The instructions of the Buddha are: Abstain from all vice. Perform virtuous actions. Purify the mind.⁴⁸

183. Not to commit any sin, to do good, and to purify one's mind, that is the teaching of all the Awakened.⁴⁹

183. The avoidance of all evil; the undertaking of good; the cleansing of one's mind; this is the teaching of the awakened ones.⁵⁰

These verses give a sense of the tone of Gogerly's translation, and to my mind show that it is actually quite a fair translation of the *Dhammapada*.

In some cases, he sometimes translates words in ways that are perhaps simply wrong. He takes *appamāda*, the title of the second chapter, to mean religion, but it means something more like vigilance or attention. Other instances of wrong identification of words are also present, but I suggest not really very many. However, in many cases, his translation is wrong in a way that indicates he was told something, which is now regarded as "wrong." He translated verses 168–169 like this:

168 Be not weary of the alms you receive where you are,* but walk in the paths of righteousness. That will produce happiness both in this world, and that which is to come.

169. Walk in the path of righteousness, not in those of unrighteousness.+ That will produce happiness both in this world, and that which is to come.

* Pass not by the alms of the poor, although the food be coarse, in order to get better food from the rich. The precept is to go in order from door to door and receive and eat such things as are given.

+ This is understood as referring to receiving alms from door to door, as expressive of complete control over the appetite: the coarser food to be received with the same pleasure as that which is most delicate.⁵¹

Müller, and almost all subsequent translators, translated it as:

168. Rouse thyself! do not be idle ! Follow the law of virtue! The virtuous rests in bliss in this world and in the next.

169. Follow the law of virtue; do not follow that of sin. The virtuous rests in bliss in this world and in the next.⁵²

I would suggest that the reason for this, radically different, translation by Gogerly must be that it was given to him by the monks, or ex monks, who were helping him to learn Pāli. So when Gogerly says, "This is understood," he means by the monks who were teaching him, and what we are reading therefore in his translation is their explanations of the text. The well-known twentieth-century Sri Lankan scholar monk Nārada Thera also translated these verses like Gogerly and said this was on the basis of the traditional commentary.⁵³ This then makes

48. Bishop, 281.

49. Müller, Lectures, 245.

50. Norman, 28.

51. Bishop, 279.

52. Müller, Sacred Books, 43.

53. Nārada Thera, *The Dhammapada* (Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary Society, 1978 [1963]), 153–54.

it almost certain that Gogerly's translation is actually reflecting what his informants told him the verse meant, and they were relying on the commentary attributed to Buddhaghosa to interpret it. The alternative understanding, however, was first developed by Müller and now dominates in almost all Western translations; only a few Sri Lankan translations, like Nārada Thera's, still follow the interpretation in the commentary attributed to Buddhaghosa.

To what extent Müller's translation of these verses can be described as an improvement on Gogerly's is not clear. In terms of grammar and vocabulary, Müller's understanding of the grammar of Pāli was certainly an improvement on Gogerly's, but for the most part, there is no substantial change due to that, while Müller's choice of vocabulary seems as stilted, if not more so, than Gogerly's English vocabulary.

My conclusion is that despite the shortcomings in Gogerly's translation, it is extremely important. We know that Gogerly was learning Pāli from monks in Matara in the 1830s⁵⁴ and that he published this translation in 1840. Therefore, Gogerly's translation is representative of the way the *Dhammapada* was understood in Sri Lanka before the Buddhist revival.

Müller's understanding, on the other hand, is based on his own construction of what the teachings of the Buddha were, an understanding created in a context divorced from actual contact with the living tradition.

What makes Gogerly particularly interesting is then the ways in which his translation varies from modern translations. The most important of these is the way his understanding shows a fairly complete conflation of the text and the commentary, whereas nowadays scholars and monks try to distinguish the two. I would argue that since the development of Modern Buddhism, this distinction has become vital. It is a response to initial Western attacks on Buddhism and in particular to scholars like Müller who sought to distinguish "original" Buddhism from popular Buddhism; however, Gogerly's translation appears to show an earlier attitude where the text, the commentary, and the related stories, were regarded as unitary whole.

Verses 13 and 14 can be considered as examples of the way that Gogerly understands the text in terms of the story, which explains the verses.

13. As the rain completely penetrates the ill-thatched roof, so will lust completely subdue the unmeditative mind.

14. As the rain cannot penetrate the well-covered roof, so lust cannot subdue the contemplative mind.⁵⁵

Two issues are apparent here. First, why the terms *abhāvitam* and *subhāvitam* are translated as "unmeditative" and "contemplative," but they are generally now taken as meaning "undeveloped" and "well developed." Gogerly's reading fits with the story attributed to Buddhaghosa about how these verses relate to Nanda not meditating due to being preoccupied with thoughts of his bride and then the Buddha finding a way to make him meditate.⁵⁶

54. Harris, 62.

55. Bishop, 251–52.

56. Nārada, 16.

If we seek to contextualise why this was happening in terms of contemporary scholarly debate we also see shifting ideas playing out. Philip Almond, in his 1988 study of the British discovery of Buddhism in the nineteenth century, refers a number of times to Gogerly and Spence, but does not take their methods of scholarship as a distinguishing factor. For Almond, what is important about Gogerly and Spence is that as missionary scholars, they stood at the pole of understanding Buddhism that saw it, not as a religion, but as a nihilistic philosophy that denied the existence of a Creator God.⁶² For Donald Lopez, in his 1995 paper on the history of the study of the Theravāda, what is critical about Spence (Gogerly again does not get a mention) is that he and other non-academic scholars of vernacular literature ended up as second-class scholars in the eyes of Western academics who privileged the study of Pāli texts over vernacular texts.⁶³ Most recently, Elizabeth Harris, in her 2007 study of the

63. Donald Lopez (ed.), *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 41–44.

encounter between Buddhism and the British in nineteenth-century Sri Lanka, has situated Gogerly and Spence within a dialogue about how traditional Sri Lankan forms of Buddhism interacted with the Western missionary tradition.⁶⁴ She argues, persuasively, that what is often now called Protestant, or modern, Buddhism “was neither the creation of the West nor the East, but had developed through the interpenetration of the two” and that vital to understanding this is the realisation that there were multiple “witnesses” to Buddhist tradition in Sri Lanka itself.⁶⁵

How then does Gogerly’s translation of the *Dhammapada* fit into this debate? It shows another side in this debate, how multiple streams of Western constructions of Buddhism also existed. Lopez’s dichotomy between academic Pāli studies and popular vernacular studies mirrors another split in Western tradition. This is the split between scholarly understandings and understandings informed by contact with Buddhist tradition. Müller’s translation exemplifies academic translations, Gogerly’s understandings gained by contact with the tradition.

The *Dhammapada* as a World Text

After Müller published his edition, its popularity soared, and soon more and more versions began to appear. It is possible that it was seen by some in some senses a Buddhist Bible, a single representative text for Buddhism, and this may be why its importance became elevated as it was seen as fulfilling a similar role in Buddhism to the Bible in Christianity. Indeed, in that it was a collection of saying attributed to the main teacher of Buddhism, it was possible to see it as a direct parallel to the sayings of Jesus in the New Testament.

The movement to stress the similarity between Christian and Buddhist teachings is also apparent in works such as the 1896 *The Gospel of the Buddha* by Paul Carus (1852–1919). Indeed, in its language it reads like a Christian text “REJOICE at the glad tidings! Buddha, our Lord, has found the root of all evil. He has shown us the way of salvation.”⁶⁶

The notion of finding parallels between Gospel texts and Buddhist texts also fascinated Albert J. Edmunds, who worked with Carus, and between 1900 and 1904, he published eight selections of parallel texts from the Gospel and Buddhist texts in Chicago’s *Open Court Magazine* and then in 1914 published a volume on this theme with a Japanese collaborator.⁶⁷

In 1902, Edmunds also published a translation of the *Dhammapada*, which showed how sophisticated studies of Buddhism had already become by the beginning of the twentieth century, and also points to their shortcomings. He was aware that the verses in the *Dhammapada* were partly selections from Pali canonical texts, while others were also found in works like the *Mahābhārata*

64. Harris, 3.

65. Harris, 163.

66. Carus, 1.

67. Albert Edmunds, and Anesaki, M., *Buddhist and Christian Gospels: now first compared from originals: being Gospel parallels from Pali texts reprinted with additions* (Philadelphia: Innes & Sons, 1914).

and the laws of Manu. He also points out a number of things which are of note: it was one of the documents in the first printing of Buddhist scriptures in China in 972, and its 1855 Pali edition by Vincent Fausbøll was the first complete Pāli text to be printed in Europe. He also praised the text saying, "If ever an immortal classic was produced upon the continent of Asia, it is this."⁶⁸ His translation, however, is hampered by two things. First, his having tried to "convey some of the flavour of the original by using an archaic and poetic style." Second, by the nature of the interpretation placed on the text in the translation. He calls the first section "antitheses" and starts by translating the first verse like this.

1. Creatures from mind their character derive,
Mind marshalled are they, and mind made:
If with a mind corrupt one speak or act,
Him doth pain follow,
As the wheel the beast of burden's foot.
2. Creatures from mind their character derive,
Mind marshalled are they, and mind made:
If with a pure mind one speak or act,
Him doth happiness follow,
Even as a shadow that declineth not.⁶⁹

The most striking thing here is the translation of *dhmma* as "creatures." In a footnote, Edmunds explains this is how Dr Carus translates the line, on the basis of Fausbøll's translation of *dhmma* into Latin as *naturae*, and understanding it to mean that the character of all creatures is dependent on their minds. However, he also points out that the Japanese understand it to mean "things have mind as if it were their master."⁷⁰

Edmund's preference for a Western interpretation over understandings current in the Buddhist world points to the context that this conception of Buddhism, and the *Dhammapada*, was developing in. It was seen as a representative text of a Buddhism that was a moral doctrine akin to Christian teachings.

There have been four distinct trends in the development of interest in the *Dhammapada* since 1950. There are Hindu versions, showing how the Buddha's philosophical teachings are compatible with orthodox Hinduism, esoteric versions, showing the universality of the teachings, South East Asian Theravada Buddhists versions, which show how the Buddha's moral teachings can form an ethical basis for society and versions aimed at Western Meditation, or *dhmma*, practitioners.

In 1950 S. Radhakrishnan (1888–1975), an Indian philosopher, scholar, and statesman who was the first President of India, published a distinctively Hindu interpretation of the *Dhammapada*. In his introduction he put forward a view, which is typical of how Hindus see Buddhist teachings, that the Buddha's teachings were derived from the *Upaniṣads*.⁷¹ Indeed, in 1956 Radhakrishnan

68. Edmunds, *Hymns*, x.

69. Edmunds, *Hymns*, 1.

70. Edmunds, *Hymns*, 5.

71. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, *The Dhammapada* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 39.

went as far as saying that “The Buddha did not feel that he was announcing a new religion. He was born, grew up, and died a Hindu.”⁷²

It is within this context, seeing the Buddha as a Hindu teacher of Upanishadic teachings that Radhakrishnan interprets the *Dhammapada*. He translates the first verse as follows.

(1) (The mental) natures are the result of what we have thought, are chieftained by our thoughts, are made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, sorrow follows him (as a consequence) even as the wheel follows the foot of the drawer (i.e. the ox which draws the cart).⁷³

In a footnote he then summarises the import of the first two verses as that the Buddha had said “our hope of salvation lies in the regeneration of our nature. We may all attain to happiness and serenity if we build up our character, and strengthen our moral fibre.”⁷⁴ This is then a moralistic interpretation of the verses stressing “moral fibre” as the basis of the Buddha’s teachings revealed in the *Dhammapada*.

The influential Sri Lankan monk, scholar and Buddhist campaigner, Nārada Thera (1898–1983) published a number of translations of the *Dhammapada* from 1940 onwards. The translation he first published in 1963 is still widely available today. In the introduction to its second edition from 1971, he notes it has now been expanded to include relevant stories and notes and that he has “taken care not to deviate from the traditional commentorial interpretations.”⁷⁵

Evil Begets Evil

1. Mind is the forerunner of (all evil) states. Mind is chief; mind-made are they. If one speaks or acts with wicked mind, because of that, suffering follows one, even as the wheel follows the hoof of the draught-ox.

Good begets Good

2. Mind is the forerunner of (all good) states. Mind is chief; mind-made are they. If one speaks or acts with a pure mind, because of that, happiness follows one, even as one’s shadow that never leaves.⁷⁶

He notes that *dhamma* has many meanings and says that in this case it is used to refer to “the sense of *Kamma* or *Karma* which denotes volition (*cetana*) and the other accompanying mental states found in any particular moral or immoral type of consciousness. In this verse, the term *Dhamma* refers to evil mental states (*cetasikas*).”⁷⁷ I would suggest that this kind of association of this verse with moral values is one that would fit well with how a monk would address a lay audience, emphasising the importance of *sīla*, morality, over insight into the mind. This is important as it shows one modern Theravāda interpretation of the *Dhammapada* as aimed at a lay audience.

Thomas Byrom’s 1976 verse rendering has been highly influential as it began the current round of “renderings” of the *Dhammapada* aimed mainly at

72. P. Bapat (ed.), *2500 Years of Buddhism, with a foreword by S. Radhakrishnan* (Delhi: Publications Division of the Government of India, 1997), ix.

73. Radhakrishnan, 58–59.

74. Radhakrishnan, 59.

75. Nārada, xiii.

76. Nārada, 1–5.

77. Nārada, 3.

the American *dharma* practitioner. Byrom mentions in his introduction his indebtedness to “Müller, Wagiswara and Saunders, Woodward, Bhagwat, ‘J.A.’ Buddhadatta Mahathera, Mascaro and Radhakrishnan.”⁷⁸ The style of Byrom’s translation fits better with the current aesthetic for spiritual translations in the West but owes much to Müller’s translation. It is as accurate as many of the other translations, but unless you are well informed about Buddhist teachings, you arrive at the same kind of moral understanding as you would derive from Müller.

1. We are what we think.
All that we are arises with our thoughts.
With our thoughts we make the world.
Speak or act with an impure mind
And trouble will follow you
As the wheel follows the ox that draws the cart.
2. We are what we think.
All that we are arises with our thoughts.
With our thoughts we make the world.
Speak or act with a pure mind
And happiness will follow you
As your shadow, unshakable.⁷⁹

In 1986 Eknath Eswaran published a version, which became a very popular paperback edition. He simply said nothing in his introduction to his translation about previous translations, or about how his translation was made. It is also evident that his work has to be seen in the context of Hindu readings of the *Dhammapada*. This is clear not only from his own, Hindu background, but also in the way that in his introduction he tries to situate it within the tradition of the Upanishads. This is how he translated the first verses.

1. Our life is shaped by our mind; we become what we think. Suffering follows an evil thought as the wheels of a cart follow the oxen that draw it.
2. Our life is shaped by our mind; we become what we think. Joy follows a pure thought like a shadow that never leaves.⁸⁰

A major development in scholarship about the *Dhammapada* was the publication in 1987 of a version by Carter and Palihawardana, which included not only the text itself but a translation of the commentary on it as well, which dates from the fifth century CE.⁸¹ Their book also contains a study of the history of *Dhammapada* commentaries in Sri Lanka and also comments that it leaves some areas unstudied, such as whether “the commentary ‘reduces’ the sense of *Dhammapada* verses and offers a narrow monastic meaning, addressed primarily to *bhikkhus* (Buddhist monks), or a sectarian meaning attuned exclusively to the teachings of the Theravāda school.”

78. Thomas Byrom, *Dhammapada: the sayings of the Buddha: a new rendering by Thomas Byrom Photography by Sandra Weiner with a foreword by Ram Dass* (London: Wildwood House, 1976), vii.

79. Byrom, 3.

80. Eknath Eswaran, *The Dhammapada* (London: Arkana, 1986), 78.

81. J. Carter, and M. Palihawardana, *The Dhammapada* (New York & London: Oxford University Press, 1987), 4. See also Norman’s review of this publication, K. R. Norman “On Translating the *Dhammapada*,” *Buddhist Studies Review* 6, no. 2 (1989): 153–65.

Their translation is as follows.

1. Preceded by perception are mental states,
For them is perception supreme,
From perception they have sprung.
If, with perception polluted, one speaks or acts,
Thence suffering follows
As the wheel the draught ox's foot.
2. Preceded by perception are mental states,
For them is perception supreme,
From perception they have sprung.
If, with tranquil perception, one speaks or acts,
Thence ease follows
As a shadow that never departs.⁸²

The exhaustive commentary and notes show how the word-by-word commentary is structured and the traditional Sri Lankan commentarial understanding of the text. They translate *mano* as “perception,” but the commentary explains it means here specifically the negative mind state in the mind of the person in the story that goes with the first verse, and the positive mind state in the person in the story that goes with the second verse in the Sri Lankan tradition.⁸³

In 1997 K. R. Norman, the leading British Pāli scholar of the second half of the twentieth century, published a translation of the *Dhammapada*. It represents the best understanding of the text as seen by an outstanding Western academic and is very much in the tradition of Müller's translation. Norman's translation of the first verses has already been quoted above so I will not repeat it here.

Typical of the current generation of popular Western *Dhammapada* versions is one which was published in 2002 by Jack Maguire. As Max Müller's translation is now out of copyright, people are free to republish it and, indeed, to alter it. Maguire describes the text in his book as “based on one published by the eminent scholar Max Müller in 1870, which captures well the poetic flavour of the original.”⁸⁴ But he mentions that he has made some revisions based on his study of the Pāli texts and other translations or adaptations “of particular distinction, including those of Irving Babbitt (1936), Juan Mascaro (1973), Eknath Eswaran (1985), Thomas Byrom (1993), and Thomas Cleary (1994).”⁸⁵ One aspect he mentions that he has revised is “changes have been made in favor of gender neutrality, even though the *Dhammapada* was originally addressed primarily to monks.”⁸⁶

To understand the full context of Maguire's translation, we have to consider that it is part of the “Skylight Illuminations series” edited by Andrew Harvey. According to the inside cover of the book, titles already published range from *The Book of Mormon* to *Hasidic Tales* and the Indian classics include not only

82. Carter and Palihawadana, 13.

83. Carter and Palihawadana, 89–94.

84. Jack Macguire, *Dhammapada: Annotated and explained* (Vermont: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2005), xxi.

85. Maguire, xxi–xxii.

86. Maguire, xxii.

the *Dhammapada* but the *Bhagavad Gita* and Selections from the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, where the aim it says is to offer readers “an enjoyable entry into the great classic texts of the world’s spiritual traditions.” So it seems reasonable to argue the publishers come from a kind of contemporary esoteric tradition. Maguire, however, comes from another tradition, and he acknowledges his teacher John Daido Looi, Roshi, and the assistance of the Zen Mountain Monastery in New York, which is suggestive of the way this text has become popular among Zen practitioners in the USA.

The growth in interest in the *Dhammapada* among Zen practitioners is also evident in Geri Larkin’s 2003 version, as Larkin is the guiding teacher of the Still Point Zen Buddhist Temple in Detroit.⁸⁷ She describes her approach as “rendering,” a common American term used to mean an adaptation made from an existing translation. For instance, she turns all the pronouns in verse three into “he” and all of those in verse four into “she.” Regarding such changes, she says a modernised version was needed as “all the pronouns in the versions I knew were masculine, and that just didn’t work for contemporary life. And some of the metaphors used made me squint in concentration as I tried to understand their teaching. The version we used as our starting point — our baseline *Dhammapada*, if you will — is The Illustrated *Dhammapada*, by Venerable Weragoda Sarada Maha Thero.”⁸⁸

1–2. Our minds create everything.
If we speak or act with an impure mind suffering is as certain
as the wheel of a bike that moves
when we start to pedal. In the same way
if we speak or act with a pure mind
happiness will be ours — a shadow that never leaves. (Larkin, 2003: 1)

In 2005, Gil Fronsdal, a well-known meditation teacher, published a new translation of the *Dhammapada*, and in his preface to this he explained why he felt his translation was needed. He mentions over fifty translations and how they often go back to the Max Müller’s translation which first appeared in 1870, but that how “many succeeding ‘translations’ are simply adaptations of Müller’s work, often by people unfamiliar with Pāli. Some of these are beautiful, even inspiring, but not accurate. At the same time the language of some of the most accurate translations can be clumsy or opaque.”⁸⁹ He also points out many of the problems I have highlighted here.

Hindu concepts appear in English translations done in India; Theravāda viewpoints have shaped translations made in such countries as Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand; and in the West, translations have often reflected Western viewpoints and Western preferences and interpretations of Buddhism.⁹⁰

87. Geri Larkin, *The Still Point Dhammapada: living the Buddha’s essential teachings* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 2003), xiv.

88. Larkin, xvi–xvii.

89. Gill Fronsdal, *The Dhammapada: A new translation of the Buddhist classic with annotations with an foreword by Jack Kornfield* (Boston & London: Shambhala, 2005), xi.

90. Fronsdal, xii.

He also comments on how he has tried to make an accurate translation, but is also aware that some of his translations, such as “experience” for *dhmma* in the opening verses, may be controversial, and that in other places he has translated it as “Dharma teaching” and “line of Dharma.” Fronsda also adopts a “gender-neutral” approach to pronouns, due to which he has used the plural, that is, they, or “used male and female pronouns more or less randomly.” The result of this strategy is often the same as in Larkin, for instance, both use “he” in verse three and “she” in verse four. It is notable though that Fronsda is the most reflective author on the issue of how he relates to his translation pointing out that it reflects three perspectives, a Buddhist practitioner, a Buddhist teacher, and a scholar. He then goes on to mention those people whom he had consulted during the preparation of the text, including many notable American academics and Buddhist teachers. Moreover, not only does he present a list of important translations of the *Dhammapada* in an appendix at the end, but also he includes a discussion of *Dhammapada* literature in Prakrit, Sanskrit, and Chinese sources. Fronsda’s translation of the first verses is as follows.

All experience is preceded by the mind,
 Led by the mind,
 Made by mind. Speak or act with a corrupted mind,
 And suffering follows
 As the wagon wheel follows the hoof of the ox.
 All experience is preceded by the mind,
 Led by the mind,
 Made by mind. Speak or act with a peaceful mind,
 And happiness follows
 Like a never-departing shadow.⁹¹

Conclusion

I have tried to show the ways in which the *Dhammapada* has been employed by different groups from 1840 onwards to represent aspects of Buddhism. Ultimately, I do not think there will ever be such a thing as one correct way to understand a text like the *Dhammapada*. Its meanings are contingent on the audience it is addressing. However, tracing the story of its translations reveals three important points. First, I have shown the ways in which different translators have understood the *Dhammapada* by contextualising it within their own thought systems. Second, I have demonstrated the critical role that Max Müller and the nineteenth-century translators played in establishing a tradition of translating the *Dhammapada*. Third, the existence of this translation tradition for the *Dhammapada* has not only enabled translators in their understanding of the text, but it has also constrained them in how they have interpreted the text. In conclusion then, I would argue that the existence of a tradition of continually translating the *Dhammapada* has had a very significant impact. Indeed, it has to a considerable degree helped to enshrine the centrality of the *Dhammapada* as the text, par excellence, which is representative of Buddhism as a world religion.

91. Fronsda, 1.