



## Translation of *The Sūtra on Three States of Mind* (Toh 253)

Artur PRZYBYŚLAWSKI

**ARTUR PRZYBYŚLAWSKI**  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4502-8712>.

Katedra Porównawczych Studiów Cywilizacji UJ

**E-MAIL:** [artur.przybyslawski@uj.edu.pl](mailto:artur.przybyslawski@uj.edu.pl)

The translated text *Tridharmaka-nāma-sūtra* (Tib. *chos gsum pa zhes bya ba'i mdo*)<sup>1</sup> belong to the General Sutra Collection (*mdo sde*). The text *chos gsum pa zhes bya ba'i mdo* has not so far been investigated in Western Buddhism, and has not been translated into any European languages except French (cf. Feer 1883, 193–5). The preliminary research starts with investigating and comparing the most important editions of the text. There is no Sanskrit original of the text, and neither is there a Chinese translation. It seems that the text does not have a Pāli parallel either. The basis for translation is the Degé edition (with consultation of the Degé Pedurma (*dpe bsdur ma*) comparative edition and *bka' 'gyur stog pho brang bris ma*).

The text of *chos gsum pa zhes bya ba'i mdo* is a typical sutra of the first Turning of the Wheel of Dharma. The topic of the text is only *karma*, and thus it should be qualified as Vinaya, but similar topics are also discussed in Sūtra. The text was translated by those scholars who are associated mainly with Vinaya texts in the Kangyur. According to the colophon, the sūtra was translated by the Indian paṇḍita Jinamitra and Devacandra. They were active at the time of King Trisong Detsen. The first is known for his

<sup>1</sup> Location of the text in the Degé Kangyur: vol. 66 (*mdo sde, za*), ff. 69v.2–70v.3.

translations of such texts as the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (together with Jñānagarbha and Devacandra), *Uṣṇīṣavijayā Dhāraṇī*, etc. The text was revised and published by Kawa Paltsek (*ska ba dpal brtsegs*). Since the first two were most probably contemporaries of the latter, the time of the translation can be dated at the 8th century.

*The Sūtra on Three States of Mind* is a concise text on karma – in fact, a monologue of Buddha Śākyamuni – who explains the karmic results having to do with three unwholesome and three wholesome states of mind (*chos gsum pa*). The first three are: attachment, stinginess, lack of attentiveness. The second three are their antidotes and exact opposites. The text stresses their importance in relation to being able to uphold discipline, and also points out the difference in karmic results of actions carried out by people in different life situations (being rich, being in difficult financial situations, etc.). The three wholesome states of mind are called true (*dam pa*) and in this way they are explained as activities of the true person (*skyes bu dam pa*). The sūtra is thus closely related to *The Noble Sūtra of the True Person* (translated by our team before for the 84000 project), explaining the practice of five types of generosity.<sup>2</sup> One can say that the practices of generosity<sup>3</sup> explained in the *The Noble Sūtra of the True Person* are explained here from the point of view of states of mind motivating the actual behavior.

There are no commentaries on this sūtra, and so far we did not come across any references to it in other Buddhist texts. The only exception is the summary of the sutra in: Pad dkar bzang po, *mDo sde spyi'i rnam bzhag* (cf. bibliography). The text does not comment on the content of the sūtra but quotes the sūtra with quite a few variant readings (also a slightly different title) which can suggest the existence of some other version of the text than the one in Degé Kangyur (which will be the object of further research). The sūtra so far does not have a history of exegesis.

The Tibetan text is relatively simple and has a repetitive structure. Most of it is, from a grammatical point of view, pretty straightforward. Sometimes the form of the sentences aims at sticking closely to the Sanskrit original, which affects somewhat the grammatical structure, but this does not create particular problems in reading. Only one sentence has a bit of an unclear

<sup>2</sup> Namely, generosity 1) out of trust, 2) after paying respect, 3) with one's own hands, 4) at the right time, 5) without harming others. More on this topic cf. *The Noble Sūtra of the True Person*, McCombs (2014, 266) and also Gampopa (1998), Tashi Dorjey (2018).

<sup>3</sup> On the role of generosity in Buddhist practice and in Indian culture in general cf. 1. Ariyabuddhiphongs (2016), McCombs (2014), Eck (2013), Heim (2004).



structure due to the particle *gang* inserted at the end of the verse (most probably to fill the metre of the verse) – for further details cf. the corresponding footnote in the translation below. Apart from that, the variant readings in different editions of the Kangyur are of minor significance and do not affect the meaning in an important way.

The text has a very simple straightforward structure, which has no particular subsections and divisions.

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## *The Sūtra on Three States of Mind*

[F 69b]

Homage to all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas!

Thus have I heard at one time. The Bhagavān was residing in Śrāvastī, in the Jeta Grove of Anāthapiṇḍada's park, together with a great saṅgha of bhikṣus. Then the Bhagavān uttered these words to the bhikṣus.

Oh bhikṣus, here if some foolish people have three states of mind that are not true, they do not practice generous acts and do not perform meritorious deeds; accepting authentic discipline, they do not keep it. What are the three? They are as follows: attachment, stinginess, lack of attentiveness.

O, bhikṣus, because of having three states of mind that are not true some foolish people didn't practice generous acts and didn't perform meritorious deeds; they accepted authentic discipline and didn't keep it. That is why when their body disintegrates, after death they will be born as hell beings, sentient beings falling into the lower rebirths.

Oh, bhikṣus, the true persons<sup>4</sup> that have three true states of mind practice generosity and perform meritorious deeds; after accepting authentic discipline, they keep it. What are the three? They are as follows: non-attachment, non-stinginess, attentiveness.

Bhikṣus, if they have the three true states of mind, [such] true persons practice generous acts and perform meritorious deeds; they accepted authentic discipline and keep it. That is why when their body<sup>5</sup> disintegrates,

<sup>4</sup> The description of the true person cf. *Noble Sūtra on the True Person* (Toh. 327), translated by Kagyu Translation Project Group for 84000 (to be published at [www.84000.co](http://www.84000.co)).

<sup>5</sup> Misspelling in the original. Instead of *las* it should read *lus*.



[F 70a] after death they will be reborn among the gods in higher worlds of happy rebirths. The Bhagavan spoke these words.

That being said by Sugata, the Teacher spoke again.

Because of stinginess and carelessness they do not perform generous deeds. That is why the wise ones who want merit should perform generous deeds. Those who are stingy are afraid that they will be hungry and thirsty. So they are not generous here because of being afraid. These are exactly the fearful ones. Due to the power of stinginess they are afraid to give their own possessions;<sup>6</sup> [but] in this world and in the other [next] they will split it among [their] children. Concerning those, however, who renounce stinginess, and then perform generous acts, even though they die, that [what they did] will not die; they will be like travelers with provisions.<sup>7</sup>

If one gives a little or a lot of what is difficult to give, then giving what is difficult to give is doing a difficult job. Those who are not true [persons], do not understand that; true [persons] do not pass beyond the dharma.<sup>8</sup> That is why when true [persons] and not true [persons] die, leaving this [world], those who are not true [persons] go to hell, and those who are true [persons] go to higher rebirths. There is no refuge against the danger of aging. Since life is short, the moment of life being taken away is also near. Those who see the terror of death can perform virtue [to reach] happiness and wealth [in future lives]. If the one who abandoned women,<sup>9</sup> despite having a difficult material situation in life, performs a bit of generosity, then one thousand offerings done one thousand times by somebody else can not be compared to one sixteenth of his offering.<sup>10</sup> Why are such enormous, great generosity with offerings and that [other] situation of offering divergent?<sup>11</sup> How could one thousand offerings done one hundred thousand times not be comparable to one sixteenth of the former one? Some childish beings kill [one another] and are bound in here [in *samsāra*]; taking the other's wealth that was not given<sup>12</sup> they are lost [F 70b].

Donations (*yona*) of those with tearful faces, who are being punished are not comparable with their [true persons'] generosity with offerings. In this way, enormous, great generosity with offerings and that [other] situation of offering are divergent; in this way one thousand offerings done thousands

<sup>6</sup> Misspelling in the original. Instead of *yod ma* it should read *yod pa*.

<sup>7</sup> Namely, they will take over the merit of positive actions to the next rebirth.

<sup>8</sup> That means that they do not stray from the dharma.

<sup>9</sup> That means a monk.

<sup>10</sup> The sentence in the original is a bit obscure because of *gang* which does not make much sense here. Most probably it should be read only as a word filling the versification or as *la*.

<sup>11</sup> Literally "do not go the same way."

<sup>12</sup> Stealing.



of times are not comparable to the sixteenth part of it. Some people are not hypocritical; they share the wealth obtained in a legal way. If those in difficult situations share that, they will go to the god realms through their own merit.

After the Bhagavān spoke these words, the whole assembly of bhikṣus praised the speech of the Bhagavān.

*The Sūtra on Three States of Mind* is concluded.

It was translated by the Indian scholar Jinamitra with the editor and translator Bandé Devacandra. Lotsawa Paltsek corrected and published it.

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