Note on the Interpretation of "Pasidati"

It might be taken for granted that translation, whatever its modes, could be described as an attempt to express the intention of one language in words of another. This involves the translation of words. But the connotations of a word in one language rarely "express" those of its "equivalent." Some ideas are missing, some others are added, according to the specific ideology of the people who speak the language. Words are created if the need arises to name an object or to express an idea. Even objects of use, however, are very different in various parts of the world and during different periods of history. How much more ideas! This difficulty is not so great in languages spoken by people of the same cultural group and of the same

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torical period, but even there certain expressions seem to be extremely troublesome to the translator. For instance there is the word "Weltannahme," which today belongs not only to the vocabulary of the German philosopher but to that of the German grocer too. It cannot be "translated," any described and explained, and in most European languages it is used in original form. It must be that this term names something special in the way of German thinking with which there does not coincide any single word in English or French. At any rate it is easy enough to explain. But the difficulty seems insurmountable in approaching ideas which are expressed in a language in use among people of a different cultural group, and which developed in historical times very far from those of the language in which it has to be translated. This is due to the fact, that the social circumstances and the ideology in which the language roots, and the subjects this language usually deals with, are extremely remote from those of the translator. The translator usually makes the mistake, instead of emphasising the variance in the meanings, of trying to force the foreign ideas into a parallel with his own. This has not only the result that the ideas are distorted, but that the reader who approaches the subject with the armour of his own ideology, will resist the differences. He is likely to be open only to his own ideas.

This "bending of the ideas towards each other" is not deliberate on the part of the translator. His thinking is strongly determined by his own ideological background, and notions which do not fit in may remain unnoticed. But values are not eternal and not everywhere identical, and ways of thinking in different societies differ. Approaching every idea with doubt will prevent ideological differences from being forgotten.

In the diverse translations of the Pali texts this "bending of the ideas towards each other" takes place to such an extent that it is nearly impossible for the average reader to appreciate the special character of Western and Eastern religions. The use of the word "Gospel" for the Doctrine of the Buddha, the word "Sabbath" for the uposatha days, the word "Lent" for vassa, implies that the contents of every religion must be the same, and that parallel will make it easier to the reader to understand. But just the opposite is true. The reader is at least as lax as the translator, and will be content, that the uposatha days are a sort of Sabbath. He is not reminded of the fact, that Sabbath and Lent have not the same history and not the moral ideas as uposatha days or vassa. T. W. and C. A. F. Rhys Davids, Almers, Woodward, Childers and the PTS Dictionary, all apparently agreeing the very great differences in the Pali and English expressions. "for convenience sake"—as Childers expresses it—find these translations acceptable.

Though the sense of these expressions is misleading, let us accept the idea of convenience. But there is another instance, which shows much more early arbitrariness in the translation of a word. The meaning which the translator gives varies according to the context. In each instance his own
attitude of the people whose social, cultural, emotional poise it expresses. The word I refer to is pasidati.

The dictionaries give a number of meanings for this word. The Pali Dictionary has:

1. to become bright, to brighten up. 2. to be purified, reconciled or pleased, to be clear and calm, to become of peaceful heart, to find one’s satisfaction in the thought of having faith.

For the noun pasado it gives:

1. clearness, brightness, purity; referring to the colours ("visibility") of the eye. Also in Abhidhamma with ref. to the eye in function of "sentient sense agency." sensitive surface. 2. joy, satisfaction, happy or good mood, virtue, faith. 3. repose, composure, alwayment, serenity. (The references have been omitted).

Childers lists for pasidati:

to be clear, serene, tranquil, to be content, satisfied, pleased, glad; to be favourable or gracious; to rejoice in, take pleasure in, to have faith in, to believe, to be converted.

He gives a number of references, and, going through them, the reader finds that the word is translated as "to be pleased," "to like someone," in instances dealing with ordinary laymen. When it refers to a theravada context, "Bhaddasālammhi there pasiditā" the choice of expression is already determined: having conceived an affection to the theravada Bhaddasāla. But for instances connected with the Buddha himself or his doctrine, it is translated to have faith, believe, be converted.

Tām sutvāna pasidīgā na gāte saṃaggataḥ, hearing this discourse of Buddha, the assembled citizens became believers. Satthu... dhānụjāna sādhu saṃyukta paśidānti, hearing the sound of Buddha’s preaching, they are converted. Paśaṇnakomānā bālam karitā, dying with a heart full of faith, etc.

Among the various compounds we have pasannudako, having clear water. The meaning “faith” in the translation of the instances given is to be found only in a religious context.

For this there is an explanation in the article on the noun pasado in the same Dictionary:

“Pasado, brightness, clearness; favour; grace; refreshing joy, serenity of mind; faith (prasada).

A few lines later we read:

“..."The words pasado, cittapasado and manoapasado are constantly used in the sense of faith in Buddha, lit. ‘rejoicing’ because of the joy or peace of mind which belief in the Buddha brings with it. Burnam, wrongly throws doubt on this use of the word, observing that ‘in connection with Buddha pasado is

When the sound of Buddha’s preaching was heard, the assembled citizens became believers. This is translated to have faith, believe, be converted.

In a footnote he adds:

W. Rhys Davids translates satthi pasadī, as: (I had) faith in the

In the same way Chalmers renders in the Cūla-Saṅhāda-Sutta:

Aṭṭhikho va dvāra satthi pasado, aṭṭhikhamme pasado as “we believe in our teacher, we believe in his doctrine.”

Reminds us not only by its religious attitude, but even through the sound words, of the Christian Creed.

The Sanskrit Dictionary of Monier-Williams lists the following meanings:

Prasad, pra-vasada (ep. also prasad) to fall into the power of (acc.), to settle down, grow clear and bright, become placid and tranquil (as the sea or the sky; met. implied to the mind), to become clear or distinct, to become satisfied or pleased or glad, be gracious or kind (with gen.) to favour; with inf. “to do good to.” Imp. often “be so gracious, please.” (References omitted).

The St. Petersburg Dictionary has:


The sense “Faith” or “to believe” does not occur.

To understand the meaning of Pali words, we have to turn to the Sanskrit where there is a change in the interpretation of the two languages. There must...
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be a reason for it. Can it be supposed, that the feeling of being pleased, clear, satisfied, inclined towards somebody, changed into "Faith" in the course of development of the new religion?

To have Faith is to believe in something which cannot be explained. For Western religions the keyword seems to be Faith, for Eastern, Knowledge. Faith culminates in the Christian attitude of "Credo quia absurdum," Knowledge, for the Buddhist, leads to the supreme goal of Enlightenment. The West reveres the saint, the East the sage.

He is pleased, satisfied, with the attribute of highest intellectual appreciation which turns into ecstatic delight, is a fairer rendering of pasidati. And this highest delight in clearness of thought, in understanding and accepting the doctrine has an emotional quality, not less important and gladdening than Faith.

There is a recurring passage in the Suttas, repeated by the person to whom the Buddha expounded his doctrine, whether he is an adherent of another sect or an educated brahmin or a layman. It expresses this delight and the enthusiasm for the clearness of the exposition, which makes it possible for him to understand the teaching and to attain through this understanding that clearness of mind (like clear water or a bright sky), which is the result of calming down after the tension and excitement accompanying the passionate search for Truth.

"Abhikkantaṁ bhū Gotama abhikkantaṁ bhū Gotama. Seyyathāpi bhū Gotama nikkujjitaṁ va ukkujjeya, paṭicchannaṁ va vivareyya, mūlhassa va maggam āchikkheyya, andhakāre va telapajjotam dhāreyya cakkhumanto rūpāni dakkhīnti evamevaṁ bhūta Gotamena anekaparipāyayena dhāmāṁ paṁsato."

The hearer is obviously pleased with the quality of the logical discourse. This attitude is found not only towards the Buddha himself. Any teacher

3. Faith may be defined as the mind in a state of conviction merely, while Philosophy may be said to be a state of reasoned conviction. Faith is the mind in a state of conviction regarding supersensible things no matter whether philosophical or not, and Philosophy is the mind convinced one way or another, after a thorough scrutiny into the profounder principles concerned. Dr. Wallace quoting Sir William Hamilton.

4. But Buddhist philosophy has... nearly a dozen words built upon the proper "know"-stems alone (jan, víd). And the question for the student of Buddhist Psychology arises: how far does the greater richness of Buddhist intellectual nomenclature correspond to a greater manifold of knowing or of knowledge?

C. A. F. Rhys Davids, Buddhist Psychology, p. 120.

5. "Credo quia absurdum" has an interesting history. It has been attributed variously to Tertullian (c. 155-222 A.D.) and to St. Augustine (345-430 A.D.). It has been suggested too, that the phrase is a transformation of Tertullian's "Certum est quia impossibile est."

6. Excellent, Gotama, most excellent! It is just as if a man should set upright again what had been cast down or reveal what had been hidden away or tell a man who had gone astray, which was his way, or bring a lamp into darkness, so that those with eyes to see might discern things about them—even so, in many a figure has the reverend Gotama made the Doctrine clear... Transl. Chalmers.

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If with the greatest reverence and the "fellows in the higher life" too each other's intellectual achievements in the same way. There used to import the idea of Faith into this phenomenon.

the Majjhima Nikāya, Rathavinīta-Sutta, Sāriputta and Punna, two of the Buddha, congratulate each other after a discussion on questions of Faith in the following way:

Sāriputta:—Acchariyam avuso abhivuttam avuso, yathā tam sutavatā sāvakām maṃma-d-eva Saththusāsamājaājanante evam-evam āyamati Punnama Manṭāṇiputtaṁ gambhirā gambhirā paṁhā anumāṣa anumāṣa bhākatā. Labhā brahmācāriyaṃ saladdiḥalabhā sabrahmacāriyaṃ ye āyamataṃ Punnaṃ Manṭāṇiputtaṁ labhanti dassenāya labhanti payārūpasaṇāyā... Ponna:... Acchariyam avuso abhivuttam avuso, yathā tam sutavatā sāvakām maṃma-d-eva Saththusāsamājaājanante evam-evam āyamataṃ Sāriputtana gambhirā gambhirā paṁhā anumāṣa anumāṣa puchhitā...? the PTS Dictionary says:

Attamano (atta + mano) having an upraised mind, delighted, pleased. Abhinandati (abhi + nandati) to rejoice, find pleasure in (acc.) approve of, be pleased or delighted with (acc.).

olders notes:

Attamano (adj.) rapt, delighted, joyful. Abhinandati to be pleased with. To prove of, to welcome, to rejoice at, to delight in. (References omitted).

Matiloka, who in his Pali Anthologie und Wörterbuch gives for "sich setzen, —beruhigen, —aufklären, heiter oder zufrieden sein, Gefallen haben, —Zuversicht haben zu, Vertrauen auf. P. P. pasanna klar, lauter, zuversichtlich, zufrieden,

Sāriputta: Wonderful Sir, Marvellous Sir! How like a well instructed disciple understands the Master's teaching to the full, has the reverend Punna Manṭāṇiputta point by point, questions deep and profound. It is a great thing, a very great thing his fellows in the higher life have the reverend Punna Manṭāṇiputta to see and with... Punna:... Wonderful Sir, Marvellous Sir! How like a well instructed disciple understands the Master's teaching to the full, has the reverend Sāriputta point by point, questions deep and profound... Transl. Chalmers.

Thus spoke the Lord. Glad at heart, those Almsmen rejoiced in what the Lord
translates \textit{attamano} as—
\begin{center}
\textit{ergriffenen} oder \textit{hingerissenen} Herzens oder \textit{Geistes}, von \textit{Begristerung}
\end{center}
and \textit{abhinandat} as “\textit{entzickt sein über, Beifall spenden}.” It is noteworthy that the word faith does not occur here, and that the meanings implied in \textit{attamano} and \textit{abhinandat} the quality of enthusiasm and applauding is added. It is likely that Nāṇatiloka being himself a member of the Buddhist Order can, in spite of his Western origin, approach the ideas of Buddhism without the aid of Christian notions.

Taking into consideration the different translations of the last two words, I feel that the interpretation of \textit{pasidati} as I have tried to render it, cannot be far from the right one. There is of course a difference between the mental attitude in \textit{pasidati} and in \textit{attamano} + \textit{abhinandat}. I suggest that this difference is a dynamical one. A person seated beside the teacher and rejoicing in the newly obtained knowledge feels a pleasure deeper and more serene than one who, at the end of a discourse, gets up applauding heartily and retires with the feeling of spiritual gain. In \textit{abhinandat}, etc., a more lively rejoicing is expressed, but the motive power is the same: intellectual rapture.

One could argue that every religious experience gladdens the faithful mind and that this \textit{attamano}, etc., could be the expression of any kind of spiritual happiness. But this argument can be disarmed by remembering that there is one instance where the disciples, instead of feeling happy and glad after the sermon, got displeased. The first Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya, the \textit{Sabbdhanema-Mula-Parivāya-Sutta}. (In the Colombo Edition, 1917, published G. F. Munasinghe) ends—as the only exception—in the following way:

\begin{center}
\textit{Idam avoca bhagava\textbf{.} Na te bhikkhū bhagavato bhāsitaṁ abhinandunti.}
\end{center}

Trenckner’s edition of the Majjhima Nikāya, published by the PTS (1935) omits this negative altogether and ends the Sutta in the usual way. So does Chalmers in his translation. In the present circumstances it is not possible to consult the various manuscripts in order to clear up the mystery of these variant readings. It is strange that the two different readings (of which there are two) are not even discussed, either in the PTS edition, or in the translation mentioned above. This is the more remarkable as Buddhaghosa in his Commentary has a whole story to explain this surprising negative. According to him, five hundred brahmins became monks under the Buddha. They were highly learned and conceited. The Buddha delivered the \textit{Sabbdhanema-Mula-Parivāya Sutta} to the brahmins. They could not follow it. So they were not pleased. The Commentary says:

\begin{center}
\textit{Te pañcasata bhikkhū idam bhagavato vacanam nānumoditaṁ. Kaśma?}
\end{center}

9. The same reading is found in the editions of the Majjhima Nikāya Text by Sīriṣeke Dharmārāma Nāyaka Thera (1924) and by Kirielle Nānavimala Thera (1937).

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Aañakena. Te kira imassa suttassa atthaṁ nābhijānīyaṁ, tasmā nābhi-

\textit{jānīyaṁ}.

The question whether there are two readings (or whether we have here an error of an oversight on the part of the editor and the translator, the causes for which once again can be traced back to their bias) and which of them is genuine is not relevant, since Buddha-

\textit{approx}ept the possibility that bhikkhus are critical towards the Buddha and appreciate the sermon. (Remembering Nāṇatiloka’s suggestion \textit{abhinandati}, “Beifall spenden,” we might understand: “they did not”). They did not, because they were intellectually not satisfied, position was not clear enough, they did not get additional knowledge of it.

The Christian reacts to a sermon in a completely different way. He too derive intellectual satisfaction from it. But the greater emotional a comes from a way of Faith, to which the detour through intellectual pation is needless. Feeling communicates directly with feeling. And ese like this the fact alone, that it is the Lord who is speaking would his miraculous influence.

Quite another kind is the impression left upon the reader of the Pali The Buddha himself (in the Anguttara Nikāya, Kālāma Sutta) ish his disciples in the following way:—

\begin{center}
\textit{Alam hi vo Kālāma kamkhītum alam vicikicchitu, kaññhāya ca pana vo vācānicciā upanna. Etha tumhe Kālāma, mā anussavena mā paramparāya mā itikirāya mā pitakasampadānaṁ mā takkhetum mā nayahetum mā ākāra-vicittakkena mā diśhīnijjihānakkhantiyā mā bhabbarāpātāya mā saṃnopo no santṝti. Yādā tumhe Kālāma attaṁ 'va jāneyyathā, ime dhammā akusalā ime dhammā sāvajjā ime dhammā viññūgaraṅgha imē dhammā samattā samādinnā hītaya dukkhaṁ samvattantāti, atha tumhe, Kālāma, pajaheyyathā.}”
\end{center}

These five hundred bhikkhus did not approve of the words of the Blessed One. Because of their ignorance. They did not perceive the meaning of this sutta. The PTS edition of the Majjhima Commentary has the discussion of the two last-mentioned editions read \textit{na jānīyaṁ} instead of \textit{nābhijānīyaṁ}.}

The PTS edition of the Majjhima Commentary has the discussion of the \textit{Na te bhikkhu bhagavato bhāsitaṁ abhinandun}ṭi, which agrees absolutely with these edition.

It is proper, O Kālāmas, for you to doubt and to waver. In a doubtful matter does arise. Now look you Kālāmas. Do not be led by reports or tradition or Be not led by proficiency in the collections, nor by mere logic or inference, nor plering appearances, nor by reflection and forbearance with views, be not led by arance of possibilities, nor thinking “the reclus is our respected (teacher).” But when you know for yourselves: these things are unprofitable, these things are led by the intelligent; these things when performed and undertaken, conduce sorrow,—then, Kālāmas, do reject them. (F. L. Woodward translates \textit{mā paṭāya} by “nor because it fits becoming”.)
Early Christian literature too for instance the Epistles of St. Paul warn the convert against being seduced by false doctrine. But the apparent safeguard against this danger is not intellectual criticism but a strengthening of Faith.

Considering all this we can render *pasīdali* most appropriately as a mental attitude which unites deep feeling, intellectual appreciation and satisfaction, clarification of thought and attraction towards the teacher. To introduce here the Christian conception of Faith and of conversion is unnecessary.\(^{12}\) It will be agreed that the intellectual appreciation and critical acceptance of knowledge and of attaining Truth as we meet it in the Suttas is some distance away from: "L'homme sans la foi ne peut connoître le vrai bien ni la justice."\(^{13}\)

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12. Attention in this article has been directed only to the question of the attitude of the Buddhist as it is revealed in the Pali texts. Whether Faith plays a role in Buddhism as practised today and why, is another problem which will require inquiry into the subject which needs does a religion satisfy and in what way.