



The Investigation & Analysis on Translation and Interpretation of “sabbe dhamma anattati”

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Samvega Parikittanapaatha

...Evam bhāgā ca paṇassa bhagavato sāvakesu anusāsani, Bahulam pavattati:
The Bless One further explained to his disciples that:

Rūpam aniccam, Vedanā aniccā, Sannā aniccā, Sankhārā aniccā, Vinānam aniccam,
Form (body) is impermanent, Feeling is impermanent, Perception is impermanent, Mental processes
(formations) are impermanent, Consciousness is impermanent.

Rūpam anattā, Vedanā anattā, Sannā anattā, Sankhārā anattā, Vinnānam anattā,
Form (body) is not-self, Feeling is not-self, Perception is not-self, Mental processes (formations) are not-self,
Consciousness is not-self,

Sabbe sankhārā aniccā, **Sabbe dhammā anattāti**
All conditions are impermanent, all nature of things are not-self...

(source: <http://chanting-book-for-buddha.blogspot.com/p/morning-chant.html>)

According to the belief and understanding of many Buddhist scholars that “sabbe dhamma anattati” which appears in Samvega Parikittanapaatha Verse can be translated as “all of the existing Dhamma is non-self,” it seems that the translation and interpretation can be misleading as it can cause the contradiction of logic, and it is necessary to take the translation science into account in order to explain and solve this mistake.

As we explore the Pali verse with translation science, we find out that the preceding expression prior to the statement “sabbe dhamma anattati,” there are “Rūpam anattā, Vedanā anattā, Sannā anattā, Sankhārā anattā, Vinnānam anattā, Sabbe sankhārā

aniccā,” thus, in order to translate and interpret “sabbe dhamma anattati..,” in accordance to the translation science, we have to also consider the preceding expression since the meaning can be carried on to the following sentences in the manner of ‘language flow.’ Therefore, we can translate the saying “sabbe dhamma anattati” in conjunction with the whole preceding expression as **“All of [the aforesaid] Dhamma [namely Rūpam, Vedanā, Sannā, Sankhārā, Vinnānam] are non-self”** instead of “All of the existing Dhamma is non-self.” This is the way that the Pali verse is nicely concluded at the end per its details and prior to beginning of a new expression. It is highly recommended that the saying “sabbe dhamma anattati” must not be independently translated as an isolated single expression because it can be interrelated with the preceding expression as an ongoing statement. This is similar to the use of ‘the’ in English language as ‘the’ in the following sentences can refer to something or someone addressed in the earlier sentences. For example, “There are many good doctors at Siriraj Hospital in Bangkok. The doctors graduated from Mahidol Medical School.” The omission is expected to be understood by all in the following sentences that there is a reference to the preceding sentences. Likewise, “sabbe dhamma” in the Samvega Parikittanapaatha Verse should be referred to ‘the aforesaid dhamma’ which are “Rūpam, Vedanā, Sannā, Sankhārā, and Vinnānam.”

It is highly recommended that Buddhist scholars should explore further to the original version of Samvega Parikittanapaatha Verse written in Pali language in order to consider grammatical form if the earlier advice in perspective of translation science correctly explains and clarifies the popular mistake on translation and interpretation of “sabbe dhamma anattati” or not. This is because if the Pali saying “sabbe dhamma anattati” is translated and interpreted as ‘all of the existing Dhamma is non-self’, it eventually means that the ‘anatta’ or ‘non-self,’ as one of the existing Dhamma, is also ‘non-self.’ And that will be a contradiction of logic.