

# BTTTS Volunteers Newsletter – September 2012

*No matter who you are, if you use your wisdom to translate Sutras, your wisdom will become greater day by day. The growth of wisdom takes place day after day. If you concentrate your mind and devote yourself to studying every day, your wisdom will open up.*

-The Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

When the Buddha taught the Dharma, he taught for the sake of limitless living beings according to their different potentials. Great Masters from the Buddhist tradition continued this important work by explaining the Teachings in new ways for newer generations, and by bringing Buddhist texts across boundaries and translating them. Indian and Chinese Masters translated large portions of the Buddhist Canon into Chinese – truly a great achievement – and this has allowed Buddhism to become deeply embedded in Chinese culture. As the Venerable Master Hua saw the importance of this early in his life, he vowed to bring about the translation of the Buddhist Canon into all of the world's languages, so that the Dharma will become deeply embedded in the worlds' culture. Based on this vow the Buddhist Text Translation Society (BTTTS) was founded in 1970.

In a recent presentation on BTTTS, Reverend Heng Sure, the President of BTTTS, reminded us how Master Hua put special emphasis on Bringing the Buddha's Words to Life. Translating, publishing, and promoting the Buddha's words, said Reverend Heng Sure, truly deserve to be high on our priority lists. That this is especially the time to do so follows from a remark of the Vice-President of BTTTS, Dharma Master Heng Chih. She believes that people in the West will soon become aware of the value of BTTTS's Sutra translations. For over a 100 years, there have been interpreters of Buddhism, but now, she said, Westerners are becoming more and more curious as to what the classical Buddhist themselves texts actually say.

If you missed the BTTTS presentation, you can find both the afternoon and evening part on youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3CSvqIIXsVM> & [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ti\\_SHbfQpwM&feature=relmfu](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ti_SHbfQpwM&feature=relmfu).

After this presentation a large group of volunteers expressed interest in helping BTTS. To make sure we keep in touch and up to date, we are starting this BTTS Volunteers Newsletter for all those involved. In this first issue you will find a brief overview of BTTS's *history and accomplishments* as well as an overview of *the translation process in BTTS*. In addition you will find a special message from the Secretary of BTTS, Dharma Master Heng Yin, for new (and old) volunteers. Furthermore, we will share some of *the recent developments* and news on some *ongoing and recently started projects*.

### ***History and Accomplishments***

Since its founding, BTTS has been fully run by volunteers and supported by donations. To date, BTTS has produced over 300 translated books and CDs in various non-Chinese languages. Of these, roughly 230 are in English, 43 in Vietnamese, 10 in Spanish (with 38 more projects in the pipeline), and a smattering in other European languages (Polish, French, and German, with Dutch to come soon). The Chinese publishing department has been prolific in producing accurate renditions of the Venerable Master Hua's commentaries on various sutras and Buddhist texts, which serve as source material for translation into other languages.

### ***The Translation Process in BTTS***

The Venerable Master Hua set up a translation process by which any translation passes through Four Committees. He also set up Eight Guidelines for translators and BTTS volunteers in general. We encourage all BTTS volunteers to study and strive to abide by these guidelines, which make our work uniquely distinct from that of the commercial publishing world. We also strongly encourage you to read the collected BTTS publications in whatever language you are interested in, as well as the compilation of the Venerable Master's instructions on translation and publication. In future newsletters, we hope to share insights from senior BTTS translators on the rationale for these guidelines.

## ***A Special Message for New (and Old) Volunteers***

-The Secretary of BTTS, Dharma Master Heng Yin

On August 26, hundreds of people listened (either in person or online) to the presentation on BTTS's ongoing projects and future plans - "Bringing the Buddha's Words to Life: the Buddhist Text Translation Society - Past, Present and Future". We are thrilled that so many people have responded to the call for volunteers – needed to help not only with translation, review, editing, layout in different languages, but even more important, to support e-book publishing, promotion and distribution – which have been areas of weakness in BTTS, hindering the flow of Dharma.

We hope to set up organized processes to fully utilize all this new energy and talent. The Venerable Master had a magnificent vow to see the Buddhist Tripitaka translated into all the languages of the world. We have accomplished only a drop in the ocean so far. However, with this new energy, BTTS is moving into a more proactive mode – to educate aspiring translators and volunteers as well as produce more translations for contemporary readers. We are fortunate that Fedde de Vries, our new volunteer coordinator, is enthusiastic and committed to help BTTS develop its volunteer program. Please be patient as BTTS takes slow but steady steps to grow in order to fulfill the Venerable Master's vision. We welcome your suggestions and feedback at any time.

### ***Recent Developments***

In the spirit of several of the talks at the BTTS Presentation, a recent meeting of the BTTS Officers felt that extra attention needs to be given to the distribution and marketing of BTTS's publications. As the Sutra texts themselves don't have legs, we who have legs should take the responsibility and bring the Dharma to people's lives. To this end we are currently setting up dedicated teams for promotion, for distribution, and for internet presence. A special e-book team is also being created. That team will be responsible for making all BTTS material available in digital formats compatible with e-book reading devices. New online publications will be sold for one year and become available for free after that.

If you wish to help out in any of these teams, please let us know. For those who recently signed up as a volunteer for BTTS: the coordinators of these teams most probably already have your email and will get in touch with you soon.

### ***Ongoing and Recently Started Translation Projects***

The BTTS Officers also discussed the status of some of the current projects. Three repentance texts are in the process of being translated into English: The Compassionate Samadhi Water Repentance, the Emperor Liang Repentance, and the 10,000 Buddhas Repentance. It was decided that once they are through their editing phase, they will be printed in limited numbers for use in DRBA branch temples, during which time corrections and feedback can be solicited for the next printing. It is hoped that the 10,000 Buddhas Repentance will be available by next May, when that repentance assembly is held again.

Because of the incoming volunteers, some new projects are being started up as well. We will experiment with having small teams, which will meet through Skype, work together under the leadership of more experienced BTTS translators. Texts for translation will be the Venerable Master Hua's talks in Asia in 1981, published in Chinese as 法界唯心, and the talks given by Master Hua during a 100 day-long Chan session. Another new translation project will be *The Record of Genuine Filial Respect in Buddhism* (釋門真孝錄) which was compiled in China and gives various examples of Buddhists embodying the essential virtue of filial respect. The Volunteer Coordinator will get invite people to these teams in the course of the next few weeks. If you're be interested in helping translate but you don't hear from us, please don't hesitate to e-mail us at [bttsvolunteers@gmail.com](mailto:bttsvolunteers@gmail.com).

One of the ongoing projects setting new standards in BTTS is the Avatamsaka Translation Project which aims to produce an accurate and elegant translation of the entire Avatamsaka Sutra. The plenary group is led by Reverend Heng Sure and meets on Monday mornings 8:30 – 10:15 am. (However, coming Monday, September 10th, the group will meet 5:15 – 6:30 am because of the Earth Store Recitation Session). BTTS

volunteers are welcome to join in person at the Translation Classroom upstairs in the DRBU or online through Skype (add ‘Avatam-tr’ to your contacts). Listening in on these sessions is a great way to get to know BTTS and taste the joy of the Dharma.

If there are projects you think would fall under BTTS’s vision that you would like to work on, we encourage you to propose it to the BTTS Officers first (through e-mailing [bttvolunteers@gmail.com](mailto:bttvolunteers@gmail.com)). BTTS is delighted by people taking initiative in translation. But in order to make sure there are enough resources to complete the different ongoing projects, the staff wants to keep track of the different efforts going on.

We hope to meet you all soon, working together on making the Dharma available in accord with beings’ differing potentials!

*If you wish to receive this newsletter through e-mail, please let us know through [bttsonline@gmail.com](mailto:bttsonline@gmail.com).*