

FUTURE TENSE AND MODALITY IN CLASSICAL TIBETAN OF BUDDHIST SCRIPTURES

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Abstract

People from the East have a completely different perception of time compared with Europeans. One of the best ways to understand the mentality of people and the grammar of time in each culture is through the study of languages, where abstract ideas and notions are expressed in concrete terms. Therefore, three languages have been selected for comparison. Tibetan is treated as a representative of the Eastern civilization, English – as a representative of the Western civilization. Sanskrit belongs to the Indo-European language family. However, geographically it has a closer connection to Asian (Indian) culture; therefore, it forms a conceptual bridge between the two traditions.

The research is mainly based on a close-to-text grammatical analyses of the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* (or *Bodhicaryāvatāra*) by Śāntideva. Specific features of Tibetan verbs and auxiliary constructions referring to the future tense are examined in comparison with Sanskrit and English text versions. Conclusions offer insightful and practically relevant observations on modes of expression in Classical Tibetan, which are shaped by distinct cultural characteristics and spiritual attitudes. By comparing the Tibetan text with its Sanskrit and English counterparts, the author contributes to a clearer understanding of Tibetan verbal forms and proposes several approaches to their translation into English.

Keywords: *Buddhism, comparative grammar, TAM in Tibetan, English, and Sanskrit.*

Objects and reasons of the research

The chosen text *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* (in Sanskrit: *Bodhicaryāvatāra*; in Tibetan: *Byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa*) belongs to the most outstanding compositions of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India and is also one of the most extensively studied religious texts within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. It has been described as “a gem that adorns the diamond crown of Buddhism” [Śāntideva 1995: 6] and can be considered a major representative of Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy.

The treatise was composed in Sanskrit during the 8th century and is attributed to the Indian Buddhist Master Śāntideva, who was a renowned poet and philosopher at the monastic university of Nālandā. He placed particular emphasis on the cultivation of moral awareness, presenting it as the most important aspect of self-cultivation on the path to liberation [Goodman 2016]. This is one of the few Mahāyāna Buddhist texts that has been fully preserved in Sanskrit; however, the surviving Sanskrit manuscript, discovered in Nepal, is of a comparatively late date – the 14th century [Brassard 2012: 6].

The first translation into Tibetan was carried out as early as the 8th century; the text was translated again in the 10th century. This later version was revised and improved in the 11th century and included in the Tengyur section of the Tibetan Buddhist canon [Melis 2005: 210]. Recently, another Tibetan translation has been discovered among manuscripts buried in Dunhuang at the end of the 10th century [Shantideva 2005: 5]. It may therefore be concluded that Tibetan translations available today are of an earlier origin than the extant Sanskrit original text, and this fact confers a particular scholarly value upon the Tibetan versions.¹

The first translations of the text into European languages were produced by Louis de la Vallée Poussin between 1892 and 1907 in French, and by Barnett Lionel David in 1909 in English. Since then, numerous translations from both Sanskrit and Tibetan have been published. Luis Oscar Gómez, Professor of Buddhist Studies at the University of Michigan, lists more than 28 translations into various modern languages (including English, Danish, Hindi, Newari, Chinese, Norwegian, Spanish, German, and others) published during the 20th century [Gómez 1999: 333–335].

For this research, the Tibetan canonical version from Sanskrit-Tibetan parallel edition published by Bhattacharya [1960] will be used, along with the three English translations of the Tibetan text (highlighted in bold below). These include texts by the Scottish Buddhist teacher and researcher Stephen Batchelor, by translators of the Padmakara Translation Group (Helena Blankleder and Wulstan Fletcher), as well as the most recent version by the American Buddhist translator, scholar,

¹ Detailed overview about Sanskrit and Tibetan editions see Baltgalve, A. (2025). *Buddhas epitetu atveide latviešu valodā. Reliģiski-filozofiski raksti*, XXXVI, pp. 361–383.

and practitioner Alexander Berzin. Further there is a chronological list of the main English language versions and their translators:

- Lionel David Barnett (1909). *The Path of Light: Rendered from the Bodhicharyāvatāra of Śāntideva*, translated from Sanskrit, London, John Murray.
- Marion L. Matics (1970). *Entering the Path of Enlightenment: The Bodhisattva-Caryāvatāra*, translated from Sanskrit, London: Allen & Unwin / Redwood Press.
- **Stephen Batchelor** (1979). *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, translated from Tibetan, Dharamsala, Library of Tibetan Works & Archives.
- Parmananda Sharma (1990). *Śāntideva's Bodhicharyāvatāra: Original Sanskrit Text with English Translation and Exposition Based on Prajñākarmati's Pañjikā*, translated from Sanskrit, New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan.
- Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton (1995). *The Bodhicharyāvatāra*, translated from Sanskrit, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Vesna A. Wallace and B. Alan Wallace (1997). *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life (Bodhicharyāvatāra)*, translated from Sanskrit with reference to the Tibetan tradition, Ithaca (NY): Snow Lion Publications.
- **Padmakara Translation Group** (1997). *The Way of the Bodhisattva: A Translation of the Bodhicharyāvatāra*, translated from Tibetan, Boston and London: Shambhala Publications.
- **Alexander Berzin** (2005). *Engaging in Bodhisattva Behavior*, translated from the Tibetan text as clarified by Sanskrit, published online in *Berzin Archives*.

Tibetan is a major language for Buddhist teachings in the Western world, used extensively in both oral and written contexts. It is taught within Tibetan communities in India, through online platforms, and at European and American universities, and there is a substantial number of Tibetan grammar manuals and scholarly research on the Tibetan language in general. However, the verbal system of Classical Tibetan is seldom addressed and remains insufficiently explained. Numerous Buddhist texts are preserved in parallel English, Tibetan, and Sanskrit versions, providing rich material for morphological and semantic comparison. Yet comprehensive grammatical analyses systematically relating all three languages (which are of particular relevance to translators and linguists) are few and difficult to find.

Śāntideva's text is a didactic treatise in which the author offers guidance on the conduct of Bodhisattvas. Consequently, a wide range of verbal forms expressing aspiration, necessity, and obligation is employed. In Tibetan, the future tense conveys not only temporal meaning but also aspectual and modal values. Consequently,

from the perspective of time, the distinction between the future tense and modes expressing possibility, necessity, imperative, desiderative, and obligation is inherently ambiguous. This problematic issue has also been identified by the Tibetologist Nicolas Tournadre, who observes that “plurifunctionality and polysemy of grammatical morphemes or markers conveying a tense, aspect or modality, still constitute a real issue for contemporary linguistic theory” [Tournadre 2017: 625].

Overview of TAM in English, Sanskrit, and Tibetan

Structures and divisions of tense, aspect, and modality (TAM) systems differ across languages, and even within a single language each TAM morpheme may simultaneously encode temporal, aspectual, and modal values. This constitutes a major challenge for understanding and accurately interpreting the authentic meaning of Buddhist teachings for Western audiences. From a notional, psychological and physical point of view, the concept of the future is also rather uncertain, because the future tense may be associated with various kinds of modality and aspectual oppositions [Tournadre 2017: 625–626].

In Classical Sanskrit, TAM is expressed through verbal inflection and related morphological categories. A specific future stem exists in Classical Tibetan and Old Tibetan for a number of verbs, but English and also some Tibetan future forms are constructed by adding separate auxiliaries, morphologically derived from motion verbs, modal verbs and copulas with desiderative or deontic meaning [Tournadre 2017: 628–629].

English has three tenses (past, present, and future), that can be specified with two main aspects – progressive and perfect [Kolln 2012: 75–76]. Besides, there are six present-form modal auxiliaries (*will, shall, can, may, must, and ought to*) and four past-form auxiliaries (*would, should, could, might*), that can be used to express future-oriented possibility, including both indicative and conditional nuances [Kolln 2012: 70–71].

In Sanskrit there are six tenses (present, imperfect, perfect, aorist, first future or simple future and second future or periphrastic future) and four moods (imperative, potential or optative, conditional and benedictive) [Bāpat 1886: 1]. As observed by Franklin Edgerton, Sanskrit professor from the Yale University, the second or periphrastic future occurs less often in Buddhistic Sanskrit, as do the future optative, the future imperative, and the conditional mood. In contrast, the simple future is frequent and can sometimes be used with a conditional meaning [Edgerton 1985: 152]. In addition, different types of participles, such as the *parasmaipada* and *ātmanepada* future participles and potential participles, can serve to indicate the future possibility [Bāpat 1886: 95–96, 98–99]. Since Sanskrit often allows the missing copula (the verb *to be*) in nominal sentences, predicates expressed by nouns or adjectives lack visible tense marking and may imply future TAM.

In Classical Tibetan, the predicate (including the copular verb) is obligatory and forms the main part of the sentence. Verbs may take four stems: past, present, and future tenses, and the imperative mood [Collet-Cassart 2011: 29]. Thus, the future can be indicated by the verbal stem alone. However, not all verbs distinguish four stems; some have only three, two, or even a single one. Although certain scholars² have compiled verb tables listing these forms, there is still no complete and united set of rules to determine systematically the different tense forms [Collet-Cassart 2011: 29]. Besides, an auxiliary verb can be joined to the main verb to clarify tense or mood, but it is not always the case, and sometimes the tense must be determined from the context [Collet-Cassart 2011: 31]. Furthermore, in Tibetan there are many auxiliary constructions that assign verbal forms specific aspects (e.g., completive, incomplete, perfective, imperfective, aoristic) or modalities (e.g., realis, irrealis, epistemic). The auxiliary is often preceded by a nominalizer or a connective [Tournadre 2017: 626].

Comparative analyses of examples from five text versions

In this analyses, predicates indicating future tense in the Tibetan canonical text are compared with their equivalents from the Sanskrit text and the three English translations cited above. Examples are drawn from the first three chapters of Śāntideva's text, as the later chapters mostly exhibit similar usages and translation approaches.

Tibetologist Tournadre [2017: 630–631] in his article *The future tenses in the Tibetan languages* identifies two primary forms of the future in Classical Tibetan: predicates formed solely by the verb stem and predicates composed of the verb combined with an auxiliary. However, in the text of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, there are no verses in which a distinct future stem signals an actual future event. Instead, one often encounters auxiliary constructions, which predominantly convey moral obligation or a change in mental attitude.

The most common auxiliary is formed from the future stem *bya* of the word *byed* (to do), e.g., verse 1.8.

Sanskrit	Tibetan	Berzin	Padmakara	Batchelor
vimocyam विमोच्यम् (ntr. sg. ger. or fut. pass. part.) <i>should not be abandoned, released</i>	gtang bya གྲང་བྱ་ (fut. V+ pres./fut. neg.+ fut. aux.)	will give up (fut. aux.+V)	should turn away (past. aux.+V)	should forsake (past. aux.+V)

² E.g., the American historical linguist and Tibetologist Nathan Wayne Hill [2010].

The example shows that Sanskrit future passive particle which indicates necessity in the future, is translated in Tibetan with the help of an auxiliary that can indicate either future or obligation. However, in English there is no single form that can express both connotations, so different translators choose different approaches: Berzin translates with the future auxiliary (*will*), but Padmakara and Batchelor use past auxiliary (*should*), indicating moral obligation or potentiality.

Another example (verse 2.46), where the same auxiliary form *bya* occurs in the Tibetan text, likewise demonstrates differing approaches among English translators: Berzin employs the present auxiliary (*can*), while Padmakara and Batchelor propose a more suitable solution by using the future auxiliary (*shall*), which additionally conveys obligation and necessity.

Sanskrit	Tibetan	Berzin	Padmakara	Batchelor
ko bhaviSyati को भविष्यति (QW+3.sg.fut.V) <i>who will become</i> <i>[my protector]</i>	bdag gis ji ltar bya བདག་གིས་ཇི་ལྟར་བྱ་ (1.sg.pron.+ erg.+ QW+fut.aux.)	what can I do? (QW+ pres. aux.+ 1.sg. pron.+V)	what shall I do? (QW+ 1.pers.fut. aux.+ 1.sg. pron.+V)	what shall I be able to do? (QW+ 1.pers.fut. aux.+ 1.sg.pron.+ periph.mod.+V)

Yet this verse reveals another problem. In Sanskrit, the subject of the sentence is in the third person, whereas in Tibetan the same verse is formulated from a first person perspective. Consequently, all English translations based on the Tibetan renderings also adopt the first person. This suggests that the Tibetan translation may have been made from a different Sanskrit original.

Another issue, that poses a difficulty for translators from Classical Tibetan into European languages, is the omission of personal pronouns. Tibetan verbs are not conditioned by the subject; they are impersonal and therefore lack grammatical person distinctions. [Jäschke 1883: 40]. In English, the subject and predicate are essential components of a sentence and generally cannot be omitted, with minor exceptions in imperative or elliptical constructions. Consequently, when a Tibetan sentence lacks an explicit subject, it is difficult to determine which person should be used in English. In such cases, the only guide is the contextual meaning.

For example, the verse 3.10 is translated by Berzin and others in the first person singular (I give, my body), and first person singular is used also in Sanskrit:

To fulfil the aims of all limited beings,

I give, without sense of a loss,

My body and likewise my pleasures,

And all my positive forces of the three times. [Berzin 2005: 24]

However, the Tibetan version does not indicate the subject, so it could refer to any person (e.g., *you give, one gives, we give*). In the case of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, the first person is mentioned most frequently; therefore, for the sake of consistency, it is advisable to use it here as well. Furthermore, Tibetan nouns do not obligatorily indicate singular or plural forms, so the first person plural is also a possible option. However, according to the content, the Bodhisattva's practice refers to individual persons, and each should perform it by oneself. For this reason, the most probable and logical form is the first person singular. Moreover, as pointed out by Tournadre, "benefactive, 'intentional', and 'autolalic' futures are restricted to the first persons (agents)", which could plausibly be the case in this example [Tournadre 2017: 639].

In the verse 3.10, two Tibetan verbs *gtong* and *byed* occur in their future forms (*gtang* and *bya*). Therefore, the above-cited second line should more precisely be translated using a future-oriented construction that expresses necessity or obligation (e.g., *I should give, I will give*). Benjamin Collet-Cassart [2011: 97] in his *Classical Tibetan Grammar Handbook* states that "the future auxiliary *bya* actually conveys the sense of a (future) necessity and is most of the times translated by "must", "should", "have to", etc." The same statement is made also by the German missionary, translator and Tibetologist Heinrich August Jäschke [1883: 51].

Furthermore, Jäschke also states that *byed* and its honorific forms *bgyid* and *mdzad* (all meaning *to do* or *to make*) are active and transitive verbs, in contrast to the auxiliary *gyur*, which can be considered as intransitive or passive [Jäschke 1883: 51–52]. The word *'gyur* (*to become, to transform into, to change into*) is frequently used in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* to express a future reference. However, this verb does not have a distinct future stem; consequently, its present form can also convey future meaning. Tibetan scholars in the translations of the text by Śāntideva have used it mostly in rhetorical questions and conditional sentences.

One of final interrogative phrases often encountered in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is *ga la 'gyur*. English translators mostly render it with future verb forms, e.g., in the verse 1.4.

Sanskrit	Tibetan	Berzin	Padmakara	Batchelor
kutaH कुतः (QW) <i>from</i> <i>where? how?</i> <i>whence? why?</i>	ga la 'gyur གཤམ་འབྱུང་ (QW+ pres./fut.V)	when will come? (QW+ fut.aux.+V)	how could be? (QW+ past aux.+V)	how will come? (QW+ fut.aux.+V)

In Sanskrit original this construction corresponds to a nominal sentence, in which the question word also implies the copula (*to be*). Since the verb is not specified in the original, but is necessary in Tibetan and English languages, different translators solve the problem employing different auxiliaries (*will, can*) and different verbs (*to become, to come, to be*). Sanskrit question word *kutaH* literally means "from where",

but it can also imply other meanings, so translations differ here, too (Tibetan: *where?*, Berzin: *when?*, Padmakara and Batchelor: *how?*).

The Tibetan auxiliary 'gyur can indicate also a future possibility, as in the verse 1.6.

Sanskrit	Tibetan	Berzin	Padmakara	Batchelor
jlyate syAt जीयते स्यात् (pres.ind.3.sg. ātmanep.+ 3 sg.opt.) <i>could conquer</i>	zil gyis gnon par 'gyur རེལ་གྱིས་པར་གྱུར་ (N+erg.+ pres.V+ co.+pres.aux.)	can outshine (pres.aux.+V)	can lay low (pres.aux.+V+ res.com.)	will be overcome (fut.aux.+ pres.aux.+ past part.)

In this example neither Sanskrit, nor Tibetan use future forms, but in English the possibility is translated twice with the modal verb *can* and once with the future auxiliary “will”. Another difference arises from the Tibetan insertion of the word *zil* (*brightness, splendour, brilliancy, glory*) that is combined with the verb *gnon* (*to suppress*) by Berzin and translated as *outshine*.³ Two other English versions omit this word and translate barely the verb *gnon* (*to lay low, to be overcome*).

The word 'gyur also frequently occurs in conditional sentences, which can be rendered in English with the future tense. A good example is the verse 1.9.

Sanskrit	Tibetan	Berzin	Padmakara	Batchelor
vandanIyo bhavati वन्दनीयो भवति (masc.nom. sg.adj.+ pres.3.sg. ind.V) <i>becomes worthy of veneration</i>	phyag byar 'gyur ཕྱག་པར་འབྱུར་ (obl.N+ pres./fut.V)	become [figures] to be honoured (V+infin.aux.+ past part.)	revered (past part.)	will be revered (fut.aux.+ aux.+ past part.)

³ It appears that Tibetan translators, as well as Alexander Berzin, have taken advantage of the multiple meanings of the word *bodhicitta*, the central term of the treatise, which is also mentioned in this verse. Francis Brassard states in his dissertation: “The expression *bodhicitta* has usually been translated as *thought of enlightenment* or *desire of enlightenment*. Sometimes the word *enlightenment* is substituted by *awakening*” (Brassard 1996: 1). The first part of the Sanskrit word *bodhi* can imply the idea of light in its extended sense; therefore, the final goal of Buddhism is often rendered as *enlightenment* in English. However, this is primarily a metaphorical translation and does not fully convey the meaning of the concept. In the *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* by Monier-Williams [1899/2020], a more precise meaning is given: *perfect knowledge or wisdom (by which a man becomes a Buddha), the illuminated or enlightened intellect; learned, wise*. In the context of Buddhism, the wisdom refers to the perfect knowledge of the truth, that liberates one from suffering and from all forms of existence.

Grammatical structures and implied meanings in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Berzin's English translation are quite similar. Padmakara simplifies the matter by using a single past participle (*revered*), whereas Batchelor employs a future form, emphasizing that the change has not yet occurred. Moreover, the Tibetan text and all three English translations use the plural, whereas the Sanskrit text clearly indicates third person singular.⁴

There is another Tibetan verb that has one stem for the present and future '*byung* (*to arise, to emerge, to occur, to appear*) and is frequently used with reference to future actions, as exemplified in the verse 2.58.

Sanskrit	Tibetan	Berzin	Padmakara	Batchelor
eti एति (3.sg.pres.V) [time] comes	'byung འབྱུང་ (pres./fut.V)	will come (fut.aux.+ V)	will come (fut.aux.+ V)	will come (fut.aux.+ V)

One can observe, that the Sanskrit original and the Tibetan translation do not explicitly indicate a future structure, yet all English translators employ the future auxiliary *will*. This usage is based on two other verbs appearing earlier in the verse: '*chi* (*to die*) and '*gyur* (*to become*). In Tibetan, neither of them distinguishes between present and future stems. Below both verbs are compared in all five text versions.

Sanskrit	Tibetan	Berzin	Padmakara	Batchelor
bhaviSyAmi भविष्यामि (1.sg.fut.V) [I] will become	'gyur འགྱུར་ (pres./fut.V)	shall be (1.pers.fut. aux.+V)	≈ my dissolution (1.pron.gen.+N)	shall become (1.pers.fut. aux.+V)
eti एति (3.sg.pres.V) [death] comes	'chi འཆི་ (pres./fut.V)	shall die (1.pers.fut. aux.+V)	shall die (1.pers.fut. aux.+V)	shall die (1.pers.fut. aux.+V)

According to the context, the entire verse refers to a possible future event (i.e., *when I will die one day*). In Sanskrit, however, the present tense can also indicate future possibility, whereas in English all translators employ future auxiliaries. The Tibetan language is flexible and open to interpretation in the case of these three verbs, which imply both present and future (as in Sanskrit), but it does not specify the tense of each word (unlike Sanskrit).

⁴ In Tibetan, the subject is marked with the plural particle *rnam*, but all English translators use the pronoun *they*.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy to observe, how the three English translations treat the subject of the second part of the verse 2.58:

Berzin:

*Without a doubt **that time** will come*

When I shall be no more.

[Shantideva 2005: 20]

Padmakara:

My dissolution and my hour of death

Will come to me, of this there is no doubt.

[Shāntideva 2011: 43]

Batchelor:

*Inevitably **the time** will come*

When I shall become nothing

[Śāntideva 1979: 21].

In the Tibetan text, it is said: *bdag ni med par 'gyur ba'i dus / de ni gdon mi za bar 'byung* (literally: “the time when I become non-existent, that undoubtedly occurs”) [Śāntideva 1960: 28]. Renderings of Berzin and Batchelor are more or less precise, whereas Padmakara group translators replace the dependent clause with two nominalized phrases, repeating the personal pronoun “my”. On the one hand, this corresponds to the Tibetan sentence structure; on the other hand, Berzin’s and Batchelor’s lexical choices more closely reflect the Tibetan lexicon.

The final future auxiliary to be analysed is the active verb *bgyid* (to do, perform, make, act). According to the Pellegrini dictionary, it has four different stems: *bgyi* (future), *bgyid* (present), *bgyis* (past), and *gyis* (imperative). However, its usage in the text is somewhat ambiguous. In the verse 2.8. it is used twice – in the second and in the fourth line of the Tibetan text, a comparative overview of translations follows below.

Sanskrit	Tibetan	Berzin	Padmakara	Batchelor
dadAmi ददामि (1.sg.pres.V) <i>I give</i>	bdag [..] bgyi བདག་ [..] བརྟེ (1.pron.+fut.V)	I offer (1.sg.pron. nom.+ V)	I offer (1.sg.pron. nom.+ V)	I shall offer (1.sg.pron. nom.+ 1.sg.aux. fut.+V)
upaimi उपैमि (1.sg.pres.V) <i>I enter, assume</i> <i>[servitude]</i>	bdag [..] bgyi བདག་ [..] བརྟེ (1.pron.+fut.V)	I shall serve (1.sg.pron. nom.+ 1.sg.aux. fut.+V)	I will be (1.sg.pron. nom.+ aux. fut.+V)	I shall be (1.sg.pron. nom.+ 1.sg.aux. fut.+V)

Sanskrit grammarian, mathematician, and Vedic priest Kātyāyana explained that in Sanskrit the present tense “is to be used where an action has been started but not come to an end” [Panda 1998: 33], and this is clearly the case here. Tibetan

translators, however, have employed the future form, whereas English translations approach the matter differently. Batchelor uses the future, as in Tibetan, but Berzin and Padmakara use the present in the first instance and the future in the second. This difference may be due to the adjective *gtan-du* (always), which appears in the first sentence and most naturally aligns with the present tense in English.

Another example where the same auxiliary is applied, is the verse 2.9. Here it is repeated three times, Tibetan translators have always used present tense *bgyid*, just as in Sanskrit original. However, all English translation apply future. This choice may be related to the conditional form, that is expressed here. Padmakara translation is the closest to the Tibetan original, therefore it is cited below:

*For if you will accept me, **I will be**
Undaunted by samsara and **will** act for beings' sake.
I'll leave behind the evils of my past,
And ever after turn my face from them.* [Shāntideva 2011: 38]

The only difference between the Tibetan and English versions with regard to the tense occurs in the first verb, where the Tibetan text uses the past stem *bzung* (from the verb 'dzin), while the English translation employs a future form (*will accept*). In fact, in English it would also be possible to use the past tense (*would*), with the modal verb expressing a conditional state. Comparing Tibetan verb forms in verses 2.8 and 2.9, the use of two different tenses (future and present) of the same verb has neither a logical nor a grammatical explanation. Therefore, one may assume that there is probably a spelling error. The same inconsistency can also be observed in verses 2.12, 2.13, 2.64 and 2.65. The Sanskrit original does not employ future forms, and the logic of the narration provides no reason for a shift in time, especially since the context relates to an actual visualization practice and English translations mostly use the present tense rather than the future. Only the last sentence of the second chapter could imply a wish or an obligation in the future; therefore, it is worth analysing the word *bgyid* in verse 2.65.

Sanskrit	Tibetan	Berzin	Padmakara	Batchelor
karttavyam कर्त्तव्यम् (ntr.sg.ger.or part.) <i>should be done</i>	bgyid བརྟེན། (pres.V)	shall do (1.pers.fut. aux.+V)	will do (fut.aux.+V)	shall do (1.pers.fut. aux.+V)

Solely the Tibetan version gives the present form; therefore, referring to the previous observations, another possible explanation for the ambiguous use of

the present and future of the verb *bgyid* is that, in ancient times, *bgyi* and *bgyid* were parallel forms, which could be used to express either present or future notion.

Conclusion

A theoretical overview of the grammar of Tibetan, Sanskrit, and English shows seemingly similar tenses (e.g., all three languages have a simple future); however, their usage differs. According to Śāntideva, future forms in Classical Tibetan convey a range of meanings, including evidential, epistemic, didactic, and pragmatic nuances. They may also encode factual, assumptive, intentional, benefactive, inferential, preventive, and deontic categories. Furthermore, a single morpheme may simultaneously imply temporal, aspectual, and modal values. In the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, future aspectual particles predominantly indicate moral obligation or a shift in mental attitude.

In Buddhist Sanskrit, the simple future is the most frequent form and can also be used with a conditional meaning (which is not the case in English). Moreover, the optative, imperative, and conditional moods, as well as potential participles, may also indicate future activities and happenings. Sanskrit often allows the omission of the copula in nominal sentences; in Classical Tibetan, however, the predicate (including the copular verb) forms the main part of the sentence and is obligatory. Meanwhile, the subject can be omitted, which poses a significant difficulty for translators into European languages, because here the subject is an essential component of a sentence and generally cannot be missing.

In Tibetan, there are theoretically four verbal stems; however, many words have only a single stem for both future and present. Consequently, the tense is frequently indeterminate on grammatical grounds and has to be inferred from context. In the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, the verbal stem alone is used very seldom; most often, an auxiliary verb is added to the main word. A wide range of auxiliary constructions exists, which presents a significant challenge for understanding and accurately interpreting the authentic meaning of the text.

Within the scope of this research, four main future auxiliaries *byed*, *'bgyid*, *'gyur*, and *'byung* were analysed. The most common auxiliary is derived from the future stem *bya* of the verb *byed*, which most often corresponds to the Sanskrit simple future or the future passive particle. It can indicate factual or actual change and is most frequently translated into English using the auxiliaries *will*, *shall*, *can* or *to be able*. However, it can also convey a sense of necessity and is typically rendered as *should*, *will be*, or *have to*.

Similarly to *byed*, another auxiliary that conveys a strong intention and activity on the part of the subject is the verb *bgyid*. According to the present Tibetan verb tables, it has distinct stems for the present (*bgyid*) and the future (*bgyi*). In the examples analysed, the Sanskrit text contains no future forms, yet Tibetan translators employ

both the present and future stems without an apparent grammatical or contextual justification. English translators, by contrast, generally prefer future forms. These inconsistencies may result from expressions in the conditional mood or from other factors, such as variations in Tibetan verb stems across time. They could also be due to a scribal or spelling error in the Tibetan text.

Passive and intransitive actions are typically expressed using the auxiliaries 'gyur and 'byung. The former is translated into English with auxiliaries such as *can* and *will*, as well as verbs like *to become*, *to come* or *to be*. The auxiliary 'gyur also frequently appears in conditional sentences, which are rendered in English either with the future tense or with past modals (*could*, *would*, *should*, etc.). The auxiliary 'byung has a single stem for both the present and the future, in this case making the Tibetan text flexible and open to interpretation. Consequently, there are instances in which the Sanskrit and Tibetan languages do not explicitly indicate future structures, yet all English translators, guided by context, employ future auxiliaries to convey the future possibility.

Most Classical Tibetan future auxiliaries originate from verbs and can, in fact, be translated into English as independent words (e.g., *to be*, *to come*, *to become*, *to change*, *to turn into*, *to do*, etc.). In the text, they may also retain this basic meaning, even when added after the main verb. However, they most frequently function as auxiliaries, expressing modality (e.g., *will*, *shall*, *can*, *might*, *must*), and while analogues for ordinary verbs can often be found relatively easily, finding equivalents for modal verbs and future auxiliaries in Tibetan and other languages is rarely possible.

List of abbreviations

- ātmanep. (ātmanepada)
- aux. (auxiliary)
- co. (connective)
- erg. (ergative marker)
- fut. (future)
- ger. (gerundive)
- ind. (indicative)
- infin. (infinitive)
- N (noun)
- neg. (negation)
- ntr. (neuter)
- opt. (optative)
- part. (participle)
- pass. (passive)
- periph.mod. (periphrastic modal)
- pers. (person)

pl. (plural)
 pres. (present)
 QW (question word)
 sg. (singular)
 TAM (tense, aspect, modality)
 V (verb)

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