

Sanskrit Lesson

by Bhikshuni Heng Hsien

सकालं कृत्वा तस्यैवामितायुषसु
तथागतस्य बुद्धक्षेत्रे सुखावत्यां
लोकधातावुपपत्स्यते ।

SA KĀLAM KṚTVĀ TASYAIVĀMITĀYUṢAS TATHĀGATASYA
BUDDHAKṢETRE SUKHĀVATYĀM LOKADHĀTAVUPAPATSYATE /

"He, having ended his life, will arrive in the Land of Happiness, the Buddhaland of that very Thus Come One Limitless Life (Amitāyus)."

This sentence of the *Buddha Speaks of Amitābha Sūtra* continues to answer the question asked in *Vajra Bodhi Sea* issue number #131: Why should beings make the vow to be reborn in the Land of Happiness (Sukhāvātī) of Amitābha Buddha (also called Amitāyus—in either case Amita Buddha)? In answering that question, the Sutra has been leading up the critical moment of death and the saving power of mindfulness of Amita Buddha's name at that crucial time. In this lesson we learn that not only will the Buddha appear before one (issue #136) so he or she will pass on with mind unconfused (#137), but if any good man or good woman has heard his name and been singlemindedly mindful of Amita Buddha for up to seven days (#134 & #135), SA (SAS before the sound combination) "he" (or "she"—see previous issues for discussion; here it is masculine singular nominative of the demonstrative pronoun and subject of the finite verb), KĀLAM KṚTVĀ "having ended his (or her) life," will not have to continue suffering on the wheel of rebirth among the six destinies of gods, asuras, humans, animals, hungry ghosts and hell-beings, never knowing in which he or she will turn up next. Again root /KṚ- "do/make" is used (see previous issues), but here with the gerund suffix -TVĀ (used rather than the suffix -VA which occurs when there is a prefix before the root).

The finite verb of the sentence expresses the culmination of mindfulness of the Buddha: UPAPATSYATE "(he or she) will arrive." This verb is formed from root /PAD- and prefix UPA- which occurred as UPAPANNA in #129, there translated as "have reached," and as UPAPADYANTE in #133: "(they) do arrive." Note how the final suffix showing person and number in the finite verbal forms in this case ends in -E (-NTE, -TE), indication that it is not an active verb but "middle" voice (also not passive, acted upon). UPAPATSYATE is third person singular future indicative middle

Where he or she will arrive is stated in the locative phrase BUDDHAKṢETRE SUKHĀVATYĀM LOKADHĀTAU (-U becomes -V in sound combination with following initial U-, and the letters are combined in writing): "in the Land of Happiness, the Buddhaland." That phrase was discussed at length in various lessons—see #131 for references. TASYA-EVA "of that very (EVA)" combines in sound and writing to make TASYAIVA, the final -A of which in turn combines with the initial A- of AMITĀYUṢAS-TATHĀGATASYA "Thus Come One Limitless Life (Amitāyus)." Those two words would normally link the final -S and initial T- when written, but are here separated because on different lines. See #129 for discussion.

This is the great advantage that mindfulness of the Buddha Amitābha (Amitāyus) can have for living beings: rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. For that reason in Buddhist Way Places seven-day sessions are regularly held, during the course of which cultivators can with one mind hold the name of Amitābha Buddha and seek rebirth in the Land of Happiness Sukhāvātī.

—to be continued