

Sanskrit Lesson

by Bhikshuni Heng Hsien

Amitabha Sutra

तस्मात्तर्हि शारिपुत्र इदमर्थवशं
संपश्यमान एव वदामि

TASMĀT-TARHI ŚĀRIPUTRA IDAM-ARTHAVĀSAM
SAMPĀSYAMĀNA EVAM VADĀMI ...

"Therefore, then, Śāriputra, perceiving this benefit I speak thus..."

Śākyamuni Buddha continues by starting a summation of the answer to the question asked in issue #131, namely *tat kasmād-d-hetoh?* "Why should living beings make the vow for that Buddhahood of Amitābha Buddha?" The issues in between have stated reasons, culminating in the certitude of being lead by the Buddha Amitābha and a host of Bodhisattvas and Sound Hearers to the Land of Happiness when the end of one's life comes. *tasmāt* "therefore" is linked with the following word in writing here, but is a separate word. In form it is ablative singular neuter of the demonstrative pronoun, and means literally "from this" or "from that." *tarhi* "then" is an indeclinable from *tad-hi*, the pronunciation having gradually altered.

śāriputra is, as usual, the vocative case (the case of direct address) of the name of the disciple to whom the Buddha is speaking: the Venerable and wise "Śāriputra." The verb of the sentence is preceded by a participle *sampāsyamāna* (*sampāsyamānas* before the sound change at the end took place and final -s was lost before the vowel that begins the next word). It means "perceiving," and is in form an adjective agreeing with the subject of the main verb--the Buddha speaking of himself in the first person singular--and so is nominative singular masculine. It is composed of prefix *sa-* and root \sqrt{pas} -, literally "seeing together" but amounting to "seeing/perceiving/considering." *-ya-* is the suffix that forms the verbal stem, here the present stem. This verb is only used in the present tense, another root $\sqrt{drś}$ - being used to express "see" in other tenses: *-māna* is the participial suffix for the present participle in the middle voice.

idam "this" was discussed before. Here it agrees with the noun *arthavaśam* "benefit." They are, again, two separate words which are linked together in the writing system, and so each has the -m final ending of the accusative singular masculine. The compound *arthavaśa* is a combination of the two masculine nouns *artha* "benefit/reason/meaning" and *vaśa* "power/will," but it is virtually equivalent to just *artha*. *vadāmi* "I speak" is present active indicative from root \sqrt{vad} - "speak," and *evam* means "thus."

—to be continued

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