

Sanskrit Lesson

by Bhikshuni Heng Hsien

AMITABHA SUTRA

एवमन्तरायां दिशि महार्चिस्कन्धो  
नाम तथागतो वैश्वानरनिर्घोषो  
नाम तथागतो इन्द्रमिस्वरनिर्घोषो  
नाम तथागतो दृष्यधर्षो नाम  
तथागत अद्वित्यसंभवो नाम  
तथागतो जनेनिप्रथो नाम  
तथागतः प्रभाकरो नाम तथा-  
गत °

EVAMUTTARĀYĀM̐ DIŚI MAHĀRCISKANDHO NĀMA TATHĀGATO  
 VAISVĀNARANIRGHOṢO NĀMA TATHĀGATO DUNDUBHISVARA-  
 NIRGHOṢO NĀMA TATHĀGATO DUṢPRADHARṢO NĀMA TATHĀ-  
 GATA ĀDITYASAMBHAVO NĀMA TATHĀGATO JALENIPRABHO  
 NĀMA TATHĀGATAḤ PRABHĀKARO NĀMA TATHĀGATA°

"In the same way, in the Northern direction there is the Thus Come One named Great Rāy Shoulders, the Thus Come One named Far-Reaching Sound, the Thus Come One named Drumroll Sound, the Thus Come One named Hard to Injure, the Thus Come One named Sun Birth, the Thus Come One named Net Light, and the Thus Come One named Emitting Light."

This lesson introduces the *uttara* "Northern" direction, citing the names of representative Buddhas. The North is the Karma Division, also known as the Accomplishment Division, whose Dharma Host is Amoghasiddhi "Accomplishment Not In Vain" Buddha. Just as the West is associated with the element metal and the color white, the North is associated with the element water and the color black. And just as the West stands for the Autumn season, the North stands for the Winter.

Issues #141 and #146 explain the overall grammar of this passage and its phrasing. The make-up of the Buddhas' names should be familiar from previous lessons, which can be consulted.

The name of the first Buddha is composed of *mahā* "great" + *arcis* "ray/flare" + *skandha* --c.f. VBS #148 for discussion of this word whose usual meaning is "shoulder." The name of the second Buddha is from *vaiśvanāra* "far-reaching," an adjective formed from *visva* "all" and *nāra* "human/mortal"--the idea being that of extending to all humanity. It is combined with *nirghoṣa* "sound." Then there is *duṅḍubhi* "drum" + *svāra* another word meaning "sound." But whereas *nirghoṣa* refers to vocal sounds and cries and noise in general, *svāra* can also have specialized meanings such as "accent," "tune," "note," and in this case can refer to the beat or rolling of the drum.

Continuing, there is *duṣpradhārṣa* "hard (*duṣ-*) to injure," then *āditya* "sun" + *sambhava* "birth," and *jaleni* "net" + *prabhā* "light" + *kara* "emitting of