

Sanskrit Lesson

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Amitabha Sutra

इन्द्रकेतुध्वज-
राजो नाम तथागतो गन्धोत्तमो
नाम तथागतो गन्धप्रभासो
नाम तथागतो

INDRAKETUDHVAJARĀJO

NĀMA TATHĀGATO GANDHOTTAMO NĀMA TATHĀGATO GANDHA-
PRABHĀSO NĀMA TATHĀGATO "...the Thus Come One
named Banner King with Indra's Emblem, the Thus
Come One named Superior Fragrance, the Thus Come
One named Fragrant Light..."

The direction above, last of the six directions listed in the text, continues to be described and representative Buddhas' names introduced. There are three *tathāgatāḥ* "Thus Come Ones" names in this lesson. *nāma* in each case means "by name," hence "named." Each name is a compound word, in the masculine singular nominative, as is *tathāgata*. In this lesson, every time the nominative singular masculine ending appears as *-o* in internal *sandhi*, but started out as *-as*. That sound change has been described many times before. Even when the final word in the compound is of another gender, the compound as a whole is masculine because it is the Buddha's name.

The first name is *indra-ketu-dhvaja-rāja*-before any ending is added. Note that while the final word in the compound is of a differ-

ent noun type and would by itself appear as *rājan*, becoming *rājā* in the nominative singular (the word itself, which means "king," is masculine), it conforms to the noun type of the name, and so takes the ending of short *-a* class nouns. *Indra* is the name of the god who is "Lord" ("Indra" literally means "Lord") in the Trayastriṃśa Heaven, the "Heaven of the Thirty-Three." *Ketu* means "emblem" or "standard," as for example a flag or ensign. It is a masculine word deriving from the root *√cit*-which means to shine or be clearly visible. In Chinese the Sanskrit is often transliterated instead of translated, and it appears written as 旛 standing for *ketu*, often, as here, followed by another word of similar meaning: *dhvaja* "banner," "standard," or "emblem," which is also masculine in gender.

The second and third names both contain the word for "fragrance" or "incense"--*gandha*-in stem form, also masculine. One name ends in *uttama*- "superior" or "highest," and the final *-a* of *gandha* + initial *u*- give *-o*- at their juncture. The other name ends in the masculine word *prabhāsa* which means "splendor" or "light."

— to be continued