

From the Vajra Prajna Paramita Sutra

continued from issue #173

भगवान्, bhagavān
"the Honored One"

bhagavān, the next word in the first sentence of the *Vajra Prajñā Pāramitā Sūtra*, gives the subject of the sentence. bhagavān was already introduced in the Sanskrit lesson for the August issue of *Vajra Bodhi Sea* (issue #171) on the invocation at the opening of the Sūtra which read: *namo bhagavatyai arya-prajñā-pāramitayai*, "Homage to the Honored One, Sagely Prajñā Pāramitā." That lesson explained how *bhagavatyai* "to the Honored One" agreed with the feminine singular noun *prajñā-pāramitā* and was in the dative case used for the indirect object. Here *bhagavān* is the title of the Buddha, referring to Shākyamuni Buddha, and is masculine singular in the nominative case used for the grammatical subject of a sentence. Among the Six Requirements for the speaking of a Sūtra, it fulfills the requirement of a Host who speaks the Dharma.

In the Shūraṅgama Mantra, *bhagavān* is transliterated as PE CHYE FAN, "PE" standing for the syllable *bha*, CHYE for *ga*, and FAN for *vān*. *-vān* (alternative forms *-vant/-vat*) is the primary suffix that means "possessing." *bhaga* is a masculine noun which derives from the root \sqrt{bhaj} - which means to divide, hence to distribute, apportion to or share with. By extension, \sqrt{bhaj} - also means to obtain as one's share, to partake of or enjoy, or else to fall to the lot or share of someone. From those meanings further developed the idea of choosing, preferring or selecting, culminating in the meanings of serving, honoring and revering. The noun *bhaga* therefore has six shades of meaning deriving from the basic idea conveyed by the root:

1. well-being, in the sense of happiness, comfort and ease.
2. excellence in the sense of illustriousness, radiance and beauty.
3. distinction in the sense of dignity and majesty.
4. renown in the sense of widespread praise and acclaim.
5. good fortune in the sense of prosperity and auspiciousness.
6. honor in the sense of veneration and reverence.

bhagavān, literally "one possessing *bhaga*," indicates the Buddha possesses all six aspects of *bhaga*, and so the



original Sanskrit is often retained, rather than a single meaning being chosen to the exclusion of the others. Here *bhagavān* is translated "Honored One," meaning the Buddha possesses honor since he is honored and revered by those in the world and those who have transcended the world. The declension of *bhaga-va(n)t* in the masculine and feminine singular is given below. Note the alternation between the strong stem *-van(t)* used for the direct cases (Nominative, Accusative and Vocative) and the weak stem *-vat* used for the oblique cases (Instrumental, Dative, Ablative, Genitive and Locative) in the masculine. The feminine forms are based entirely upon the weak stem.

	<u>masculine</u>	<u>feminine</u>
Nominative	<i>bhagavān</i>	<i>bhagavatī</i>
Accusative	<i>bhagavantam</i>	<i>bhagavatīm</i>
Instrumental	<i>bhagavatā</i>	<i>bhagavatīyā</i>
Dative	<i>bhagavate</i>	<i>bhagavatīyai</i>
Ablative	<i>bhagavatas</i>	<i>bhagavatīyas</i>
Genitive	<i>bhagavatas</i>	<i>bhagavatīyām</i>
Locative	<i>bhagavati</i>	<i>bhagavatī</i>
Vocative	<i>bhagavan</i>	<i>bhagavati</i>

bhagavān occurs frequently in both this and other Sūtras in various case forms according to how the word is used in the sentence in which it is found. It is one of the ten titles that apply to every Buddha.
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