

Sanskrit Lesson

From the Vajra Sutra

अथ खन्नायुष्मान्भूतिरुत्थायासनाद्
एकांसमुत्तरासङ्गं कृत्वा दक्षिणं जानु-
मण्डलं पृथिव्यां प्रतिष्ठाप्य येन
भगवांस्तेनाञ्जलिं प्रणम्य भगवन्तम्
एतद्वीचत्

ATHA KHALV ĀYUṢMĀN SUBHŪTIR UTTHĀYĀSANĀD
EKĀMSAM UTTARĀSĀNGAṀ KṚTVĀ DAKṢINAM JĀNU-
MAṆḌALAM PṚTHIVYĀM PRATIṢṬHĀPYA YENA
BHAGAVĀMS TENĀNJALIM PRANAMYA BHAGAVANTAM
ETAD AVOCAT.

This lesson considers the sixth type of compound found in Sanskrit.

6. dvigu compounds, or Numerical Determinative Compounds. The Sanskrit name for these, dvigu, means literally "two cows" (dvi "two" + gu "cow<s>"). This is interpreted to convey the sense of "worth two cows," being parallel to such common expressions as pañcagu "bought for five cows" (pañca "five" + gu "cow<s>"), dvinau "worth two ships" (dvi "two" + nau "ship<s>"), and pañcakapāla "made in five cups" (pañca "five" + kapāla "cup<s>"). These are actually a sub-class of karmadhāraya or Descriptive Determinative Compounds. They are considered to be adjective compounds used as nouns or adverbs, and dvigu compounds are distinguished by having a numeral as their prior member.

The Sanskrit name for these compounds is traditionally translated into Chinese as "number-bearing compounds" (帶數釋). Examples are pañcaskandhāḥ "the five skandhas" (form, feeling, thinking, activities and consciousness), and dvādaśāyatanāni "the twelve places" (dvādaśa "twelve" + āyatanāni "places," i.e., the six sense organs and their six objects). These bear numbers as part of the compound word in Sanskrit, even though the number is a separate word in English. The meaning of the items comprising a list or set is conveyed by the number, and so the number is a fundamental part of the word in Sanskrit.