

༄༅། །ཚེས་པའི་དཔལ་ལུང་བསྟན་པ།

The Prediction for Brahmaśrī

Brahmaśrīvyākaraṇa

འཕགས་པ་ཚངས་པའི་དཔལ་ལུང་བསྟན་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་མདོ།

'phags pa tshangs pa'i dpal lung bstan pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo

The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra “The Prediction for Brahmaśrī”

Āryabrahmaśrīvyākaraṇanāmahāyānasūtra

· Toh 189 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 61 (mdo sde, tsa), folios 199.b–201.a



First published 2023

Current version v 1.0.3 (2024)

Generated by 84000 Reading Room v2.21.3

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co.

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SUMMARY

- s.1 *The Prediction for Brahmaśrī* features a brief encounter between the Buddha, out on his daily alms round, and a group of children playing on the outskirts of Śrāvastī. A boy named Brahmaśrī offers the Buddha the pavilion he has made of sand or dirt. The Blessed One accepts it and transforms it into one made of precious metals and jewels. Seeing this wonder, Brahmaśrī makes a vow to become a buddha himself in the future. This prompts the Buddha to smile and predict Brahmaśrī's future awakening.

ac.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ac.1 This publication was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.

ac.2 The text was translated, edited, and introduced by the 84000 translation team. Sophie McGrath produced a draft of the translation and introduction with input from Laura Goetz. David Fiordalis revised and edited the translation and introduction. Dawn Collins copyedited the text. Martina Cotter was in charge of the digital publication process.

i.

INTRODUCTION

i.1 *The Prediction for Brahmaśrī* is a short dialogue that features an encounter between the Buddha, out on his daily alms round, and a group of children playing on the outskirts of Śrāvastī. One precocious boy named Brahmaśrī offers the Buddha the pavilion he has made of sand or dirt. The Blessed One accepts it and then transforms it into one made of precious metals and jewels. Seeing this wonder, the boy Brahmaśrī makes a vow to become a buddha himself in the future, and this prompts the Buddha to smile and give a prediction of Brahmaśrī's future awakening.

i.2 In the introduction to his translation of this sūtra,¹ Peter Skilling points out a verse in the *Lotus Sūtra* (Toh 113)² in which the Buddha seems to describe similar events to those that occur in this sūtra:

i.3 “And those children playing here and there
Who pile up sand
So as to create stūpas of the jinas:
They will all of them attain enlightenment.”³

i.4 The above verse is one of two that are quoted together in Śāntideva's compendium of Buddhist doctrine, *The Training Anthology* (*Śikṣāsamuccaya*), in the context of a brief discussion about how simple acts of faith may culminate in the incredible result of awakening as a buddha. For Śāntideva, this illustrates that one should be careful not to disrespect even ordinary people.⁴ In the narrative of *The Prediction for Brahmaśrī*, the children are not building stūpas out of sand, or, perhaps more accurately, dirt (Tib. *sa rdul*, Skt. *pāṃsu*);⁵ they are building houses, surrounding walls, and pavilions. However, the main theme of the narrative—and the image brought to mind—is similar to that found in the passage in the *Lotus Sūtra*.

i.5 This theme of a simple act of generosity, faith, and devotion to the Buddha generating incredible, inconceivable results is a common one found in narratives throughout various Buddhist traditions. For instance, in *The*

Hundred Buddhist Tales (Avadānaśataka) there are numerous stories that are quite similar to the one told in *The Prediction for Brahmaśrī*, which also feature the Buddha's extraordinary powers and his wondrous smile.⁶ So, while its longer title in the Kangyur describes it as a Mahāyāna sūtra, the narrative type, its themes, and its motifs are not unique to the Mahāyāna tradition.

i.6 *The Prediction for Brahmaśrī* is found in the General Sūtra section (*mdo sde*) of the various Kangyurs. Most of its colophons indicate that it was translated by the Indian scholar Viśuddhasiṃha and the translator Bandé Gewa Pal and edited by Vidyākarasiṃha and Devacandra, all of whom are known to have been active during the height of the Tibetan imperial patronage of Buddhism in the late eighth and early ninth centuries.⁷ That it was translated into Tibetan during the early translation period is further supported by the fact that its title is listed in the Phangthangma and Denkarma imperial catalogs of translated texts.⁸ There is no known extant Sanskrit version of this sūtra and there is no known Chinese translation.

i.7 This English translation is based on the Tibetan translation in the Degé Kangyur in consultation with the Pedurma (*dpe bsdur ma*) Comparative Edition. The Tibetan text was also compared with the Stok Palace and Phukdrak editions of the Kangyur, but none of the differences found therein were deemed noteworthy.

**The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra
The Prediction for Brahmaśrī**

1.

The Translation

[F.199.b]

1.1 Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas!

1.2 Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was dwelling in Prince Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍada's Park, near Śrāvastī, together with a great assembly of monks. At that time, one morning the Blessed One put on his lower robe and his upper robe, took his begging bowl, and walked toward the city of Śrāvastī to collect alms. [F.200.a]

1.3 At that same time, on the outskirts of Śrāvastī, there was a group of children sitting and playing with houses of sand, surrounding walls of sand, and pavilions of sand. The group of children saw the Blessed One approaching from afar. As soon as they saw him, they were elated, delighted, and glad at heart, and they continued sitting there and playing.

1.4 Then, out of compassion for those children, the Blessed One went over to where they were sitting and playing. Among the children, there was one boy named Brahmaśrī, who bowed at the feet of the Blessed One and sat right down in front of him.

1.5 Even though he already knew what they would say, the Blessed One asked the children, "What are you doing, children?"

1.6 "Blessed One," the children replied, "we are sitting here playing with these houses of sand, these surrounding walls of sand, and these pavilions of sand."

1.7 The boy Brahmaśrī then said to the Blessed One, "Out of compassion for me, Blessed One, please accept this pavilion of sand."

1.8 The Blessed One knew the lofty ambition and exuberance in the mind of the boy Brahmaśrī and accepted the pavilion of sand out of compassion for him.

- 1.9 Then, through the power of the Buddha, the pavilion of sand was instantaneously transformed into a pavilion made of the seven precious jewels, and it stood there right in front of the Blessed One. On its eastern side were 84,000 pillars of gold; on its southern side were 84,000 pillars of silver; on its western side were 84,000 pillars of beryl; and on its northern side were 84,000 pillars of crystal. [F.200.b]
- 1.10 When the boy Brahmaśrī saw this wondrous display of extraordinary power, he became even more elated. The most immense joy welled up inside him, and he addressed the Blessed One with these verses:
- 1.11 “O, the World Protector has displayed
The immense expanse of his extraordinary power!
The Buddha has displayed his extraordinary power
Out of compassion for me alone!
- 1.12 “This offering of a pavilion of sand,
Which I made to the great sage,
Has become something made of jewels!
O, the Buddha is inconceivable!
- 1.13 “O, O, a field such as this one,
A field of a buddha, cannot be surpassed!
The blind, those with loss of vision, and
Those with little wisdom do not know it.
- 1.14 “Best of those who walk on two feet,
I aspire to achieve awakening,
Having obtained this field of beings,
This opportunity so hard to obtain.
- 1.15 “I, too, wish to train in the qualities
That you possess, O Leader, so that,
Having attained unsurpassable awakening,
I can use extraordinary powers such as yours!”
- 1.16 Then, at that moment, the Blessed One displayed a smile and various multicolored rays of light issued from the Blessed One’s mouth in such a way that blue, yellow, red, white, rose madder, crystalline, and silvery rays of light spread throughout endless, limitless world systems, reaching as far as the Brahmā realm, and then they returned, circled the Blessed One three times, and disappeared into the Blessed One’s uṣṇīṣa.
- 1.17 The venerable Ānanda then addressed the Blessed One with this verse:
- 1.18 “The supreme victors, the leaders, the chiefs among beings

Do not display their smile without a reason.
Compassionate one, for the world's benefit,
Please tell us why you displayed a smile just now."

1.19 When this had been said, the Blessed One answered the venerable Ānanda,
"Ānanda, do you see this boy Brahmaśrī?"

"Yes, Blessed One, I see him," he replied. [F.201.a]

1.20 "Ānanda," said the Blessed One, "as a result of this root of virtue and this
aspiration in his mind, this boy will not become a hell being for 3,200 eons,
and then, once he has achieved awakening, he will be a tathāgata, a worthy
one, a perfect and completely awakened buddha named The One Exalted
above All the Worlds."

1.21 The Blessed One then addressed the venerable Ānanda with these verses:

1.22 "Faith in the Buddha generates
Merit in no small measure.
So, too, does hearing the supreme Dharma
And showing respect to the Sangha.

1.23 "For those with faith in the Buddha,
Attaining awakening is not difficult.
Hence, those who aspire for awakening
Should venerate the leaders of the world.

1.24 "Ānanda, this boy will become
A glorious one, best of those who walk on two feet,
A leader of the world,
Called The Exalted One.

1.25 "In this way, the buddhas are inconceivable
And so, too, are the qualities of the buddhas;
Faith in those who are inconceivable
Bears fruit that is like that as well."⁹

1.26 After the Blessed One had spoken these words, the venerable Ānanda and
the boy Brahmaśrī were delighted and they rejoiced at what the Blessed One
had said.

1.27 *This concludes the noble Mahāyāna sūtra "The Prediction for Brahmaśrī."*

c.

Colophon

c.1 Translated by the Indian preceptor Viśuddhasiṃha and the translator Bandé Gewa Pal. Edited and finalized by the Indian preceptor Vidyākaraśiṃha and the great editor and translator Bandé Devacandra.

NOTES

n.

- n.1 Skilling 2021, pp. 279–80 and note 600. He also points to a stone relief from Gandhāra that is said to depict King Kaniṣka making an offering of sand. Skilling also notes that *The Prediction for Brahmaśrī* was translated into French in the nineteenth century by the scholar Léon Feer and published, first in Feer 1865 and then again in Feer 1883.
- n.2 *The White Lotus of the Good Dharma* (<http://read.84000.co/translation/toh113.html>), Toh 113, translated by Peter Alan Roberts (2023).
- n.3 *The White Lotus of the Good Dharma* (2018), 2.109.
- n.4 For an English translation, see Goodman 2016, pp. 95–96.
- n.5 The verses in the *Lotus Sūtra* preserved in Sanskrit contain words for both sand and dirt, *sikatā* and *pāṃsu* (or *pāṃśu*), respectively. The former term for sand is typically translated into Tibetan with *bye ma*, as it is in the case of the *Lotus Sūtra*, whereas the Tibetan translation of *pāṃsu*, dirt or dust, is typically *sa rdul*, and it is this latter term that is used throughout *The Prediction for Brahmaśrī*. In any case, the city of Śrāvastī is said to have been situated on the banks of the river Aciravatī, which ran dry during the hot season, making it easy to imagine the children in this sūtra playing in the sandy ground outside the city.
- n.6 For a translation of one such story and on the theme of the Buddha’s smile, see Fiordalis 2021. For more translations from the same collection of stories, see Appleton 2020.
- n.7 The Phukdrak Kangyur version carries a variant colophon, which states that it was translated by Viśuddhasiṃha and Gélo (*dge blo*) and revised by Lhayi Dawa (*lha’i zla ba*). The name Lhayi Dawa is the Tibetan equivalent of

Devacandra, so as Skilling has observed, “There is some degree of agreement among the records.” Skilling 2021, p. 278.

n.8 Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, p. 121.

n.9 This verse has parallels or close variants in other canonical texts, such as *The Chapter on Medicines* (2021), 9.67; *The Threefold Ritual* (2020), 12; and the *Pradakṣiṇagāthā* (Toh 321).

b.

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GLOSSARY

· Types of attestation for names and terms of the corresponding ·
source language

AS	<i>Attested in source text</i> This term is attested in a manuscript used as a source for this translation.
AO	<i>Attested in other text</i> This term is attested in other manuscripts with a parallel or similar context.
AD	<i>Attested in dictionary</i> This term is attested in dictionaries matching Tibetan to the corresponding language.
AA	<i>Approximate attestation</i> The attestation of this name is approximate. It is based on other names where the relationship between the Tibetan and source language is attested in dictionaries or other manuscripts.
RP	<i>Reconstruction from Tibetan phonetic rendering</i> This term is a reconstruction based on the Tibetan phonetic rendering of the term.
RS	<i>Reconstruction from Tibetan semantic rendering</i> This term is a reconstruction based on the semantics of the Tibetan translation.
SU	<i>Source unspecified</i> This term has been supplied from an unspecified source, which most often is a widely trusted dictionary.

g.1 Ānanda

kun dga' bo

ཀུན་དགའ་བོ།

ānanda^{AO}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A major śrāvaka disciple and personal attendant of the Buddha Śākyamuni during the last twenty-five years of his life. He was a cousin of the Buddha (according to the *Mahāvastu*, he was a son of Śuklodana, one of the brothers of King Śuddhodana, which means he was a brother of Devadatta; other sources say he was a son of Amṛtodana, another brother of King Śuddhodana, which means he would have been a brother of Aniruddha).

Ānanda, having always been in the Buddha's presence, is said to have memorized all the teachings he heard and is celebrated for having recited all the Buddha's teachings by memory at the first council of the Buddhist saṅgha, thus preserving the teachings after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa. The phrase "Thus did I hear at one time," found at the beginning of the sūtras, usually stands for his recitation of the teachings. He became a patriarch after the passing of Mahākāśyapa.

g.2 Anāthapiṇḍada's Park

mgon med zas sbyin gyi kun dga' ra ba

མགོན་མེད་ཟས་སྤྱིན་གྱི་ཀུན་དགའ་ར་བ།

anāthapiṇḍadārāma ^{AO}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

This was an important early site for the Buddha's growing community. Anāthapiṇḍada, a wealthy patron of the Buddha, purchased the park, located outside Śrāvastī, at great cost, purportedly covering the ground with gold, and donated it to the saṅgha. It was there that the Buddha spent several rainy seasons and gave discourses that were later recorded as sūtras. It was also the site for one of the first Buddhist monasteries. (*Provisional 84000 definition. New definition forthcoming.*)

g.3 Bandé Devacandra

ban de de ba tsan+d+ras

བན་དེ་དེ་བ་ཅན་སྤྱིན་གྱི་ཀུན་དགའ་ར་བ།

—

One of the scholars involved in the translation of this sūtra.

g.4 Bandé Gewa Pal

ban de dge ba dpal

བན་དེ་དེ་བ་ཅན་སྤྱིན་གྱི་ཀུན་དགའ་ར་བ།

—

One of the scholars involved in the translation of this sūtra.

g.5 Best of those who walk on two feet

rkang gnyis dam pa

ཀར་གཉིས་དམ་པ།

dvipadottama ^{AO}

A common epithet of the Buddha.

g.6 Blessed One

bcom ldan 'das

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

bhagavat ^{AO}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

In Buddhist literature, an epithet applied to buddhas, most often to Śākyamuni. The Sanskrit term generally means “possessing fortune,” but in specifically Buddhist contexts it implies that a buddha is in possession of six auspicious qualities (*bhaga*) associated with complete awakening. The Tibetan term—where *bcom* is said to refer to “subduing” the four *māras*, *ldan* to “possessing” the great qualities of buddhahood, and *'das* to “going beyond” *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*—possibly reflects the commentarial tradition where the Sanskrit *bhagavat* is interpreted, in addition, as “one who destroys the four *māras*.” This is achieved either by reading *bhagavat* as *bhagnavat* (“one who broke”), or by tracing the word *bhaga* to the root $\sqrt{bhañj}$ (“to break”).

g.7 Brahmā realm

tshangs pa'i 'jig rten

ཚངས་པའི་འཇིག་རྟེན།

brahmaloka ^{AO}

The heavenly realm of Brahmā, which in standard works like the *Abhidharmakośa* is described as being just above the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*) and comprising the first three levels of the form realm (*rūpadhātu*). It is also said to be the dwelling place of the god Brahmā and of the class of divinities called brahmās, and it is equated with the state that one achieves in the first level of meditative concentration (*dhyāna*).

g.8 Brahmaśrī

tshangs pa'i dpal

ཚངས་པའི་དཔལ།

**brahmaśrī* ^{RP}

A young boy who offers a pavilion made of sand to the Buddha in this sūtra.

g.9 extraordinary power

rdzu 'phrul

རུ་འཕྲུལ།

ṛddhi ^{AO}

A general term for an array of extraordinary or superhuman powers, the word for which derives from a verb meaning “to succeed” or “to flourish.”

g.10 field

zhing

ཞིང།

kṣetra ^{AO}

Literally, “a field” or “plot of arable land.” A term that comes to be used figuratively to refer to beings like the Buddha as a “field of merit,” that is, in the sense that offerings made to them bear great fruit. In what is a related use, the term also refers to domains of existence, such as those over which a buddha exerts authority. Both senses are used in this sūtra.

g.11 inconceivable

bsam mi khyab

བསམ་མི་ལྷན།

acintya ^{AO}

A term that refers not only to something that cannot be imagined or conceived, generally speaking, but also to something of inconceivably great quantity or quality.

g.12 lower robe

sham thabs

ཤམ་ཐབས།

antarvāsa ^{AO}

The garment covering the lower body. One of the three Dharma robes (*tricvara, chos gos gsum*).

g.13 monk

dge slong

དགེ་སློང།

bhikṣu ^{AO}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The term *bhikṣu*, often translated as “monk,” refers to the highest among the eight types of *prātimokṣa* vows that make one part of the Buddhist assembly. The Sanskrit term literally means “beggar” or “mendicant,” referring to the fact that Buddhist monks and nuns—like other ascetics of the time—subsisted on alms (*bhikṣā*) begged from the laity.

In the Tibetan tradition, which follows the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, a monk follows 253 rules as part of his moral discipline. A nun (*bhikṣuṇī*; *dge slong ma*) follows 364 rules. A novice monk (*śrāmaṇera*; *dge tshul*) or nun (*śrāmaṇerikā*; *dge tshul ma*) follows thirty-six rules of moral discipline (although in other vinaya traditions novices typically follow only ten).

g.14 pavilion

khang pa brtsegs pa

ཁང་པ་བརྟེན་པ།

kūṭāgāra^{AO}

A hall or a type of building that may have a second floor and is often distinguished by a pinnacled or peaked roof.

g.15 Prince Jeta’s Grove

rgyal bu rgyal byed

རྒྱལ་བུ་རྒྱལ་བྱེད།

jetavana^{AO}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A park in Śrāvastī, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Kośala in northern India. It was owned by Prince Jeta, and the wealthy merchant Anāthapiṇḍada, wishing to offer it to the Buddha, bought it from him by covering the entire property with gold coins. It was to become the place where the monks could be housed during the monsoon season, thus creating the first Buddhist monastery. It is therefore the setting for many of the Buddha's discourses.

g.16 sand

sa rdul

ས་རྩལ།

pāṃsu^{AO}

A term that often refers to dust or dirt but may also refer to sand.

g.17 seven precious jewels

rin po che sna bdun

འཇིག་ཆེན་བདུན།

saptaratna^{AO}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The set of seven precious materials or substances includes a range of precious metals and gems, but their exact list varies. The set often consists of gold, silver, beryl, crystal, red pearls, emeralds, and white coral, but may also contain lapis lazuli, ruby, sapphire, chrysoberyl, diamonds, etc. The term is frequently used in the sūtras to exemplify preciousness, wealth, and beauty, and can describe treasures, offerings materials, or the features of architectural structures such as stūpas, palaces, thrones, etc. The set is also used to describe the beauty and prosperity of buddha realms and the realms of the gods.

In other contexts, the term *saptaratna* can also refer to the seven precious possessions of a cakravartin or to a set of seven precious moral qualities.

g.18 Śrāvastī

mnyan yod

མཉམ་ཡོད།

śrāvastī^{AO}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

During the life of the Buddha, Śrāvastī was the capital city of the powerful kingdom of Kośala, ruled by King Prasenajit, who became a follower and patron of the Buddha. It was also the hometown of Anāthapiṇḍada, the wealthy patron who first invited the Buddha there, and then offered him a park known as Jetavana, Prince Jeta's Grove, which became one of the first Buddhist monasteries. The Buddha is said to have spent about twenty-five rainy seasons with his disciples in Śrāvastī, thus it is named as the setting of numerous events and teachings. It is located in present-day Uttar Pradesh in northern India.

g.19 surrounding wall

ra ba

ར་བ།

—

A term that can refer to a fence, an enclosure, a rampart, or the wall surrounding a courtyard or building.

g.20 tathāgata

de bzhin gshegs pa

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

tathāgata ^{AO}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A frequently used synonym for *buddha*. According to different explanations, it can be read as *tathā-gata*, literally meaning “one who has thus gone,” or as *tathā-āgata*, “one who has thus come.” *Gata*, though literally meaning “gone,” is a past passive participle used to describe a state or condition of existence. *Tatha(tā)*, often rendered as “suchness” or “thusness,” is the quality or condition of things as they really are, which cannot be conveyed in conceptual, dualistic terms. Therefore, this epithet is interpreted in different ways, but in general it implies one who has departed in the wake of the buddhas of the past, or one who has manifested the supreme awakening dependent on the reality that does not abide in the two extremes of existence and quiescence. It is also often used as a specific epithet of the Buddha Śākyamuni.

g.21 The Exalted One

mngon par 'phags pa

མངོན་པར་འཕགས་པ།

—

A shorter form of The One Exalted above All the Worlds, the name of the buddha whom the boy Brahmaśrī will become in a future lifetime, as predicted by the Buddha in this sūtra.

g.22 The One Exalted above All the Worlds

'jig rten thams cad las mngon par 'phags pa

འཇིག་རྟེན་ཐམས་ཅད་ལས་མངོན་པར་འཕགས་པ།

—

The name of the buddha whom the boy Brahmaśrī will become in a future lifetime, as predicted by the Buddha in this sūtra.

g.23 upper robe

chos gos

ཚོས་གོས།

cīvara ^{AO}

In common parlance, this denotes the patched, yellow upper robe worn by renunciants.

g.24

uṣṇīṣa

dbu'i gtsug tor

དབུ་འཇུག་རྩྭ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་

uṣṇīṣa^{AO}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

One of the thirty-two signs, or major marks, of a great being. In its simplest form it is a pointed shape of the head like a turban (the Sanskrit term, *uṣṇīṣa*, in fact means “turban”), or more elaborately a dome-shaped extension. The extension is described as having various extraordinary attributes such as emitting and absorbing rays of light or reaching an immense height.

g.25

Vidyākarasiṃha

bid+yA ka ra sing+ha

བེད་ཡ་ཀ་ར་སིང་མ།

**vidyākarasiṃha*^{RP}

One of the scholars involved in the translation of this sūtra.

g.26

Viśuddhasiṃha

bi shud+d+ha sing+ha

བི་ཤུད་སིང་མ།

**viśuddhasiṃha*^{RP}

One of the scholars involved in the translation of this sūtra.

g.27

wondrous display of extraordinary power

rdzu 'phrul gyi cho 'phrul

རྩུ་འཕུལ་གྱི་ཚོ་འཕུལ།

ṛddhiprātihārya^{AO}

An expression used to refer to a display of extraordinary power (*ṛddhi*) that elicits wonder in an audience. In Buddhist literature, one of three types of wonders or miracles (*prātihārya*), the others being “reading others’ minds” and “teaching the Dharma.”

g.28

worthy one

dgra bcom pa

དགའ་བཅོམ་པ།

arhat^{AO}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

According to Buddhist tradition, one who is worthy of worship (*pūjām arhati*), or one who has conquered the enemies, the mental afflictions (*kleśa-ari-hata-vat*), and reached liberation from the cycle of rebirth and suffering. It is the fourth and highest of the four fruits attainable by śrāvakas. Also used as an epithet of the Buddha.