

! than *pratyekabuddhatva*).⁶ This, however, would be somewhat surprising since in the preceding as well as in the following verses *buddhatva* (and also *buddhatā*) is, without any qualification, consistently used for Buddhahood proper, i.e., the state of highest, perfect Awakening. Actually, in the following verse (IX.10) *śreṣṭha* clearly qualifies not *buddhatva* but *śaraṇa*,⁷ and the same is true of a quasi-synonym of *śreṣṭha*, viz. *uttama*, in the preceding pair of verses (IX.7–8)⁸ of which IX.9 is a more artistic rephrasing.⁹ In both cases, the purport is that Buddhahood is the supreme refuge. This doubtless makes better sense. At any rate, the commentary on verse IX.9 does construe *śreṣṭha* with *śaraṇa* and not with *buddhatva*:

By this third [verse the author] shows that ... precisely this refuge status [of Buddhahood] is unsurpassed because it (= the refuge status of Buddhahood) is incomparable and supreme (*tasyaiva śaraṇa-tvasyānupamaśreṣṭhatvenānuttaryaṃ*¹⁰ ... *darśayati*).

Accordingly, Lévi (p. 71) translates the verse as follows:

Cette Bouddhaté est le Refuge excellent, incomparable....

The Tibetan translation, too, supports this interpretation:

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⁶Cf. XIX.62d *bodhiḥ śreṣṭhā* (Bhāṣya: *śreṣṭhā bodhiḥ*), but in contrast to *buddhatva* the term *bodhi* is traditionally applied to Śrāvakas (and Pratyekabuddhas) as well and hence requires specification when referring to a Buddha, i.e., when used in the sense of *anuttarā samyaksaṃbodhi*.

⁷ “[T]his Buddhahood is regarded here as the best of [all] refuges” (... *tad buddhatvaṃ śreṣṭham iheṣṭam śaraṇānām*; text follows Naoya Funahashi, *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* [Chapters I, II, III, IX, X] (Tokyo: Kokushokankokai, 1985), p. 27).

⁸ “Buddhahood protects from ...; therefore, [it] is the best refuge” (*paritrāṇaṃ hi buddhatvaṃ ... tasmāc charaṇam uttamaṃ*).

⁹ The same pattern is also found in the preceding verses, the *anuṣṭubh* lines IX.1–2 and IX.4–5 being rephrased by IX.3 (*śārdūlavikrīḍita*) and IX.6 (*sragdharā*), respectively. This pattern is, by the way, also found in the poetical rephrasing of the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra at Ratnagotravibhāga I, 96–126.

¹⁰ Thus to be read with Tibetan *mhog nyid kyis*, against Lévi’s *śreṣṭhasya cānu*^o. Among the mss accessible to me (see n. 12), mss B, N2, N3 and NS read *°ṣṭhasvanānu*^o, whereas ms A has *°ṣṭa·svanānu*^o, with a dot between *ṣṭa* (*sic*) and *sva*. A misreading of *tve* as *sa* seems quite possible from a script where the *e*-sign is a downward hook on the upper left side of the akṣara. See A 34b2; B 36b5; N2 37b4, N3 29b7; NS 31a6.

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This Buddhahood is considered to be the incomparable, supreme refuge (Peking Phi 10a1-2: *sangs rgyas nyid de skyabs ni dpe med mchog tu 'dod*).¹¹

However, such an interpretation is clearly impossible if *śreṣṭhabuddhatvaṃ* is read as a compound. To conjecture a reading *śreṣṭhaṃ* is out of the question because it would violate the metre. The only way out of the difficulty occurring to me is to suggest that we should probably separate *śreṣṭha* from *buddhatvaṃ* and take it as a BHS form of the nom. sg. neuter (cf. F. Edgerton, *BHSG* § 8.31–34). Possibly what the mss¹² write as °a was actually pronounced °ā,¹³ i.e., a short nasal for which the Brāhmī script has no sign, so that the scribes had only two options: either to indicate the nasalization by means of an *anusvāra* to the effect of obscuring the metre, or to give precedence to the metre and leave the nasalization unexpressed (as they actually do).¹⁴ If my argument is correct, the line should be read (and was at any rate read by the commentary) as

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¹¹Likewise the Tibetan translation of the *pāda* in Sthiramati's commentary (P Mi 125b6–7): *sangs rgyas skyabs ni dpe med mchog yin te*. Cf. also P Mi 125b5 (*skyabs de nyid dpe med pa dang / mchog tu gyur pa 'i phyir*) and 126a1 (*skyabs 'di dam pa yin pas na mchog ces bya ste*). The Chinese translation, too, seems to take *śreṣṭha* with *śaraṇa* but construes *anupama* with Buddha-(hood) when paraphrasing the commentary: “Verse: The Buddha is the supreme refuge; because [he] is incomparable, [it?] is unsurpassed. ... Commentary: This verse elucidates the supremeness of refuge. Because the Buddha is incomparable, [as a refuge he] is unsurpassed” (T 31.1604: 602c4 and 6: 偈曰。佛為勝歸處 無比故無上 ... 釋曰。此偈顯歸依勝。由佛無譬喻故為無上。).

¹²Five mss are accessible to me, viz. mss A and B published in Syôkô Takeuchi et al. 1995 and mss N2 (NGMPP E 1923/5), N3 (NGMPP E 1367/11) and NS (NGMPP A 114/1). According to Wakahara 2003, p. (34), NS is dated Nepal saṃvat 796 (= 1675/6 C.E.), N2 Vikrama saṃvat 1957 (= 1900 C.E.), and N3 Nepal saṃvat 1025 (= 1904/5 C.E.). Cf. also Wakahara's articles in *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 51.2 (2003), pp. (157)–(163) and 52.2 (2004), pp. (157)–(162).

¹³For cases of *aṃ* to be read as *ā* for metrical reasons in Pāli verses, cf. Alsdorf 1967, p. 17, verses 7c = Sn 921c *paṭipadā* (but cf. Norman 1992, 342!) and 16b = Sn 930b *payuttā*; p. 26 (*Jātaka* no. 479) verse 2b *Kālingā*; p. 29 (*Jātaka* no. 485) verse 6a *imā mayhā*; etc.

¹⁴All mss available to me read °a, as does S. Lévi's edition. See A 34b1; B 36b3; N2 37b2; N3 29b6; NS 31a5.

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