The Nine Qualities of the Buddha

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 22:49

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sama Sambuddhasa Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sama Sambuddhasa Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sama Sambuddhasa - Homage to the Buddha, the blessed, noble and fully self-awakened one.

First of all, many thanks to Donatella who is translating for me, honeying my words with her angelic voice.

I'm going to give a talk on the qualities of the Buddha, the nine qualities. This is what we chant when we do puja. This evening I will talk about the nine qualities of the Buddha, which we refer to when we intone the puja. We chant that in the morning.

The first quality is *Arahant*. It means accomplished, somebody who is worthy of respect. Now, what the commentators do is they begin to separate the word to give it more meaning. The one that makes sense to me is the division between Ari and Hatta. It means he destroyed his enemies. Now the enemies, of course, are the defilements. The defilements are listed as ten, but actually in the scriptures it just means anything that is unwholesome within our personality. Such a person has no secret evil. He can say with the Buddha, with all the enlightened people, that birth is destroyed and the holy life has been lived. What had to be done has been done. There is no more rebirth for me. So whenever we say Arahant, that's what we mean.

The second one is *Samma Sambuddho*, which means self-enlightened. This is the crucial role that the first person plays for us. Somebody must have planted the first wheat. Somebody must have created the wheel. We know that Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing climbed Everest. Once they did it, everybody else can do it, even the dogs. In other words, the one who initiates, who begins something, has a special place within our praise. The first person, the one who started all this, has a special place in what we attribute to him, in the blessings we wish him. He is the founder of our tradition. Without him there simply wouldn't be any Buddhism.

The next quality is endowed with clear vision, or we can say direct understanding, and virtuous conduct. This means that he has understood the cause of our problems and of course of his own problems. Because of that his actions are always virtuous. Remember that everything begins from this misunderstanding. It's a misunderstanding as to who we are. Presuming ourselves to be human beings, that's all, we seek happiness in the sensual world. This creates what we call an attachment, which means we are dependent on the sensual world to make us happy. This leads us to certain unfortunate qualities: greed, aversion and fear, and all the rest of human misery. In other words, he is somebody who has understood the path and understands it to be a path of purification.

The next quality is translated as someone who has completed a journey. This includes all the training that he went through with his two teachers and his own discovery of the path. Don't forget that he also did some very severe mortification exercises. In other words, by practicing in the wrong paths, he eventually found the right path. This often happens to us. First you make mistakes and then you find the right way to do something.

The next one is a seer of the worlds. This does not refer specifically to seeing other realms of being. This is to do with the worlds that we create. These are the ones that we manufacture, our little universes. Sometimes we're in the hell realm, when we're depressed and upset. Sometimes we were in the animal realm, when we used to get drunk, but we don't do that anymore. Then there's the hungry ghost realm, when we are very greedy. Sometimes we're in the human realm, where we have some sort of intelligence, some sort of wisdom. Occasionally we get lost in anger and we become angry gods. Of course occasionally we are bathing in absolute wonderful joy and pleasure. These are the worlds that we create within ourselves. Somehow we have to go beyond these worlds. That's what we do whenever we practice *vipassa nā*. Because when we practice *vipassanā* we can see these worlds appearing in front of us.

The next translates literally as a coachman driving an ox or a horse. It translates better as an incomparable trainer of trainees. Of course he has left us certain rules and regulations that we can follow. On the negative side there are the five precepts, the eight precepts. Then of course for the monastic life, all the rules of the Vinaya. On the positive side, he's given us the ten perfections and the four Brahma Viharas, the four great illimitables: love, compassion, joy and equanimity.

The next one is, he is a teacher of gods and men, gods and human beings. This, of course, refers to the Dharma, all the teachings of the Dharma. Of course, the practice of Vipassanā, of all the absorption techniques, and how to live the spiritual life in ordinary daily life.

Number eight is *buddho* which is the one who knows. This is simply saying that he knows how we create the world of *samsāra*, the world of ongoing, and the escape. Remember he said he only taught two things: *dukkha* and the end of *dukkha*. *Dukkha* is all the miseries that you can think of.

The final quality is *Bhagavā*, which means exalted, sublime. It's an honorific, like we say of the Dalai Lama, his holiness.

So those nine qualities: he has accomplished and has destroyed all his defilements. He was self-awakened. He has a clear understanding of our situation and because of that virtuous conduct. He has completed the journey and he did it skillfully. He knows all the worlds that we can create and how to get out of them. He's a wonderful trainer, a coach, a life coach. He's also a great teacher. He has penetrated the human condition, he is the Buddha. Therefore we consider him to be exalted, sublime and blessed.

I hope my words have been of some assistance. That I have not caused confusion. And that by your devotion to the path you will be liberated sooner rather than later.

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