The Four Bases of Power

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 10:45

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

So I thought today, being the new year and everybody's made these amazing new year resolutions, that we would do the four bases of power — or better still, the better translation — the four bases that lead to success.

Now, these are part of the 37 requisites for awakening, the *Bodhipakkhiya dhamma*. And this is the practice that the Buddha teaches us. So it begins with the four foundations of mindfulness. And then you have the four right efforts. I won't go into details — it takes too long. Then you get these four roads to success or basis for success. Then you have the spiritual faculties. And when you achieve stream entrant, they become the five spiritual powers. Then you have the seven factors of awakening, the Noble Eightfold Path, and all that adds up to 37.

And according to Bhikkhu Thanissaro, Ajahn Thanissaro — some of you will know his very good work — he reckons that this relates to the 37 chords of those times. If you wanted to play the veena, which was like a guitar, then you had to be able to find these 37 chords. I don't know, I've never seen proof of that, but there we are. So there's a nice connection there between music and the Buddha Dhamma.

Anyway, when you practice these four bases, you get what's known as the *iddhis*, or the powers. You might have heard them called the siddhis. So you can bilocate — you can appear in two different places or more. You can fly through the air and through walls. You can have the divine eye where you see beyond what's possible through the physical body. And the same with the divine ear — you can hear things which you can't hear if the mind is constrained by the physical body. You can read other people's minds. You can see how people are born and die depending on their *kamma*. So these are just some of them.

Now, all these are very wonderful and magical. But the really important one for us is that it leads to the destruction of the mental defilements. So that's where they become important for us. So these four bases or four qualities are what we need in order to purify the heart. And that's an absolute necessity in order to become fully liberated.

Okay, so what are these four bases? The first one is *chanda*, and it translates as desire. Now, in the dependent origination, of course, we have this word *taṇhā*. That's always an unwholesome desire. It's always a desire which is driven by greed, hatred or delusion. *Chanda* can be unskillful. But here, of course,

it's a skillful desire. Now, it's not just a wish, it's an aspiration. It's a longing, it's a yearning for something. So in order to get this liberation from suffering, you've got to really want it.

Now, once you've got that desire, once you've got that aspiration, the next thing that arises to support that, of course, is your energy, your commitment, true grit, doggedness, perseverance and all that drive.

And then with that, there comes a devotion to it. So that word is *citta*. Now, *citta* refers to both the heart and the mind. In other words, it's the whole mental process. And it demands a complete devotion from the heart to the task in hand. It's to do with attitude, dedication, devotion, care. And this is where the Buddha's word, *appamādo*, one of his favourite words, which means diligence, is one of the last two words: *appamā do sampādeta* — really strive, really work for your liberation. So there's the *citta*.

And then finally, there's this word *vīmaṃsā*, which translates as discrimination, reflection, knowing what you're doing, constantly reflecting on how you feel, what you're doing, what the process is, where you're going, et cetera, et cetera.

So these four qualities, I'm sure all of you have exercised these. They are necessary for spiritual attainment, but they're necessary for anything that you set about in ordinary daily life. If you set yourself a goal, whatever it is, even if it's a simple thing like having to replant the garden or a job of work, you've got to have these qualities. And if one of them is missing or if one of them is not up to standard, then it undermines the project. It'll undermine your process.

Let's see now. I'm just thinking of my own personal — there's about four or five times in my life where I've had to put some special effort in. One of them was when I was a student. So I just lived the good old student life. And I was doing at the time this combination of a BA with a teacher's certificate. And in that very same year, they'd actually instituted the Bachelor of Education, which would have been far easier. Anyway, by the time I got to the fourth year, I knew I actually knew nothing. I had to pull my socks up, as they say.

And I really, really, really wanted that BA because it's a passport to jobs and all sorts of stuff, especially in teaching. So I really had to put my heart and soul into it. And I remember working 12, 14 hours a day trying to get this stuff into my head. But what was missing there? So I had the desire, I had the aspiration. I really, really wanted that BA. I had the energy because I was young anyway. I had the energy, the empowerment to do it. My heart was completely devoted to it.

But I'm also sure about the discrimination and reflection. So in those days, I don't remember anybody teaching you study skills or anything like that. You just hung on in there and drove it in. If I'd have had some guidance on study skills, it probably would have been that much easier for me. So I wasn't really reflecting on the ways that I was studying or the way that I had chosen to do this work. And it probably led to inefficiencies and all sorts of stuff.

So I think if you look back into your life, I think you'll find there were times when you really had to put

your body and soul into something. I use soul, of course, in a Buddhist sense.

So here we have these four qualities. You have to have an aspiration, a yearning, a real zeal for something. And there has to come that energy, which includes diligence. Your heart has to be right behind it. And there's this constant reflection.

So in our spiritual life, every day, every time you wake up in the morning to set yourself to make this a day of mindfulness, affectionate mindfulness. I mean, that's what the Buddha wants us to do. That's his teaching in the Mettā Sutta, the discourse on goodwill — to develop not just a mindfulness, but something that engages also the heart. And that's your sense of care. So it's care and attention. Care and attention leads to this affectionate mindfulness.

And sometimes you have to give yourself a really good aspiration. So the aspiration, whatever it is — the end of suffering, make life a bit easier, movement towards contentment, it's better for other people. You can always bring others in. And then to raise that energy, the commitment to your practice, and then this constant reflection. So throughout the day when the mind's wandering, you find yourself all over the place just to stop for a minute. Whoa, where am I going? What am I doing? And in that way, we're slowly developing these qualities.

And well, that's the path. I mean, it's pretty straightforward, really, once you're into it.

So that's what I've got for this evening. And it supports whatever resolutions you've made. So a resolution normally lasts for as long as you say it. So it's no good saying, "Oh, I won't have any tea from now on." It'll last about 10 minutes. So you've got to keep reinforcing that commitment, whatever your resolution has been.

Very good. Short and sweet. I hope these words have been of some assistance, that I have not caused confusion, and that by your devotion to the practice and the four bases of success, you will be liberated from all suffering sooner rather than later.

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