

# Buddha as Refuge

Bhante Bodhidhamma · DhammaBytes · 12:38

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*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa. Namō tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa. Namō tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa.* Homage to the Buddha, the blessed, noble and fully self-enlightened one.

So I thought actually this evening for my little Dharma bite, I'd actually do this word Buddha. And we chanted these nine attributes.

So the first one we say is *iti pi so bhagavā araham̐*. This word *araham̐* refers to having completed the path of training. It's the fourth level of sainthood. The first one being stream entrance, when a person intuitively Nibbāna. And then the next two are developments of that insight. See that it's always into the same thing: the three characteristics, impermanence, not-self, and how we create suffering. So this word *araham̐* simply means that he's completed the training to full awakening.

The next one is *sammāsambuddho*, so fully self-enlightened. So why do we say he was self-enlightened? Because he went to various teachers, and then he practised mortifications. And really the influence, we think, of the Nigaṇṭha, the leader of the Jains, who would have been his elder contemporary. We say that because remember he comes to a crunch where he leaves his five companions and he sits by the roadside pretty dejected. And when I contemplate that moment, I would have thought it's a pretty heavy moment of anguish because he's left his family, he's left everything, he's gone out, he's done this training and it didn't work, and then he's done all this starving himself almost to death, and that didn't work, and there was nothing else on offer, nothing else in the spiritual field on offer. But he was still there with his original problem as to suffering—why was he suffering? And remember, in those days it would have been put in terms of continuous rebirth, *saṃsāra*. There would have been seemingly no end to being reborn in this realm, in that realm.

And it was in that desperation, remember, that he remembers this childhood occasion. And that's why we say he's self-enlightened, because it was the memory of how he was watching his father doing the ploughing ceremony that gave him the inspiration to sit again. And of course, what he remembered was that childlike mind, which we develop in our meditation, of just watching, just looking, with that curiosity, that enquiry. And that's the reason we say he's *sambuddho*, he's self-enlightened.

We also say he's *vijjācaraṇasampanno*, which means that he is fully developed in both his wisdom and his virtue. And that's something which is important to understand, that those two are concurrent. You can't grow in wisdom without the growth in virtue, because the defilements we suffer from, the unethical behaviour that we commit, is an expression of delusion. That's what it is. So as we grow in wisdom, there

is a growth in virtue. You can't have the one without the other.

So I remember, it's not so bad these days, but there was a time you couldn't talk about morality. People didn't want to know about it. It was Victorian. So people would do... I mean, I know people who used to do six months head-banging meditation and then go out on sex, drugs and rock and roll, and it's like they won't get anywhere. You can't do that. At some point there has to be this purification of the heart, this purification of intention. And it can happen naturally just through the meditation. It becomes systemic as it drops into the attitude. Or you can develop it as an exercise in itself through right action.

So remember there's an eightfold path, it's not just the onefold path of right understanding. It runs systemically through our intentions, which is based in the heart, our attitudes, and then through the way we speak, the way we act, and into our livelihood. So that's why we say he's accomplished both in his wisdom and in his virtue. The one comes with the other.

Then we say he's sugato, which means he lives a happy life, he's at ease. He fares well through life. In other words, he's happy. He's found the end of suffering. So when you find the end of suffering, it seems, you're happy, which makes sense, doesn't it?

There was an occasion when somebody complains about the toughness of the training. And he says, you know, it's hard. And the Buddha replies, yes, it is, but people attain liberation. They attain Nibbāna. And the guy says, Nibbāna, so what? He says, well, when you get to Nibbāna, you are contented and really happy.

So the contentment is a mind, is a heart without unskillful desires. And the happiness is the basic flavour of the mind, which expresses itself in various forms of love, compassion, joy, and so on. That's where we're heading for. Have faith.

Then there's *lokavidū*. So he's the knower of the worlds, and this really points to, remember, the three insights that he had upon enlightenment. The first one was all his past lives and how he came to be the enlightenment. And then he saw that beings moved from one realm to the other according to their moral behaviour, which was new for the age. Most people thought it was just destination, but our destination is determined by our morality. And thirdly was that he was free of all defilement. So in that he's saying he saw how the law of kamma works. And in that case he saw the six worlds.

So there's the hell realms, there's the animal realm, there's the hungry ghost realm—that's a being driven by insatiable desires. There's the demon world, which are those people driven by hatred and anger and jealousy and all that stuff. There's the human world, here we are. And there's the celestial world, which is the happy realm.

And of course, these not only refer to specific realms, which is either provable or not provable, it doesn't matter, but they refer also to our own states of mind. So if we get drunk, for instance, we've entered into the animal world, the lack of intelligence. And if you fall into a deep depression or a psychotic episode and

things like that, then you're in a hell realm. Even if it's for a moment where you find yourself in a place like a little panic. The whole point of those places is that you don't see the escape. That's hell. So he's lokavidū, he's the knower of the worlds.

He's also said to be the anuttaro purisadammasārathi. So sārathi is a charioteer, so he's a trainer, incomparable trainer of human beings. And this refers to the fact that he didn't just leave a teaching, he left a methodology which includes the rules of engagement. So we do the five precepts, you can take on the eight precepts, you can do ten precepts, and finally you get 227 if you become a monastic. So all the way he's creating institutions whereby people can actually see the training that they want to get themselves.

And we call them sikkhāpada. We don't call them commandments. Sometimes they're called precepts, but even that's not quite right. They're sikkhāpada. Pada means footsteps, sikkhā is training. So they are footsteps of training. They're the training rules. So that's why we say he is the incomparable trainer and leader of human beings.

Then we say he is sathā devamanussānaṃ. So sathā means a teacher, so he teaches in these two specific realms, the celestial realms, but also to human beings. So he's the actual teacher. And he takes that role seriously. There's a point where he may not have taught, but just out of compassion, the desire to pass the good news on to people arose in him. And the only doubt he had was whether people in fact could receive his message. And it's put in this mythological sense that the great Brahmā Sahampati came down and said, there are people with just a little dust in their eyes. And then he went out and began his teaching.

And one of the little phrases he comes up with, he always says that, whatever a teacher can do out of compassion for his students, I have done for you. So he's really committed to that whole process. And all his life, from 35 to 80, he spent just wandering around teaching. That's his life after that. So he's the teacher, he's the teacher of gods and men.

Buddho comes from the word budh which just means awakened. And I think that's the better word to enlightenment. Enlightenment gives the impression of something sudden, but it's a gradual awakening. And here it's almost like an adjective. He is the awakened one, the buddho.

And then finally Bhagavā. That's an honorific. It means anything from the sublime one to the reverend to the illustrious, the blessed, depends how you want to translate it. And that's how he's talked of in the scriptures. He's referred to as the Bhagavā, the blessed one.

And those epithets really, those descriptions of him, encapsulate this word Buddha. So when we actually take refuge, we are taking refuge in that historical figure, see? There's a trust, a confidence in that. But it also, remember, can refer to that within us, which is to be awakened.

Of course we don't have to be fully self-enlightened Buddhas. There are two other types. There's the Paccekabuddha who is fully self-enlightened but doesn't teach, either because he can't—it wouldn't be

because he won't, maybe he just can't—and then there is the SāvakaBuddha which are those who become Buddhas simply by following a Buddha. So everybody can become the Buddha.

And that's about it, my little Dharma bite. I can only hope my words have been of some assistance. May you be fully liberated sooner rather than later.

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