

THE NINE ATTRIBUTES OF THE BUDDHA

by
SAYAGYI U KYAW HTUT
Maha Saddhammajotikadhaja
Translated by
DAW MYA TIN, M.A.

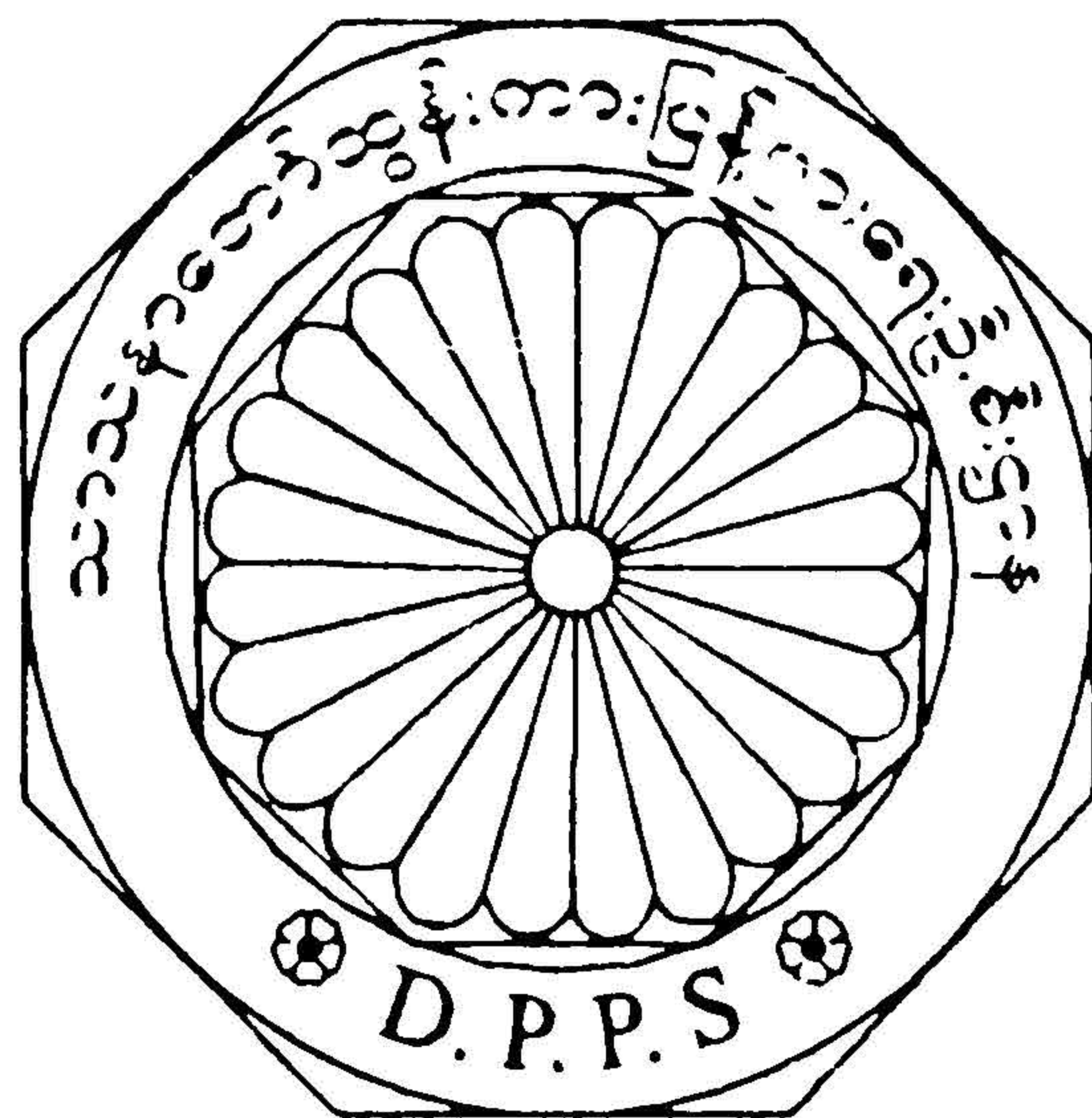


Ministry of Religious Affairs
Department for the Promotion and
Propagation of the Sāsana

Sāsana: 2540 1996 Myanmar Era: 1358

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F O R E W O R D

The Nine Attributes of the Buddha

The attributes of the Buddha are innumerable. But, during the time of the Buddha, there were only nine attributes which became well-known, far and wide, up to the deva and brahma realms. The theras participating in the Buddhist Synod or Council repeatedly mentioned this fact in the Nikāyas.

The nine attributes as recorded by the Council theras were taught also by the Theravāda theras to their own male and female disciples. First, these disciples had to memorize the Pāli text of the nine attributes.

Later, the meaning of each of the nine attributes was explained briefly, and also extensively, to the best of their ability. The explanations were in both Pāli and Myanmar. Due to these expansions and lengthy explanations, scholars wishing to find out the original meaning of the individual attributes are now facing many difficulties.

To overcome these difficulties as far as possible, Sayagyi U Kyaw Htut of the Board for Myanmar Translation of the Sixth International Buddhist Synod Pāli Texts made a careful study of the Pāli text of the Five Nikāyas for more than twenty years.

Based on that study and notes taken, Sayagyi tries his best to bring out and maintain the original meaning of each attribute of the Buddha. In giving lectures to Maṅgala classes, Abhidhamma classes and other classes, Sayagyi usually starts with his lecture on individual attributes of the Buddha as a sort of introduction.

The Sayagyi has taught thus with the intention of making others see the point that the Buddha himself had for forty-five years carried out the promotion and propagation of the Sāsanā based only on these nine attributes.

The lectures given by . Sayagyi U Kyaw Htut were recorded in the original Myanmar language by Daw Khin Than Myint, a retired librarian, Defence Services Historical Research Institute. The translation is done by

Daw Mya Tin, M.A, member of Piṭaka (English) Translation Editorial Committee, Department for the Promotion and Propagation of the Sāsanā.

This booklet, "The Nine Attributes of the Buddha", is published by the D.P.P.S. with the hope that it would be of much help to the promotion and propagation of the Sāsanā both within and outside the country.

(SANN LWIN)

Director-General

Department for the

Promotion and Propagation

of the Sāsanā

P R E F A C E

The following short treatise on "The Attributes of the Buddha" is a translation of lectures given by the well-known Myanmar scholar, Sayagyi U Kyaw Htut at the Abhidhamma Classes held at 'Myinjusaka House', Yangon, and recorded by Daw Khin Than Myint, a retired librarian, Defence Services Historical Research Institute. The translation is done by Daw Mya Tin, M.A., member of Piṭaka (English) Translation Editorial Committee, Department for the Promotion and Propagation of the Sāsanā.

Sayagyi U Kyaw Htut, Maha Saddhammajotikadhaja, was a member of the Board for Myanmar Translation of the Sixth International Buddhist Synod Pāli Texts. He is currently a Doctrinal Consultant to the (English) Translation Editorial Committee of the D.P.P.S, and also an Adviser at the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

It is said that the lectures on the Buddha's attributes were given after a careful study of and research on the subject and after a study of the

Piṭakas for more than twenty years. To make the meaning of each attribute clear to the reader (or the hearer), the Sayagyi has made a careful choice of both Pāḷi and Myanmar words. He has set them out briefly, clearly and without any duplication of their qualifications, so that one can specifically and specially revere and venerate each one of the attributes. One will find that these attributes are also applicable to one's daily life, and contemplation of these attributes will enable one to uphold a high moral standard in our lives.

May the reader have a clear comprehension and understanding of the nine attributes of the Buddha and may he able to revere and pay obeisance to the Buddha in all humility and due respect.

May the Buddha's Teaching

Shine forth like the radiant sun. .

THE NINE ATTRIBUTES OF THE BUDDHA

The Nine Attributes of the Buddha,
as taught by Sayagyi U Kyaw Htut at the
Abhidhamma classes held at
'Myinjusaka House',
University Avenue, Yangon.

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāśambuddhassa
Pāli Verse:

"Buddhaguṇo ananto,

Dhammaguṇo ananto,

Samṅhaguṇo ananto,

Mātāpituguno ananto,

Ācariyaguṇo ananto,

Ahaṃ vandāmi sabbadā."

English translation:

"The beneficence of the Buddha is infinite;

The beneficence of the Dhamma is infinite;

The beneficence of the Saṃgha is infinite;

The beneficence of our parents is infinite;

The beneficence of our teachers is infinite;

We always pay our homage to them."

The Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṃgha, which are known as the "Three Gems", and our parents and our teachers are our Five Great Benefactors. The benefactions bestowed on us by them are innumerable. For this reason we always pay homage to them.

The Buddhists recite the above Pāḷi verse at all times and also make their children learn it by heart. They believe that if one bears it in mind in the course of one's daily duties, one can overcome any danger one might encounter. According

to Buddhist tradition, whenever there are occasions for rejoicing or for sorrow, those functions or ceremonies are always carried out under the patronage of our Five Great Benefactors.

Parents who are the very first teachers of their children teach them, when they are young, that the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṃgha, which are the Three Gems, parents and teachers are their Great Benefactors of Infinite Beneficence.

From the moment conception takes place within our mother's womb we have been under her care. Then, from the time of our birth, we grow up under the tender care of our parents. Until such time as we set up a separate family of our own we are not free from their protection. Parents are, indeed, pillars of strength for their children.

In the same way, the teachers teach, admonish and train the children when they are still young and are studying at school so that they would become responsible citizens when they grow up. They are taught in such a way that they come

to know what they did not know before and gain new skills. For attainment of knowledge and skills, teachers also are pillars of strength for us.

But, do we really understand the infinite beneficence of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṃgha, the Three Gems which are far more precious than all the other gems? The Buddha is endowed with nine attributes which are well-known not only in the human world but also throughout the world of the devas and of brahmas. All Buddhists realize and accept the fact that these nine attributes are those which are worthy of and pertain only to the Buddhas.

Every time we make obeisance to the Buddha we recite the passage containing the nine attributes of the Buddha, starting with Arahant and ending with Bhagavā. In all humility and with due respect and devotion to the Buddha we ponder upon and contemplate those nine attributes. With these attributes as a basis of measure or assessment, one may ask: "How did the Buddha come to possess these beneficent attributes which he so deserved? How did he come to be acclaimed the

Enlightened One throughout the world of human beings?"

The Buddha was born more than 2600 years ago as an ordinary man. But, because of his fulfilment of the Ten Perfections (ten principal virtues brought to perfection by Bodhisattas), the Buddha was able to comprehend clearly the true Dhamma sought after by many people. Thus, the Buddha came to be endowed with limitless power, limitless good kamma, and limitless wisdom. He is, indeed, the 'Incomparable Person' That 'Incomparable Person' was acclaimed by people of those days as the truly Enlightened One, the Buddha. They approached him with confidence, Conviction and gladness. Why is it so? Why did they do that?

1. The Attribute of Araham

Even before the appearance of the Buddha in this world, there was one Uruvela Kassapa, a leader of one thousand ascetics, who claimed himself to be an 'Araha', who was also addressed by others as "Araha". Soon after the attainment of

Enlightenment, the Buddha delivered his discourse first to the 'Pañcavaggi', the group of five bhikkhus, then to Yasa the son of a rich merchant, and afterwards to fifty-four friends of Yasa. All of them attained arahatship and thus there appeared in this world sixty-one arahats including the Buddha himself.

The Buddha then sent out those sixty arahats individually to the four quarters of the world, for the purpose of promotion and propagation of the dhamma they had acquired. The Buddha himself, proceeding to Uruvela forest tried to convert Uruvela Kassapa and his one thousand ascetic followers by teaching them the dhamma together with demonstrations of psychic power. In spite of the Buddha's teaching of the dhamma and demonstration of psychic power Uruvela Kassapa just remarked, "It is true that Gotama is powerful, but he is not yet an araha like me."

The term 'araha' comes from the Pāli word 'arahanta'. It means a person who has abandoned defilements (kilesas) of greed, hatred, conceit and wrong view. Araha, arahatta, rahanta are words

which have changed stage by stage. Here, an arahat or rahanta is the same as araha. In an arahat defilements have ceased just as in the case of the Enlightened One, the Buddha. But he has not yet abandoned his habits from past existences. Although he is now free from defilements, actions and way of speech acquired in the past when he was not yet free from defilements still remain within himself. He, therefore, tends to act or speak according to that habit although he is now an arahat.

Even the Ven. Sāriputta, the chief disciple of the Buddha, once unthinkingly jumped across a small stream while he was going on his alms round. This was because he was a monkey in one of his past existences. His habit of the past had not yet been abandoned and still lay innate in his nature. It was on this account that as the original behaviour (of a monkey) cropped up, the Ven. Sāriputta unwittingly acted in a manner not appropriate to his position.

The Buddha, who is worthy of the epithet 'Araha', has completely abandoned all defilements

together with their innate nature. All his physical actions, verbal actions, and mental actions - are never without mindfulness, they always arise in association with wisdom. Having completely abandoned these defilements, viz, greed, hatred, bewilderment, conceit and wrong view, his morality is of the purest. And his attribute of 'Araham' came to be well-known throughout the world.

2. The Attribute of Sammāsambuddha

A Sammāsambuddha is a Perfectly Self-enlightened One, who, being endowed with Sabbaññuta Ñāṇa, knows all the dhammas. The term 'Sabbaññu' is a combination of two words, 'sabba' and ñu. "Sabba" means all, i.e, all the dhammas and 'ñu' means knowing or understanding, i.e, knowing or understanding thoroughly. This Pāli word 'sabbaññu' was, in fact, widely used even before the time of the Buddha. In those days, many people practised in their own way and established different creeds or sects of their own and claimed themselves to be 'sabbaññus', the omniscient ones.

These 'sabbaññus' and experts of various creeds asked the Buddha many questions; to each of their questions, the Buddha was able to give a comprehensive answer without fail. The Buddha knew much more than what those people knew and also everything that should be known in this world. Besides these people there were monarchs from the human world, monarchs from the deva world, monarchs from the brahma world, bhikkhus, brahmins, rich householders, merchants, field labourers, the rich as well as the poor, who came to pay obeisance to the Buddha, who asked him many questions and put up many problems. To all their questions and problems the Buddha gave satisfactory answers and solutions.

Therefore, they all fervidly acclaimed him "one who knows all the dhammas, one whose knowledge of the dhamma is absolute. He was widely praised and his attribute of "Sammāsam-buddha", one who knows all there is to be known, both mundane and supermundane, became well-known throughout the world.

3. The Attribute of Vijjācaraṇa Sampanna

Thus, the Buddha is endowed with the attribute of 'Araham', the purest in morality or character and the attribute of 'Sammāsambuddha', the perfect self-enlightenment, which is the ultimate in wisdom. But, in this human world, where there are so much opposition and competition among people, for one to be a perfect refuge, the protector of beings, these two qualifications are not sufficient. Even among people of good character and scholars, can we say that there will be no rivals and enemies? For people to come in all their humility and reverence to the Buddha as a safe refuge he needs to be endowed with all kinds of power to be able to overcome all danger, to protect beings from all enemies. The Buddha, in fact, has all these powers.

On account of these powers, people of those days fervidly acclaimed him "one endowed with Protective Powers (Vijjācaraṇasampanna)". This term was in common use in those days.

'Vijjā' is vijjā paññā, the knowledge which enables one to give demonstrations of power. 'Caraṇa'

is the basic mode of conduct or practice undertaken by one, so as to acquire vijjā or power.

Even before the time of the Buddha, there were brahmin scholars who were experts in the three vedas and people who had attained jhāna abhiññas (mental absorption and special apperception) through skilful practice of the various caraṇas.

Based on these jhānas, there were people who had acquired vijjā paññā associated with supernormal powers such as Dibbacakkhu Ñāṇa, the divine power of sight, Dibbacakkhu Ñāṇa, the divine power of hearing; Pubbenivāsa Ñāṇa, knowledge of past existences; Iddhivida Ñāṇa, supernormal psychic power with which one wields various kinds of supernormal powers; Cetopariya Ñāṇa, knowledge of the minds of others. Those people had acquired these various powers through caraṇa practice.

That the Buddha himself had fulfilled this course of caraṇa practice to the greatest extent with expert knowledge and skill is not to be doubted. His attainment of Vijjā Paññā through caraṇa practice is incomparable.

In the Buddha's order of the Saṃgha, the Ven. Mahamoggallāna was the one without rival among those endowed with supernormal powers. But he could not perform the Yamaka paṭihāriya, the twin miracle of fire and water like the Buddha. Besides, there are many miracles which can only be performed by Buddhas.

By means of such miracles the Buddha had converted many people from their evil ways.

As many people of those days came to hear about this, the Buddha's attribute of 'Vijjācaraṇa sampanna' become well-known throughout the world.

Thus, with these three attributes, viz., the attribute of 'Arahaṃ', the purest morality; the attribute of 'Sammāsambuddha', the ultimate in wisdom; the attribute of 'Vijjācaraṇa sampanna', the attribute of endowment with various kinds of power, the Buddha might boldly declare, "In this world, I am the only Perfectly Self-enlightened One". He is, indeed, one who is endowed with the attributes that are worthy of our veneration and our taking refuge in him.

Should the Buddhas, even though they are worthy of such veneration, stay by themselves comfortably and complacently in solitary seclusion? No, they should not.

The Buddhas would have to teach the dhamma they have known and seen to all beings. They would have to set up the Order of Saṅghas from among their followers. They would also have to impart the knowledge of the dhamma to human beings, to devas and to brahmas so that darkness of ignorance would disappear and the light of the dhamma would appear and lead beings to the 'Safe Shore' of Nibbāna.

How did the Buddha work out to accomplish those important tasks? How did the remaining attributes come to be well-known throughout the world even to this day? Let us continue and find out.

4. The Attribute of Sugato

The compassion of the Buddhas towards sentient beings is infinite. With the eye of wisdom he searched for those who should be liberated and

for those who could be liberated from the round of rebirth (Saṃsāra). From the time of his Enlightenment to the time of his passing away, the Buddha was the most hard working person.

Dividing up the day, starting from dawn this day to dawn the next day, into three parts, he worked for the good of beings fulfilling their needs, both physical and mental. When going on alms-round, after having his meal, he would make those who deserved to be liberated at the place of the alms-round establish themselves in Sotāpatti magga and phala, etc., or establish themselves in saraṇagamana, or observe the moral precepts. Back at the monastery he taught the resident bhikkhus the methods of meditation practice. Later, he would deliver discourses to lay disciples who had come to pay obeisance to him. Then as night fell, the Buddha would again deliver discourses to the bhikkhus who were engaged in meditation practice to help them in their effort to attain Magga and Phala. At about midnight when the Buddha was all alone devas and brāhmas would come to the Buddha and he would answer their questions and solve their problems. It was only during the last

third of the last watch that the Buddha would go to sleep, for a period lasting about one hour and twenty minutes; even then not without mindfulness and comprehension.

Then with his desire for the good of the whole world and all human beings the Buddha searched, with great compassion, for those who deserved to be liberated from the round of rebirth. By day or by night, the Buddha would go to any place, by any means; by means of jhāna or on foot, if necessary. If it was for the good of someone and if it needed to be done personally by the Buddha, he would always go and get it done himself.

In each year, the Buddha would stay in one place only during the rainy season retreat (vassa). During the remaining nine months he would travel widely to various towns and districts delivering his discourses, thus doing good for the people. This he did unrelentingly until he passed away at the age of eighty.

For this reason, for him there were such words of praise and approval: "The Buddha's coming

to us is, indeed, good and auspicious! It is quite true that wherever he goes, only good results will come about!" Thus, the Buddha was widely praised and this attribute of the Buddha, 'Sugata', came to be well-known throughout the world.

5. The Attribute of Lokavidū

After he became the Buddha, the Perfectly Self-enlightened One, through his realization of the Four Noble Truths underneath the Bo tree, the Buddha's main objective was to work for the liberation of sentient beings from *saṃsāra dukkha*. That goal was not easy to achieve under the complicated social system of those days.

There were the *Titthiyas* (heretics) of various sects, with a large following of ascetics, each claiming himself to be the 'Enlightened One'. There were also rival kings, who were rulers of independent kingdoms; also ministers and warriors (*brāhmaṇas* and *khattiyas*) belonging to the high castes; and farmers and labourers (*vessas* and *suddas*) of the lower castes.

In his dealings with various classes of people,

the Buddha never had any hitches. He always accepted an invitation, whether it be from an ascetic, a brāhmin, a king, a householder, a merchant, or a farmer without any distinction. He would go to any place he was invited.

If he was invited by a king, he would know their traditions and customs; if he was invited by a poor man he would know his condition and his way of thinking. He understood the social conditions of the people as well as those of kings.

He knew all about the world with its men, devas and brahmas and was wise as to the affairs of them all. His penetrative knowledge of the maturity or immaturity of their natural skill and intelligence, their habits and dispositions, and their desires, was unrivalled. Thus, he was praised widely and his attribute of 'Lokavidū' became well-known throughout the world.

6. The Attribute of Annuttaro purisa dammasārathi

In guiding and admonishing someone according to his needs, or according to the maturity

of his natural skill and intelligence also, the Buddha is unrivalled. Because he knew, by his own intellect, the desires and innate disposition of each individual, the discourses and admonition given by the Buddha were incomparable.

Fierce and brutal as they were in the beginning, men like Aṅgulimāla, devas like Alāvaka, and animals like Nandopananda the dragon, as soon as they came to the presence of the Buddha and heard his voice, always became docile and listened attentively to the Buddha's admonition.

Therefore, he was acclaimed 'the Incomparable One' in taming those who deseryed to be tamed. And his attribute of 'Anuttaro purisa dammasarathi' became well-known not only in the world of human beings but also in the world of animals and the world of brahmas.

The Buddha delivered his discourses in the world of human beings and also in the world of devas and brahmas, and came to have a large following of arahat bhikkhus, the Order of bhikkhus (Saṅgha) and lay disciples. In fact he was able to

firmly organize and set up a large Order of the Saṃgha in accordance with the Rules of Discipline for the Saṃghas.

The fact that the Buddha had been so successful in his leadership were due to:-

- (i) His being endowed with the attribute of 'Sugata', because of which many people from all countries, towns and villages enthusiastically acclaimed him with this statement: "The coming of the Buddha is, indeed, for our own good."
- (ii) His being endowed with the attribute of Lokavidū, because of which his knowledge of the world, with its men, devas and brahmas, together with their desires and dispositions, was unrivalled.
- (iii) His being endowed with the attribute of 'Anuttaro purisa dammasārathi,' because of which he was incomparable in taming those who deserved to be tamed.

The Buddha always exercised the power of these attributes; it was on this account that he was so successful.

It is also because of these incomparable worthy attributes of the Buddha that people from all walks of life pay homage to the Buddha, in all humility and with due respect.

7. The Attribute of *Satthādeva manussānam*

The Pāli words 'Ācariya' and 'Sattha' are usually translated as teacher. Therefore, the Buddha's attribute of '*Satthādeva manussānam*' is translated as 'the teacher of men, devas and brahmas'. In this connection, we should take note of the meaning of '*Satthā*' as used in the Pāsādika Sutta in Pāthika Vagga of Dīgha Nikāya.

During the time of the Buddha there was a leader of a certain sect whose name was Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta. When he died there arose much discord and disarray amongst his disciples and the sect itself broke up. Seeing this, Cunda, a disciple of the Buddha, became apprehensive that the same fate might befall the disciples of the Buddha after his passing away. With much apprehension and worry, Cunda approached the Buddha and put up his question. The Buddha explained to him that there were, in fact, two kinds of '*Satthā*', viz,

'Sammāsam̐buddha Satthā', one who knows all there is to be known and 'Asammāsam̐buddha Satthā', one who does not know all there is to be known.

According to that Sutta, 'Satthā' should therefore be interpreted as the 'All-knowing Buddha'. So, if we interpret the Buddha's attribute 'Satthādeva manussānam̐' as the 'Homage-worthy Buddha, who is the Leader of men, devas and brāhmas, I think it will be more appropriate, complete and meaningful than just simply 'Teacher'.

The Ven.Sāriputta's mother, the brāhmin lady, was one who worshipped the Brāhma. Before the passing away (parinibbāna) of the Ven. Sāriputta he went on a visit to his mother's house. While he was there some devas and brahmas came at night to the Ven. Sāriputta to pay homage to him. His mother, the brāhmin lady seeing them asked her son about them and he answered that they were the devas and the brahmas. Then only she realized, 'My son, a disciple of the Buddha, is now one who is venerated even by devas, and brahmas!' With a feeling of great awe

she, then and there, came to have a full confidence and conviction in the Buddha, the preceptor of her son, and took refuge in the Buddha.

If devas and brahmas paid homage to the Chief Disciple of the Buddha, there could be no doubt that they would be paying homage to the Buddha himself, not occasionally, but each and every night, with the greatest respect. Therefore, this attribute of "Sattthā deva manussanam" came to be well-known throughout the world. Even the Tittthiyas, who were the rivals of the Buddha, could not help hearing about it and were struck with awe.

8. The Attribute of Buddho

In those days, although Tittthiya leaders like Makkhali Gosala and Purāna Kassapa, who had large numbers of followers, were claiming themselves to be Buddhas, the number of people who venerated the Buddha after hearing his discourses was growing day by day. The Buddha had compassion on everyone as if he were his own child, without making any distinction between high caste

and low caste, kings and brāhmins, rich men and poor men. The bhikkhu disciples of the Buddha also, although they had followed him from various classes and strata of people, were not different within the Order of the Saṃgha. The Buddha had set up the Order of the Saṃgha by laying down Rules of Discipline and Conduct for all, without any discrimination.

In Kevaṭṭa Sutta, Sīlakkhanda Pāḷi, Kevaṭṭa said to the Buddha that if the Buddha were to ask a bhikkhu to demonstrate certain supernatural or magical powers, many people, many times more than at present, would become Buddhists. It was then that the Buddha gave the discourse on three methods of winning over people to Kevaṭṭa as follows:

- (i) Iddhipāṭihāriya--winning over people by show of magical or supernatural powers (which could be confused with knowledge of gandhārī);
- (ii) Ādesanāpāṭihāriya--winning over people by show of surprising powers through the knowledge of other people's mind (which could be confused with Cintāmaṇi knowledge);

(iii) Anusāsanipāṭihāriya--winning over people by instruction and explanation of what is proper and what is not proper (which is the honest and blameless method).

In winning over people with this honest and blameless Anusāsanipāṭihāriya method, the Buddha is unrivalled, and because of this, his attribute of 'Buddho' became well-known throughout the world.

At that time, people holding different views of their own were searching for the truth, but none of them found the way to liberation from existences, the truth leading to the realization of Nibbāna. The Buddha was the only one who found the truth. It was only the Buddha who guided people and meticulously expounded to them the dhamma which he had known by his own intellect and Insight, and gave them the necessary instructions and guidance.

Having been thus guided regarding the Four Ariya Truths and having personally practised the dhamma, many people attained Magga and Phala (Insight and Fruition). The Buddha could make

people know the dhamma they had not known before, he could make it clear to those who had no clear comprehension of the dhamma, he could explain and give instruction on any problem, to the satisfaction of everyone.

Therefore, people commented: "He is, indeed, a noble personage, one who could make people know the dhamma they had not known before; he is the true Buddha!" Thus, they commented with a deep feeling of reverence and many people came to have a full confidence and conviction in the Buddha. Like a flash of light coming out as the sun breaks through darkness, people came to have a clear comprehension of the dhamma. The degree of their comprehension could be such that one could almost cry out with this spontaneous utterance: "Vision arose, wisdom arose, knowledge arose, special knowledge arose, light arose."

Because he could make people know the dhamma they did not know before, and because he could guide, explain and show the light to people in the dark, many people kept talking and, the Buddha's attribute of 'Buddho' became well-known throughout the world.

The above eight attributes concern only with the mental powers of the Buddha, brought about by his own unrivalled intellect and Insight. The Buddha was born in the human world and as a human being was endowed with the physical and mental aggregates, the five khandhas. We have seen the admirable, noble mental qualities of the Buddha and have venerated him. We will now study the physical body of the Buddha.

9. The Attribute Of Bhagavā

After receiving the definite prophesy of Buddhahood as Sumedhā the hermit, the Buddha had, with the view to attaining Enlightenment, fulfilled the practice of pāramīs (Perfections) for four asaṅkheyyas and a hundred thousand aeons. As a result of these pāramīs the Buddha in his last existence was born as the son of King Sudhoddana of the Sakyans, in the noble caste of khattiyas. His parents, besides being of the noble caste were of the highest in society being the king and queen of an important kingdom. Even as a child, by his physical signs and marks, it was predicted that if he were to remain in the life of

a layman he would surely become a king of the whole universe (Cakkāvaḷa), or if he were to leave the lay life and lead the homeless life of an ascetic he would surely become the Enlightened One, the noblest among men.

Abandoning the royal life of a king, he took up the austere practices for six years, and later the Middle Way, and finally attained Enlightenment. The Buddha being endowed with such attributes as the thirty-two characteristics of a Great Man together with the eighty minor marks as mentioned in the Lakkhaṇa Sutta of Pāthika Vagga, looked extremely respectable and venerable. As he had completely abandoned all defilements, his faculties were bright and clear and dignified. The upadhi, the physical form, of the Buddha is unsurpassed by anyone else's and cannot at all be compared.

Anyone who sees the Buddha is inspired with confidence and esteem in him and instinctively pays obeisance to him. All wise men, whether kings or brāhmins or bhikkhus, also would pay obeisance to the Buddha when they see him.

For these reasons people kept talking about the Buddha's attribute of 'Bhagavā' and he became well-known with this attribute throughout the world.

The attribute of 'bhagavā' which concerns mainly with the physical form (rūpakāya) of the Buddha cannot be fully described by anyone, not even by one with ten million tongues.

Thus, of the innumerable attributes of the Buddha these nine spread resoundingly throughout the world: These attributes have been repeatedly mentioned in the Nikāyas. They truly reflect the greatness of his intellect, his ability to win over people and his capacity for work!

A person strives hard to be enlightened. On being enlightened, i.e., on becoming a Buddha, he teaches the Dhamma he has known by his own intellect and Insight.

This dhamma is the true dhamma, the dhamma which liberates one from the round of rebirth (saṃsāra). Through this dhamma, not only human beings but the devas and brahmas also attained freedom from saṃsāra. Though the teach

ing of the Dhamma, the Order of the Saṃgha came to be firmly established to the extent that the Order exists up to this day, more than two thousand five hundred years after the parinibbāna (the demise) of the Buddha. Today, the Pāli texts, the Piṭakas, still remain in their original purity.

Just how did the Buddha manage to maintain the Teaching for the good of mankind for such a long time?

The Three Groups of Attributes

If one carefully considers the attributes of the Buddha, which are so widely acclaimed by the whole world, one will find that they fall into three groups.

Group One : Comprises the first three attributes. They are the attributes which must be possessed by one who claims to be a Buddha. The three attributes are:

(i) **Araham** : Being absolutely unblemished by defilements (kilesas), he is of the purest morality.

(ii) **Sammāsambuddho** : He knows all there is to be known.

(iii) **Vijjācāraṇasampanno** : He is endowed with all kinds of psychic power and is invincible.

Group Two : Comprises the next three attributes, which describe the Buddha's ability to win over people. The three attributes are:

(i) **Sugato** : For the good of all beings he goes to any place, at all times.

(ii) **Lokavidū** : He knows all about the world and is wise as to the affairs of the world.

(iii) **Anuttaro purisa dammasārathi** : He is incomparable in taming beings.

Group Three : Comprises the last three attributes which declare to the world that -

(i) **Satthādevamanussānam** : He is the Leader of men, devas and brahmas.

(ii) **Buddho** : He makes others understand the Truth most clearly.

(iii) **Bhagavā** : He is the Most Exalted One.

By thus classifying the attributes of the Buddha into three groups and considering them in the light of the role taken by the Buddha for the good of the *sāsanā* and the welfare of mankind, one will realize the greatness of the success achieved by the Buddha and one will come to revere him and venerate him all the more on that account.

Contemplation and Practice

Thus if, with firm conviction and clear comprehension, one holds the attributes of the Buddha in the highest esteem one will clearly realize what responsibilities one should take up in this world.

1. *Araham* : By constantly bearing in mind and repeatedly contemplating the Buddha's attribute of *Araham* (i.e, his being of the purest morality), one will clearly realize that one must strive hard to uphold a much higher moral standard.

2. *Sammāsambuddho* : Also, by constantly bearing in mind and repeatedly contemplating the Buddha's

attribute of Sammāsambuddho (i.e., that he knows all there is to be known), one will clearly realize that, as one's moral standard gets higher, one must accordingly strive hard to be competent, intelligent and well-informed in whatever responsible position one might be.

3. *Vijjācaraṇa sampanno* : Also, by constantly bearing in mind and repeatedly contemplating the Buddha's attribute of *Vijjācaraṇa sampanno* (i.e., that he is endowed with all kinds of power and is invincible, one will not only have a high moral standard, intellect and competence in one's work, but will also clearly realize that one must have dauntless courage to face all dangers and ability to overcome all obstacles.

4. *Sugato* : Also, by constantly bearing in mind and repeatedly contemplating the Buddha's attribute of *Sugato* (i.e., if it is for the good of all beings, he goes to any place, at all times), one will clearly realize that it is one's duty to untiringly go to any place and take up any activity in accordance with one's capabilities in the interest of the people.

5. *Lokavidū* : Also, by constantly bearing in mind and repeatedly contemplating the Buddha's attribute of Lokavidū (i.e, that he knows all about the world and is wise as to the affairs of the world), one will clearly realize that in carrying out welfare and social activities, it is one's duty to try and understand the traditions, habits and interests of the people.

6. *Anuttaro purisa dammasārathi* : Also, by constantly bearing in mind and repeatedly contemplating the Buddha's attribute of Anuttaro purisa dammasārathi (i.e, that he is incomparable in taming beings), one will clearly realize that in carrying out welfare and social activities, one's duty to train the foolish to be wise and the wise to be ever wiser is very important.

7. *Satthā deva manussānam* : Also, by constantly bearing in mind and repeatedly contemplating the Buddha's attribute of Satthā deva manussānam (i.e, that he is the the Leader of men, devas and brahmas), one will clearly realize that in carrying out welfare and social activities, one must strive hard so as to gain the enthusiastic support of the majority of the people from all walks of life.

8. *Buddho* : Also, by constantly bearing in mind and repeatedly contemplating the Buddha's attribute of *Buddho* (i.e, that he makes other understand the Truth most clearly), one will clearly realize that in carrying out welfare and social activities one will succeed only by making others see the truth not by using authority or by giving bribes in form of cash or kind or by promises of official positions.

9. *Bhagavā* : Also, by constantly bearing in mind and repeatedly contemplating the Buddha's attribute of *Bhagavā* (i.e, that he is the Most Exalted One), one will clearly realize that to gain respect from others, it is very important for one to have dignity by being proper in one's dress, speech and behaviour.

