

Qualities of the Buddha

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*Iti pi so Bhagavā, araham,
sammāsambuddho, vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno,
sugato, lokavidū, anuttaro purisa-damma-sārathī,
satthā devamanussānaṃ, buddho, bhagavā 'ti.*

*Such indeed is the Blessed One, worthy,
fully self-enlightened endowed with knowledge and conduct,
fortunate, knower of the worlds, the incomparable tamer of trainable
men, teacher of gods and men, enlightened and blessed.*

Many devotees have been chanting the nine above qualities of the Buddha, over and over again, in the Pali language, for years, without wholly understanding what the words mean:

So let's take a closer look at these oft-chanted words and explicate their meanings: –

One common example would be the Pali word *araham* which means one who has eradicated the defilements. By constantly reflecting on this quality of the Buddha, *araham*, we may gradually gain insight and merit.

Another example would be the word, *buddho*. When the word – *buddo* is repeated, continuously, over a longer period, one may benefit from the magical tonality made in the sound of '*buddho, buddho ...*' in the ancient Magadha, Pali dialect.

The above chant lists nine important qualities of the Buddha, and in Pali, these nine qualities are:

1. *araham*,
2. *samma-sambuddho*,
3. *vijjacarana-sampanno*,
4. *sugato*,
5. *lokavidu*,
6. *anuttaro-purisa-dhammasarathi*,
7. *sattha-deva-manussanam*,
8. *buddho and*
9. *bhagava*.

What at first seems to be a short verse turns out to contain a lot of meaning. The qualities of the Buddha included in these nine Pali words are indeed vast:

1. *ARAHAM*

Araham means that the Buddha had eradicated and become free of all the defilements. Defilement in plain language means bad thoughts, bad reactions like anger, anxiety, hatred, frustration, stress, depression, ignorance, jealousy, gossip, attachment, dogmatism and so on, and the Buddha had got rid of all these. The Buddha inspires us with His qualities. Because He had got rid of all defilements so He is *Araham*. While repeating the word *araham*, one continues reflecting on this quality. The word *Arahant* and *Arahat*, incidentally come from the same etymological background. and have the same meaning with *Araham*.

2. *SAMMA-SAMBUDDHO*

This means to discover and understand fully, the Four Noble Truths,

without any aid from a teacher. The Four Noble Truths that we have been taught and thought about, we can continue to reflect upon until we understand them fully.

3. *VIJJA-CARANA-SAMPANO*

Vijja-Carana-Sampano is knowledge and conduct, or theory and practice; the Buddha is endowed with both. He says as He acts and He does what He says. When you see things like this, you realize how great is the quality of *Vijja-Carana-Sampano* the Buddha possesses, and how valuable are all His qualities. Some people know the theory but do not practice it.

4. *SUGATO*

Sugato is a great speaker, who is adept in the art of choosing the right words, saying them at the right time, and in such a way as will benefit the listener. The Buddha was a master of that.

Another meaning of *Sugato* is that the Buddha walks the best path to reach His goal—the path leading to freedom from suffering (*dukkha*). When He meditates and a pain arises, He observes the pain without increasing *dukkha*, whereas the majority of people personalize pain or suffering and misperceive it through attachment and pride (*mana*). The Buddha avoided this path of misconstruing things and followed the right path. He had chosen to deal with things in the right way that freed Him from suffering. The Buddha, being a *Sugata*, walked the path of freedom and freed Himself from mental suffering.

5. *LOKAVIDU*

Lokavidu is the person who knows about the world. What do we mean by *Loka*? As There are six worlds; the seeing world, the hearing world, the smelling world, the tasting world, the touching world and the thinking world. There are no other worlds than these

six. The Buddha understands how they arise and cease. He knows how clashes and harmony arise in this world. He knows why people can be trapped in them or be freed from them. That is why He is called *Lokavidu*. You are in harmony with the world only when you know about it and live accordingly accepting as it is.

6. *ANUTTARO PURISA DHAMMA-SARATHI*

Anuttaro Purisa Dhamma-Sarathi means that the Buddha is the best teacher who can bring the wayward back into the fold. The Buddha can make people understand with either just one sentence or a whole series of talks, like the time He gave His first sermon to the five ascetics. We should reflect on this quality of the Buddha whenever we experience problems in teaching or explaining things to children. How capable the Buddha is in these things!

7. *SATTA DEVA-MANUSSANAM*

Satta Deva-Manussanam — the teacher and leader of devas and men. Not knowing more than the Buddha or even knowing as much as the Buddha did, we struggle to understand even a tiny bit of what He has said in His sermons and this is in spite of having many learned monks teaching us. He was the *Satta Deva Manussanam*. There were many that became the Buddha's followers. Even after He passed away, there are many like us who regard the Buddha as their teacher and leader.

8. *BUDDHO*

Buddho is the person who knows the Four Noble Truths. This is similar to *Samma Sambuddho*, which emphasizes the fact that the Buddha discovered the Four Noble Truths by Himself. *Buddho* just emphasizes the fact that he knows it well. He was the Awakened One, who had awakened from ignorance and delusion.

9. *BHAGAVA*

Bhagava is the person endowed with special powers . The merits the Buddha had accumulated are much more than those of others and this is also why He was called *Bhagava*. The merits are acts of sharing, ethical morality, patience, renunciation, wisdom, diligence, truthfulness, determination, loving-kindness and equanimity. He perfected these to the most difficult and advanced level. He shared not only material things in His past lives but also His limbs and life.

Conclusion:

When we consider the above, we realize how helpful it can be to know the meaning of the Pali words when we do our chanting.

Reference:

Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon.D.) *Traditional Pali Chanting Book in English* (2011) The National Coordination Center of Provincial