

*Radio Thailand Special Report*  
*For Visakha Puja Promotional Week*  
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**Part I**

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Buddhism is a global religion, accordingly *Visakha Puja* day becomes a global festival for Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike all over the world. It is the one of the oldest festivals in the world. Internationally, it is widely known as the ‘Vesak Day’ or simply even the ‘Buddha Day’. It is not only Thai Buddhists who celebrate this day but Buddhists all around the world of all schools of Buddhism celebrate this day with various activities as an expression of a loving gesture of homage and recollecting the virtues of the Buddha, who was born, became the Buddha at the age of 35, and finally died at the age of 80, each occurring on the full-moon day of the lunar month of *Vesakha* which falls around the month of May.

For today’s reflection as a food for thought I present you with a meaning of the popular virtues of the Buddha which most Buddhists are familiar with. The Buddha-virtues are commonly repeated in the suttas, often in passages where the Buddha speaks about himself or describes the nature of a faithful follower. Later lists of the Buddha’s epithets are systematically arranged to illustrate the Buddha’s great compassion, purity and wisdom. These three qualities may be seen in the often-chanted verse: *Namo tassa bhagavato* which is compassion, *arahato* which is purity, and *samma sambuddhassa* which is wisdom.

The other longer version of the nine Buddha-virtues which goes like *Itipiso bhagava araham* etc. is in fact expand upon and clarify those three above. Most importantly, when we chant as the Buddha-virtues it is not only the virtue of the historical Buddha. If we understand thoroughly they are nine virtues which everyone should cultivate to perfect the true humanness. These are nine Buddha-virtues:

1. **Araham**, the accomplished destroyer of defilement. This virtue shows stainless purity, true worth and the accomplishment of the end, Nibbana. The Buddha is first named as an Arahant, as were his awakened followers, since he is free from all defilements, without greed, hatred, and delusion, rid of ignorance and craving, having no “assets” that will lead to a future birth, knowing and seeing the real here and now. Therefore, this virtue should cultivate by all of us not to keep it as a sacred chanting. In a layman term, this would be to develop our mind to be a pure mind without any mental stains and be here and now.

2. **Samma sambuddho**, self-awakening of the right wisdom. This emphasizes the majesty of one who has awakened by wisdom to the truth found in his own heart and by his own labours. He owes his Enlightenment to none; it is not the work of a god granting it to him nor is he an enlightened messenger from on high, nor again an incarnation of some god. Born as human being, he has gone beyond the limitations of humanity, and he declares that what he has done others too may do. In a layman term, right understanding has to sprung out of your own empirical understanding.

3. **Vijja-carana-sampanno**: Complete in Clear knowledge and Compassionate conduct. Both wisdom and compassion have a part in this virtue, where balanced and developed to

their highest degree. In a layman term, we have to perfect both on theory and practice. It is not enough to master in knowledge but never act accordingly. A Buddha is someone who acts according to his own words and someone who speaks according to his own action. Unlike popular saying as 'do as I say, not as I do.'

4. **Sugato:** Supremely good in presence and in destiny. "His going was good" both in his life and at its end when he reached final Nibbana. His going forth in the world was out of compassion for people in their need for help, in sickness, due to defilements or sometimes because of social oppression and injustice. The final going might be described as compassionate, showing as it did the way to others, or as wise, illustrating the way out of all conflict. In a layman term, your presence brings goodness, creativity, productivity wherever you go or stay.

5. **Lokavidu:** Knower of the Worlds. This is a wisdom characteristic, the knowing through meditation and insight of the nature of all the various worlds. In a layman term, this is someone who understand the nature of mind and its manifestation in our real worlds.

6. **Anuttaro purisdamma-sarathi:** Incomparable Master of those to be tamed. The virtue again is a balance of wisdom and compassion. Taming or training people is a hard business and we know that the Buddha had some tough customers. But he was successful even with very difficult people though of course, due to their different capacities, that taming did not lead to the same results for everyone. In a layman term, once we mastered in something we should compassionately train others too.

7. **Sattha deva-manussanam:** Teacher of Devas and humanity. Most religious teachers will certainly be instructors of humanity but they are taught by whatever divine source they conceive. Through his wisdom, the Buddha was the teacher of both, answering not only questions put to him by human beings but those posed by the gods as well. In a layman term, we should develop the quality of instructor who instruct other without any bias and discriminations.

8. **Buddho:** Awakened and Awakener. This virtue shows the Buddha's status of knowledge as well learned and one who thoroughly realized, awakened, and happy. In a layman term, this is a quality of an expert in the subject who knew subject inside out.

9. **Bhagava:** The Lord by Skillful Means Apportioning Dhamma. This virtue is something to do with contemplation on the Dhamma and share those Dhamma with others skillfully and hence compassionately. In a layman term, this is a sharing quality in human. One can only live peacefully if he can live in harmony with the society. Or recognizing the significance of society over individuality.

These nine Buddha-virtues are not only a sacred chanting but we should make it as a part of who we are. Then you would be a true Buddhist or even a Buddha yourself.

May all listeners be a Buddha and happy Visakha Puja Week.