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BODHISATTA IN BUDDHISM

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ABSTRACT:

This thesis deals with a graphic life account of the Bodhisatta. As we know, when Our Buddha fulfilled the Perfections (Pāramis), although he knew could attain as “the most Supreme One” since the life of the ascetic Sumedā, had fulfilled the ten perfections (Pāramis) four asaṅkhyeyya and a hundred thousand aeons for the welfare of the all the sentient beings.

The Buddha appeared in the world also fulfilled the perfections according to their wisdom (Paññā), faith (Saddhā) and effort (Vīriya). So also the Future Buddhas (Bodhisattas) must fulfill the perfections. Unless one who wants to be a Buddha fulfills the perfections, he will not be a Buddha. But if everybody tries to fulfill the perfections to be a Buddha, he can be a Buddha. Every Bodhisatta used to do not only ethical aspects but also sociological aspects. All Buddhas appeared in the world devoted their lives selflessly and tirelessly towards the welfare of their Saṅgha Order. All Buddhas were always preoccupied with the responsibilities of the Order and humanitarian activities until their last breath.



KEYWORDS: Bodhisatta Theravāda and Mahāyana.

INTRODUCTION

There are many people in the world. Among them, we are Buddhist. So, we should know not only about Our Buddha and His teachings but also about Bodhisatta. I think it is also very important. In our Buddhism, most of the people don't know about Bodhisatta thoroughly. Especially, we should know about it like that: how to become as a Buddha, how to try to fulfill the perfections, etc. If we want to be as a Buddha, we should try to fulfill the perfections.

The Meaning of Bodhi

Bodhi is both the Pāḷi and Sanskrit word traditionally translated into English as “Enlightenment.” The word “Buddha” means “One who has achieved *bodhi*.” *Bodhi* is also frequently (and more accurately) translated as “Awakening.” Although its most common usage by far is in the context of Buddhism, *bodhi* is also a technical term with various usages in other Indian philosophies and traditions.

Bodhi is an abstract noun formed from the verbal root *budh* (to awake, become aware, notice, know or understand,) corresponding to the verbs **bujjhati** (Pāḷi) and **bodhati** or **budhyate** (Sanskrit).

In early Buddhism, *bodhi* carried a meaning synonymous to nirvana, using only some different metaphors to describe the experience, which implied the extinction of *rāga* (greed), *dosa* (hate) and

moha (delusion). In the later school of Mahayana Buddhism, the status of nirvana was downgraded in some scriptures, coming to refer only to the extinction of greed and hate, implying that delusion was still present in one who attained nirvana, and that one needed to attain *bodhi* to eradicate delusion. Therefore, according to Mahāyana Buddhism, the arhat has attained only nirvana, thus still being subject to delusion, while the bodhisattva not only achieves nirvana but full liberation from delusion as well. He thus attains *bodhi* and becomes a Buddha. In Theravāda Buddhism, *bodhi* and nirvana carry the same meaning, that of being freed from greed, hate and delusion. It should also be noted that in the *Mahāyana Mahaparinirvana Sutra*, “Great Nirvana” (*maha-nirvana*) is equal in all respects to *Bodhi* and indeed is the state of perfect Buddhahood.

Theravāda Buddhist do not subscribe to the belief that everyone must strive to become a Buddha in order to gain *Nibbāna*. However, the word ‘*Bodhi*’ is used to refer to the qualities of a Buddha, or *Pacceka-Buddha* and Arahant in expressions such as *Samma Sambodhi*, *PaccekaBodhi* and *Sāvaka-Bodhi*. In addition, many of the Buddhas mentioned in the Mahāyana school are not historical Buddhas and are therefore not given much attention by Theravāda Buddhists.

Bodhi in Theravāda Buddhism

In Buddhism, *Bodhi* means the awaking experience attained by Gautama Buddha and his accomplished disciples and refers to the unique consciousness of a fully liberated *yogī*. *Bodhi* is sometimes described as complete and perfect sanity, or awareness of the true nature of the universe. After attainment, it is believed that one is freed from the cycle of *samsāra*: birth, suffering, death and rebirth (see *moksha*). *Bodhi* is most commonly translated into English as enlightenment. This word conveys the insight and understanding (wisdom) possessed by a Buddha and is similarly used in Christian mysticism to convey the saint’s condition of being lit by a higher power—the merging of the human and the divine in theosis. There is no image of “light” contained in the term “*bodhi*”, however. Rather, it expresses the notion of awakening from a dream and of being aware and knowing (reality). It is thus more accurate to think of *bodhi* as spiritual “awake-ness” or “awakenment”, rather than “enlightenment” (although it is true that imagery of light is extraordinarily prevalent in many of the Buddhist scriptures).

Bodhi is attained when the ten fetters that bind a human being to the wheel of *samsāra* have been dissolved; when the Four Noble Truths have been fully understood and all volitional conditioning has reached cessation (*Nirodha*), giving rise to transcendent peace (*Nibbāna*). At this moment, the psychological roots of all greed (*lobha*), aversion (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*), ignorance (*avijjā*), craving (*tanha*) and ego-centered consciousness (*atta*) are completely the eightfold path, the development of the paramitas (virtues) and profound wisdom into the dependently arisen nature of phenomena.

Bodhi in Mahāyāna Buddhism

Certain Mahāyāna Buddhist sutras stress that *bodhi* is always present and perfect, and simply needs to be “uncovered” or disclosed to purified vision. Thus the “Sutra of Perfect Awakening” has the Buddha teach that, like gold within its ore, *bodhi* is always there within the being’s mind, but requires the obscuring mundane ore (the surrounding defilements of *samsāra* and of impaired, unawakened perception) to be removed. The Buddha declares: “Good sons, it is like smelting gold ore. The gold does not come into being because of smelting... Even though it passes through endless time, the nature of the gold is never corrupted. It is wrong to say that it is not originally perfect. The Perfect Enlightenment of the *Tathāgata* (Buddha) is also like this.

The Definition of Bodhisattva

In Buddhism, a bodhisattva means either “enlightened (*bodhi*) existence (*sattva*)” or “enlightenment-being” or given the variant Sanskrit spelling *satva* rather than *sattva*, “heroic-minded one (*satva*) for enlightenment (*bodhi*).” Another translation is “Wisdom-Being.” It is the name given to anyone who, motivated by great compassion, has generated *bodhicitta*, which is a spontaneous wish to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all living beings. What makes someone a Bodhisattva is her or his

dedication to the ultimate welfare of other beings, as expressed in the prayer: “May I attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.” This is *bodhichitta*. With this motivation, if the Bodhisattva or trainee Bodhisattva promises to engage in the practice of the six or ten perfections (*Pāramitā*), this is the Bodhisattva vow.

Bodhisatta Theravāda Buddhism

According to **Theravāda Buddhism**, the term Bodhisatta in Pāli language was used by the Buddha in the Pāli Canon to refer to himself both in his previous lives and as a young man in his current life, prior to his enlightenment, in the period during which he was working towards his own liberation. When, during his discourses, he recounts his experiences as a young aspirant, he regularly uses the phrase “When I was an unenlightened Bodhistta” The term therefore connotes a being who is “bound for enlightenment,” in other words, a person whose aim is to become fully enlightened. In the *Pāḷi* Canon, the Bodhisatta is also described as someone who is still subject to birth, illness, death, sorrow, defilement and delusion. Some of the previous lives of the Buddha as a bodhisattva are featured in the *Jātaka* Tales.

In the *Pāḷi* Canon, the Bodhisatta Sidhartha Gotama is described as thus:

Before my Awakening, when I was an unawakened Bodhistta, being subject myself to birth, sought what was likewise subject to birth. Being subject myself to aging, illness, death, sorrow and defilement, I sought [happiness in] what was likewise subject to illness, death, sorrow and defilement. (*Ariyapariyesana Sutta*)

While Maitreya (*Pāḷi*: Metteya) is mentioned in the *Pāḷi* Canon, he is not referred to as a bodhisattva, but simply the next fully-awakened Buddha to come into existence long after the current teachings of the Buddha are lost.

In later Theravada literature, the term Bodhisatta is used fairly frequently in the sense of someone on the path to liberation. The later tradition of commentary also recognizes the existence of two additional types of bodhisattas: the *pacceka-bodhisatta* who will attain *Pacceka-buddhahood*, and the *Sāvaka-bodhisatta* who will attain enlightenment as a disciple of a Buddha.

Bodhisatta Mahāyāna Buddhism

On the other hand, Mahāyāna Buddhism regards the Bodhisattva as a person who already has a considerable degree of enlightenment and seeks to use their wisdom to help other human beings to become liberated themselves. In this understanding of the word the Bodhisattva is an already wise person who uses skillful means to lead others to see the benefits of virtue and cultivation of wisdom.

The Mahāyāna encourages everyone to become bodhisttas and to take the bodhisattva vows. With these vows, one makes the promise to work for the complete enlightenment of all sentient beings by practicing the six perfections. Indelibly entwined with the Bodhisattva Vow is *Parinamana* (Sanskrit; which may be rendered in English as “merit transference”).

In Mahāyāna Buddhism life in this world is compared to people living in a house that is on fire [3]. They take this world as reality pursuing worldly projects and pleasures without realizing that the house is on fire and will soon burn down (the inevitability of death). A Bodhisattva is the one who has determination to free sentient beings from *samsāra* with the cycle of death, rebirth and suffering. This type of mind is known as bodhicitta; Sanskrit for mind of awakening. Bodhisattva take bodhisattva vows in order to progress on the spiritual path towards buddhahood.

There are a variety of different conceptions of the nature of a bodhisattva in Mahāyāna. According to some Mahāyāna sources a bodhisattva is someone of the path to full Buddhahood. Others speak of bodhisattvas renouncing Buddhahood.

CONCLUSION

A Study of the Buddhisatta Concept Mentioned in Theravāda Tradition is very important to know the Bodhisatta concept correctly and thoroughly. In this essay, it is mentioned step by step to be a Buddha for Bodhisatta. In our world, all people are trying to liberate from suffering. Some people want

to liberate from it only himself. Some people want to liberate from it not only himself but also other people. Among these two, second person is good or right to be a Buddha. According to Theravāda tradition, if one, who want to save himself and others or want to be a Buddha try to practice Bodhisatta Vows or moralities and to fulfill perfections continuously and correctly, he may be a Buddha. For example, in order to cure all sentient beings to liberate from the Round of *Saṃsāra*, the Buddha appeared in this world. He knows the universal disease of the world and, its cause and nature of illness. He is the wise and scientific doctor for the ills of the world (Bhaiṣajya-guru). He is truly benevolent and compassionate, and he really wants to all beings to be free from suffering.

After reading my essay, one who wants to be a Buddha can practice correctly. The Buddhists, who understand the Bodhisatta concept, the true nature of life and of the world, accept the real worst condition of life and, therefore, they are not frightened and shaken by the normal vicissitudes of life. They can practice Bodhisatta vows, solve the problems of life serenely and calmly and live happily without worry and anxiety. Especially, the noble persons who are practicing Bodhisatta vows and have fully understood the Four Noble Truths are the happiest persons in the world. Therefore, all people should try to be not only a noble person but also a Buddha.

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