

## **A Brief Study on the Concept of Bodhisattva**

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### **Introduction**

The term Bodhisattva is used to refer to the Buddha before his attainment of enlightenment. The Theravada tradition does not show much interest in the concept of Bodhisattva but it has become a central teaching of the Mahāyāna tradition. The Theravada tradition accepts that if a person wishes to be a Buddha, he has to cultivate various spiritual qualities as well as a profound willingness to abandon Arahant ship by taking a Bodhisattva vow to attain supreme enlightenment, for the well-being of all beings. To proceed in this path, such a person has to enhance some kind of thought patterns such as Bodhicitta, fulfillment of Pāramitā by being a Bodhisattva. Those two layers are important to materialize this concept.

### **Research Objective**

The objective of this research is to give a brief study on the Bodhisattva concept in Theravāda and Mahāyana and this investigation mainly depends on Buddhist scriptures that relate to two traditions.

### **Methodology**

The method of this research is to do a brief study on Bodhisattva concept with reference to the pali canonical texts.

### **Research Problem**

There are many teachings on the Bodhisattva concept in Theravāda and Mahāyana traditions. Here, it will discuss on the Bodhisattva concept in Theravāda and Mahāyana briefly for the fulfillment of this task. The research problem is 'are there any teachings on the Bodhisattva concept in Theravāda and Mahāyana traditions'.

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## Discussion and Data Analysis

The bodhisattva ideal is often considered the respective guiding ideal of Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism but we cannot say exactly where this concept originated. The ideal of Bodhisattva is the most refined and the most beautiful ever presented idea to the world. Bodhisattva means a human being who voluntarily renounces personal salvation to help suffering humanity; it also signifies the acme of selflessness. The Pali term Bodhisatta, etymologically can be separated into two parts "bodhi and satta, bodhi, from the root budh, to be awake, means 'awakening' or 'enlightenment' and satta, derived from sant, the present participle of the root as 'to be' means 'a being' or, literally, 'one who is; a sentient being. Hence, the term is taken to mean one whose essence is Enlightenment, or enlightened knowledge'.

In the developed form of the ideas regarding Bodhisattvas, a Bodhisatta's career started with his making a resolution before a Buddha to become a Buddha for the welfare and liberation of all creatures and anyone who has developed the Bodhi mind, the aspiration to save on self and others. The Bodhisattvahood has the two aspects of self-perfection and benefiting others to pinnacle those cultured qualities, Such a person has to complete Abhiñhāra, such as (1) A human being, (2) a male, (3) sufficiently developed to become an arahant in that very birth, (4) a recluse at the time of the declaration, (5) he should declare his resolve before a Buddha, (6) should be possessed of attainments such as the Jhānas, (7) be prepared to sacrifice all, even life, and (8) his resolution should be absolutely firm and unwavering. In the case of Gotama Buddha, his abhiñhāra is made at Amarāvāti in the presence of Dīpaṅkara Buddha. At that time his name was Sumedha.

Such was the train of thought that passed through the mind of the Bodhisattva Sumedha, as he lay prostrate at the sacred feet of the Buddha Dīpaṅkara. On this occasion, Sumedha got the Bhodhi mind and having taken Vivaraṇa from Dīpaṅkara Buddha. The Buddha Dīpaṅkara said that he will attain Buddhahood in the near future. He completed his probationary period in four Asaṅkheyyas and one hundred thousand aeons. During this enormous period, he utilizes his energy and power to qualify himself for the laudable task by persistently practicing the 'Pārami' perfections the sine qua non of Bodhisattvahood.

These splendors do not indicate that the bodhisattvas are laymen. They symbolize their status as heirs of the Buddha, the king of the Dharma, and the untold spiritual riches to which they will one day succeed when, in the final stages of their career, they are themselves consecrated to Buddhahood.

The Mahayana tradition also has given big revolutionary ideas on the topic of Bodhisattva and it inculcated the conception of Bodhisattva which is another ethical ideal. But in the Pali canon a Bodhisattva is regarded as the preliminary form of a Buddha. In Hīnayāna there is only one Bodhisattva while in Mahayana

there are myriads of Bodhisattvas. According to Mahayana everyone can attain Buddhahood if he becomes a bodhisattva first. In Mahayana a number of celestial Bodhisattvas became extremely important, most notably Avalokitesvara, Manjusri, Mahasthmaprapta, Ksitigarbha and Samantabhadra.

## Conclusion

Especially, A Bodhisattva, during his career, escapes from being born in eighteen inauspicious states (aṭṭhārasa abhabbatthānāni). He is never born blind, deaf, insane, slobbery or crippled, or among savages in the womb of a slave, or as a heretic. He never changes his sex, is never guilty of any of the five ānantarīkammās, and never becomes a leper. If born as an animal, he never becomes less than a quail or more than an elephant. It is possible to understand this idea after reading all the Jātaka stories too. He is never born neither in Avīcī nor in the lokantaraka-nirayas, neither as Māra, nor in worlds Where there is no perception nor in the Suddhāvāsas, nor in the Arūpa-world, nor ever in another Cakkavāla. In this way, the bodhisattva can be understood as a being who is wishing to attain future Buddhahood. In this manner the Pali canon, quite logically, recognizes the Bhodhisatta as a rare type of man appearing at a certain stage in time and space. it leaves the matter at that. But later works like the Buddhavaṃsa, Cariyāpiṭaka, the Pali commentaries and the Mahāyāna sutras went on developing the Bodhisattva concept in such a way that he become an object of devotion and his human nature gradually disappeared.

Those Bodhisattvas who are distinguished for wisdom are generally lacking in confidence, the energetic ones in wisdom, and the devotional one in Energy. When those three characters come together or is combined in one person he is called Bodhisattva.

**Keywords:** Bodhisattva Concept, Theravada, Mahayana, Buddhist Scriptures

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