

# The Bodhīsattva Path: An Anticipatory Path in Mahāyāna Buddhism

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## Abstract

Buddha and Bodhīsattva are the most praised words in Buddhism. The Mahāyāna texts like Guṇakāraṇḍavyūha, Sadharmapuṇḍarika, and Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra seem never exhausted praising philanthropic deeds of Bodhīsattvas. Buddha frequently describes his previous life to his pupils as Bodhīsattva. The Bodhīsattva vows to have the potential power to lead one to become Buddha. The word and its essence have precious value among Buddhists. The Bodhīsattva vows can lead to becoming Buddha as they have the potential to become one. In this respect, Bodhīsattvahood is an applied way of practicing dharma. The personification of the ideal concepts in Buddhism is commendable. Wisdom and compassion are two aesthetics in Buddhist philosophy incorporated and appreciated with the greatest Buddhist zeal. The wisdom of Mañjuśrī and the compassion of Avalokiteśvara are beautiful emanations, praised practices of deification in Buddhism. Believing in the wisdom of Mañjuśrī and the austerity of various emanations of Avalokiteśvara are hugely popular cult beyond the geographical constraints of Nepal. Yet, the development of Buddhist streams after the Mahāparinirvāṇa of the Buddha is not smooth. The library research method was implemented, with original sources taken into account for the authentication of the study. Various ideologies made an impact to develop 18 sects at the time of Emperor Asoka in India around the 3rd century BCE. The advent of Mahāyānic concepts like Buddhahood and Bodhīsattvahood led Buddhism to a whole new level in the world that is still witnessed with great Endeavour.

**Keywords :** Avalokiteśvara, Bodhīsattva, Mahāyāna, Pāramitā, Sanskrit Literatures

## Introduction

The Buddhist ideology could be understood from the provision of three bodhis viz., Śrāvakabodhi, Pratyekabodhi and Samyaksambodhi (Vajracharya 11). General understanding of those who follow the Sanskrit tradition and the path of Pāramitā and Mantra are known to be Māhāyanist. Another side in the Buddhist practices is strongly rooted with Pāli tradition whose ideal is also the bodhisattva but emphasizing greatly to the ethics and Arhatship. Each tradition is unequivocal for the validation of Bodhisattva practices often known to “Bodhisattvacaryā” (Rijal 45-46)). It is obvious to interpret the concept as per their beliefs.

The Māhāyānic tradition goes distinctive in following bodhisattva path with wider textual and practical erudition. This could be the ideal for any Māhāyāna Buddhist with certainty. Perhaps it could also be said that the concept of “Mahā” which is “greatness” was corroborated by the facts and figures of bodhisattvas (Upadhyaya 107). Since, the anticipation of something best for anyone's' life is obvious and willing to be secured from any unwanted circumstances of perils, specific categories of Bodhisattvas are always there to make it ease. Hence, the practice of anticipation for the welfare of the sentient beings after acknowledging the “bodhi” is praiseworthy. It could be well observed and understood from the literature and ideas generated there by people from its conception. Those ideas are addressed following the qualitative approach in research methodology using the library exploration method.

The historic perspective for its ideal seemed to be started from the Buddha himself. The Jātaka stories rejoice the various philanthropic deeds by the Buddha himself while he was a Bodhisattva. Some 550 Jātakas were collected in the Pāli tradition and similar in numbers for the Sanskrit (D. Vajracharya 24-27). These stories inspire people back then and today also. Buddha himself recalled his previous lives while giving a reference to any incidents happened in his life as a Gautam Buddha. The Pāramitā and its various ways of practicing are spoken in the Ratnasutta where it tells people to go through daśa-pāramitā, daśa-upapāramitā and daśaparamattha-pāramitā (D. Shakya 21) to achieve the Buddhahood.

Māhāyānic understanding for the bodhisattva is very open and do not hesitate to confer it's numerosity by giving an example of infinite particle of silt in the Ganges (S. Vajracharya 295). On top of that, literatures attested it by mentioning of Buddha Śakyamuni often giving discourses to innumerable number of heavenly beings including the Bodhisattvas (D. Vajracharya 10). These are the greatest interests of study for faithful devotees and believers. The emphasizing elements for such practices are hitherto in Māhāyāna practices. It remains the outcome of skillful means highly praised in Buddhism.

## Results and Discussion

### Various aspects in defining Bodhisattva

Bodhisattvas are also called the seed of Buddha in pāli literature (Medhankara 8). The term is spelled ‘Bodhisatta’ and refers to a being 'destined for enlightenment'. The term technically appraised for Siddhartha before his enlightenment however, wide use in Mahāyāna expects a greater ideal of practicing austerity. The theory of Arhat and Bodhisattva seems evolved simultaneously in Pāli literature. Later on, Mahāyāna emphasized the Bodhisattva ideal and called Bodhisattvayāna (Medhankara 7). A Bodhisattva will thus attain Bodhī and become a Buddha. These two conceptions of Bodhī and Buddhahood are integral elements of Bodhisattva doctrine. “Bodhī” as understood by the Buddhist, is related to the meaning, “to know, to understand” and “waking up”. In Buddhist philosophy, it signifies “supreme knowledge”, “enlightenment”, and “Perfect wisdom”. The Sarvajñatā and Sarvākārajñatā refer to the quality of knowing things as they are, Mārgakārajñatā refers to the quality of knowing the forms of the way, Anuttarajñatā to supreme knowledge and Acintyamjñānāma refers to the inconceivable knowledge (Dayal 18-19). Those epithet have the potential to convenience the philanthropies they are engaged in

and austerity including their own contentment and enlightened state of mind.

Both in Theravada Buddhism and in the Mahāyāna, one who aims at becoming a fully enlightened Buddha has to work his way over many rebirths, gradually acquiring the merit to fulfill his intention; and during these many rebirths in which he aims at becoming a samyak-saṃbuddha, he is known as a Bodhīsattva (Gellner 109-10). In Yogācāra school, Bodhīsattvas are ideally represented as Yogī who practice many Samādhis and eventually, it becomes the most essential part for Bodhīsattva to practice (Medhankara 18). They are the Saṅgha ratna among the Tri-ratna. The realization that Dharmakāya enhances their ability to serve living beings in any manifestation is equally likely contemporaries in Sanskrit literature with the vast treasure of Pāli Jātaka tales as well. The philanthropies described particularly to the Avalokiteśvara glimpsed his saṃbhoga-kāya aspects on many occasions. His emanations in many different forms are praised and hence appreciated by the practitioners as a way to liberate serving the entire sentient beings with very common acknowledgment of “Sarva Prakāram Jagatohitāye” however not the classical statement from the ancient Sanskrit sources but with modern maneuver could cope and well fitted to Bodhīsattvayāna.

Chinese writer, Hsieh Fu of the 4th century CE has written that “A Bodhīsattva is the one who has reached deep to the root of existence, and has known the non-existence of cause and conditions.” It is because of this twofold knowledge that a Bodhīsattva will not “renounce existence in order to enter into non-existence,” nor “put an end to cause and conditions in order to return to emptiness (Jan 125).” The plausible reason to evolve such a philosophical definition and interpretation of the Bodhīsattva ideal must get support from deeper literature on this particular theme of that time.

In a broader perspective, eight chief Bodhīsattvas occupy an important place in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Since they destructed two āvaraṇas i.e., veils or covering, relate to the sins and passion (Kleśāvaraṇa) and to knowable things (jñeyāvaraṇa) (Dayal 19). According to the Tattvaratnāvali of the Advayaavajrasaṅgraha, Mahāyāna is defined by two of its approaches which are “Mahāyānaṃ ca dvibidham: pāramitānaya mantranayaśceti” i.e., the person following the path of Pāramitā or Mantra for the realization or enlightenment (Shastri 14) and those practitioners are called Bodhīsattva. Their ideal is however for the welfare of the entire realm with a sentiment of the Buddha i.e., Buddho bhavedyam jagato hitāya (Kudrīṣṭinirghātana Sūtra 6). These Bodhīsattvas have great compassion and wisdom and have been working tirelessly for the welfare and benefit of sentient beings since time immemorial, they are also called Lokeśvara. Although there are innumerable Bodhīsattvas eight Bodhīsattvas are among the most prominent ones. They are said to have personified the various virtues or qualities of the Buddha (Shakya 20). The driving force to practice the Bodhīsattvahood must be skillful means. It has a very message for the people that connect with the Buddha and his actions. The Upāyakausalāya Parivarta in the Saddharmapuṇḍarika sūtra says: Upāyakausalāya mametadagram bhaṣāmi dharmam bahu yena lok

Tahim tahim lagna pramochoyāmi trīṇi ca yānānyupadarśayāmi / 21/ Translation: This is my perfect remedy skill. I preach many religions in this world. I free the creatures from the bondage of the world. Let us save the suffering beings by preaching the three kinds of Yāna.

Upāyakausalāyamanantu teṣam bhaviṣyati lokavinayakānām yenā vineṣyantiha praṇakotyo bauddhasmi jñānassi anāsrāsmin/ 99/

Translation: They will be the masters of the world, but they will be skilled in the means. By which crores of life-forces will be destroyed in this world for the detachment. Skillful means is the thing which will take us to the Buddhahood. It means by the knowledge of remedies and skills, the Buddha makes millions of beings without attachment and proficient in knowledge.

The Bodhīsattva Avalokiteśvara is described not deeply attaining Buddhahood but rather helping

or facilitating others to become Buddha. Avālokiteśvara means “Lord who looks down” and is a Bodhīsattva who embodies the compassion of all Buddha which is why he is also called Karunāmayā. Avālokiteśvara is capable of taking any form of being reaching different realms of the universe and liberating sentient beings from all sins and sufferings. Meditation of Avālokiteśvara by chanting his symbolic mantra “Om Mani Padme Hum” will invoke and enshrine the compassion ideal of the Bodhīsattva in one’s inner mind (Vajracharya 28). The psychological phrase “extrovert” for Bodhīsattva is thus rightly praised by Har Dayal whereas an Arhat was considered an “introvert” (Dayal 19). This personal attitude can well maneuver in our own lives by cultivating the aspect of joy. B.L Suzuki says “We can make an imitation of the Bodhīsattva even though we cannot practice it as yet perfectly, but the religious life should be joyful” (Suzuki 26). Joy is the ultimate goal of an individual because, at the end of the day, he needs to be satisfied. The method or the expectation for an individual differ but mostly their inclination is directed towards spirituality. For a person inclined towards Buddhist practices, his priority is set to the realization of enlightenment and thus the path he explores will somewhere connect the “Bodhīsattva path”.

### Evolution of Bodhīsattva Ideal

The greatest enthusiasm and endeavor are needed for the development of a profound ideology such as the “Bodhīsattva ideology”. The systematic development of Bodhīsattva philosophy and doctrine around the third Century BCE is a skeptical hypothesis although some descriptive information is scattered in Buddhavaṃsa and Cariyāpīṭaka (Medhankara 18). On this basis, it may suggest that the future Buddha Maitreya was believed in some circles by about 200 B.C. or earlier, soon after Aśoka’s (304-232 BCE) death, if not during his reign. Belief in future Buddhas is, in any case, an obvious logical corollary of belief in former ones, which certainly existed by about 250 BCE. since Aśoka’s pillars are in situ to commemorate his visit to holy Buddhist places of previous Buddhas like Krakuchanda and Koṇāgamana of ancient times.

Once the doctrine of future Buddhas, especially Maitreya, became accepted, the path to head-on was open for the faith in Bodhīsattvas in the contemporary world. Each earthly birth of the Bodhīsattva of the Jātaka stories influences people and ultimately strengthens the belief system of Maitreya Buddha to take earthly birth after his sojourn in his utopia. This earlier Theravāda Buddhology not only opens the vistas for the Bodhīsattva concept but also makes it more authentic. The latest date by which belief in heavenly Bodhīsattvas and their worship could have begun is indicated by the presence of images of princely beings, often with mustaches and wearing a good amount of jewelry, found in Buddhist thematic depictions in Gāndhāra and Mathurā. Some of these have been identified as representing Maitreya, the future Buddha, and others as Avalokiteśvara, the most famous of the Bodhīsattvas of later Mahāyāna mythology (Basham 28-29). Their icons on the coins of King Kaniska, reign 110-139 CE (Irons 276), signify and provide evidence of the existence of the Bodhīsattva cult deeply rooted and cultured far before his lifetime (Nattier 92).

Scholars believe the historicity in the evolution of Bodhīsattva doctrine could be from around 2nd century BCE. This native Buddhist word, Bodhīsattva, occurs in the Pāli Nikāyas. In the Jātaka book of the Khuddaka Nikāya, the fully elaborated doctrine of the Bodhīsattva figures occurs at least in 547 stories, according to the Theravāda system (Vajracharya 26). The Buddha speaks of himself as a Bodhīsattva, when he refers to the time before the attainment of enlightenment in Majjhimnikāya. We can say with confidence that by about 100 B.C. at the latest the Theravāda concept of the Bodhīsattva was widely popular. The fact that this concept was particularly associated with the Jātaka stories suggests a way in which it may have developed and aimed wider currency (Basham 22-23). In the Kathāvatthu, certain questions are raised concerning the Bodhīsattva’s action; the signs on his body, his rebirth in a state of woe, and his asceticism are discussed. The previous lives of Gautam Buddha and other saints

have now begun to excite interest and speculation. But there was no new systematic doctrine in the middle of the third century BC, when the Kathāvatthu was composed. The idea of a Bodhīsattva's renunciation of personal nirvāṇa is stated clearly and unequivocally in the Astasahasrika Prajñāpāramitā and Bodhī is set up as the new ideal in the Saddharma Puṇḍarika. These treatises belong mainly to the 1st century BC. This was also the period of the Hindu revival under the Śuṅga dynasty (Dayal 43-44). This revival of Hinduism in the second century BC obliged the Buddhists to develop new methods of popular propaganda. Buddhism was in critical condition after losing the royal patronage of the Maurya dynasty in 184 BC, and Buddhism had to fight for its life against the Brahmins, who had converted the Bhāgavatas and the Śaivas into their allies. The arhats were becoming too meditative and inert. The Buddhist leaders, who inaugurated the Mahāyāna movement, saved Buddhists from shipwreck by popularizing it and inventing compassionate Bodhīsattvas as Buddhist counterparts of the Hindu deities and soteriological faith (Dayal 38).

A more definite date can be established from the inscription of the Taxila silver scroll, which is dated in the year 136 and mentions an unnamed Kuśāna king as at present reigning. This refers to a private Bosisatvagaha (sic), or Bodhīsattva chapel. Although the date is skeptical and uncertain for A.L. Basham, he believes the inscription can hardly be later than the second half of the 1st century A.D. and the king referred to is certainly a predecessor of Kaṇiṣka. It proves quite conclusively that by now heavenly Bodhīsattvas were not only believed in but also worshipped by some of the Buddhists of Taxila (Basham 29).

A completely theistic Mahāyāna is reflected in an inscription on a Buddha image from Mathurā, dated in the year 14 of Kaṇiṣka's reign, in this a lady named Sanghilā sets up the image for the worship (puja) of the Lord, the grandfather, the well-enlightened, the god. The final motive of the gift is mentioned succinctly at the end of the inscription. Its purpose is 'the destruction of all sorrow'. Here Buddha receives the title, prajāpati - the pitāmahā, the first progenitor of all things. The term seems to presuppose something like the Trikāya doctrine, and the final phrase involves belief in the transfer of merit (Basham 36). Similarly, the oldest dated Buddha image flanked by two Bodhīsattvas i.e., Maitreya and Vajrapāṇi was traced from Gandhāra (Shakya 19). This fifth year of Kaṇiṣka's reign attests to the popularity of Bodhīsattva practice in the Khotan region.

The earliest scripture containing the name of Avalokiteśvara that was translated into Chinese is the Ugraparipṛcchā-sūtra translated by An Xuan and Yan Fotiao during the later Han dynasty, c. 180 CE (Shakya 3). The Mahāyānic scripture namely the Sukhāvatīvyūha was already translated into Chinese between 147 to 187 CE which supports and attests to this fact mentioned above (Medhankara 16). This signifies the wider spectrum of Bodhīsattvahood and provides a clear indication of people's belief in the soteriology of divinity.

The gradual exaltation of the Bodhīsattvas at the expense of the Buddhas culminated in the apotheosis of Avalokiteśvara, Who is declared to be a kind of "Buddha maker". He helps others to acquire Buddhahood, while he himself remains the eternal Bodhīsattva. The glorification of wisdom reaches its climax in the writings of the Mādhyamika School of philosophy, which was founded by Nāgārjuna in the 2nd century CE. The historical timeline suggests the gradual shifting in priority from wisdom (prajñā) to compassion (Karuṇā) in later Mahāyāna. As this idea gains ground, the Bodhīsattva Avalokiteśvara increases in importance till he becomes the supreme and unique Bodhīsattva, the Mahāyāna slowly passes from the ascendancy of Mañjuśrī to the reign of Avalokiteśvara (Dayal 44-45).

### Requisitions for becoming a Bodhīsattva

Different persons are qualified by their gotra to become Śrāvakas or Prateka Buddha or perfect Buddha etc. As enumerated in the Mahā-vyūtpatti, the person who is first to become a Bodhīsattva and



then develop into a Buddha, must have the proper and requisite gotra for his mission; otherwise, he cannot enter the first stage of his career by “producing the thought of enlightenment” and taking the vows. Gotra is either innate or acquired. He is a severe critic of his own actions and he fears and avoids the slightest sin and is thus cautious towards the deeds he is involved (Dayal 52). This attitude could be fragile for not serious practitioners and demand cautious action in confirming his deeds however for the betterment of sentient beings. The Bodhīsattva carya will be accomplished only after developing Bodhīpranidhicitta and Bodhīprasthānacitta which is the mere resolution and the actual progress towards Bodhī respectively. These vows have to be strong and steady for pure practice.

The Daśabumikasūtra mentions the cittotpāda as the first step in a Bodhīsattva's career. It is written in Pramuditānāma pratham bhūmi that,

Vajropamam hridayam sthāpayitvā buddhajñānam param cādhimuchya Anātmānam cittabhumim viditvā śakyam śrotum jñānametatsusūkṣmam//9//

Its translation could be “Having established a heart like a Vajra, one should attain the supreme knowledge of the Buddha. This very subtle knowledge can be heard by knowing that the mind is not the self.”

Further, only by firmly believing in Buddha's knowledge as supreme knowledge with one's heart as Vajra, and knowing that the subject of the mind is non-self, one can hear the subtle understanding of reality i.e.: Dhamma. It's an obvious step to start with because until and unless our mind is ready to face the challenges, our bodily actions remain static. The resolution to worship innumerable Buddhas is the first among the ten that Bodhīsattva undertakes at the beginning of his spiritual career (Upreti 160). It finally concludes when a Bodhīsattva reaches the tenth bhūmi. Throughout his journey, Bodhīsattvas' divine status goes on advancing. In the tenth bhūmi, he gets an ovation from many Bodhīsattvas and is worshipped by the sentient beings who aspire for supreme and perfect enlightenment. The systematic process and a plan for an individual to reach in a tenth bhumi of Bodhīsattva is an impact of Daśabumikasūtra. It is quite obvious that people are willing to live their life in bliss along with material efficiency or spiritual tranquility as per their individual choices but to make them in equilibrium, initial steps are required to help them habituate and transit to higher levels of practices.

Another significant text leading a human being towards the practices of Bodhīsattvacaryā is the Bodhīcaryāvatāra of Śāntideva. The importance of the Bodhīpranidhicitta and the Bodhīprasthānacitta were described exceptionally in Bodhīcaryāvatāra. The three stanzas in a row describe motivation who are in a thought of Bodhīsattva practices and hence said:

Tad Bodhichittam dvividham vijñātabhyam samāsatah Bodhipranidhicittam ca bodhiprasthanameva ca / 15/

-That Bodhichitta should be understood in summary as twofold. The mind of the Bodhipranidhinidhi and the Bodhiprasthāna. This concept is again explained by giving the generalization view as:

Gantukāmya gantuśca yathā bhedaḥ pratīyate

Tathā bhedaṇayorjñeyo yāthāsankhyena paṇḍitaih /16/

-The difference between the one who wants to go and the one who goes is perceived. It's exactly like the difference between seeking and going and thus the difference should be understood by the learned Pandit, who has distinguished them in order.

It further elaborated as:

Bodhispraṇḍhicittasya samsārespi phalam mahat

Na tvavicchinna puṇyatvam yathā prasthānacetasaḥ /17/

-The fruit of the mind of enlightenment and meditation is great even in this world. But it is not uninterrupted piousness as the mind of departure.

Interestingly the Bodhīsattva's thoughts towards his actions are described in

Bodhīcaryāvatāra of Śāntideva as:

‘May I be the protector of the helpless! May I be the guide of wayfarers! May I be like upon a boat, a bridge and causeway for all who which to cross (a stream)! May I be a lamp for all who need lamp! May I be a bed for all who lack a bed! May I be a slave to all who want a slave! May I be for all creatures a cintāmani (the philosopher's stone) and a bhadraghata (a vessel from which a lottery is drawn, a pot of fortune), even like unto an efficacious rite of worship and a potent medicinal herb! May I be for them a kalpa-vrksa (the wish-fulfilling tree) and a kāma-dhenu (the cow yielding all that one desire)!’ (Dayal 58).

The practice of Bodhīsattvacaryā is thus an action-oriented task that must have a strong background of realization of reality and tenacity. Realizing the peril of death and suffering after death could be a strong support of any Wiseman; he should feel fear and trepidation (Samvega) and resolve to become a Bodhīsattva. A Bodhīsattva produces thoughts of love, mercy, and compassion in him for his own good and for the welfare and liberation of all living beings. He says: "As the Buddhas accepted the thought of Bodhī and regularly followed the discipline of the Bodhīsattvas, even so, I too produce this thought of Bodhī for the good of the world, and I will follow that discipline in due order. With this resolve, the man or woman becomes a Bodhīsattva (Dayal 61).

Śāntideva goes out of his way to define the Bodhīsattva's practice of these perfections as a purely mental act. Giving (dāna) is described not as donating real things to real people, but as "the mental attitude of relinquishing everything to all people". Śāntideva goes on to say that this explains why it is that if the Buddhas of the past all fulfilled the perfection of giving while they were Bodhīsattvas, the people of this world are still poor. The ‘giving’ is also an integral part of any Buddhist rituals or if we consider the culture in Nepal maṇḍala, we will be witnessing it with or without knowing it. They are something now being habituated and good for the reason of unconditional practice in giving. It does make sense, yet completely depending on this concept is something non-practical or rational in every case. The same approach is applied to the cultivation of morality (śīla), which he defines as "the mental attitude of abstaining from worldly actions" (Nattier 135). It is held that a Bodhīsattva must get rid of a sensual desire, pride, and egotism in all its forms. The heresy of sat-kāya-dṛṣṭi must be destroyed before the first step toward perfection can be taken. Sat-kāya-dṛṣṭi could be understood as the view of the existence of a personality or individuality (learnsanskrit.cc). Ācārya Candrakīrti also says it's a Svakāyadrṣṭi: Ātmātmīyadrṣṭih (Upadhyaya 414). The Aṣṭasahasrikā Prajñāpāramitā goes so far as to declare errors of sat-kāya dṛṣṭi by epitomizing the non-duality except Śūnyatā yet the discussion on Samṛti and Paramārtha Satya remains an unequivocal approach towards the realization of it (Dayal 72-3). These are the cognition and insight called smṛti samprajāñya. A Bodhīsattva must cultivate four of them and they are "sustained cognizing, deliberateness, self-awareness and self-possession with mental alertness, self-control, and self-mastery. Without samṛti and samprajāñya, one cannot expect to succeed in the struggle against sin or possible bad karma. Samṛti confers great power on a Bodhīsattva that protects their actions against the sins, and thus Dayal says: "Whoever loses mindfulness loses the deathless; but he who applies mindfulness to the body, the deathless is his" (85-7).

Bodhīsattva is freed from anger, falsehood, envy, hypocrisy, and all such faults of characters.

These characteristics of a person are only possible when someone is realizing the power of detachment and contentment in totality. This feeling is not only self-denial but the need to acquire four strengths also called bala or qualities. They are:

1. Adhyātma bala i.e. Joy (ruci) in Bodhī, produced by one's own strength.
2. Parābala i.e. the joy conferred by others.
3. Hetu bala i.e. joy experienced on account of exercise in past existences; and
4. Prayoga bala i.e. power obtained by practice in the present life, the company of virtuous persons (Dayal 62).

These qualities of an individual are driven by the karma and its theory. Based upon this Mahāyāna believes every individual has the potential to become Buddha and Bodhīsattva. Not only that, the Buddhist Sanskrit classical texts are mentioned a myriad number of them within Triloka as many as the uncountable number of sands in the Ganges. They are expected to realize the “intelligence-heart” i.e. Bodhī-citta and practice accordingly. It may be found enveloped in ignorance and egotism but to realize those, one must be insightful and contemplative with their actions to be mindful.

### **Bodhīsattvahood and its Various Typologies**

The respect for the Bodhīsattva in Buddhism is immense. However, there are two views of the Bodhīsattva, first in its broader and more popular sense, as the name

for those who take the vow to realize their ideals on the way to Buddhahood, and secondly as the name for those who are ever striving for the enlightenment of other sentient beings through the practice of the four great vows and the Pāramitās. The vows are:

1. To save all beings.
2. To destroy all evil passions
3. To learn the truth and teach it to others
4. To lead all beings towards Buddhahood (Suzuki 61).

The textual elaborations for the activities linked to the Bodhīsattva for enlightening the sentient beings are worth exploration from the perspective of their greatness and for revering them.

According to Hinayāna school, attaining the state of Arhat is the ultimate goal of a monk. On attaining Nirvāṇa, a monk becomes free from afflictions and becomes self-established. He cannot help the world. But a Bodhīsattva is endowed with great friendship and compassion. The goal of his life is to free every creature of the world from afflictions and establish them in Nirvana (Upadyaya 87). Baladeva Upadyaya believes that Bodhīsattvas' elaboration in a distinct approach among the different followers can be witnessed from one of the Vaipūlyasūtras called Sadharmapuṇḍarika. This sacred text elaborated various dimensions of Buddha's teaching under one vehicle, exemplifying the need for skillful means to make sentient beings aware of their actions. This significant text believes that it explicitly declares that the Arhats preach the four noble truths and twelve Nidānas, while the Bodhīsattvas teach the Pāramitās (Dayal 156). The stories containing such actions are mentioned with a motive to disseminate the concept “not only for idealism but also they implemented in their life from a pragmatic approach”. Text like Ugraparipṛccha defines at least four interpretive possibilities for such actions:

1. That it represents the historical Buddha Sakyamuni prior to his enlightenment.
2. That it represents the future Buddha in his final life.
3. That it represents one or another of the so-called "celestial Bodhīsattvas," such as Avalokiteśvara



or Mañjuśrī, to whom the devotee can appeal for assistance in the present; or

4. That it represents a generic deal, to be actualized by the practitioner himself (Nattier 64).

A Bodhīsattva should regard every action and movement of his body as an occasion for the cultivation of friendly thoughts for the good of all Creatures. When he sits down, he thinks thus: ‘May I help all beings to sit on the Throne of Bodhī! When he lies on his right side, he thinks thus: “May I lead all beings to Nirvana!” When he washes his hands, he thinks thus: “May I remove the sinful propensities of All Creatures!” When he washes his feet, he thinks thus: “May I take away the dirt of sins and passions from All Creatures!” In this way the body can be converted into a Holy vessel

of benediction (Dayal 96). Dayal is further talking about the Bodhīsattva path and believes that the people who are in their quest have perfection on three levels. They may be ordinary, extraordinary, or superlatively extraordinary (171). It is ordinary when it is practiced by ordinary worldly persons for the sake of happiness in this life or the next; it is extraordinary when it is cultivated by the people of lesser vehicles for the sake of personal nirvāṇa; but it is of the highest degree when it is acquired by the Mahāyanist Bodhīsattvas for the welfare and liberation of all beings. The aspiration is praiseworthy since their model in practice or approach can be understood in the very significant verse “sarva prakāram jagato hitāya”. All perfections can be cultivated only by means of attentive thought, resolute purpose, self-mastery, and wisdom in the choice of means. This could be considered as the driving force and the way to implementation is the skillful means.

Among many Bodhīsattva sutras that are available to illustrate various stages in its subsequent development, Scholars believe Ugraparipṛcchā is one of the earliest. The Ugra persuaded that both laity and monastic could pursue the Bodhīsattva path (Nattier 100-01). This is very far-sighted and dynamic at the same time for the adaptation to practice the Bodhīsattva Caryā as a householder. It opens the scope and considers everyone to come and be involved within. Some of the earlier texts of the Mahāyāna refer to it as the Bodhīsattvayāna, the way of the Bodhīsattvas, and thus oppose it to the pratekabuddhayāna, the way of the solitary Buddhas, and to the Śrāvakayāna, the way of the disciples. At the same time, Mahāyāna texts point out that there is only one path and one Buddha, and that the Mahāyāna represents only an elaboration, and not rejection, of the Śrāvakayāna (Gellner 110).

## Conclusion

The Mahāyāna is nothing more and nothing less, than a synonym of the “Bodhīsattva path”. For the Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra, in other words, the Mahāyāna is not a school, a sect, or a movement, but a particular spiritual vocation, to be pursued within the existing Buddhist community. A person becomes “Mahāyānist” means to be a Bodhīsattva, thus does not mean to adhere to some new kind of “Buddhism,” but simply to practice Buddhism in its most rigorous and demanding form. Bodhicitta is simply the thought one has to generate while practicing Mahāyāna Buddhism. Bodhicitta simply means “the thought of Bodhī”. The word citta has also been translated as "heart", "soul", "mind". But it should be interpreted as “thought, idea”, in the compound Bodhī-citta. The terminal derivation from the root “cit”, meaning “to perceive”, to form an idea in the mind, etc. is so satisfactory that mindfulness initiates the dynamics and vistas for the future endeavor in Bodhīsattvas’ carrier of austerity. Mahāyāna Buddhism made Bodhīsattva-hood the aim of all genuine Buddhists worth appreciation. Mahāyāna Buddhists take a vow to become a Buddha for the sake of all beings and to strive for the welfare of others. The approach it took from its inception was great anticipation to broaden the mind and mental phenomenon that ultimately adopted for the quest of austere practice.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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