

The term 'Bodhisatta' has been widely misused in various schools that claimed to be Buddhism. An example would be the schools that exist in Asia that call everyone a Bodhisatta.

In the authentic teachings of the Buddha, the name Bodhisatta is given to a being who aspires to Bodhi or Enlightenment. In the developed form of the ideas regarding Bodhisattas, a Bodhisatta's career started with his making a resolution before a Buddha (abhinīhāra or mūlapanihāna) to become a Buddha for the welfare and liberation of all creatures. The following conditions also bind:

- (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 abhinīhāra was made at Amaravātī in the presence of Dīpankara Buddha. His name at that time was Sumedha (q.v.). The Buddha, before whom the abhinīhāra is made, looks into the future and, if satisfied, declares the fulfilment of the resolve, mentioning the particulars of such fulfilment. This declaration is called vyākaraṇa, and is made also by all subsequent Buddhas whom the Bodhisatta may meet during his career. Having received his first vyākaraṇa, the Bodhisatta proceeds to investigate the qualities which should be acquired by him for the purposes of Buddhahood (buddhakāradhammā), in accordance with the custom of previous Bodhisattas. These he discovers to be ten in number, the Ten Perfection, (dasapārami):

1. Dāna parami : generosity, giving of oneself
2. Sīla parami : virtue, morality, proper conduct
3. Nekkhamma parami : renunciation
4. Paññā parami : transcendental wisdom, insight
5. Viriya (also spelt vīriya) parami : energy, diligence, vigour, effort
6. Khanti parami : patience, tolerance, forbearance, acceptance, endurance
7. Sacca parami : truthfulness, honesty
8. Adhiṭṭhāna (adhitthana) parami : determination, resolution
9. Mettā parami : loving-kindness

10. Upekkhā (also spelt upekhā) parami : equanimity, serenity