

BODHISATTA FIRST DEFINITE PROPHECY



Buddha Dipankara Buddha Prophecy Sumedha and Sumitta

Introduction:

*Many Buddhists in our community made their wish to become Buddha some day in the future – **Paya Su Pan Puggo** – as known in Burmese – as if the task to become a Buddha is easy and trivial.*

*Let us look at the length of time from the time our Bodhisatta received the first definite prophecy – **Byardeiktaw** – to the time he fully attained the self-enlightenment as Gotama Buddha. Our Bodhisatta received a definite prophecy from each of the **twenty four Buddhas** that he would one day become a Gotama Buddha in the **Baddha-Kappa**, starting from **Sumeddha** ascetic during **Buddha Dipankara**.*

SUMEDHA Ascetic during BUDDHA DIPANKARA

Time in relation to present - 100,000 world cycles and four incalculable periods ago. Duration of period - 100,000 world cycles interspersed with 4 incalculable periods

Bodhisatta Gotama then known as - *Sumedha* the ascetic and the Buddha at the time – **Dipankara**

The third period, known as the *Kaya-panidhana kala*, which lasted for a period of four Asankheyya and 100,000 Maha kappa, was the period during which the Bodhisatta received the definite prophecy from another Buddha. This period started at the time of the *Buddha Dipankara*. At that time our Bodhisatta was born into the family of a

priest and was named *Sumedha*. He had distributed all of His wealth among the poor and taken the life of an ascetic.



Sumedha Distributed his Wealth

At that same time there was a king named Sumedha and a queen named Sumedha who ruled the city of *Rammavati*. Their son gave up royal life and attained enlightenment. He was known as the *Dipankara Buddha*.

On hearing that the Dipankara Buddha was visiting, the ascetic Sumedha started to decorate a stretch of the road on which the Buddha would be walking. However, the *Dipankara Buddha* arrived before Sumedha could get the road ready. A muddy stretch lay ahead of the Buddha. Lying across the muddy road, Sumedha requested that the Dipankara Buddha and His retinue tread on him so as not to soil their feet. **He then again made the verbal aspiration to Buddha hood.**

The Dipankara Buddha gave him eight handfuls of white jasmine flowers that represented the Noble Eightfold path that all Buddhas realize, and gave Him the definite prophecy.

He said, "In the distant future you will be born into the Sakyan clan and will attain enlightenment as the Buddha Gotama." From this point on, the Bodhisatta started in earnest to complete the ten virtues.

Requisite to become a Buddha

Eight conditions must be met in order to receive the definite prophecy (proclamation).

1. If one so wished one could at this point attain *Arahatship* and obtain one's liberation from samsara.
2. One must be **a human being.**

3. One must be a **male**.
4. One must come **face to face with a living Buddha**.
5. One must be an **ascetic**.
6. One must **possess psychic powers** (known as Attha-Samapatti Jhana-labhi).
7. One must be **prepared to lay down one's life for the Buddha**.
8. One must have the strong determination to be a Buddha even though one knows that one might have to suffer as an animal, demon, etc., in an unhappy world. In other words, one has to suppress *one's attainment of Arahatsip with determination and remain in samsara for the benefit of mankind and Gods*.

At the time of the Buddha Dipankara, over 200,000 world cycles and sixteen incalculable periods after He made the first mental aspiration, our Bodhisatta met the eight requirements and received the definite proclamation.

The Bodhisatta's aspiration to become a Buddha was now a certainty. But even at this point, after countless years of practicing generosity, morality, renunciation, truthfulness, etc., our Bodhisatta was a world ling (puthujjana). That is, He had not even reached the first stage of sainthood, *Sottapanna*. However, if He so wished, He could now have won His liberation by gaining Arahatsip. At this point He suppressed this achievement with determination and continued in samsara to complete the ten virtues for the good of mankind. On that momentous day the ascetic *Sumedha* proclaimed thus:

"Today if such were my desire,
I my corruptions might consume.
But why thus in an unknown guise,
Should I the Doctrine fruit secure?
Omniscience first will I achieve,
And be a Buddha in the world.
Why should I, a valorous man,
The ocean seek to cross alone?"

Omniscience first will I achieve,
And men and Gods convey across."

Knowing that there were many pitfalls between that time and the time when He would reach Supreme Buddhahood, knowing that in samsara He may through His action be born into one of the unhappy worlds, knowing He had the capability to reach salvation, the Bodhisatta Sumedha gave it up for us. He gave it up for the good of men and Gods.

During this period, known as the *Kaya-panidhana kala*, the Bodhisatta perfected Himself and retained the determination and aspiration to Buddha hood. The ten perfections - *Dana, Sila, Nekhamma, Paninia, Viriya, Khanti, Sacca, Adhittana, Metta and Upekkha* - the prerequisites to Buddha hood, were reached in this third stage known as the *Kaya-panidhana kala*.

As most Buddhists are familiar with the *twenty-three Buddhas* who followed the *Dipankara Buddha*, A brief chronicle of the past births of the Bodhisatta during the time of each of these Buddhas.

1. *Dipankara Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was born as the ascetic *Sumedha* and received the definite proclamation

After a period of one Asankheyya there appeared:

2. *Kondanna Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a *Cakkavatti King* named *Vijitavi*

After a period of one Asankheyya there appeared:

3. *Mangala Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a *Brahmin* named *Suruci*

4. *Sumana Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a *Naga king* named *Atula*

5. *Revata Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a Brahmin named *Atideva*

6. *Sobhita Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a Brahmin named *Ajita*

After a period of one Asankheyya there appeared:

7. *Anomadassi Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a *leader of demons*

8. *Paduma Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was *a lion*

9. *Narada Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was *an ascetic*

After a period of one Asankheyya there appeared:

10. *Padumuttara Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a man named *Jatila* (This period was 100,000 Maha kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)

After a period of 70,000 Maha kappa there appeared:

11. *Sumedha Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a young man named *Uttara* (This period was 30,000 Maha kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)

After a period of 12,000 Maha kappa there appeared:

12. *Sujata Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was *a chakkavatti king* (This period was 18,000 Maha kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)

13. *Piyadassi Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a young Brahmin named *Kassapa*

14. *Atthadassi Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was an ascetic by the name of *Susima*

15. *Dhammadassi Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was the *God Sakka*

16. *Siddhata Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was an ascetic by the name of *Mangala*

17. *Tissa Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a king named *Sujata* who later became an ascetic (This period was 92 Maha kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)

18. *Phussa Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a king by the name of *Vijitavi* who later became a monk

19. *Vipassi Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was the *Naga king, Atula* (This period was 91 Maha kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)

20. *Sikhi Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a king named *Arindama* (This period was 31 Maha kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)

21. *Vessabhu Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was the *king Sudassana* who later became a monk (This period was one Maha kappa before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)

22. *Kakusandha Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a *king named Sema* (This period was in the same Maha kappa as that of the Gotama Buddha)

23. *Konagamana Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a king named *Pabbata* who later became a monk (This period was in the same Maha kappa as that of the Gotama Buddha)

24. *Kassapa Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a Brahmin named *Jotipala* (This period was in the same Maha Kappa as that of the Gotama Buddha)

There were twenty-four Buddhas between the time of the first definite prophecy and the time of the Gotama Buddha. Our Bodhisatta met each of these Buddhas and received the definite prophecy from each one. It was during the *period between the Buddha Sobhita and the Buddha Anomadassi, in the dark period of one Asankheyya when there was no Dhamma*, that the Bodhisatta erred (2). He killed His brother to inherit the family wealth. The reason He erred was that He was still a world ling - a Bodhisatta who had been practicing the ten perfections for aeons and aeons of time but was still a world ling with 1,500 impurities (*kelesa*) and the desires and greed of a world ling. This is why at the time of the Buddha Anomadassi He was a leader among the demons (Asuras). This is why He was a lion at the time of the Buddha Paduma. This is why He had to work His way up through the animal kingdom back to a human form. This is why there are many Jataka stories where the Bodhisatta was an animal. And it was the residual effect of this action that caused the injury to His foot when Devadatta rolled the big rock at Gijjhakula to kill Him. Having given His limbs, His life in countless births, a Buddha has reached the saturation point in generosity and cannot be killed. However, the karmic result of that one action still affected the Buddha as a painful injury to His foot.

How dangerous it is to be born at a time when there is no Buddha Sasana (Dhamma) in the world.

How easy it is to err when you are born at a time when that which is immoral is considered moral. If you look at our century you will see that over time certain modes of conduct that were considered immoral are now in certain countries accepted as moral. The law of kamma, however, operates despite the ignorance of man. Certain religions condone the killing of animals. Destroying the life of a living being, human or animal, is an unwholesome act and when accompanied by intention, will set in motion the law of kamma. Those among us who have as their long-term goal heavenly birth should understand that even the extremely long and happy life spans in the heavens are impermanent. Rebirth could occur in any of the thirty-one planes of existence, perhaps in a human world devoid of the Dhamma. Then the chances of wrongdoing and subsequent birth in an unhappy plane are very high because we will not have the Dhamma of a Supreme Buddha to guide us.

Looking back at this period one can also see how long it took the Bodhisatta to regain birth as a human being. The Bodhisatta remained in the unhappy planes for an infinite number of years. The life span in some of these unhappy planes exceeds a world cycle. Also it is difficult to acquire merit in these planes of life and, as such, difficult to obtain birth in a happy plane. The Buddha used this parable to explain how difficult it is to obtain birth as a human once you are born in an unhappy plane. He said, "If a ring were tossed about on the surface of a stormy sea, and if in that sea there lived a one-eyed turtle which came up to the surface once every hundred years, the likelihood of the turtle surfacing such that the ring would slip around its neck is greater than that of achieving birth as a human."

Those of you who are familiar with the Jataka stories know the effort that was required to complete the ten perfections - how the Bodhisatta *gave up His wealth, His life, and ultimately His wife and children, to complete perfection in generosity*; how many times He gave up His kingdom to achieve perfection in renunciation; how difficult it was to reach perfection in truth, patience, etc. If we compared the spiritual perfection of the Bodhisatta between the time of the Dipankara Buddha and the time He attained Buddha hood, it would be like comparing a grain of sand with a mountain bigger than the Himalayas. And yet, at that time, He had attained the eightfold mental absorption (Attha Samapatti Jhana-labhi) and was capable of psychic powers and attaining Arahathship.

Ananta Metta

Maung Paw