



HOW TO BE A BUDDHA

4th Edition

A Complete Guide for Anyone Aspiring to Become

One of the World's Greatest Holy Persons

Authored by Pittaya Tisuthiwongse

Edited by Ajahn Michael (Chulalongkorn University)

Copyrighted 2016 - All rights reserved

Free distribution for non-commercial purposes only

www.meditation101.org

PREFACE

When I was a child, my mother would ask me, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” It’s a question I’m sure every child hears at one time or another. And of course, everyone wants to be all that they can be. Some children may dream of becoming president, prime minister, a secretary, a director, a judge, a policeman, a soldier, a doctor, or an artist. But among the billions of people on the planet, how many times do we hear someone say, “I want to be a Buddha.” Maybe this is because most of the world’s citizens simply do not know what it means to be a Buddha. And then too, they have this fixed notion that only Buddhists can aspire to Buddhahood. But if the people of the world had a better understanding of what ‘the Buddha’ really is, we may hear more people professing a desire to become a Lord Buddha, no matter what their religion or even if they don’t have a religion at all. And this, they would find, is the most wonderful career choice in the whole wide world, or better yet, the celestial realm, or even the entire universe. No one could imagine anything better because this is a career that brings magnificent benefits, true peace, and bliss to numerous beings, both living and non-living. And although it may seem hard to believe, some people actually *do* become Buddhas from time to time. If you really want to know what ‘the Buddha’ is, this book will tell you, and beyond that, it will lead you to the discovery that everyone can be a Buddha, and that includes *you*, as Buddhahood already lies within us all.

Pittaya Wong

July 2013

WHO IS THE BUDDHA?

If we translate the term 'Buddha' literally, we will probably come up with something like 'The Enlightened Lord.' In fact, the word has hidden meanings and richer connotations that require much further explanation. Generally speaking, this term is used to refer to the founder and leader of Buddhism, who, through his own efforts, attained a state of 'enlightenment,' which allowed Him to understand the truth about all living and non-living beings. When we mention the Lord Buddha, most people know that before his enlightenment, he was His Royal Highness Prince Siddharta Gotama, who was born and lived on the East Asian subcontinent more than 2,500 years ago. His teachings form the key tenets of Buddhism, one of the world's oldest and most revered religions, with millions of followers throughout its history. The Buddhist teachings are profound, rationally oriented, and expressive of a wisdom that promotes peace and harmony within and among its practitioners.

However, few people realize that, in fact, 'the Lord Buddha' is a position that anyone can strive to attain, much like the position of a country's president or prime minister. But one cannot become a Buddha through election, appointment, or succession. Instead, the attainment of Buddhahood depends on perfecting the virtues within oneself such that one can then introduce the Dhamma, the essential truth about living and non-living beings, to others in order to liberate them from suffering and eventually reach Nirvana, the state of pure bliss where the process of reincarnation ceases. (According to the Lord Buddha, celestial beings cannot enjoy eternal happiness because they must still be reborn when the power they have acquired from past good deeds or the merit from their good karma is used up.)

Since the beginning of time, an uncountable number of individuals have become the Lord Buddha for their own Buddhist era. This is why it is said that the number of past Lord Buddhas is greater than the number of grains of sand in the world's four great oceans. To explain this analogy, it is necessary to realize that all beings have existed for an incredibly long time, so long in fact that no one can say when they

began and when they will end. While the number of past Lord Buddhas is enormous, the number today is almost as great, and an equally vast number of Buddhas will appear on earth in the future, for as long as beings continue to exist.

Within each Buddhist era, meaning the period starting from the establishment of Buddhism by a Lord Buddha until the end of the religion, there is only one person in the universe who becomes the Lord Buddha. For example, in the present Buddhist era, there is only one Lord Buddha, namely Prince Saddharta Gotama, whose Buddhist era will last for 5,000 years. So far, it has been more than 2,600 years since his enlightenment, and there will definitely be no other Lord Buddha for another 2,400 years, except perhaps in some other universe where human worlds exist. The Lord Buddhas in these other universes are not the same individual as the Lord Gotama Buddha on our earth. To clarify, it is like a president or prime minister; each country has only one, but the world in total has many. Likewise, there is a unique Lord Buddha who leads and governs Buddhism in the human world of each universe. Every universe has its own human world, and from time to time an individual who successfully perfects his virtues will be reborn as a Lord Buddha in these human worlds, but not all of them will be born at the same time.

In the Buddhist scriptures, there is a story about the Venerable Moggallana, one of the two most prominent disciples of the Lord Gotama Buddha and who, among all the disciples, was possessed of the greatest supernatural powers. One day, he flew as far as he could off into the universe, guided by the Lord Buddha's suggestion that he return when the human world appeared to him as small as an orange. This would prevent him from getting lost in the vastness of space. However, the Venerable Moggallana flew too far and when he turned back, he was unable to distinguish the human world from other countless planets. Finally, he arrived in another human world, where he found another Lord Buddha who resembled the Lord Gotama Buddha. The Venerable Moggallana was uncertain whether this other Lord Buddha was the same person as his own teacher or not, so he humbly paid respect to this

Lord. But the Lord Buddha of that universe kindly told the Venerable Moggallana that his teacher lived in another universe, and advised him to return to his human world. Then, this Lord shone his radiance until it brightened the whole universe, suggesting that the Venerable Moggallana fly back along the rays of his aura. When the Venerable Moggallana reached the midway point of his journey, the Lord Gotama Buddha, who lived in the human world of his universe, also radiated his aura into the universe to light the rest of his disciple's way. After arriving safely back in the human world, the Venerable Moggallana had an audience with the Lord Gotama Buddha and told him of all he had seen, and especially of his meeting with the other Lord Buddha. This is one of many stories from the Buddhist scriptures which assure us that there are other human worlds in other universes where Lord Buddhas exist.

So now we know that 'The Buddha' is a position belonging to the founder and leader of the Buddhist religion – a position to which anyone can aspire, regardless of their gender, age, social status, or religious belief. This post is not reserved exclusively for clergy or believers of any particular faith, with the exception of the noble Buddhist disciples who have already attained a certain level of enlightenment and those persons whom the various Lord Buddhas have predicted will become Silent Buddhas or noble disciples predestined to enter Nirvana as non-Lord Buddhas. In any case, preparation for the position of 'Lord Buddha' is like that for the Presidency. Before one can qualify, one must undergo a great deal of hardship, rigorous training, and extensive learning to become truly capable, knowledgeable, and worthy. One has to overcome a host of problems and obstacles before one can occupy the office. But the difference between becoming president and becoming the Lord Buddha is that the preparation for Buddhahood is incredibly more difficult, and while there can be many presidents or political leaders in the human world, each with dominion over a country for a term or two, the position of Lord Buddha can be occupied by only one person in the world, or even the entire universe, for the

period of one Buddhist era which is much longer than a presidential term. During the lifespan of one human world (from its creation to its complete destruction), there can be only one to five Lord Buddhas who become enlightened on earth. In the worst case, there may be no Lord Buddha at all for the entire life of some human worlds. In the life of the present human world in our own universe, the Lord Gotama Buddha stated that there would be as many as five Lord Buddhas, and that the Lord Gotama Buddha is the fourth. The fifth and last Lord Buddha of this human world is the Lord Metriya Buddha. Now a celestial being in Tusita heaven (the fourth of six levels of heaven in Buddhist belief), he will be reborn as a human in the future in order to attain Buddhahood millions of years hence.

TWO MAJOR TYPES OF BUDDHA

In the sense that a Buddha means an enlightened person who attains enlightenment by himself with no one to teach him, we can classify all of the Buddhas into two types, namely (A) Silent Buddhas and (B) Lord Buddhas.

(A) The Silent Buddha refers to a Buddha who attains enlightenment through his own efforts but who does not establish a religion. He does not have students, but chooses to live peacefully in a tranquil place. However, the Silent Buddha is kind enough to allow laypeople to make merit with Him. The Silent Buddha also lacks all of the hallmarks of a great holy man like a Lord Buddha, and he attains His Silent Buddhahood by accumulating perfections over a period as long as two eons. There can be many Silent Buddhas born to this world at the same time, but not in a period when a Lord Buddha is born.

(B) Like the Silent Buddha, a Lord Buddha also attains enlightenment by Himself without the guidance of a teacher. But after attaining enlightenment, He teaches others to attain enlightenment just like Him. He is a great teacher, who establishes Buddhism and leads the religion. Thus, he has disciples who study

and attain the Dhamma through His teaching. In their capacity as teachers, Lord Buddhas can be further classified into these three subcategories:

- (1) The Wisdom-Oriented Buddha: This Lord Buddha used to be a Bodhisattva or Buddha-to-be who cultivated virtues based on his wisdom. The Wisdom-Oriented Buddha must perfect his virtues for a period of 20 eons and 100,000 sub-eons. He spends the minimal time in pursuit of Buddhahood. The Lord Gotama, who is the Lord Buddha of the present era, is one such wisdom-oriented Buddha. The time he spent in pursuit of perfection can be divided as follows:

Wishing in mind to become a Buddha for a period of 7 eons.

Uttering the wish to become a Buddha verbally for a period of 9 eons.

Receiving predictions from other Lord Buddhas and continuing to cultivate perfections for another 4 eons in order to attain Buddhahood.

- (2) The Faith-Oriented Buddha: This Lord Buddha was a Bodhisattva whose pursuit of perfection is motivated by faith. This type of Lord Buddha spends a moderate amount of time cultivating perfection – a total of 40 eons and 100,000 sub-eons. A Faith-Oriented Buddha's pursuit of perfection can be divided into the following periods:

Wishing in mind to become a Buddha for a period of 14 eons.

Uttering the wish to become a Buddha verbally for a period of 18 eons.

Receiving predictions from other Lord Buddhas and continuing to cultivate perfections for another 8 eons in order to attain Buddhahood.

- (3) The Endurance-Oriented Buddha: This Lord Buddha once pursued perfections as an Endurance-Oriented Bodhisattva. He spends a maximum period of time cultivating perfections – 80 eons and 100,000 sub-

eons. This Buddha's pursuit of perfection can be divided into the following periods:

Wishing in mind to become a Buddha for a period of 28 eons.

Uttering the wish to become a Buddha verbally for a period of 36 eons.

Receiving predictions from other Lord Buddhas and continuing to cultivate perfections for another 16 eons in order to attain Buddhahood.

DIFFERENCES AMONG THE LORD BUDDHAS

Even though these various Lord Buddhas share some similarities, as explained in the earlier chapter, they differ in some ways. The six major differences distinguishing the Lord Buddhas are:

1. **Age.** Lord Buddhas are born in different epochs, so their lifespans are different. Some Lord Buddhas live a short life whereas others live much longer. This also depends on the average human lifespan in the time when each Lord Buddha is reborn. The minimum lifespan of a Lord Buddha is 100 years whereas the maximum is 100,000 years – this is when people are virtuous and the environment is pure, and food is nutritious and free from toxins that damage health and shorten the average lifespan.

2. **Height.** Normally, the minimum height of any Lord Buddha is two meters, and the maximum height is eleven meters. The height of the Lord Buddha differs depending on the era. If a Lord Buddha is born to a human world where human beings have a larger body and longer life, his physical body will be taller than the average person, and he will live a longer life, too. On the other hand, if a Lord Buddha is born to a human world where people have a smaller physical body and shorter lifespan, the life of the Lord Buddha in that era will be approximately the same as most ordinary people. However, in every era, the physical body of the Lord

Buddha is taller than the average person, and this allows him to stand out from the crowd.

3. **Lineage.** Every Lord Buddha chooses to be born either to a royal or Brahmin family. This depends solely on the social hierarchy in place at the time. If a Lord Buddha is reborn in an era when the monarch receives the highest respect and recognition from the public, the Lord Buddha will be born to a virtuous queen. On the contrary, if the Brahmin family is more respected than the king and his family, he will choose to be born to a virtuous Brahmin lady. In addition, whether he chooses royal or Brahmin parents, his family will be secure, wealthy, and well-respected. He will not be born to an underprivileged royal or Brahmin family.
4. **Length of time to attain enlightenment.** Before attaining enlightenment, every Lord Buddha spends time practicing and training in his final lifetime. Each of the Lord Buddhas spends more or less time depending on his karma. The minimum period of time required is seven days whereas the maximum is seven years (The Lord Gotama Buddha spent six years). Notwithstanding, no matter how long it takes for a Lord Buddha to attain enlightenment, the power of meditative insight for all such Buddhas is equal, meaning that they have the same capability to see, know, and understand all living and non-living beings alike.
5. **Radiance.** This difference depends on the past meritorious deeds of each Lord Buddha as well as his accumulated merit. Radiance here means the radiance which normally emanates from a Lord Buddha's body after attaining enlightenment. Other than this regular radiance, a Lord Buddha may occasionally shine his radiance for as far as ten thousand universes. In addition, if a Lord Buddha has resolved in past lifetimes to have a brilliant radiance, his radiance after enlightenment will be relatively greater than that of other Lord Buddhas who have the same level of accumulated merit. Every Lord Buddha's radiance consists of six colors: white, yellow, red, green, light yellow, and a mixture of green, red, white, and yellow.

6. **Vehicles.** This means the vehicle used to renounce the world and enter the monkhood. Vehicles differ from one Lord Buddha to another; however, some Lord Buddhas have the same kind of vehicle. These vehicles provide different degrees of comfort and can be either an elephant, a steed, a chariot, a sedan chair, or a floating palace, depending on the past karma of each Lord Buddha.
7. **The tree of enlightenment.** Every Lord Buddha attains enlightenment under a tree called a 'Bodhi Tree.' The Bodhi tree differs from one Buddhist era to another. Although some Lord Buddhas attain enlightenment under the same kind of tree, any tree at the foot of which a Lord Buddha attains enlightenment is, in that era, called the Bodhi tree. So, a Bodhi tree could be, for example, a banyan, bamboo, a *ficus* (Moraceae), or a *sala* (Pentacmesiamensis).
8. **Seats.** The seats used by the Lord Buddhas when they attain enlightenment differ in size. Actually, these seat cushions are all made from a pile of grass (Lamperata cylindrical), but they are different in size to accommodate the bodies of the different Lord Buddhas.

Other distinctions among the Lord Buddhas include the number of disciples, the co-birth beings (humans, animals, and things which are born or occur on the same date of his birth), the duration of each Lord Buddha's religion, his encounter with the evil *mara*, the force of those who oppose his religion, and the nature of the monastic code and discipline. These differences are due to differences in karma of each Lord Buddha. The following is a comparison of the five Lord Buddhas of our human world:

- The first Lord Buddha of the present epoch was 'Lord Kakusandha Buddha.'

He resided in a city called Khema. His father, Akkidhatta, and his mother, Visakha, were Brahmins. He had two chief disciples, the Venerable Vidhura and the Venerable Sanjeeva. His personal attendant was the Venerable Buddhicha. His two most main female disciples were the Venerable Sama and the Venerable

Champa. His Bodhi tree was the *Sirisa* tree. He stood 5 meters tall, and lived for 40,000 years. His normal radiance radiated as far as 160 kilometers. He lived a secular life for 4,000 years and rode a wagon to ordain as a monk. He persevered for 8 months to attain enlightenment. After establishing his religion, he organized an assembly of 40,000 disciple monks.

- The second Lord Buddha of this epoch was 'Lord Gonakamana Buddha.'

Born in a city called Sobhavadi to a Brahmin father named Yanyadhatta, and a Brahmin mother named Uttra, he had two principal disciples, the Venerable Bhiyayosa and the Venerable Uttara. His personal attendant was the Venerable Sodhicha. His two most chief female disciples were the Venerable Samutta and the Venerable Uttra. His Bodhi tree was the *Utomporn* tree. He was 3.75 meters tall, and was 30,000 years old at his death. He lived a secular life for 3,000 years and his vehicle for entering the monkhood was an elephant. He persevered for 6 months to attain enlightenment. After establishing his religion, he organized an assembly of 30,000 disciple monks.

- The third Lord Buddha of this epoch was 'Lord Kasappa Buddha.'

He resided in a city called Banares. His father Brahmadhatta and his mother Tanawadi were both Brahmins. The Venerable Tissa and the Venerable Bharadhavaja were his two principal disciples, and his personal attendant was the Venerable Sabbhamitta. His two main female disciples were the Venerable Anula and the Venerable Uruwela. His Bodhi tree was the ficus tree. He stood 2.5 meters tall, and he lived for 20,000 years. He lived a secular life for 2,000 years and entered the monkhood riding a flying palace. He persevered for 7 days before attaining enlightenment. After establishing his religion, he organized an assembly of 20,000 disciple monks.

- The fourth or present Lord Buddha of this epoch was the 'Lord Gotama Buddha.'

Born in a city called Kapilavasdhu to King Suddhodana and Queen Maya, he had two principal disciples, namely the Venerable Kolita and the Venerable Upatissa. His personal attendant was the Venerable Ananda. His two main female disciples were the Venerable Khema and the Venerable Ubonwanna. His Bodhi tree was the Asattapruksa tree. He was 2 meters tall, and his lifespan was 80 years. His normal radiance measured two meters in diameter. He lived a secular life for 29 years and rode on a steed to enter the monkhood. He persevered for 6 years before attaining enlightenment. After establishing his religion, he organized an assembly of 1,250 disciple monks.

- The fifth and last Lord Buddha of this eon (the very next one) is 'Lord Metriya Buddha.'

He will reside in the city of Ketumati. His father will be Sutta, and his mother will be Brahmnavadi, both Brahmins. He will have two principal disciples – the Venerable Asoka and the Venerable Brahmadeva. His personal attendant will be the Venerable Siiha. His two chief female disciples will be the Venerable Patumma and the Venerable Sumana. His Bodhi tree will be the *Kakating* tree. He will stand 11 meters tall, and will live for 80,000 years. He will enter the monkhood riding a flying palace and persevere for 7 days before attaining enlightenment. His normal radiance will radiate for 400 kilometers in diameter.

Long after the Lord Metriya Buddha passes into Nirvana, and his religion ceases to exist, the world will be beset by fires for eons until it is completely destroyed, and this will mark the end of this epoch. Then, after a long period of time, the world will reform, and the new land will be called *Sunnakappa* (The Empty Epoch) because there will be no Lord Buddha, no Silent Buddha, nor even any noble disciples born to this world. It will last one *asangaiya* (10^{140} eon years). When the empty epoch ends, the world will be demolished again, and after it reforms, the new land will be

called *Mandakappa* (The Epoch of Three). Then there will be three Lord Buddhas born to the world as well as a number of Silent Buddhas. The first Lord Buddha will be the Lord Rama Buddha, who will live for 90,000 years, and stand 11 meters tall. Long afterward, there will come the age of Lord Dhammaraja Buddha, who will live for 50,000 years and be 2 meters tall. Subsequently, there will be the Lord Dhammasamee Buddha, who will live for 100,000 years, and be 10 meters tall.

There will be more Lord Buddhas born to the world in the following epochs, namely Lord Naradha Buddha, Lord Rangsimuni Buddha, Lord Devadhepa Buddha, Lord Narasiha Buddha, Lord Tissa Buddha, and Lord Sumangala Buddha among others.

SIMILARITIES AMONG THE LORD BUDDHAS

Now that we have identified the differences among the Lord Buddhas, I would like to explain their similarities. The most important similarity is their insight, which means their ability to thoroughly comprehend the Dhamma. This is why all the Lord Buddhas share the same basic teachings, consisting of the following: the four noble truths (suffering, way out from suffering, cessation, and liberation), the three truths (impermanence, suffering, and non-self), endless causation, and the three practices of *Sila* (discipline), *Samadhi* (concentration), and *Panna* (wisdom). These teachings do not arise from cogitation, like the principles of other philosophers, but are grasped through the insight of the Lord Buddhas.

This is similar to a man who holds a key that can unlock the gateway to inner knowledge or to a library full of truth about existence. All the Lord Buddhas hold this very key to unlock the same library of knowledge within, so the knowledge they obtain is virtually the same. Still, there are many locked doors which only a Lord Buddha can unlock, so disciples, who have less insight, are unable to unlock them all, unlike the Lord Buddha.

Those disciples who gain insight through meditation are like those who hold keys to unlock only certain doors since the power of their insight is in no way comparable to that of the Lord Buddha. While the insight of a disciple is comparable to a flashlight, that of the Lord Buddha is like a powerful spotlight that shines far into the darkness, enabling him to see and understand things at a great distance. The disciple, who holds only a flashlight, can see into the darkness for a much shorter distance.

In addition to this power of insight, which explains why the teachings, or Dhamma, of all the Lord Buddhas are almost identical, the Lord Buddhas also share the same 30 Buddha Practices regardless of whether they are a Wisdom-Oriented Buddha, a Faith-Oriented Buddha, or a Perseverance-Oriented Buddha. These common practices are as follows:

1. In their final lifetime, each person destined to be a Lord Buddha enters the mother's womb and remains fully conscious the entire time he is inside.
2. The Buddha-to-be sits in a cross-legged posture facing outward in the same direction as His mother.
3. The Buddha-to-be's mother delivers her child in a standing position.
4. The birth occurs in a grove.
5. After delivery, the Buddha-to-be steps on a gold plate, faces the north, takes seven steps, turns in all four directions, and utters holy words.
6. As the Buddha-to-be grows up, he meets the four *devadhuta*, namely the old one, the sick, the dead, and a monk. Then, after careful consideration, he enters monastic life.
7. Each Buddha-to-be perseveres in his practice for at least 7 days to attain enlightenment.
8. On the date of his enlightenment, he consumes rice-milk.

9. The Buddha-to-be sits on a pile of hay and attains enlightenment under a Bodhi tree.
10. He practices meditation.
11. He eradicates the evil *mara(s)* who obstruct(s) him.
12. Under the Bodhi tree, he attains insightful power.
13. He stops at the nearby Bodhi tree for seven days to reflect on the Dhamma.
14. Later, the Lord Brahma invites him to deliver discourses.
15. He teaches the Dhamma wheel discourse at Isipatana Mikatayawan grove.
16. On the full moon night of the third lunar month, he delivers the *Ovadapatimokha* discourse where he assembles his noble disciple monks.
17. He resides at Chetavanaram Temple.
18. He shows his miraculous powers near the gates of Savatthi City.
19. He teaches Abhidhamma to his mother and other celestial beings in the Tavatimsa celestial realm.
20. After delivering the Abhidhamma, he leaves the celestial realm and returns to a place near the gate of Samgassa City.
21. The Lord Buddha normally enters a deep meditative state.
22. He examines the sentient beings two times.
23. When a disagreement arises, he settles it by setting codes of conduct.
24. When there is a concern, He delivers the *jataka* stories.
25. He delivers 'The Buddha Clan Discourse' to his relatives.
26. He welcomes his disciple monks.

27. Monks who attend the rainy season retreat are not allowed to leave without permission when they are invited to go somewhere.
28. He has five normal daily activities.
29. He consumes meat on the date of passing into Nirvana.
30. He enters a deep meditation and passes away to Nirvana.

Besides the thirty common practices, the safety and security of all of the Lord Buddhas is assured in these four ways:

1. No one can destroy the offerings prepared for Him.
2. No one can assassinate Him.
3. No one can destroy the 32 bodily markings of the great holy man and the 80 secondary characteristics.
4. No one can lessen His radiance.

Many may wonder why the Lord Buddhas born at different periods of time share so many similarities. In order to explain, we have to understand that each Lord Buddha gains his power of insight from the same source, and this enables each successive Lord Buddha to understand what other previous Lord Buddhas have also seen.

In addition, some of these similarities are common duties shared by all the Lord Buddhas. This is similar to a country's succession of presidents, each of whom takes an oath, appoints a cabinet, delivers his policy to the parliament, and negotiates with representatives from other nations. They also often work in the same office building as their predecessors. Before a president can take office, he has to learn about what the previous presidents did first. Although individual practices may differ to some extent, there are certain common practices to be observed.

This is similar to the case of the Lord Buddhas, who learn from the past Lord Buddhas how they should use their powers of insight.

THE SPECIAL SIGNS & CHARACTERISTICS OF EVERY LORD BUDDHA

All of the Lord Buddhas resemble each other. They all have the 32 bodily signs and the 80 secondary characteristics of a holy man. They are like Buddha statues that are cast from the same mold, but with slight differences. These include the size of their body and their radiance. All the Lord Buddhas are men, without exception. They may be women only when they are unpredicted Buddhas-to-be. Regardless of their perfection level, all of the Lord Buddhas have the same insightful capabilities.

The marks of a great holy man refer to the most sublime signs of a great gentleman, who is the most perfect in the world – in other words, ‘the most perfect human form,’ which only Lord Buddhas can have. Other people may have some of these signs. Others may have none. But no one but the Lord Buddha possesses them all. These signs make each Lord Buddha stand out among the people and even among the celestial beings.

The story about the signs of a great holy man is found in the Brahmin teachings, dating back to long before the Lord Buddha’s birth. Learned Brahmins like Asita, the revered hermit, and King Suddhodana, the Lord Buddha’s father, knew this story well. So when he saw these marks on the young Prince Siddharta’s body, Asita knew immediately that this child was destined to be a Buddha. The story about the signs of a great holy man was also taught by the Lord Buddha.

When artisans of different nations create their own figures of the Lord Buddha, no matter what the image is made of, the craftsmen turn to the story of the 32 signs and 80 secondary characteristics of the great holy man for their inspiration. Some people wrongly believe that a fat Buddha statue is the Lord Buddha, when in fact, the fat Buddha statue stems from the story of the Venerable Kajjajana, a noble disciple. Kajjajana had some of the signs of a great holy man, and this led to the misunderstanding that he was a Buddha. In order to avoid this confusion, he

disguised himself as an obese monk. The 32 signs and the 80 secondary characteristics of a great holy man occurred as a result of the meritorious deeds of the Lord Buddha, accumulated when He was a Buddha-to-be.

The First Sign: In previous lifetimes, each Buddha-to-be is virtuous and devoted to wholesomeness in his actions, speech, and thoughts. He practices generosity, observes the precepts, and is a good child to His mother and father. He has respect for the monks, deities, the elders in His family, and the Dhamma. And because of his karma, the Buddha-to-be has flat feet.

The Second Sign: A Buddha-to-be brings happiness to the masses and lessens their fear. He lifts their despair by providing security, acting with righteousness, and practicing generosity. As a result of His great charity, he is given another sign of a great holy man, which is a wheel pattern on the soles of his feet.

The Third to the Fifth Signs: A Buddha-to-be eliminates bad deeds. He refrains from killing and is kind to all living creatures. As a mark of these qualities, He has long feet, long fingers and toes, and a straight back like a celestial being.

The Sixth Sign: A Buddha-to-be gives delicious, nutritious food and drink to others, and for this, He earns another special sign: full flesh in seven places, namely the back of his hands and feet, both sides of his chest, and his neck.

The Seventh and Eight Signs: In helping people with the four practices, namely giving, mindful speech, beneficial practices, and consistency, a Buddha-to-be earns two signs: He has tender palms and soles with net-like lines.

The Ninth and Tenth Signs: A Buddha-to-be uses righteous speech in teaching many people. He brings benefits and happiness to sentient beings who regularly pay homage to the Dhamma. As a result, He earns these two signs, which are conch-like feet and hair in a spiral shape pointing upward.

The Eleventh Sign: A Buddha-to-be is attentive to the teaching of arts and sciences. He helps people to gain a quick understanding of karma and the practices they should observe. For this, He has sleek calf muscles like those of an antelope.

The Twelfth Sign: Because a Buddha-to-be interrupts monks and Brahmin priests to ask them questions about their teachings on wholesomeness and unwholesomeness, karma and the law of karma, what one should consider, the advantages and disadvantages, for the sake of happiness, He earns a twelfth sign, which is having soft tender skin that repels dust.

The Thirteenth Sign: A Buddha-to-be has no anger or vengefulness although He is threatened. He is never vindictive and never causes sorrow to others. He also gives soft mattresses and fine fabrics for clothing, such as cambric, cotton, silk, and wool. Because of this, He earns the thirteenth sign, which is having a complexion like gold.

The Fourteenth Sign: A Buddha-to-be brings kind, good-hearted relatives and friends together. He unites fathers and mothers with their sons and daughters and other relatives. He also brings siblings together. Togetherness earns him the fourteenth sign: concealed sexual organs.

The Fifteenth and Sixteenth Sign: In learning to recognize those who deserve help, a Buddha-to-be knows people of the same and different levels. This allows Him to know who deserves respect and worship, and in respecting them, he brings them great benefits. For this very reason, He earns two signs, which are His body spreads out like a tree when He bends down, and when He stands up, the palms of His hands reach to His knees.

The Seventeenth to Nineteenth Signs: A Buddha-to-be is helpful. It is His wish to benefit others, freeing them from suffering and showing them the path to happiness. To do this, he promotes pure faith, *sila* (precepts), *sutta*(learning), *Buddhi* (thoughtfulness), giving, Dhamma, wisdom, wealth, farms and orchards, animals of all kind, spouses and offspring, employees and subordinates, relatives, friends, and fellows. This accounts for His powerful chest, which is like that of a lion, and his rounded neck.

The Twentieth Sign: A Buddha-to-be does not harm other beings with his hands or weapons. This allows him to have a sensitive tongue that can savor all the rich tastes.

The Twenty-first and Twenty-second Signs: A Buddha-to-be does not glare or look coldly at others. He has a truthful heart and looks at everyone with a kind heart. For this, He has two completely black pupils which are perfectly round like the eyes of a calf.

The Twenty-third Sign: A Buddha-to-be is a leader of virtuous people who do good and righteous deeds through bodily actions, speech, and thoughts. He also practices generosity, observes the precepts, observes *uposatha* (the precepts on a Buddhist Sabbath day), behaves well toward his mother and father, and to the monks and Brahmin priests. He also respects people in his family and the Dhamma. Because of this respect for righteousness, He has a beautiful hairline.

The Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Signs: A Buddha-to-be eliminates false speech and speaks only the truth. He does not lie or deceive others. Because of this, He has a single hair in each pore and curly soft hair between His eyebrows.

The Twenty-sixth and Twenty-seventh Signs: A Buddha-to-be does not speak sarcastically to or about others, and he does not betray people or break them apart. Instead, He speaks in a way that promotes unity and harmony. He enjoys people's togetherness and speaks only words that encourage them. For this, He has forty perfectly straight teeth.

The Twenty-eighth and Twenty-ninth Signs: A Buddha-to-be abstains from false speech and speaks of only the truth. He speaks loving words that make him beloved by others. This accounts for His having a large tongue and a beautiful heavenly voice.

The Thirtieth Sign: A Buddha-to-be does not ramble. He speaks on the right occasion and only truth that is well supported and that benefits oneself and others. For this, He earns the sign of an elegant jaw like that of a lion.

The Thirty-first and Thirty-second Signs: A Buddha-to-be earns an honest living and does not cheat others by means of false weighing, falsifying, bribing, deceiving, killing, caging, stealing, or robbing. As a result, He has evenly parted teeth which are flawlessly white.

In addition to the 32 major characteristics of a great holy man, there are these 80 secondary characteristics:

1. He has gold-toned fingers and toes
2. His fingers and toes are slender from top to base
3. His fingers and toes are well shaped
4. His nails are of red-pink color
5. All of his nails are beautifully shaped unlike those of commoners
6. His nails are smooth and have no line
7. His wrists and ankles are fleshy so that the bones joints are not visible.
8. His feet are of the same size
9. He walks elegantly like a noble elephant
10. He walks smoothly like a noble lion
11. He walks softly like a swan
12. He steps firmly like an ox
13. When He begins to walk, He lifts His right foot first, and His movement always starts from the right side.
14. His kneecaps are well-rounded and hidden inside His flesh, so they are not visible.
15. His gestures are those of a gentleman. He has no effeminate manners.
16. His navel is nicely rounded
17. His abdomen is flat
18. On his abdomen, there is a spiral line that appears to spin clockwise
19. Both of His thighs are like beautiful golden cylinders
20. He has an appropriate sexual organ

21. His body is perfectly proportioned and free from all flaws.
22. There is both dense and thin flesh as appropriate all over His body
23. None of His flesh is flabby
24. There are no moles or birthmarks on His body
25. His body is well balanced from top to bottom
26. His body is beautifully pure
27. He is powerful like many elephants
28. The bridge of His nose is high
29. His cheeks are beautifully shaped
30. His upper and lower lips are even and of red color like a tomato
31. His teeth are pure white and free from stains.
32. His teeth are white like a conch
33. His teeth are perfectly smooth without flaw
34. His body and mind are totally beautiful
35. All four canine teeth are perfectly shaped
36. His face is beautifully white
37. His cheeks are beautifully symmetrical
40. The lines on His palms are straight
41. The lines on His wrists are red.
42. He has a radiance that emanates outward from His entire body.
43. His dimples are not relaxed
44. His eye sockets are well shaped
45. His eye balls are pure white
46. The ends of his body hair are straight
47. His tongue is a beautiful shape
48. His tongue is tender and dark red-pink in color
49. His earlobes are long.
50. His ears are nicely rounded

51. His tendons are strong and shapely.
52. His tendons do not appear through the skin as with other commoners
53. The shape of his head is beautiful
54. The width and height of his forehead are proportionate
55. The bulge of his forehead is shapely.
56. His eyebrows are beautifully curved like a bow
57. The hair of his eyebrows is delicate
58. His eyebrows are flat
59. His eyebrows are broad
60. The tips of his eyebrows reach to the outer corners of his eyes
61. The skin that covers His body is smooth and fine.
62. He has a graceful figure.
63. His hair is fragrant and can be smelled from afar
67. The hairs on His body are all of equal length.
68. His body hair is fine and soft.
69. His breath and the circulation of his blood and life energy are gentle
70. His lips are nicely shaped as if he were smiling a little
71. His breath smells good like lotus fragrance
72. His hair is deep black and glossy
73. His hair is scented and can be smelled from afar.
74. His hair smells good like water lilies
75. His hairline has a perfectly cylindrical shape.
76. His hair is completely black
77. His hair is fine.
78. His hair is not tangled
79. His hair is in a spiral shape circling clockwise
80. His head is illuminated with an aura

Many readers who have little or no understanding of Buddhism may wonder how each of the characteristics is related to various deeds. For example, how does the

right livelihood result in evenly-spaced white teeth? To comprehend this, we need to recall the teachings about karma, and merit and sin in Buddhism first.

Simply speaking, when a living being performs any action, it generates energies, namely merit and its opposite. These energies pulse through each living being at all times, in the same manner that a mild electrical current, although difficult to notice, functions within the human body to generate movement. For example, when we donate money to charity or take part in any other charitable activity, the state of mind resulting from this act of sacrifice is a state of mind that generates 'merit,' and this merit fuels our mind. This energy is accumulated at the center of our body, just as 'sin' energy accumulates when we commit misdeeds, like cursing or hurting others.

Now that we know that 'karma' can generate energy which affects the direction of our life both in the present and the future, we can understand the meaning of the saying, "One reaps what one sows." If we are very helpful to others, karmic energy will ensure that we are helped by others. The karmic mechanism which is driven by merit and sin energy helps us to understand why siblings born to the same parents can be so different. The elder sister may look more beautiful than the younger sister, or twins may resemble each other but their levels of success differ.

The Buddhist concept of karma helps to explain that our lives in the present are not affected merely by surrounding factors in the present, but also by another factor working behind the scenes. This is the karmic mechanism powered by our accumulated merit and sin. Indeed, these energies control our lives, right down to the level of our DNA. It explains why one child may be born paralyzed or with a certain disease whose cause is unknown to doctors. These phenomena are explainable by karma, merit, and sin, which are behind the functioning of all living beings.

To conclude, the Lord Buddha's characteristics of a great holy man are made possible by the merit energy generated by the accumulation of wholesome deeds. This merit energy controls the functioning of the DNA in His body, meaning that it is responsible for the design of His physical body, a body that is beautiful and perfect in every way, a body that allows Him to fulfill his duties as the most sublime person in the world, a man whose role is to teach sentient beings the Dhamma and help them achieve liberation.

THE LORD BUDDHAS' ROUTINE

Some may think that the position of Lord Buddha is a desirable post that can bring them happiness as the Buddha is well respected and worshipped by millions of people. In addition, to be a Lord Buddha means to be a leader of an outstanding religion that is founded on a body of wise teachings that even a genius like Albert Einstein also admired. However, it is not easy to be a Lord Buddha – even though He is enlightened and has both wisdom and might, because a Lord Buddha still falls under the law of karma. He is also subject to aging, sickness, and passing away (to Nirvana).

As we have already learned, a Lord Buddha has to accumulate perfections for at least 20 eons and 100,000 semi-eons in order to attain the Buddhahood, as in the case of Lord Gotama Buddha. But once he attained Buddhahood, he had a very short time to complete his duties. The Lord Gotama Buddha was ordained when he was 29 years old; He attained enlightenment when He was 35 years old, and He passed away to Nirvana when He was 80 years old. Because of His limited time, He had to be determined; he had to be committed to performing his duties, always knowing that He was competing against time. Although he suffered from sickness and faced troubles in overseeing his religion, he still performed His duties well, and His routines each day were as follows:

1. The Morning Session

In the morning, he had an alms round. Sometimes, he was invited by laypeople to have meal at their places. With his alms bowl, the Lord Buddha welcome donated food from people regardless of discrimination. He consumed whatever was given to him whether the foods were well prepared or not. After receiving foods from each patron, he blessed them in return. The Lord Buddha had emphasized to the monks to consume foods moderately to sustain their life, not for sensual pleasure or enjoyment. Most of the time, when he had an alms round, he was accompanied by one or more attendants or adherents.

2. The Afternoon Session

In the afternoon, it was time for the public. The Lord Buddha gave this opportunity to laypeople who wished to have an audience with Him. Laypeople who were interested in the Dhamma would head to the Lord Buddha's temple or the place where He stayed to pay respect. They would come to ask questions and listen to his discourses.

3. The Evening Session

Normally, in the evening, the Lord Buddha dedicated himself to teaching disciple monks by allowing them to have an audience with Him. This gave them opportunities to ask questions about the Dhamma. The Lord Buddha would answer their questions, lecture them, and offer them guidance, and suggestions. Sometimes, the Lord Buddha went to see the disciple monks where they gathered to converse, such as at the Dhamma Hall. When He heard them speaking, He went to ask them what they were conversing about. Then, He took this opportunity to teach them further.

4. Midnight Session

After the monks listened to the Lord Buddha's teachings and returned to their abodes to rest, the Lord Buddha did not stop his duties as a great teacher. He spent the next hours giving an audience to the deities. These deities came to ask Him about the Dhamma and other matters, and once they listened to His lectures, many of them attained enlightenment. The reason why the Lord Buddha had to spare some time for the deities is because deities can attain enlightenment just like humans, although it is difficult for them to accrue additional merit. Many deities were in the celestial paradise before the Lord Buddha was born, but many were Buddhist disciples who made merit according to the Lord Buddha's teachings and were reborn in the celestial realm. The deities were eager to seek out the Lord Buddha because they knew that He would not live long on the earth, and time in the celestial realm and in the human world are very different. A single day in the Tavatimsa celestial realm is equal to one hundred years on earth. This means that the celestial beings in Tavatimsa had less than a day in which to see the Lord Buddha. But we must also remember that prior to the birth of Prince Siddharta in this world, he was a Buddha-to-be celestial being in the Tusita celestial realm. Before he was reborn as a human in order to teach the Dhamma to sentient beings, deities from 10,000 universes had gathered together to have an audience with him and had joyfully invited him to be reborn for the final time because they wished to attain enlightenment just like Him.

Finally, at the end of each day, when all the deities had departed, the Lord Buddha practiced meditation to relax His body and mind. Then, he slept, always on his right side, with His right hand resting under His head. This position allowed Him to sleep with good awareness. We might even call it 'sleeping meditation' where the sleeper is always ready to rouse, for the Lord Buddha did not sleep like ordinary people. Many may wonder how the Lord Buddha could complete his daily routine with so little sleep each day. To explain this, we need to understand that ordinary

people sleep without consciousness. Sometimes we may have a good dream; other times we may have a nightmare, and sometime we may just wander aimlessly through our dreams. As a result, although we may sleep for many hours, our body and mind are not completely rested or refreshed. This is similar to eating foods which are not nutritious. Although we eat a lot, we receive very few benefits. But the Lord Buddha's sleep is different. When He slept, His mind entered a state of deep meditation which enabled Him to rest peacefully. Even a few hours of sleep were adequate for Him to begin a new day. Anyone who is experienced at meditation practice can do the same as the Lord Buddha.

5. Before Dawn Session

The Lord Buddha woke up to perform His personal errands and practiced meditation in order to gain insight into the sentient beings who deserved His teachings each day. To understand those sentient beings who deserved His teachings, He relied on the powerful insight He gained from meditation practice. This power allowed Him to know whom He should teach each day. These were people who were prepared to attain enlightenment or who would benefit from His teachings. Each day, in using His power of insight, the Buddha did not simply sit thinking, imagining, or figuring things out by Himself; instead, the images of these people – some already known to Him, others strangers – would appear in His mind as He meditated.

Some people traveled to see the Lord Buddha, but others would be visited by Him. Yasa, a gentleman, was one such person whom the Lord Buddha waited to see in order to teach him the Dhamma until he attained enlightenment.

To help us better understand the nature of Lord Buddha's insightful explorations, we might compare them to the preparations for an important business meeting. In the case of a modern businessman, he has to find out information about the person he is planning to meet – his name, position, department, address, phone number,

and even directions to his place of business. He can probably gather all this information from the internet. These preparations help to ensure that his meeting goes off without a hitch. But for the Lord Buddha, He did not obtain information by using a computer, a mobile phone, a tablet, or the internet. Instead, He used his mental powers, which were strong enough to intuitively know and understand situations in advance.

A BUDDHA-TO-BE

Now that we know what the Buddha means, who the Buddha is, and what his duties are, we will examine the requirements for Buddhahood. To be a Buddha requires making a silent wish to become a salvager who frees sentient beings from suffering. A person who makes this wish is called a Bhodhisattva (a Buddha-to-be). A Buddha-to-be can be either a human or a non-human creature. Animals such as horses, elephants, or even ants who wish to salvage others are called Buddha-to-be animals.

A Buddha-to-be can be classified into 3 categories namely (1) The Wisdom-Oriented (2) The Faith-Oriented and (3) The Endurance-Oriented. While one is a Buddha-to-be pursuing perfections, (s)he may not even know which category (s)he belongs to, but the inclination of this person would categorize him or her automatically.

Every category of Buddha-to-be can be divided into two groups:

1. **An Unpredicted Buddha-to-be** means a person who pursues perfections to become either a Wisdom-Oriented, Faith-Oriented, or Endurance Oriented Lord Buddha but who has not received any prediction from any of the Lord Buddhas. This means that it is still uncertain if they will be able to become a Lord Buddha. They may change their mind later on. We may compare the unpredicted Buddha-to-be to a presidential candidate who is not predicted by a political party, and who may then withdraw from the race before the election. Also, although they

are called a Buddha-to-be, their lives are subject to risk and harm in the cycle of rebirth since they still must be reincarnated and may even plummet into any of the realms of hell. We may say that some of the creatures of hell are Buddhas-to-be, although this is rare. The unpredicted Buddha-to-be can be either a man or a woman, a Brahmin, a celestial being, a human, or an animal. Buddhas-to-be are still subject to risk because although they have accumulated enough merit to become enlightened, they still have to encounter different troubles and problems in life that may cause them to suffer and plunge into hell while in the process of pursuing perfections and waiting to become a Buddha.

When a Buddha-to-be has stronger defilement or mental impurity, s(he) can, like others, make sinful mistakes and compensate according to the law of karma. This is similar to the Lord Gotama Buddha and many other Buddhas who were in hell when they were Buddhas-to-be, causing them to experience the suffering of torture. For this reason, some Buddhas-to-be give up their intention to become a Lord Buddha and become a disciple of a Lord Buddha instead, as in the case of the Venerable Kajjajana, who was a Bodhisattva. He gave up his pursuit of Buddhahood and became an enlightened disciple instead. However, because his merit was greater than that required of a disciple, he had some of the 32 marks of a great holy man. Because this made people mistake him for the Lord Gotama Buddha, he decided to disguise himself as an obese Buddhist monk. This is why Buddhists often depict him as a fat laughing monk and a symbol of good fortune.

2. A Predicted Buddha-to-be refers to a person who cultivates perfections to become a Lord Buddha and has already received a prediction from a Lord Buddha that s(he) will surely become a Buddha. In this prediction, the Lord Buddha would tell him his name, clan or family, his holy disciples' names, and his height. The Lord Buddha would address a predicted Buddha-to-be person as 'my younger brother' rather than 'my child', which he would use with his holy disciples. Although a predicted Buddha-to-be will certainly become a Lord Buddha in the future, he still

has to cultivate perfections until completely fulfilled. Once one becomes a predicted Buddha-to-be, every Lord Buddha he meets will predict his future attainment of Buddhahood by himself, and after receiving a prediction from a Lord Buddha, this Buddha-to-be is called a 'predicted Buddha-to-be.' As a predicted Buddha-to-be, he cannot attain enlightenment no matter how much he perseveres in practicing the Dhamma since his vow to become a Buddha is not yet due for fulfillment. In addition, he is unable to become a holy disciple of any Lord Buddha, but he is still capable of attaining some supernatural powers such as (1) divine ear (2) divine eye (3) telepathy (4) recollection of previous lifetimes and (5) mental power. However, the sixth power – the ability to eradicate defilement – is available only to Lord Buddhas, silent Buddhas, and holy disciples.

Despite the fact that a predicted Buddha-to-be may feel like abandoning his mission to become a Buddha, his accumulated merit will destine him to continue pursuing perfections until he finally attains Buddhahood. In addition, only men can be predicted Buddhas-to-be. The Lord Gotama Buddha met numerous other Lord Buddhas when He was a Buddha-to-be, and 24 of them predicted that He would achieve Buddhahood.

Anyone who becomes a predicted Buddha-to-be will acquire eight qualities: which are: (1) he will be born only as a human (2) he will be born male (3) he will be qualified to become an enlightened disciple (if He listens to a Lord Buddha's discourse) (4) he will be an ascetic who believes in karma and the fruits of karma (5) he will meet Lord Buddhas (6) he will attain meditative absorption and supernatural powers (7) he will have a strong will to attain Buddhahood, and (8) he will make rare donations, giving children, wife, bodily organs, and even his own life.

Besides, a predicted Buddha-to-be will never have these 18 inferior characteristics: (1) being deaf or blind from birth (2) being insane or paralyzed (3) being born to a low class tribe (4) being born to a slave mother (5) being a permanently ignorant person (6) being born female (7) committing any of the four supreme sinful deeds

(killing one's parents, killing an enlightened person, bruising a Lord Buddha, or causing disunity among the monastic community (8) contracting leprosy (9) if reborn as an animal, being larger than an elephant or smaller than a weaverbird (10) being reborn as a hungry ghost (11) being reborn as a thirsty ghost (12) having anorexia (13) being reborn in the realm of the great Aveji hell (14) being reborn in the great realm of Lokanta hell (15) being reborn as a devil (16) being reborn as Asanyasatta Brahma (17) being reborn as Arupabrahma and (18) being reborn in another universe.

The predicted Buddha-to-be who has been given a prediction by a Lord Buddha will normally have four virtues. If we consider the ten perfections, they are perseverance, wisdom, resolution, and loving kindness. They can be explained as follows:

1. Constantly persevering in cultivating perfections, leading to Buddhahood.
2. Having profound wisdom to foresee the great benefits of becoming a Lord Buddha
3. Having an unflickering wish to become a Lord Buddha.
4. Being kind to sentient beings and extending love and compassion to all creatures alike.

The Lord Gotama Buddha became a Buddha-to-be for the very first time in a lifetime when he was born as a gentleman. He saw a Buddhist monk in a forest and, out of respect, offered him a piece of old cloth, thinking to himself that he wished to become a Lord Buddha. This is the very first lifetime in which he wished to become a Lord Buddha. And he became a predicted Buddha-to-be for the first time when he was born as a man in a well-to-do family. Later on He was ordained and became a hermit called Sumedha who achieved the five supernatural powers (divine ear, divine eye, psychic reading, a memory of past lives, and mental power). Sumedha's mental power was so strong that he could fly into the air.

One day, when he was flying in the air, he saw people who were busy building a road. He landed and asked them why they were building the road. The people told him that they were preparing to welcome the Lord Depankara Buddha and his disciples. Sumedha offered to help, so the people assigned him the most difficult part which was a swamp. Sumedha tried his best to build a road over the swamp without using his supernatural power. But the Lord Buddha arrived before he could complete the road, so he lay face-down with his head toward the Lord, and covered the swamp with his body. He begged the Lord Depankara and his disciples to step on him and cross the swamp. The Lord did so, and turned to him predicting that Sumedha would become another Lord Buddha called Gotama. This was the very first lifetime in which he received a prediction.

Because of the eight qualities that the predicted Buddha-to-be will achieve and the eighteen inferior qualities that he will avoid, a predicted Buddha-to-be is very likely to be reborn in a wholesome realm, such as the human world or a celestial realm thanks to the merit and virtues he has accumulated. There is a strong tendency that he will be reborn as a good person, but there is still no guarantee that a predicted Buddha-to-be will not fall into hell. The status of a predicted Buddha-to-be only guarantees that this person will not be reborn in one of the deepest realms of hell. Hence, a Buddha-to-be must not be reckless in pursuit of his perfections, thinking that he is a Buddha-to-be because, in Buddhism, there are only the noble disciple whom are guaranteed wholesome rebirths until they attain Nirvana.

INCLINATION OF THE BUDDHA-TO-BE*

A Buddha-to-be has to begin his pursuit of perfection as an unpredicted Buddha-to-be. Then, he gradually works to become a predicted one. Every Buddha-to-be may start the pursuit of perfection in the form of a human or even an animal. As a Buddha-to-be cultivates virtues and accumulates more meritorious deeds, a

Buddha-to-be, by aiming steadfastly toward Buddhahood, will develop six inclinations or mental preferences. The Buddha-to-be will be satisfied with these preferences while he still pursues perfection and is reborn repeatedly in *samsara*, the cycle of rebirth, in order to complete the requirements for Buddhahood. These preferences arise over time from the experience of cultivating virtues and accumulating perfection.

It is similar to those who study a certain field of knowledge, and develop their beliefs and preferences based on the foundation of a certain framework and context. For example, those who study sciences tend to be more logical than those who study arts. This does not mean that a Buddha-to-be has to study science or art, but it is just meant to show that through our experiences we develop certain preferences. Buddhas-to-be who devote themselves to Buddhahood will have these six common preferences:

1. The preference to become an ascetic. A Buddha-to-be prefers the monastic life to secular life. However, this does not mean that he has to become a Buddhist monk only because in some lifetimes, a Buddha-to-be is born into some system of beliefs other than Buddhism. Sometimes, he does not even believe in the Three Gems. However, his practice will be righteous and virtuous. If a Buddha-to-be is reborn to believe in Buddhism, he will have a chance to learn the Dhamma, and while he will not be able to attain enlightenment, he will continue on the path to Buddhahood.

2. The preference for tranquility. A Buddha-to-be is a lover of peace who lives a contented life and prefers serenity to hustle and bustle. He does not like most kinds of noisy entertainment as peace and quiet help to make his mind serene. Simply speaking, a Buddha-to-be does not like to socialize much or live in surroundings that cause his mind to wander. This does not mean that a Buddha-to-be cannot socialize or enjoy certain kinds of entertainment like sports or a concert. A Buddha-to-be can do everything an ordinary

person can, but if given the choice, he will remain in a tranquil place which promotes peace and serenity in his mind.

3. The preference for giving. A Buddha-to-be is neither stingy nor greedy, but loves to practice generosity in order to help others. He loves to be a giver rather than a taker. Whether a Buddha-to-be is reborn as a human or an animal, rich or poor, he will give up his wealth and belongings to others without expecting anything in return. This is because a Buddha-to-be has cultivated his virtues well and so that is less greedy. The Buddha-to-be's giving is not full of defilements. He does not give because he needs fame or a good reputation, but he gives with a pure heart, anticipating benefits for others and Buddhahood for himself.

4. The preference for not getting angry. This means that a Buddha-to-be has cultivated his virtues so well that the defilement of anger is lessened. In addition, he has goodwill towards others, feeling that he wants to help others at all times. This generates compassion in his mind that extinguishes the source of anger in his mind, much like seawater extinguishes a bonfire. A Buddha-to-be can overcome his anger and feel at ease. This does not mean that a Buddha-to-be does not have anger at all. In fact, he still has anger but at a lower level when compared to most other people. A well cultivated Buddha-to-be rarely feels angry or if he does, he can diminish this feeling easily. So a Buddha-to-be does not feel like taking revenge on others.

5. The preference for not being deluded. A Buddha-to-be has perfected his wisdom so well that he is able to eliminate delusion from his mind. Delusion is one of the defilements that leads a person to enjoy the world of sensual pleasures – what he sees, hears, tastes, smells, touches, and feels. These sensual pleasures are delusions that can lead to suffering somehow. Also the happiness derived from sensual pleasure is impermanent. For example, those who seek pleasure from sex would find it difficult to have only one spouse.

They may commit adultery or sexual misconduct that eventually leads to family problems and the end of their marriage.

6. The preference for attaining Nirvana. Every Buddha-to-be foresees the suffering of living in the sensual world. He wishes to liberate himself from this state by attaining enlightenment together with other living beings. For this reason, he pursues perfection by joining with other beings, who can then accompany him to the state of supreme bliss called Nirvana. They do not wish to be reincarnated for long as there are many risks in the cycle of rebirth. Although heavenly paradise is joyful and full of entertainment, the Buddha-to-be does not aim to live here because he knows that life in the celestial realm is limited –Nirvana is the only state of permanent happiness.

We can see that the six preferences of the Buddha-to-be are found at different levels because each Buddha-to-be has accumulated different virtues. But it is certain that these preferences can lead to great virtues in the Buddha-to-be as they allow his body, speech, and mind to progress along the righteous path. The more virtues a Buddha-to-be has, the less defilement or mental impurity there will be in his mind. The degree of these six preferences differs according to the cultivation of virtues, much like the number of flight hours a pilot has accumulated is a good indication of how much confidence and expertise he has. So, if somebody wonders whether he is a Buddha-to-be or not, he may use these six preferences to identify the degree of his cultivated virtues.

THE TEN REALIZATIONS OF THE BUDDHA-TO-BE*

In addition to the six inclinations of a Buddha-to-be which escalate in proportion to one's accumulated virtues, a Buddha-to-be also has ten realizations which enable him to view the world differently from ordinary people. These ten realizations also derive from the cultivated virtues and the elimination of mental defilements; they

grow out of the individual's determination to save sentient beings with an aim toward Buddhahood which is the highest goal anyone can achieve. The ten realizations are:

(1) A Buddha-to-be realizes that sickness is common to all living beings. It is natural for everyone to age, get sick, get old, and die. The Buddha-to-be gains wisdom to comprehend this fact and is never overly perturbed by sickness due to his realization that it is a natural phenomenon.

(2) A Buddha-to-be, who lives in the cycle of rebirth, realizes that there are risks to this cycle. Thus, a Buddha-to-be is careful in the way he lives. He knows what brings prosperity and what brings ruin to his life. When danger occurs, he remains unperturbed or frightened since he is well prepared to face it.

(3) A Buddha-to-be realizes that his pursuit of perfection will not be easy because normal life is subject to problems. When a Buddha-to-be intends to live his life in a way that runs counter to the worldly stream, it is inevitable that he will confront opposition and impediments.

(4) A Buddha-to-be realizes well that he will encounter evil in his pursuit of perfection. This happens to everyone, whether a Buddha-to-be or an ordinary person. Evil in this context refers to some obstacle or obstruction. Sometimes, it is a devil, an angel, an animal or even a human who hinders the Buddha-to-be from pursuing perfection and completing his mission with ease. The Buddha-to-be understands this very well, and he is ready to encounter all obstacles with a strong will.

(5) A Buddha-to-be pursues his perfections regardless of time, meaning that he is willing to spend as much time as necessary to achieve his mission. The cultivation of perfections will end when it is finished, so a Buddha-to-be does not rush to attain Buddhahood. He must wait for the fulfillment of his virtues like a crystal crystallizes little by little over time.

(6) A Buddha-to-be associates with his friends with a pure heart, meaning that he does not intend to fool his friends or make any profit out of his friendship. The Buddha-to-be is a kind giver who is willing to share good things from his heart with others without expecting any kind of gain. He is also sincere to everyone he associates with, wishing them all prosperity and freedom from harm.

(7) A Buddha-to-be is neither selfish nor self-centered. He does not want anyone to please him because he is a Buddha-to-be. Although a Buddha-to-be must make sacrifices in leading his disciples in the pursuit of perfection, he does not appoint himself their leader. Instead, they look to him to guide them with righteousness because he is superior in virtue and conduct, and is helpful to his subordinates.

(8) A Buddha-to-be does good things for others without expecting anything in return because a Buddha-to-be aims toward Buddhahood and this requires the elimination of mental impurities like greed, anger, and delusion. The Buddha-to-be expects to perfect his virtues, so he seeks to take nothing from others. This brings about pure merit without contamination from mental defilements because if one gives with greed, one expects something in return, and this causes one's mind to be impure.

(9) A Buddha-to-be does not look with jealousy at anyone who receives more than he does because he has little defilement or mental impurity. On the contrary, when he sees someone else's good fortune, he rejoices without expecting to share in it. Whether a Buddha-to-be is rich or poor, he earns an honest living since he is contented with his wealth.

(10) A Buddha-to-be does not defame, criticize, or gossip about others because he understands that it is common in the world to receive both praise and blame. So he remains indifferent to and unaffected by such talk. In addition, he has goodwill and kindness toward others, so he does not feel anger or vindictiveness toward anyone, but is ready to eliminate such feelings and forgive easily.

THE EIGHT IDEALITIES OF THE BUDDHA-TO-BE*

In addition to the ten realizations of every Buddha-to-be, each well-cultivated Buddha-to-be also has eight idealities which control his behavioral direction and that of his disciples in pursuit of perfection. These idealities make him eager to attain enlightenment when his perfections are fully completed. The eight idealities shape the attitude of the Buddha-to-be toward the world and make it different from that of ordinary people. All of the eight idealities reflect the devotion and spirit of sacrifice of a Buddha-to-be. They are as follows:

- (1) A Buddha-to-be brings benefit to others without expecting something in return for himself except the attainment of Buddhahood.
- (2) A Buddha-to-be, without becoming disheartened, is willing to make sacrifices that no ordinary person could make in order to save other creatures.
- (3) A Buddha-to-be pursues perfection and dedicates himself to all living beings without greed or self-interest. His wish is only to give and sacrifice for the good of others.
- (4) A Buddha-to-be does not have prejudice toward any living creature, whether it is due to love, hatred, anger, or fear as he extends goodwill to all beings alike.
- (5) A Buddha-to-be respects other Buddhas-to-be without getting jealous and does not think of other Buddhas-to-be as rivals in pursuit of perfection.
- (6) A Buddha-to-be appreciates the noble disciples' teachings and is willing to apply them to his own teachings without feeling he is any way superior to the noble disciples. This is because the Buddha-to-be highly respects the teachings of enlightened disciples who are superior in terms of purity.
- (7) A Buddha-to-be does not get jealous of others' gains, and he does not become arrogant because of his own gains, whether great or small, because he has less

mental impurity and is contented. He is satisfied with what he has and is able to control his mind to not want more.

(8) A Buddha-to-be always investigates his own fault and never looks at others' faults in order to blame them because his only intention is to multiply the virtues within for the sake of attaining Buddhahood.

(*The author appreciates the above factual information from the Most Venerable Du Prommapanyo)

THE CULTIVATION OF THE TEN VIRTUOUS PERFECTIONS

Every Buddha-to-be, whether predicted or unpredicted, has to pursue ten perfections to be completely fulfilled. If a Bodhisattva lives his life aimlessly without cultivating virtues, he will not attain Buddhahood. The term 'perfections' means accumulated meritorious virtues. If we are to explain in a scientific sense, we may compare it to the crystallization of a crystal. As virtues accumulate, they become powerful enough to bring about many good things such as the eradication of defilements or mental impurities, or the engendering of supernatural powers within oneself. For example, on the day of Prince Siddharta's enlightenment, he recollected his perfections while he encountered evil, and this enabled him to drive it away with the power of his perfections.

To explain further, the ten perfections that all Bodhisattvas have to cultivate can be classified into three levels depending on their extremity. When we add together the ten perfections at all three levels, we can call them 'the thirtyfold perfections.' Every Bodhisattva has to accumulate these thirtyfold perfections to be completely fulfilled as they are prerequisites for Buddhahood. The thirtyfold perfections are accumulated within the required time duration. The three levels of perfections are (1) the normal perfections (2) the superlative perfections and (3) the excellent perfections, arranged in order of their difficulty to attain.

The three levels of perfections are comparable, more or less, to electrical charges that differ in strength. However, though they are all the same kind of energy, the electricity used in the human world is less refined than a mobile phone signal, and a mobile phone signal is less refined than the powerful pull of the moon that causes the tides, whereas it is difficult to feel this energy with the human body.

The normal perfections must be cultivated by all Bodhisattvas. For example, if one is to practice the perfection of generosity, one donates frequently. For precept or discipline perfection, one observes the precepts as usual. However, when one enters the level of superlative perfection, one is willing to cultivate such virtues at the cost of one's flesh and blood. In other words, one is tremendously dedicated to performing good deeds. For example, a Bodhisattva is willing to donate his blood and organs to others in need, and this is the superlative perfection of generosity. In case of superlative discipline perfection, a Bodhisatta who is sick will not kill animals to make a remedy for himself although it could eventually cure him. This is because he is willing to observe the precept against killing despite the deterioration of his own health. A Bodhisattva does not kill, no matter what happens, and he is willing to continue to be sick even though he must suffer from pain and discomfort.

Finally, the third level of perfection is the level of excellent perfections. Here, a Bodhisattva is willing to sacrifice his life to cultivate his virtues. For example, the Lord Gotama Buddha was once born as a hermit. One day, he saw a mother tiger who was about to eat her own cub. The hermit ran down the mountain in order to offer his body as food for the tigers. This is an extreme case of generosity cultivation. In the case of excellent precept or discipline perfection, one will not kill or cheat others even if one is forced to do so or threatened with death. This is an extreme level of discipline perfection cultivation.

We can see that a Bodhisattva must have a stronger determination to do good deeds if he is to cultivate virtues such that he is willing to sacrifice his blood, flesh, organs, and even his life. And the determination to do good deeds without any feeling of

obligation, or even any attachment to his body and life, requires the highest level of sacrifice. The mind that one acquires from doing such deeds is pure and powerful, and it generates a certain kind of energy that destines a Bodhisattva to fulfill his wish to become a Lord Buddha. This is something that ordinary mortals, who have weaker willpower, can never accomplish.

The ten perfections or virtues that every Bodhisattva must accumulate or cultivate are generosity (*dhanaparami*), discipline (*silaparami*), renunciation (*nekhammaparami*), wisdom (*pannaparami*), perseverance (*viriyaparami*), patience (*khantiparami*), truthfulness (*saccaparami*), resolution (*adhitanaparami*), loving kindness (*mettuparami*), and equanimity (*upekhaparami*). These are explained in some detail below:

(1) **Generosity Perfection** means the accumulation of virtue by way of giving. This is to train oneself to be a giver in order to eliminate greed from one's mind. At the same time, one's giving also brings about merit which, according to the Law of Karma, results in one attaining the wealth and resources needed to prosper in life. In the case of the Lord Buddha, His generosity perfection allowed Him to provide His disciple monks with the necessities of food, clothing, medicine, and shelter so that they could devote themselves to the practice of the Dhamma and the attainment of enlightenment.

The Lord Buddha accumulated generosity perfection by giving in many ways over numerous lifetimes. This enabled Him to be a devout person who was always ready to give good things – whether worldly or spiritual – to others. The pursuit of generosity perfection is for his own benefit and for the benefit of those who receive. By giving, the Lord Buddha did not lose benefits but received merit in return. The pursuit of generosity perfection trained him to sacrifice what he had. Giving can be easy or difficult. For example, it can start from giving clothes, food, and other basic necessities. These can often be given easily. At another level, the giver provides better objects which are beneficial and cause no harm to the

receiver. He gives with good intention without expecting any kind of gain in return – only his own eventual enlightenment. In Buddhism, giving can be classified into three levels: giving inferior objects, giving objects of equal quality, and giving superior objects.

Giving inferior objects means giving what one no longer uses or something which is of lower quality than what one currently uses. An example is giving a relative a cheaper, basic cellphone as a commencement gift when you yourself normally use a late-model smartphone. When you give an object of equal quality, you buy for others products of the same quality and approximately the same price as those you use yourself. For example, you carry a good quality genuine leather bag, and buy a similarly good quality genuine leather bag for your mother as a Christmas present. Finally, giving superior objects means buying someone something which is better in quality than what you regularly use. For example, you usually wear a silver ring but you buy your spouse a diamond ring.

However, perfection from giving is not limited to these three kinds of giving because there are superior levels of giving, namely giving at the cost of your own well-being and even your life. This is sacrificing yourself in order to cultivate virtues. You can even give until you have nothing left to give, just like pouring water out of a pitcher until it is completely empty. For example, one man might donate an organ to save another without seriously endangering his own life. Another man may donate a vital organ that costs him his own life while saving the life of someone else. In the latter case, the giving is of a higher order because the donor is making a greater sacrifice.

(2) Precept & Discipline Perfection. The term ‘precept’ generally means a religious prohibition or code of conduct similar to a law. However, in the Buddhist sense, *sila* (precept) means ‘the normal state.’ To explain further, precepts for laypeople are their normal state, which is composed of five codes: abstention from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech, and liquor consumption. These are the prohibitions for Buddhist laypeople. In a deeper sense, religious discipline also

means the control over one's actions, speech, and thoughts, and keeping them pure and wholesome. When we observe the precepts, we discover how much mental strength we have to supervise ourselves. With mental strength, whenever a negative impulse arises within us, urging us to think, speak, or act in an unwholesome way, we will have 'awareness' and be able to turn away from such ill will. However, if our awareness or mental strength is too weak, we will not be able to prevent ourselves from doing bad things even though we know that they are bad. So, the stronger our awareness we have, the better able we will be to follow the codes of conduct. When we have awareness of what we think, say, or do at any given moment, we should also have the 'wisdom' to ponder if it is right or wrong and to contemplate if it is something we should do or not. In this way, awareness and wisdom are like the firewall and antivirus system of a computer that blocks threats from infiltrating our system. When we make an effort to keep our precepts pure, the power of merit grows. We gain mental energy and strength to control or supervise our thought, speech, and actions, so as to prevent them from becoming unwholesome.

The more strictly we observe our precepts and codes of conduct, the more mental strength we gain as our effort escalates. This is a kind of mental energy that clears away impurities in our thoughts, speech, and actions. Mental energy of this kind is important, as it gives us better control over ourselves. It is similar to a powerful antivirus program that helps our life system to function better with less error and fewer crashes because the powerful program screens all computer actions, no matter what program is open and running. It also monitors the computer's operations all the time to make sure that everything is safe and secure. When we have stronger discipline perfection, we will be able to deal with the mental impurities that encourage us to take bad actions or deliver false speech. With discipline perfection, the mind becomes well-trained, and as a consequence, it is more powerful in facing down mental impurities which motivate our deeds, resulting in a cleaner mind, and purer speech and actions.

The cultivation of discipline perfection is not as simple as not fishing and not drinking alcohol. In some situations, it can be very critical to be able to control ourselves and what we do or do not do. As we noted above, the five precepts for laypeople are abstention from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech, and alcohol consumption. These are prohibitions that one may find hard to follow in daily life, especially in certain situations when one needs very strong willpower. For example, imagine a man who loses all of his money in the stock market. He finds a wallet in a public restroom. He has to decide whether to keep the wallet and take the money to buy food for his children. If he is to observe the codes of conduct, he must not keep the wallet, no matter what. This exemplifies the situation that trains a Buddha-to-be to keep his thought, speech, and actions always righteous and pure, even when he must confront difficulties or threats to his own life. For example, a government officer may be pressured to take part in corruption. He is offered the choice of sharing in the benefits if he joins or being killed if he refuses. This is an extreme case of having to choose between breaking his precepts or being willing to die in order to keep his precepts pure and his deeds righteous.

(3) **Renunciation perfection** means the cultivation of virtue by way of living a contented life. This doesn't mean that a Buddha-to-be has to be ordained as a Buddhist monk, because in some lifetimes, a Buddha-to-be is born in a world without Buddhism. Sometimes, He is reborn in a world where Buddhism exists, but he chooses to be an ascetic or a hermit who does not belong to a Buddhist sect but who succeeds in living a contented life. Also, it is possible that he may not believe in Buddhism, although deep in his mind, it is still his wish to liberate sentient beings from suffering. This is because the process of reincarnation makes the Buddha-to-be forget what he has been and what he expects to be, except when he attains the supernatural power that allows him to recollect his previous lifetimes and his determination to attain enlightenment.

The reason we say that renunciation is a virtue that can be perfected is because the person who renounces the world allows himself to develop his spiritual qualities by eliminating sensual pleasure and living a peaceful and contented life as an ascetic. Normally, an ascetic does not have a spouse or family, so he has no emotional or physical obligations. His mind is free from family matters, and this allows him to train the spiritual side of himself. As a consequence, other virtues can also be developed. We may say that the renunciation perfection of a Buddha-to-be means instilling the habit of rejecting sensual pleasure and promoting contentment, which brings about the development of virtues and the purity of thought, speech, and action. Moreover, the cultivation of renunciation perfection means much more than just a beautiful or sacred ordination ceremony; it means cultivating the preference for living a contented life where sensual pleasure is minimized. If a monk or a priest spends his life in luxury, he is no different from a layperson. Thus, he does not make progress in renunciation perfection although he puts on robes and lives in a temple or a church, because, in Buddhism, it is the mind that matters the most. In contrast, if a layperson lives a contented life, and makes his home like a monastery, he may also cultivate his renunciation perfection. But a person who can live like a monk – contented both outside and within his heart – enjoys the most perfect scenario for cultivating renunciation perfection. At the extreme level of renunciation perfection, we may find clergy in some countries that have to put their lives at risk in order to live a monastic life. They may be hounded by opponents or rivals to quit the monkhood for religious, social, or political reasons. These people may choose to remain in the monkhood, even at the risk of being suppressed or killed. This is a good example of superlative and excellent renunciation perfection, where the practitioners have to sacrifice their lives and well-being.

(4) **Wisdom perfection.** Before we explain how to cultivate wisdom perfection, we have to know first that wisdom means the capability to know and comprehend things not limited to the Dhamma in Buddhism only but extending to all living and

non-living beings as well. The Lord Buddha classified wisdom into three categories: (1) Wisdom from reading and listening or other forms of external learning (2) Wisdom from thinking or contemplation, and (3) Wisdom from meditation which is the knowledge that occurs when the mind is in a meditative state. In some instances, we may call this 'intuition' or the knowledge and understanding that arise from a divine ear, divine eye, and mind reading.

Wisdom perfection can be cultivated by promoting the three categories of wisdom. In addition, one must develop the habit of using one's wisdom to solve problems. The more we use our wisdom to solve problems, the stronger our wisdom becomes. This is similar to a pilot who gains more expertise in flying an airplane as his flight hours increase. However, if a pilot works in an office on the ground, his expertise and ability to fly an airplane will decrease over time.

The Buddha-to-be's accumulation of wisdom perfection involves training himself to utilize and access his knowledge logically in such a way that it promotes understanding instead of action driven by emotion. The one who is wise is more cautious and circumspect. He tries to consider all the aspects before making a decision and taking action. The first type of wisdom occurs through learning from external factors. A Buddha-to-be can accumulate wisdom by studying and learning from different sources, like a book, a website, an educational institute, a teacher, a seminar, or an experienced person.

For wisdom from thinking, a Buddha-to-be person can learn to think carefully and reasonably by considering all the surrounding factors which are related to the cause and effect of the thing. In the Western world, this kind of wisdom would seem to be valued as people are trained to think critically as in the case of famous influential philosophers like Aristotle and Socrates – who are role models for wisdom through thinking. Some people read and listen to others a lot, so they gain wisdom from learning, but they are unable to initiate any theory by themselves because they lack wisdom from thinking. This is similar to students in a math class. Although they

study in the same class and study from the same teacher and same text, some of them may look at a mathematical equation and able to understand thoroughly how to solve it. In contrast, some other students may not be able to understand and solve the problem. This is a vivid case of wisdom from thinking. The last category of wisdom is wisdom from meditation, which is a more vital tradition in the Eastern world where there are yogi, hermits, ascetics, and Buddhist monks who are capable of gaining this wisdom. For example, some of them can know the future just by sitting still and meditating. This is because the information is transferred to them not through their eyes, ears, and touch, but through their mind directly, without relying on the sensory channels. This allows them to gain knowledge and understand things without thinking. And the wisdom from meditation is how the Dhamma or Lord Buddha's teachings were discovered.

Some may wonder how it is possible for someone to sit in meditation with his eyes closed (or even with opened eyes) without listening, reading, and even thinking, to gain knowledge about the past, the present, and the future. To understand, imagine we are sleeping in a room and dream of future in which we meet someone and say something. When we get to that day in the future, we realize that it is the situation we saw in our dream because here we are, faced with just that person and saying just those words. This is called dreaming of the future. However, the knowledge and understanding we gain when dreaming comes to us unconsciously, but the ability to know the future during meditation is different: in meditation, we are still conscious of what we are doing. Those who are not practiced in meditation may still need to close their eyes in order to enhance their intuition because the vision from their eyes may distract their mind, but those who are highly skilled can gain intuition while their eyes are open since their mind is very focused and disengaged from what they see with their eyes. However, in the pursuit of wisdom perfection, a Buddha-to-be aims to use his wisdom in a wholesome way only without harming himself and others. This is considered to be a virtue. It is wisdom perfection that

will lead to the creation of a vaccine against AIDS or a cure for cancer. It is directly opposed to the use of knowledge and wisdom to build weapons to kill others. The more one uses wisdom, the better will be one's understanding of the correct and righteous way. Whenever the wisdom perfection of a Buddha-to-be is fulfilled, he will be able to eliminate ignorance. Wisdom perfection will allow him to know and understand things thoroughly, clearly, and correctly, without bias or prejudice.

(5) **Perseverance perfection** means the cultivation of effort in doing wholesome deeds. Many may wonder how perseverance can be accumulated because energy is used up. In order to explain this, it is necessary to think of perseverance as we do of wisdom – the more we use it, the more we gain. Likewise, the more perseverance we have in attempting to do good things, the more willpower or mental energy we gain. This is the very energy that drives our thoughts, speech, and actions toward success. This kind of energy can be experienced when we make an effort to do something good, for example, when we study hard for a school or university examination or when we try hard to raise funds for victims of natural disasters and wars.

If we have more 'willpower' or 'mental energy,' we will be ready to encounter all kinds of trouble and obstacles in order to achieve our mission. On the other hand, if we have less willpower, we are likely to feel disheartened on our way toward achievement. For example, a student who has seven days to study for an examination may feel disheartened on the third or fourth day after studying hard without sleep, and decides to watch a movie instead. As a result, he fails the exam. There are also cases of businessmen and women struggling try to overcome problems and net loss when they are in the early stage of their business career. If they lack perseverance, they are likely to feel like getting out of the business, so they will not become successful. In contrast, those who have perseverance will confront and overcome problems until they succeed.

The accumulation of perseverance perfection means accumulating the willpower to encounter and overcome obstacles as we try to achieve our goals. This kind of mental power differs from other perfections. When one donates generously, one has a generous mind trying to make sacrifices for others. When one observes the precepts, one tries to stay within the strictures of good discipline, and the energy that one can feel in one's mind is different from being generous. As for perseverance, it is the energy to confront, to overcome, and to achieve one's goals. Therefore, we can say that different perfections or mental energies, drive or motivate the mind to be in different states. In terms of psychology, we might even say that the cultivation of perseverance perfection involves training oneself to be dedicated and committed to something. This is a powerful force that drives one thoughts, speech, and actions toward success. Buddhist monks, for example, persevere in purifying themselves and others by practicing the Dhamma and following the Buddhist teachings, such as the practice of generosity, precepts, and meditation.

Some people cultivate perseverance perfection with extreme determination. Some environmentalists, for instance, invest so much effort into protecting the forests and slowing global warming that they fall into the crosshairs of politicians and businessmen whose interests are threatened by their activities. These environmentalists gain perseverance perfection at superior levels as they are willing to sacrifice their well-being, safety, and even their lives in order to save our planet.

(6) **Patience perfection** means endurance in confronting difficulties and hardship. This virtue is valued in most cultures because patience is a universal virtue that is not limited to Buddhists. Most people, no matter what religion they believe in, or which race they belong to, have a common understanding that patience is good. In Buddhism, patience can be classified into three categories: (1)

Patience toward physical hardship (2) Patience toward conflict and (3) Patience toward mental impurities.

As the first category of patience involves something physical, this means our physical body has to endure physical hardship in different forms such as temperature, hunger, thirst, fatigue, and illness. Whenever we are confronted with these discomforts, we have to be patient in order to overcome them. If we are not, we will likely feel more pain and suffering in our body and mind. However, if we have the mental power to hold back these uneasy feelings, we will suffer less in our body and mind until the hardships are finally over. For example, a construction worker has to put up with harsh weather and the heaviness of his tools and equipment. He may also suffer an accident that affects the well-being of his body. However, he has to endure in order to earn his living. If he has no patience and just leaves the construction site, he will receive no money and cannot support his family. So, physical endurance is in the most common and most basic kind of patience to cultivate as it is the easiest to acquire when compared with other kinds of patience.

The second kind of patience is patience in the face of conflict. This involves both physical and mental aspects because when one has a conflict, one deals with both the emotional elements and physical expression of this conflict through one's speech and actions, which may devolve into violence ranging from saying rude, harsh words to damaging objects and hurting people. This kind of patience is not limited to oneself as there is another party involved in the event. In our daily life, for instance, when we meet different people such as colleagues at work, conflict may arise over overlapping roles and responsibilities. This is also true even in one's family. There can be many conflicts between spouses and siblings even though they love each other. But conflicts arise due to disharmony of habits and preferences, all of which require patience for individuals to maintain control. Otherwise, a couple may divorce and a family may break apart, unable to live under the same roof.

The third kind of patience is the most difficult. It is the patience toward mental impurities. Although it is something intangible, everyone can sense it in their mind. We say that it is the most difficult because, in Buddhism, there are 1,500 kinds of mental impurities or defilements. To compare and contrast, patience toward illness means the ability to endure physical diseases, but patience toward mental impurities means being able to endure mental illness. When our body is sick, we feel uncomfortable and we suffer. Likewise, when our mind is sick, we feel uneasy and in pain as well. The Lord Buddha classifies mental disease into 1,500 kinds, but they can be grouped under three major areas, which are (1) greed (2) anger and (3) delusion. These mental impurities are like viruses that infiltrate our computer system. Once they get in, they manipulate our system of thought, speech, and action. Once, we are contaminated by these impurities, they make our thoughts, speech, and actions unwholesome. We need patience to endure these uneasy feelings, so that they will not develop further, and our thought, speech, and actions will not get worse and worse. In an extreme case, one may have to be extremely patient when one faces a potentially fatal sickness such as cancer. There will be much pain and hardship on one's body and mind, but one needs to try one's best to endure these mental and physical travails until they are over without worsening the situation.

(7) **Truthfulness perfection** means honesty and sincerity toward oneself and others, which are expressed through thought, speech, and actions. Some may think that truthfulness perfection means only to speak the truth or keep one's promises. Indeed, truthfulness perfection is even more meaningful because if we regard it from the aspect of speech only, it means only truthful words. But if one promises or vows to do bad things, this cannot be considered as truthfulness perfection.

Truthfulness perfection can be accumulated by being truthful, honest, and sincere in our thoughts, speech, and actions. To clarify, the opposite of truthfulness perfection

is being tricky, crafty, and deceitful. One who has the virtue of being truthful has an honest, pure and straightforward heart. One will not trick or deceive others by, for example, pretending to respect or love someone in order to gain some benefit, while saying bad things about them behind their back.

Some people may believe that it is disadvantageous to be a straightforward or truthful person as one may become a victim of others. However, from the Buddhist perspective, to be a truthful person is beneficial for oneself as it promotes the purity of one's mind. One does not have to think of any trick to deceive others, and one will not cause any unwholesomeness due to such tricks. Although truthfulness may result in some material loss, it certainly enhances spiritual gain as one expresses one's thoughts, speech, and actions in a righteous way always. On the other hand, some people like individuals who are truthful because they can trust them wholeheartedly, without having to fear betrayal. However, we must not forget that a Buddha-to-be does not rely on this perfection only; he also has wisdom perfection, which allows him to maintain the right balance and prevents him from becoming a victim.

The need for truthfulness in daily life can be seen in the case of running a business. Once a truthful businessman makes an agreement, he must be true to his word and follow the term of that agreement. Although the situation may place a burden on him sometimes or even lead to bankruptcy, keeping to his agreement must remain his first priority. Some business executives even decide to call back their defective products from the market as they realize that their products can cause harm to consumers. This is more important than concealing the truth and protecting the company. This is truthfulness expressed in terms of responsibility toward the consumers. These truthful businesspeople are willing to do this although it may damage their brand or cause a net loss to their business. Also, truthful politicians who promise the people they represent certain benefits have to keep their promises

and work for the public good with honesty and truthfulness; they must aside their own benefit, fame, popularity, and advantages.

(8) **Resolution perfection** means maintaining a firm and steady aim toward one's goals. To make resolutions is to keep one's mind determined, whether this resolution is made through one's thought, speech, or actions. The cultivation of resolution means accumulating the power of determination. Before a Buddha-to-be can complete his pursuit of perfections and become a Lord Buddha, he has to make numerous resolutions for Buddhahood. His mind is set unwaveringly on this goal. He is like a boat whose rudder controls its direction and keeps it headed toward its destination. But being resolute must mean being resolute in a wholesome way. One should not resolve to do or be something bad or disadvantageous. For example, a person who resolves to be wealthy should wish to be so in order to become a philanthropist who supports schools, libraries, hospitals, universities, religious places, and such. This person has set his sights on a good goal; his mind is focused on doing good for others, and this, in turn, generates a good and pure energy that drives him toward his goal.

Resolution making can start with one's mind. For example, when we meet bad colleagues, we keep hoping inside that we won't have to deal with colleagues like this again. A thought like this is considered to be a resolution as well. However, whether one's resolution is strong or not depends on the power and focus in one's mind or determination. If one is very determined to achieve one's goals, one may be mentally and verbally resolute. For example, one may think and say "May I get a good job." This is also a resolution. Or when someone makes a prayer with a determined mind, one is also cultivating resolution perfection. To make a resolution physically, one may make gestures expressing one's determination such as placing one's hands in an attitude of prayer or writing one's wishes on a piece of paper and hanging it on a tree, as in the Japanese tradition.

The power of our resolution depends on the energy of our accumulated merit and the determination we have. As our resolution is to the rudder of a boat, our merit energy is the fuel that makes the boat engine run. So, if we have little merit, our resolutions for major things may not come to pass easily because they lack the driving force to reach fruition. Also, the power of our focus or our determination is important because it helps to prevent our mind from going astray and keeps us focused on our goal. This is like the good pilot who controls the rudder of our boat. The power of determination can also be strong if one makes resolutions during a meditation session when one's mind is completely focused. Then the mind can be much more determined and powerful compared to making verbal resolutions with a wandering mind. To compare and contrast, it is like a magnifying glass that concentrates sunlight on one spot until it becomes powerful enough to catch fire. The mind is the same as that magnifying glass when it is very determined.

Psychologically, resolution making means repeatedly thinking of achieving a goal until one has the unshakable conviction that one can certainly reach that goal. As a result, one's mind clings to the goal, and one regularly takes actions to achieve it. In contrast, if one does not make a resolution or wish at all, one may just forget what one aims to do. Without steady determination, one loses one's focus and does not do anything to achieve any goals. Thus, one is destined to failure from the beginning.

(9) **Loving-Kindness perfection** means having compassion for oneself and others. It is different from love driven by lust or sensual desire although they share something in common. This is because loving-kindness is driven by the pure positive energy in one's mind. When we have kindness, we have good-will toward others. As a consequence, we think, speak, and act toward others only in positive ways. In Buddhism, kindness involves the mind, and when the mind is brimming with wholesome energy like compassion and goodwill, it causes us to think, speak,

and act compassionately. Our actions tend to be gentler although this is not always true because some people may not express themselves clearly.

The accumulation of loving-kindness energy within one's mind will allow a Buddha-to-be to have a gentle mind. This will eventually develop into a supportive and helpful personality. We may say that the power or energy of loving-kindness can benefit both oneself and others. It is a kind of energy has a 'friendliness' that one can sense although no word is spoken and no action taken. The kindness energy within the mind of a Buddha-to-be can radiate like the coolness that spreads from an ice cube. This is different from meanness energy that radiates out of a violent person who is cruel and evil.

The stream of loving-kindness is a power that can create world-peace. As a Buddhist saying has it, "Loving-Kindness fosters the world." Buddhists know how to use the power of loving-kindness for their benefit with loving-kindness meditation where practitioners first create a sense of peace and compassion in their mind. Then they extend this energy out from their heart, much like the sun shines its radiance through space. Loving-kindness energy expand in two ways: it can spread to a specific person such as one's parents, friends, or even one's enemy. This is similar to a mobile phone network station that transmits its signal to a specific mobile phone.

In another case, loving-kindness extends boundlessly, like a radio station that transmits its signal everywhere within its coverage. A man who has a kind heart has a special positive attitude and personality that makes him more likely to be happy and at peace all the time. This is because his mind is not easily contaminated with anger. The stream of loving-kindness enhances the purity in his heart. In addition, he tends to be calmer and more admirable than ordinary people.

In our daily life, we may accumulate loving-kindness like a Buddha-to-be by making ourselves kind at all times and eliminating ill will toward others. We should also

wish others to be happy, free from suffering, and prosperous in their lives. For example, in our family we should have goodwill toward our spouse, our children, and our parents regardless of the feedback we get from them, like the moon that shines down on everyone – even those who show no appreciation for its beauty.

When we are driving to work and encounter impolite drivers who cut into our lane or violate the traffic laws, we should be ready to forgive and think of them in a positive way. Similarly, in our workplace we should always forgive those who make us dissatisfied or cause disagreements, defects, or failures. We should always be ready to forgive and improve the situation. In an extreme case, loving-kindness perfection commands us to be kind to our enemies, even terrorists who kill our friends, relatives and family members. Certainly, it is very hard to be kind when anger, hatred, and a desire for revenge prevail in our hearts, but if the loving-kindness energy within our mind is powerful enough, we will still find it possible to be compassionate to them. And if we find this compassion, we can restore peace within our own heart, which makes us feel happy and less distressed.

(10) **Equanimity perfection** means keeping one's mind indifferent to anything that arises, whether it is caused by ourselves or others, through thought, speech, or action. We can see that some people are very sensitive to stimulants. When they see something, they are likely to respond in certain ways with a manipulated mind, just like a stick that is driven into the mud where it can lean at ease.

In contrast, a Buddha-to-be who cultivates equanimity perfection can keep his mind indifferent and remain unaffected by strong emotions caused by loss, gain, fame, defamation, grace, disgrace, happiness, and suffering. A Buddha-to-be who cultivates equanimity perfection should be able to keep his mind calm and peaceful at all times, no matter what happens, whether it is good or bad. He will not laugh too loudly or cry too forlornly as his mind is stable. Although his mind is manipulated somehow, he will be able to restore the stability of his mind with ease. One who has less equanimity perfection will find that his mind fluctuates very

much when confronted with different situations, like a graph that goes up and down in waves. But one who has more equanimity perfection will have a stable mind like a graph of tiny ripples.

For this reason, equanimity is a kind of mental energy that creates a good personality and attitude. It is a requirement for leadership and responsibility, so it is a pivot virtue for the aspiring Lord Buddha. It is also a virtue that helps practitioners to develop their life and mind. The indifferent mind is also a mental state which is suitable for meditation practice. A Buddha-to-be who cultivates equanimity perfection does not trouble his own mind. Although he is affected by something, he tries to keep his mind neutral. He is not sorrowful, angry, or vengeful. In this way, equanimity perfection helps to promote other good virtues within him.

To see equanimity perfection at work in daily life, when a Buddha-to-be makes a mistake at work and is reprimanded by his boss and colleagues, equanimity perfection helps to prevent his being overwhelmed by sorrow, anger, and hatred. He will remain peaceful and understand the problems that give rise to solutions. Also, in an extreme case, when a family member passes away, equanimity perfection helps us withstand the feeling of loss. We will not be overwhelmed by sorrow and manipulated by grief. Our mind will remain stable and calm. This is true even when we experience something good such as winning a lottery. We will not get so excited that it affects our life.

THE BALANCE OF VIRTUOUS PERFECTIONS

The ten virtues that the Buddha-to-be seeks to perfect are like the 10 requirements for Buddhahood. To pursue perfection in only one specific virtue is inadequate as becoming a Lord Buddha requires all ten perfections. We might compare the pursuit of perfection to cooking. To make a perfect dish, we may need to add a number of

different ingredients, such as sugar, salt, pepper, and garlic. One ingredient alone is not enough to achieve the perfect flavor. Likewise, all ten perfections combine to make a Buddha-to-be the most perfect man, ready to fulfill the duties of a Buddha.

For example, one who strives for perseverance perfection may be overcommitted to a goal and may not quit until he succeeds. But if the goal he has set for himself is impossible to attain, like discovering a non-existent treasure, his energies are wasted. Therefore, a Buddha-to-be must have other perfections like the perfection of equanimity to maintain the proper mental balance. Also, in the case of generosity, a Buddha-to-be may keep so busy giving alms that he has no time to cultivate other virtues. By cultivating the perfection of renunciation, he will keep a balance that allows him to remain peaceful and contented. However, this does not mean that being overcommitted to giving is wrong, because in some lifetimes, a Buddha-to-be may focus on cultivating a specific perfection instead of many perfections in combination. It is simply that each perfection balances out the others when they are practiced or cultivated together.

Generally, though, the cultivation of one perfection encourages the cultivation of others. For example, having wisdom can enable one to cultivate other perfections better as wisdom gives one the ability to distinguish what one should do from what one should not. With wisdom, one learns to observe the precepts and live one's life contentedly as an ascetic. When all of the perfections are combined, each perfection develops into a certain virtue, attitude, or attribute. When one has all of the ten perfections, one achieves perfectness in oneself, so one can be enlightened and attain Buddhahood and help to lead other sentient beings toward Nirvana.

THE LORD BUDDHAS' POWER OF PERFECTION

Now that we have looked at how an ordinary person can eventually become a Lord Buddha by cultivating the ten virtues, we can see that whether one is a Buddha-to-

be or not, the accumulation of these ten virtues is beneficial in terms of one's own personality, life, mind, morality, and ethics, its rewards are both worldly and spiritual. The cultivation of the ten virtues can bring about pure positive energy within our mind, while this energy differs from virtue to virtue, like the different colors of spectrum hidden in sunlight. In other words, this energy exists, but we cannot see it with the naked eye. We can feel or sense this energy within our mind. When we sacrifice by donating or giving, we can feel the energy from our good deed. When we persevere in doing something wholesome, we gain another kind of energy in our mind. And when we have loving-kindness, we can feel a different mental energy generated within. So, each cultivated virtue brings about a different energy to our mind, each one accumulable. The ten virtues or perfections are, thus, the ten energies or powers of the mind.

When we practice these virtues, it is like adding to the accumulated energy in our mind. For example, when we offer Christmas gifts to our loved ones or orphans, our mind brims with sacrifice and helpfulness. This is energy that we can feel, and the energy is accumulated in such a way that it can be used later. The Buddha-to-be's perfection of virtues means self-development as well as accumulation of the powerful pure energy of goodness that has to be practiced over numerous lifetimes before the Buddha-to-be's mind, which is like a battery, is fully charged with these good energies.

With a fully-charged battery, then, one will be ready to fulfill the duties of a Lord Buddha by eradicating the defilements or impurities in his mind with these pure energies. The energies can also be used for other purposes such as bringing good things to one's life and the lives of others. However, those who do not wish to become a Lord Buddha can also benefit from these energies of goodness because when these energies are accumulated to a certain level over a certain period of time, they become crystallized, and enable those who have accumulated them to be enlightened and become a Silent Buddha or some other noble enlightened person.

Anyone who possesses the power of perfections or virtuous energies within his or her mind is likely to be a virtuous person whose mind is purer than ordinary people who have less of these energies. Ordinary people can be overwhelmed by negative energy that manipulates their thought, speech, and action and makes them unwholesome. Therefore, whether one chooses to become a Lord Buddha or not, the accumulation of merit energy, which further crystallizes into perfections, can yield great benefit in one's life, either in the present or the future, regardless of whether one is a Buddhist or not. As we have noted earlier, a Buddha-to-be, in some lifetimes, can be an ascetic who believes in other religions or a hermit who lives in a forest. The ten virtues are universal values which are not limited to Buddhists only. They are virtues all humankind can practice alike irrespective of their race, religion, gender, social status, or age. After all, other beliefs besides Buddhism teach the virtues of giving, regard for discipline, love, and kindness.

For those who wish to be a Lord Buddha in the future, this book is a good beginning. Although some readers may already be a Buddha-to-be who has pursued perfections for many lifetimes, they may be unaware of it or unable to remember past lifetimes. But whether one is a senior or junior Buddha-to-be, a predicted or unpredicted one, the principle of pursuing perfections to achieve Buddhahood remains the same, which is to cultivate the ten virtuous perfections on three levels with great sacrifice over innumerable times no matter what one is reborn as, whether a human, a celestial being, or an animal.

WHEN THE VIRTUOUS ENERGIES ARE FULFILLED

After a Buddha-to-be has fully cultivated all of the ten perfections at three levels, before attaining Buddhahood, he has to become a celestial being waiting in the Tusita Celestial Realm (the fourth of six levels of heaven according to Buddhist belief) where he is placed on a waiting list to become a Lord Buddha on

earth. About one thousand years prior to his birth as a Lord Buddha, the celestial beings who secure the world will know that there will be a Lord Buddha, and they announce this news to all celestial beings in all the celestial realms.

Thus, the celestial beings will be overwhelmed with excitement, like people who have been in darkness for a long time and then see the breaking of dawn. The news about the new Lord Buddha will spread, and the celestial beings in ten thousand universes will assemble in the same universe. They will learn about the celestial being who will become another Lord Buddha. Then, they will pay him a visit and invite him to be reborn as a human in order to attain Buddhahood and liberate sentient beings to achieve Nirvana. After this, the celestial Buddha-to-be will consider the five necessary criteria with his divine eye. These criteria are as follows:

1. He will determine if it is an appropriate time because if he is reborn in a human world when the human lifespan is longer than 100,000 years, it will be inappropriate as it is an era when humans barely suffer from aging and death (when humans have a long life-span, they are less susceptible to disease). As a result, if a Lord Buddha teaches about the three common characteristics of life: impermanence, suffering, and non-self, humans will find it hard to comprehend as they have very little experience of suffering and rarely know death. It will be hard to convince them of the Dhamma, and as a result, few people will attain enlightenment. Also, if he is reborn in a human world when the average human life-span is shorter than 100 years, it is inappropriate as well because people will be saddled with many mental impurities. They will not obey the Lord Buddha's teachings, and there will be few people who attain enlightenment. So, the Lord will not be able to perform his duties effectively. Therefore, a Buddha-to-be will reborn in a human world when the human life-span is between 100 and 100,000 years so that the chances of attaining Buddhahood are greater.

2. After investigating the time, the Buddha-to-be celestial being will identify the appropriate human world as there are four major human worlds in a universe. These four human worlds are located in the four directions of the universe. Then, he chooses the most suitable planet earth where people can persevere in practicing the Dhamma until they attain enlightenment. This is something that people in the three other human worlds are not capable of.
3. Next, he chooses the right country for his reincarnation.
4. Then, he considers the clan he should be reborn into. Normally, a Lord Buddha is reborn to either a royal or well-respected Brahmin family. He will choose between the two by considering which clan is more respected in that particular era.
5. After he chooses the clan, he selects his mother. He will search for the right lady who is beautiful and virtuous and has accumulated perfections for 100,000 semi eons, with an aim to become a Lord Buddha's mother.

Once the Buddha-to-be celestial being considers the five criteria, and he finds that it is appropriate to be reborn as a human, he accepts the invitation offered by the celestial beings. Then, the celestial beings will leave, some to accompany him to the celestial park where they wish him a prosperous birth. As the Buddha-to-be celestial being enters the celestial park, he determines to be reborn and to disappear from the celestial realm, heading to the human world in order to enter his mother's womb.

Once the Buddha-to-be enters his mother's womb, the 10,000 universes vibrate and 32 auspicious events occur on earth: the infinite light brightens, the blind can see, the deaf can hear, the mute can speak, hunchbacks have straight backs, the crippled can walk, chained and caged animals are released, the fire in hell is extinguished, hungry ghosts are no longer hungry, animals no longer feel fear, the animals' diseases are cured, animals speak to each other with endearing speech, horses can laugh lovingly, elephants can sing, musical instruments play by themselves,

ornaments on human hands make melodious sound without bangles, cool breezes blow in all directions, bringing joy to living beings, there are rains outside the monsoon season, water bursts from the ground and flows abundantly, birds stop flying, rivers stop flowing, seawater tastes sweet, pools and lakes are filled with lotus flowers of five colors, flowers bloom both on land or in the water, lotuses bloom from the trunks and branches of trees, from vines, from stones, and from the middle of the air, flowers rain down from the sky, and celestial music plays.

As the holy mother completes her pregnancy, she stands up to deliver her child without the bodily impurities of other women. After she gives birth, the 32 auspicious signs occur once again. Seven days later, the holy mother passes away and is reborn as a celestial being in Tusita heaven (the fourth out of six levels of heaven) since she can no longer have other beings in her womb. As the Buddha-to-be grows up, he starts life in the secular world, and then he ordains as a monk. After persevering in training himself for a period of time, he attains enlightenment and becomes a Lord Buddha. Then, he delivers the Dhamma in order to liberate other sentient beings from suffering. By the end of his life, he passes into Nirvana. His religion will last for a period of time during which the Dhamma prevails. By the end of his religion, Buddhism disappears from the earth, as do the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. This marks the end of another Buddhist era led by a Lord Buddha.

The remaining sentient beings must wait for the next Lord Buddha to be enlightened on earth, so they have an opportunity to listen to the Dhamma, practice, and eventually attain enlightenment, like prisoners waiting for someone to break open the doors to their cells.

IF YOU ASPIRE TO BE A BUDDHA

If, after reading this book, you wish one day to become a Lord Buddha, a great teacher and leader of Buddhism who delivers the true Dhamma that liberates sentient beings from the cycle of rebirth and leads them to Nirvana, you should first reflect on the tremendous import of this responsibility. Then, you should make a wish, either silently or aloud, to devote yourself to becoming a Buddha-to-be – a person who cultivates the ten virtues in order to become a Lord Buddha and save other sentient beings from the sufferings of the cycle of rebirth. You may also resolve to become either a wisdom-oriented, faith-oriented, or perseverance-oriented Buddha-to-be.

Anyone who makes such a resolution or wish wholeheartedly can rightly be called a Buddha-to-be or Bodhisattva. Together, these Buddhas-to-be share a common mission: to save other creatures, not for the sake of winning praise or respect, but to liberate them from suffering. And Buddhas-to-be must not in any way compete with one another, but should join hands in harmony to promote the mutual success of their mission.

Finally, the author would like to congratulate all the Buddhas-to-be and every other reader who makes it to the end of this book. I wish all of you success in your pursuit of perfection and the cultivation of virtues. May you become a Lord Buddha, Silent Buddha, or noble enlightened disciple, depending on your willpower and accumulated virtuous energy.