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## Parami: The Perfect Competencies In A Spiritual Dimension

**Anil Dhale****Introduction To The Essence Of Bodhisatta And Parami**

In Pali Tipitaka, a Bodhisatta is a being who has vowed to achieve enlightenment and become a Buddha but postpones it to help others too attain enlightenment. Prince Siddhartha is called Bodhisatta before enlightenment and also designated so in his previous lives.

Bodhisatta's continuous pursuit of perfections throughout countless existence takes unwavering resolve and perseverance. This special perfection or virtue is called 'Buddha-karaka Dhamma' in Pali literature. '*Dasa kho sariputta bhuddhakaraka dhamma..... kata me dasang?* (Cariyapitaka atthakatha). When defilement is removed and merit is continuously accumulated, it results into perfections.

Some habits are formed in present existence and some follow us from our past existence. Good habits are opposite in character to defilements. For example one can develop the habit of giving alms often to overcome our greed. Only a Bodhisatta who passes the most rigorous test will receive the Buddha-Forecast from one of the Buddha he will meet along the way. Therefore, all Bodhisattas are divided into two categories: 1. Aniyata Bodhisatta (Unconfirmed Bodhisattas) 2. Niyata Bodhisattas (Confirmed Bodhisattas). Bodhisatta Siddhartha had met the first three Buddhas i.e. Lord Tanhankara, Lord Medhankara and Lord Saranankara but he did not receive the Buddha forecast because his merit did not reach a specified level yet. As soon as Sumedha Bodhisatta received his first Buddha-forecast from the Lord Dipankara Buddha that he would definitely become enlightened as a Gautam Buddha in future, the status of our Bodhisatta changed from an unconfirmed Bodhisatta to a confirmed Bodhisatta.

**KINDS OF PARAMI**

A Bodhisatta puts his life to test to cultivate good habits so that he can pursue perfections to the fullest extent. Buddha's Parami in Pali or Parāmita in Sanskrit is the ideal of spiritual perfection. A Bodhisatta is required to fulfil **10 parami** to attain enlightenment. It is divided into 3 kinds of paramita: 1. Paramita, 2. Upaparamita 3. Paramattha paramita. The 10 paramita are: 1. Dana (Generosity), 2. Sila (Precepts), 3. Nekkhamma (renunciation), 4. Panna (Wisdom), 5. Viriya (Endeavour), 6. Khanti (Patience), 7. Sacca (Truthfulness), 8. Adhitthana (Resolution), 9. Metta (Loving-kindness), 10. Upekkha (Equanimity). Thus, for each of these parami there would be three kinds of pārami eg. 1. Dana Parami 2. Dana upaparami 3. Dana Paramattha parami. Sacrifice of material things would be Dana parami at first level i.e. Parami. Sacrifice of body parts would be Dana Upa-Parami the second level whereas giving one's life for sake of others around would be Para-mattha parami, the third level. Bodhisatta or a Buddha –to-be pursue the ten perfections lifetime after lifetime at all three levels.

A Bodhisatta must possess eight very special attributes in order to reach his loftiest aspirations. These are called '**Dhamma-Samo-Dhana**'. These are as follows: 1. The wish to be a human being 2. having the right /male gender 3. having the appropriate motive for Buddhahood. In order to receive the Buddha –forecast from a Buddha, he must have the

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Arahat attribute although he is working towards Buddhahood.4.Having met a Buddha 5. Having ordained 6.Having the appropriate virtues 7.Superior deeds including giving one's life for Buddhahood.8.Ever contented with aspirations for Buddhahood. Moreover, the 32 special physical features and the 80 minor features make the Buddha uniquely different from ordinary human beings. These special features results from the wholesome deeds which Buddha has accumulated to the fullest extent throughout his countless lives.

There are three distinct kinds of enlightenment /arhat. Buddha Arahat (who completes 10 pārami thrice over), Paccekabuddha Arhat (who completes 10 pārami twice over and Savaka Arahat (who completes 10 pārami once).

In Theravada, role of Bodhisatta is recorded in form of 547 Jātakas which gives stories depicting journey of a Bodhisatta perfecting 30 pārami in previous life. As per Khagga Visana Sutta *,Eko care khagga visana kappo* he moves around alone like a rhinoceros. So, he can not be an ideal for society as he does not have a social objective to enable others in liberation. Savaka Arhat, being himself liberated, can liberate others. It is noteworthy to understand that Buddha preached 60 arahat Bhikkhu, “ Carath Bhikkave.... Bahujan hitaya, Bahujan sukhaya... signifying his urge and utmost necessity to move around in different directions to teach , enable and uplift competencies of many around.

It is imperative for all to take pertinent lessons and exercise resolve and persistence when it comes to the accumulation of good deeds. One should not only work for a living and seek sense pleasures but need to avail every opportunity to accumulate good deeds in our lifetime to be of constructive support and welfare for all beings. It is not only one quality competencies in isolation of other competencies that matters but parami amply illustrates that it is the cluster of attributes which one undertakes to develop enables an individual to perform for his own welfare as well as others around in society.

### **Brief Review Of Bodhisatta In Pali Literature**

Suttapitaka refers to Jātaka wherein Bodhisatta Cariya has been discussed e.g. Mahagovind Sutta, Mahasudassana Sutta, Mahadeva Sutta as Jātaka. When Lord Buddha was in ambivalent state, he resolved and decided to preach Dhamma to all as per his Dhamma Sankappo.. As a result many laities had become Anagami but exceptionally kulputta Yasha. Khema etc. had become arahat as householders before taking pabajja or just before demise.

As per Kinti Sutta, Buddha teaches Dhamma, 37 factors of enlightenment, out of compassion and for welfare of others .He wants monks to train in concord with mutual appreciation and without dispute.

Ten paramitas are depicted in Buddhavamsa and Cariya piṭaka. Cariya Pitka gives narration of 35 cariyas which covers 7 pāramitās but it does not refer to 3 pārami i.e. Panna, viriya and Khanti. Aṅgutura Nikaya refers to four sangari vatthuni as being essential for Bodhisatta Cariya. 1. Cariya 2. Piyyavacca 3. Attacariya 4. Samanattata.

The detailed discussion on Bodhisatta appears in Atthakatha. One comes across Bodhisatta cariya in Pasarasi Sutta, Mahasaccaka Sutta Bhayabharava Sutta Sangarava Sutta.

In Maha Silava Jātaka, Bodhisatta Silava did not believe in fighting and chose a path of non violence and even in face of jackals nearing his sight, they could not assault him and finally he becomes victorious.

In Sila Vimamsa Jātaka, deliberate theft by a royal priest was enough to prove that virtues/competence rather than birth is most important to gain respect and status.

In Mahadhammapala Jātaka, it becomes very clear to an eminent teacher from takkashashila that family practice based on moral precepts had been the cause for not facing any untimely death of younger people in family. *Dhammo have rakkhati dhammacarim, Chattam mahantam viya vassakale, Dhammena gutto mama Dhammapalo, Annassa atthini sukhi kumaro 'ti.* Indeed Dhamma protects him who practise the Dhamma. Just as a big umbrella protects one during rains, guarded by Dhamma is my son Dhammapala. These are others bones, not of my beloved juniors.

In Akitti Jataka, we come across the Bodhisatta Akitti who was able to fulfil all the ten spiritual perfections.

### **APPLICATIONS OF PARAMI**

The ultimate objective of fulfilment of parami is Nibbana which is also variously referred to as Ceto vimutti, Amtang pada, Accutang pada, Anuttara Yogakhema. As per Dhatu Vibhanga Sutta, for one to attain peace/Nibbana, one should have four determinations: to start with, 1. not be negligent of discernment, 2.should always guard the truth, 3. be devoted to relinquishment and 4.train him for calmness. Discernment comes from observing with our mindfulness both the causes and effects .If we know only one, it will not qualify for having a discernment i.e. all round knowing. People with discernment will see that stress /diseases are of two kinds: Physical i.e. stress arising out of natural conditions 2. Mental i.e. stress of defilement / akusala kamma .If it is disease arising out of physical elements, we should treat it with food ,medicine If it arises from Kamma we have to treat it with the Buddha's medicine when he stresses that it arises from three types of craving .

To be successful at a meditative practice of Samatha and Vipassana as per Satipatthana, One has to practice other forms of supportive meditation and contemplation such as Metta Bhavana, Satipatthana-four Anupassana or meditative contemplation on perfection known as Parami. When one contemplates on each of these ten perfections by fourfold analysis i.e. wise reflection on their 1.characteristics (lakkhaṇa), 2.functions (rasa), 3.manifestations (paccupaṭṭhānas) and 4.Proximate causes (padaṭṭhāna), it changes the nature of our volitional actions. Paramis are ways of generating good kamma and mind is yet trained to release unskilful mind- sets and deepen into transcendent ones. Thus, pārami also carried the meaning of 'qualities that cross over'. Practice of pārami give rise to a sense of innate value (punna) in oneself, in others but mostly in the blessing of skilful action.

Belief in violence creates violence .But Lord Buddha, in his all- knowing wisdom, teach that it is not through hatred that hatred ceases, but ceases only through **Metta**-universal love and goodwill. The Karaniya Metta Sutta starts with the requisite of a man interested in his welfare and well -being highlighting the five essential attributes: able, honest, upright, gentle in speech and humble: not being proud. In the world of wisdom as against the competitive world full of militancy and aggressiveness, Metta alone works in promoting harmony, conciliation and friendliness. As Buddha categorically states in Chavalata Sutta, a man who promotes his own good and also promotes another's good is the foremost competent and superior amongst four kinds of persons fond existing in the world. Modern psychology talking about the importance of analysing and individual taking four life positions i.e. I am ok you are ok, I am not ok you are not ok, I am ok ,you are not ok and I am not ok you are ok illustrates the vital point of being positive in our approach towards fellow beings in society .

Dhammapada reminds us that the mind is forerunner and precedes everything. Kamma means intentional actions and the potency they create, which produce the result. All kamma, wholesome or unwholesome, come out of one's mind .If one wants to change one's destiny, one has to look at changing ones pattern of actions. As Dhammapada state, if a person speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness follows him like his never departing shadow. We as human being create our own destiny with our own actions, conduct and beliefs and get it filled with happiness or misery. With this value system, there is no place for inhuman killing or violence pursued by some terrorist elements in the name of external divine force or God across the globe. Dhammapada states, “ *Susukham vata jivama,Aturesu anatura,Aturesu manussesu,viharama anatura*”ie happy

indeed we live, unafflicted amidst the afflicted by craving .Amidst afflicted men, we dwell free from affliction. The worst form of Craving leads to egotism and self- serving tendency which is detrimental to peace, harmony and mutual prosperity. Happiness requires humility and sense of gratitude which calls for control over one's mind through virtues and meditation.

If we abide by Panch Sila given by Lord Buddha faithfully, we will create our own happy destiny for ourselves. For example in terms of Dana in food offering to the needy, it gives Ayu, Vanna, Sukham and Balam, Merit goes to the giver of alms as well as to the recipient .Tirokuda Sutta given by Lord Buddha to king Bimbisara talks of transference of merit (Punyanumodana) even to the departed ones. Thus, Dana parami becomes paramount for all.

### CONCLUSION

It is clear that practice towards fulfilment of ten Paramis is the prerequisites for the gradual attainment of enlightenment and freedom from the bondage of worldly existence.

A school of thought which emphasized upon every being to be Bodhisattas and significance of their journey towards fulfilment of Parami have been recognized in Mahayana whereas the traditional Theravada path directly leading towards arhathood was labelled as Hinayana. Both the approaches seem to highlight importance of key competencies for a perfect or a model teacher for building a harmonious and progressive society. Both Bodhisatta and Arahata are epitomised as a Guide or Kalyan Mitra for the welfare and well-being of Society at large .However, the degree of perfections and time period taken in its fulfilment marks a subtle difference in terms of priority approaches towards competencies building in a society at large.

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