

Bodhisattva

The individuals who are on the path to becoming Buddha or attaining salvation are known as Bodhisattvas. In Sanskrit, Bodhisattva means “*a person who intends to become a buddha.*”

Bodhisattva is one of the ten realms of whose teaching are included in [Buddhism](#). In this article, we shall discuss at length the meaning, ideals and list of Bodhisattvas.

Definition of Bodhisattva

Given below is the Bodhisattva definition based on the different schools of Buddhism.

- As per **Theravada**, Buddha referred to himself as a Bodhisattva during all his incarnations. He proclaimed himself as Buddha only after he had attained complete enlightenment. Thus, by definition,
 - *A being who is on the path to enlightenment is a Bodhisattva and attains the title of Buddha only after complete enlightenment*
- The **Mahayana** school of Buddhism defines Bodhisattva as “*any being who intends to achieve enlightenment and Buddhahood*”

List of Bodhisattvas

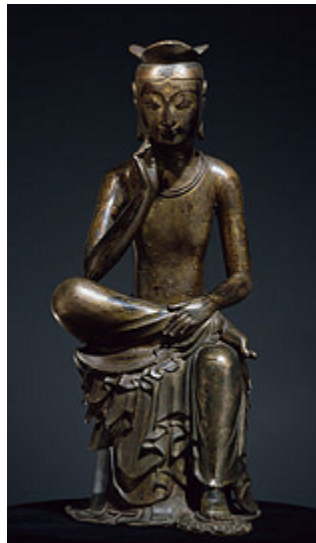
The important Bodhisattvas have been discussed below in detail.

- Avalokiteshvara



(Image credits: Wikipedia)

- It is the Bodhisattva of **compassion**
 - It is **also known as Guanyin**, which also means "*Perceiver of all sounds*"
 - Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva is **depicted as a female**, holding a lotus in the hand
 - It has been **extensively described in the Lotus Sutra**, one of the most important texts of the Mahayana school of Buddhism
 - This Bodhisattva is able to hear the prayers and cries of all and help them by providing the required aid
 - Out of many of its forms, the **Padmapani Lokeshvara** is one of the most popular ones. It means "*Lord with a Lotus in hand*"
 - The Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva sculptures generally have a common Buddhist saying inscribed, that can be translated as "*The Buddha has explained the cause of all things that arise from a cause. He, the great monk, has also explained their cessation.*"
- **Maitreya**



(Image credits: Wikipedia)

- It is the **Bodhisattva of the Future**
- It is believed that Maitreya is still not Buddha and resides in the **Tusita Heaven**, which is one of the realms of Buddhist cosmology
- A popular representation of the Maitreya Bodhisattva is the **Laughing Buddha**. It is said to be an incarnation of Maitreya
- It is believed to appear on the Earth in the future as many scriptures showcase it as the **successor of Gautam Buddha**, the present Buddha

- Manjushri



(Image credits: Wikipedia)

- It is the **Bodhisattva of Wisdom**
 - It is one of the most important **iconic figures in Mahayana Buddhism**
 - The meditation halls, libraries, and studies room of Buddhist monasteries often consists of image of Manjushri Bodhisattva
 - In Chinese Buddhism, Manjushri (*Wenshu in China*) is respected as **one of the Four Great Bodhisattvas**
 - Manjushri is **represented as a male Bodhisattva**
 - This iconic image wields a **flaming sword “Vajra Sword of Discriminating Light” in the right hand**, and a **Blue Lotus flower in full bloom in the left hand**
- Samantabhadra



(Image credits: Wikipedia)

- It is the **Bodhisattva of Practice and Meditation**

- **Samantabhadra, Manjushri and Buddha, together form the Shakyamuni trinity in Buddhism**
- Ksitigarbha



(Image credits: Wikipedia)

- Ksitigarbha, in Sanskrit means “**Womb of the Earth**”
- He is the saviour of the oppressed, the dying, and the dreamer of evil dreams
- Ksitigarbha is said to be the Bodhisattva of Mortals
- Vajrapani



(Image Credits: Wikipedia)

- Vajrapani is the **Thunderbolt-bearing Bodhisattva**
- He is one of the three protective deities around Buddha
- In human form, Vajrapani is depicted holding the vajra in his right hand. He is sometimes referred to as a Dhyani-Bodhisattva, equivalent to Akshobhya, the second Dhyani Buddha
- Sadaparibhuta
- He is the Bodhisattva that **manifests the never disparaging spirit**
- This bodhisattva never disparages living beings, never underestimates them or doubts their capacity for Buddhahood

- The action of this bodhisattva is to remove the feelings of worthlessness and low self-esteem in people
- Akasagarbha
 - Also, known as the twin both of Ksitigarbha, the name Akasagarbha means “*boundless space treasury*”

Bodhisattva Art & Architecture

In comparison to the art and sculptures of Buddha, Bodhisattvas are represented as more princely figures. They drape a rich attire, with robes, threads, beads, elaborate hairdos, etc.

Each Bodhisattva is represented through its expression and essence. Sculptures of these are widely spread across different parts of the world.

As mentioned in Mahayana teachings, Buddha is firstborn as a Bodhisattva, and then after many lifetimes, progresses to attain Buddhahood. Thus, this is also a progressive approach and inspiration for Buddhist art and culture.