



Buddha Maitreya

PRESENTED by [Ricardo B Serrano](#)

A Brief History of Maitreya
by Venerable Lama Thubten Yeshe
From teachings given at
Maitreya Institut, Holland in September, 1981

Countless eons ago, Maitreya, while making many offerings, took the Bodhisattva Vows from the Tathagata Great Power (Tub chen) in the presence of many other Buddhas. From that moment on, he has guided countless sentient beings along the path of the three higher trainings (discipline, concentration and wisdom) thereby leading them through the three vehicles (shravaka, pratyekabuddha and Bodhisattva) to Enlightenment.

While practicing as a Bodhisattva, he specialized in the meditation on great love. He not only taught this path to others, but meditated on it continuously himself. He would often station himself at the gates of a city and contemplate on loving-kindness. So powerful was his meditation that people coming and going through the gates, if they would pass close enough to touch his feet, would they receive the realization of great love. This greatly pleased all the exalted beings of the ten directions. The Tathagatas rejoiced in his actions and predicted that in his future lives, as a Bodhisattva and as a Buddha, he would be known by the name "Love" (Maitreya; Jhampa). This is how he received his name.

In one lifetime he was born as one of the thousand sons of a great king. This king wanted to know in what order his sons would become Enlightened, so he put all their names into a bowl, then drew the names out of the bowl one by one. Maitreya's name was fifth and the Buddha of that age, the Tathagata Limitless Knowledge (Yon ten pa ye) predicted that he would be the fifth Buddha of the present era, Shakyamuni being the fourth.

Eventually, Maitreya advanced through all the levels of spiritual development. He achieved the tenth and highest stage of a Bodhisattva and afterwards a fully Enlightened Buddha. Having reached this level of utmost perfection, he manifested in many different aspects in countless Buddha fields, and at present his particular abode is the Pure Land of Tushita. There he imparts mahayana teachings to many countless advanced Bodhisattva disciples, and it was in Tushita that he taught his five famous texts to the great arya being Asanga. Maitreya also gives many other teachings in accordance with the needs of different disciples. Throughout the ten directions of space he appears as countless spiritual masters, thereby leading innumerable beings along the path to full Awakening.

Eventually the time will come for Maitreya to appear as the fifth universal Buddha of this world age and turn the Wheel of Dharma for the benefit of all. This will come about in the following manner. In the future, because of the growth of delusion, the beings living in this world will degenerate. Their lifespan will decrease and be filled with much suffering. When the human life expectancy has shortened to only ten years, Maitreya will manifest in the form of a great spiritual leader and demonstrate the path of virtue. He will particularly spread the teachings on loving-kindness and, as a result, the fortune of the beings in this world will begin to change. As they gradually give up their deluded attitudes and harmful behavior, their lifespan will increase. After a great many ages the life expectancy of humans will grow enormously and then slowly decrease again until the human lifespan is about a hundred years. According to the prophecies of all the Buddhas and his own promise, this will be the time when Maitreya Buddha will appear in this world as a universal teacher.

His father will be called The Great Compassion Brahmin (Tramze Tsang rab) and his mother The Youthful-looking One (Tsang Denma). Maitreya will be born from her side as she stands in a forest garden, and the great celestial king Indra will receive the newborn Buddha with great devotion. Immediately the baby Maitreya will take seven steps in each of the four directions, and on each spot that he places his feet, a treasure of lotuses will bloom. Then he will declare, "I am the unsurpassed savior of the world and have come to liberate all beings from their suffering. This will be my last rebirth; there will be no further reincarnations for me." Upon hearing this, all the exalted beings and spirits of the world will rejoice, performing many acts of purification and presenting magnificent offerings to him. His proud father will then take him around the city so that the citizens can also rejoice at their new treasure. Beautiful goddesses will offer him flowers and the great sages will predict that in that very life he will become a fully Enlightened Buddha.

Thereafter he will follow the life of a royal prince. When the time comes for him to be educated, Maitreya will be the foremost of four thousand and eighty students and when it is time to marry, Maitreya will have many wives with whom he will live for many years. Then a great religious festival of Brahmins will take place in his kingdom. During this festival, Maitreya will demonstrate that he has come to realize the impermanent nature of phenomena and, seeing the examples of ascetic monks, will declare his renunciation of cyclic existence and his intention to leave his royal surroundings and follow the religious way of life. This decision will so greatly shock those around him that the whole palace and all his wives will fly up into space.

Thereafter, having made his decision to abandon the royal way of life, Maitreya will depart into the forest. All the celestial beings and saints will rejoice at his resolve and will offer prayers for his success, protecting and caring for him as he meditates. Following his example, many of his wives and one thousand and forty members of his retinue together with numerous city dwellers will follow after him in great devotion and also take ordination as religious practitioners.

For seven days, Maitreya will follow the ascetic way of life, refraining from all food and drink. Then upon arising from a state of deep meditative concentration, Maitreya will receive a bowl of milk from his wife Da way Tong chen. Refreshed by this, he will assume the diamond hard cross-legged posture and make the firm determination not to rise from meditation until Enlightenment has been achieved. That evening he will defeat all demonic interferences and negative forces of Mara and in the middle of the night will enter a state of profound absorption. Finally, with the rising sun the following morning, Maitreya, who in fact has achieved full Enlightenment many ages before, will demonstrate for the sake of his fortunate disciples the attainment of complete and perfect Buddhahood. Then, in the same manner as all Buddhas of the past, present and future, Maitreya will lead countless beings out of their suffering and along the path to spiritual Awakening.

For seven days after his demonstration of Enlightenment, Maitreya will remain in silence, observing his future disciples. Then Indra, the king of the celestial beings, will present him with a golden wheel and the universally beautiful objects of the five senses, requesting him to turn the Wheel of Dharma for the benefit of all. In response to this request, Maitreya will teach the four truths of the noble ones and thereby lead many millions of disciples to liberation.

During his long teaching career, Maitreya will turn the wheel of great teachings three times and each time countless multitudes of disciples will come to listen. These teachings will be enormous events attracting not merely human, earth-born disciples, but many celestial beings, dakas, dakinis and beings from other realms as well. Many of those gathered to receive these teachings will immediately become Arhats, Bodhisattvas and even fully Enlightened Buddhas. By the power of his holy body, speech and mind, Maitreya will lead and satisfy all those gathered according to their individual needs and capacities. To some he will give hinayana instructions, to others he will give mahayana. In this way, he will lead countless disciples through the three vehicles to liberation and Enlightenment.

Taken from Maitreya by Lama Thubten Yeshe
A commentary on the Kriyatantra of Maitreya
(C) Wisdom Publications, 1985

IMPORTANT LINKS:

[Buddhism - Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition](#)

[Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive](#) and [Maitreya Project](#)