

## **Social Prerequisites for a Flourishing Initiation of Buddhist Meditation: A Clarification**

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### **ABSTRACT**

As tradition exposes, the Bodhisatta in the Tusita heaven had eight great investigations (*aṭṭha māhāvīlokanāni viloketi*): (1) the time of his birth, (2) the continent where he would be born, (3) the region, (4) the family, (5) the mother, (6) the life – span, (7) the month of his birth and (8) the time of renunciation of worldly life. Similarly some examples can be taken from the above investigations as social preconditions for meditation. For instance, birth, growing, learning, living and working in good social surroundings engendering occasions which encourage one to hear, inquire and talk about meditation, suitable people, good friends, suitable places where one meets virtuous and disciplined monks and nuns, etc. are wholesome social prerequisites of immense significance. It is in such social surroundings that a person happens to meet in day to day life or associate a good friend who leads a moral and spiritual life.

A spiritual friend (*kalyāṇamitta*) or a good teacher or the giver of a meditation subject, good devotees, good family members, social ethics, wholesome social relations, less social problems and conflicts, wholesome religious, cultural, economic and social conditions, righteous governance etc. are social prerequisites that contribute to the development of meditational practice. As elaborated in the Sambodhi Sutta, the association of admirable friends is the first among the social prerequisites that lead a beginner or novice disciple whose mind is immature to the development of self-awakening.

The Six things which are conducive to communal living (*sārāṇīyā dhammā*) mentioned in the *Saṅgīti Sutta* are also wholesome social prerequisites that contribute to peaceful co-existence which, in turn, favours mental development. Monks dwelling both in public and private show loving-kindness to their fellow monks in acts of body, speech and thought, share with their virtuous fellow monks whatever they receive as a rightful gift including the contents of their alms-bowls, keep constantly, unbroken and unaltered the rules of conduct which are spotless, leading to freedom, praised by the wise, unstained and conducive to concentration, persist with their fellow monks both in public and private, remain in such awareness with their fellow monks and continue in the noble view that leads to liberation to the utter elimination of suffering.

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