

The Promise of Amida Buddha

HŌNEN'S PATH TO BLISS

法然上人和語燈錄

Translated by
Jōji Atone & Yōko Hayashi



WISDOM PUBLICATIONS • BOSTON

2011

Appendix: The Forty-Eight Vows of Buddha Amitābha

1. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, the realms of hell beings, starving spirits, or animals are in my land, I will not realize enlightenment.
2. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, the humans and heavenly beings who return again to the realms of hell beings, starving spirits, and animals at the end of their lives are in my land, I will not realize enlightenment.
3. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, the humans and heavenly beings in my land are not golden in color, I will not realize enlightenment.
4. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, there is distinction in the personal appearance of the humans and heavenly beings in my land, I will not realize enlightenment.
5. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, the humans and heavenly beings in my land do not acquire the ability to recollect all former existences of themselves and others going back at least a hundred thousand million eons, I will not realize enlightenment.
6. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, the humans and heavenly beings in my land do not possess the divine eyes to see at least

- a hundred thousand million buddhalands, I will not realize enlightenment.
7. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, the humans and heavenly beings in my land do not acquire the divine ears to hear at least a hundred thousand million teachings of manifold buddhas, I will not realize enlightenment.
 8. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, the humans and heavenly beings in my land do not obtain the ability to read the thoughts of others in at least a hundred thousand million buddhalands' beings, I will not realize enlightenment.
 9. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, the humans and heavenly beings in my land do not possess the divine feet to travel, in a single thought moment, to at least a hundred thousand million buddhalands, I will not realize enlightenment.
 10. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, the humans and heavenly beings in my land have any thought of delusory attachment to their own lives, I will not realize enlightenment.
 11. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, the humans and heavenly beings in my land do not abide in the rightly established state for entering into nirvāṇa, I will not realize enlightenment.
 12. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, my light is limited and does not illuminate at least a hundred thousand million buddhalands, I will not realize enlightenment.
 13. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, my lifespan is limited and does not last at least a hundred thousand million eons, I will not realize enlightenment.
 14. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, the number of practitioners in my land is able to be counted by the pratyekabuddhas and śrāvakas of the three thousand great-thousand worlds within a hundred thousand eons, I will not realize enlightenment.

15. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, the humans and heavenly beings in my land are limited in the length of their lives, I will not realize enlightenment. Excluded are only those who have vowed their limited life span.
16. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, the humans and heavenly beings in my land ever hear the name of the unvirtuous, I will not realize enlightenment.
17. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the countless buddhas of the ten directions do not praise my name, I will not realize enlightenment.
18. **If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all sentient beings in the ten directions who hold faith with genuine hearts and who wish to be born in my land are not born there with just ten moments of being mindful of me, I will not realize enlightenment. Excluded only are those who have committed the five grave offenses and those who have abused the true Dharma.**
19. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all sentient beings in the ten directions awaken the heart of enlightenment, accumulate the various roots of merit, sincerely desire to be born in my land, yet do not receive the welcome of myself surrounded by the host of celestial beings at their time of death, I will not realize enlightenment.
20. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all sentient beings in the ten directions, upon hearing my name, keep their thoughts fixed on my land, cultivate the various roots of merit, dedicate the merit to birth in my land, but fail this birth, I will not realize enlightenment.
21. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, the humans and heavenly beings in my land are not fully endowed with the thirty-two prominent features a buddha, I will not realize enlightenment.

22. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the bodhisattvas in other buddhalands, who are born in my land, are unable to attain the state of nonregression to realize buddhahood, I will not realize enlightenment. Excluded are those bodhisattvas who, due to their own vows designed to save sentient beings, fortify themselves with the armor of the universal vow, accumulate the roots of merit, realize emancipation for sentient beings, visit other buddhalands to observe the bodhisattva perfections, pay homage to various buddhas and tathāgatas in the ten directions, show the path to enlightenment to sentient beings as numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges, and make them abide in the unsurpassed and true path. Furthermore, excluded are those bodhisattvas who are superior to ordinary bodhisattvas, have attained the final stage of the bodhisattva stages, and have been endowed with the virtues of Buddha Samantabhadra.
23. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the bodhisattvas in my land cannot possess the transcendent faculties of a buddha to pay homage to various buddhas, and cannot visit all the countless buddhalands within the time of taking a meal, I will not realize enlightenment.
24. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the bodhisattvas in my land cannot present their cultivated merits in the presence of all the buddhas and cannot obtain articles of worship whenever they desire to pay homage to other buddhas, I will not realize enlightenment.
25. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the bodhisattvas in my land cannot preach the perfect wisdom, I will not realize enlightenment.
26. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the bodhisattvas in my land cannot be endowed with the diamond-like body of Nārāyaṇa,⁴⁸⁷ I will not realize enlightenment.
27. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the things belonging to the humans and heavenly beings in my land are not sublime

- and brilliant, are not wondrous in colors and forms, are not extremely exquisite, and also if sentient beings, with their divine eyes, are not able to clearly describe the names and number of those things, I will not realize enlightenment.
28. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the bodhisattvas as well as those who have less virtue in my land cannot perceive the most exquisitely colored tree of enlightenment reaching four hundred *yojanas* in height, I will not realize enlightenment.
 29. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the bodhisattvas in my land cannot acquire wisdom and eloquence through reading, reciting, and preaching the sutras to others, I will not realize enlightenment.
 30. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, the wisdom of any of the bodhisattvas in my land has any limitations, I will not realize enlightenment.
 31. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, my land is not pure and serene, and cannot reflect all the countless and inconceivable buddhalands in the ten directions as clear as seeing one's own image in a mirror, I will not realize enlightenment.
 32. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all bodhisattvas do not pursue the bodhisattva perfections even after hearing that: all the adornments of the palaces, pavilions, streams, flowers, and trees from the ground up to the sky in my land are made of countless jewels and a hundred thousand kinds of fragrance; the exquisite fragrance of my land is wondrous, surpassing the realms of humans and heavenly beings and spreading throughout the worlds of the ten directions, I will not realize enlightenment.
 33. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the sentient beings of the countless and inconceivable buddhalands in the ten directions, though bathed in and touched by my light, cannot be gentle in body and mind beyond the reach of humans and heavenly beings, I will not realize enlightenment.

34. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the sentient beings of the countless and inconceivable buddhalands in the ten directions, upon hearing my name, do not attain the bodhisattva stage of patience accepting that all things are unborn or profound *dhāraṇī*, I will not realize enlightenment.
35. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, there are women of the countless and inconceivable buddhalands in the ten directions who may be born again in a female form after hearing my name, having joy and faith, awakening aspiration for enlightenment, and detesting femininity, I will not realize enlightenment.
36. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the bodhisattvas of the countless and inconceivable buddhalands in the ten directions do not, upon hearing my name, always observe the bodhisattva practice to accomplish the path leading to enlightenment in their lives to come, I will not realize enlightenment.
37. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the humans and heavenly beings of the numerous and inconceivable buddhalands in the ten directions do not win reverence from other humans and heavenly beings when they, upon hearing my name, prostrate themselves on the ground to worship me and observe the bodhisattva practice with joy and faith, I will not realize enlightenment.
38. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the humans and heavenly beings in my land do not spontaneously obtain garments approved by a buddha upon wishing for them, and if the garments require sewing, bleaching, or cleaning, I will not realize enlightenment.
39. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the humans and heavenly beings in my land do not receive the same pleasure and happiness of fully ordained monks who are freed from their worldly passions, I will not realize enlightenment.

40. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the bodhisattvas in my land, upon their wish, cannot see the countless sublime and pure buddhalands in the ten directions reflected among the jeweled trees of my land as clear as one sees his own image in a clear mirror, I will not realize enlightenment.
41. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the bodhisattvas of other buddhalands, hearing my name, become deformed until they attain buddhahood, I will not realize enlightenment.
42. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the bodhisattvas of other buddhalands, hearing my name, do not enter the pure samādhi of emancipation in which they can pay homage to various tathāgata buddhas within a moment of thought, I will not realize enlightenment.
43. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the bodhisattvas of other buddhalands, hearing my name, are not reborn as ārya beings, I will not realize enlightenment.
44. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the bodhisattvas of other buddhalands, hearing my name, do not become so happy they dance for joy and pursue the bodhisattva practices, and are not endowed with the roots of merit, I will not realize enlightenment.
45. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the bodhisattvas of other buddhalands, hearing my name, do not abide in the state of the universal samādhi in which they can see all the countless inconceivable buddhas until they attain buddhahood, I will not realize enlightenment.
46. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the bodhisattvas in my land are unable to hear the Dharma according to their wishes, I will not realize enlightenment.

47. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the bodhisattvas in my land, hearing my name, do not attain the state of the nonregression, I will not realize enlightenment.
48. If, when I am to attain buddhahood, all the bodhisattvas of other buddhalands, hearing my name, do not acquire the three kinds of wisdom nor attain the state of nonregression through the Dharma, I will not realize enlightenment.