

# **The Forty-Eight Great Vows of Amitabha Buddha**

IBDSCL, Feb. 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018, by Nancy Yu

Good morning!

Last week we read through the sutra of the Buddha Speaking of Amitabha and we all knew the inconceivable and magnificent pure land of Amitabha Buddha. As we have talked about, every buddha land forms and exists due to the vows brought up and achieved by the Buddha of that land. This week, we will learn the forty-eight great vows brought up by Amitabha Buddha who was Bhiksu Dharmakata at that time.

This was talked about in the sutra of Infinite Life. This sutra was given on the Vulture Peak in Rajagriha. On that day, the Buddha looked radiant with joy. The Buddha's body was serene and glorious and his august countenance was as majestic as a clear mirror whose brightness radiated outward and inward. The magnificence of the Buddha's appearance was unsurpassed and beyond measure.

## **Amitabha Buddha's Vows**

### **Vow 1:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if in that buddha land of mine there should be either hell, or the animal state of existence, or the realm of hungry ghost, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

### **Vow 2:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if in that buddha land of mine the beings who are born there should fall away (die) into the three evil realms, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

### **Vow 3:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if in that country of mine the beings who are born there should not

all be of the color of genuine gold, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 4:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if in that buddha country of mine the beings who are born there should not all be of one appearance without the difference of noble looking or ugly lineaments, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 5:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if in that buddha-country of mine the beings who are born there should not be possessed of the supernormal knowledge of recollecting the previous lives of themselves (Purvanivasana i.e. knowledge of all reincarnations), and knowing the events of evolution of hundred thousand nayuta years of kalpas, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 6:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if in that country of mine the beings who are born there should not be possessed of the Divine-eye (Divyatchakchus) which can see a hundred thousand nayuta of Buddha-countries, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 7:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if the beings of that country of mine should not be possessed of the Divine-ear (Divyassrotra) which to be able to hear the preachings of a hundred thousand kotis of nayuta of Buddhas, and to a faithful observance, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 8:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if the beings of that country of mine should not all be possessed of the Intuitive-mind (Paratchittadjna) knowing the thoughts of all beings of a hundred thousand kotis of nayuta of Buddha-countries, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 9:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if the beings of that country of mine should not all be possessed of the Heavenly-step (Riddisakchatkriya) which can in the shortest moment of one thought travelling over a hundred thousand kotis of nayuta of Buddha-countries, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 10:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if the beings of that country of mine should have raised in their minds the idea of selfishness and covetous thoughts, even regarding their own bodies, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 11:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if the beings of that country of mine should not all be firmly abiding in a concentrated state of meditation and equanimity (Samadhi) till they have reached Nirvana, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 12:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if my light should be limited in measurement so that it could not illuminate a hundred thousand nayuta of kotis of Buddha-countries, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 13:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if the measure of my life should be limited, even by counting a hundred thousand nayuta of kotis of Kalpas, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 14:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if any being should be able to count innumerable pupils belonging to me in that country of mine, even if all the beings of the Three Thousand Great Thousand

World, who after having become Pratyeka-Buddhas, count and continue to do so for a period of a hundred thousand nayuta of kotis of Kalpas, could know the balance, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 15:**

Provided I become a Buddha, the life of the beings in that country of mine should be eternal, excepting by their own free will whenever they choose to pass away from life, otherwise may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 16:**

Provided I become a Buddha, there should be no evil or sinful existence in that country of mine, even its very name is unknown. Otherwise may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 17:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if the innumerable Buddhas of the worlds of ten directions do not glorify my name, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 18:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if the beings of the ten directions who after having heard my name, and thus awakened their highest faith and aspiration of re-birth in that country of mine, even they have recollected such a thought for ten times only, they are destined to be born there, with the exception of those who have committed the five deadly sins (Anantarya), and who have blasphemed Dharma, otherwise may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 19:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if the beings of ten directions who have directed their thoughts towards the Bodhi and cultivated their stock of various merits with a fervent craving for re-birth in that country of mine, if at the moment of death, should I not appear with an assembly of retinue

before them, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 20:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if the beings of ten directions, after having heard my name always longing for that country of mine and cultivating various essential merits for the purpose of realizing their earnest wish to be born in my country, should their fulfillment be failed, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 21:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if the beings of that country of mine should not all be endowed with the glorious body perfected with the thirty-two attributes (Laksanani) of a great being, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 22:**

Provided I become a Buddha, the Bodhisattvas who come to be born in that country of mine are to be bound to that one birth only, then to become Buddha-elect (Ekajatipratibuddhas), with the exception of those who by their own free will remain in the stage of Bodhisattva-hood for the sake of delivering various beings, wearing the armor of vows to travel to all worlds, performing their Bodhisattva-duties and accumulating their stock of merit, who wish to serve the Buddhas of ten directions, and convert the various beings in number like grains of sand of the River Ganges to the highest perfect knowledge, whose activities have surpassed the stage of ordinary beings, and who practice the universal virtue of Samantabhadra, otherwise may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 23:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if those Bodhisattvas in that country of mine, through the Grace of the Buddha should not be able to serve all the Buddhas throughout the countless nayuta of

Buddha-worlds within a moment as short as a length of time of refreshment, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 24:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if those Bodhisattva in that country of mine who wish their stock of merit to produce any appliance to be used before the Buddhas, should such things not appear for them to their satisfaction, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 25:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if those Bodhisattvas in that country of mine should not be able to preach the law of wisdom in completion, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 26:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if those Bodhisattvas of that country of mine should not all be in possession of a golden body as strong as the diamond of Narayana, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 27:**

Provided I become a Buddha, the heavenly beings and the various properties produced in that country of mine should all be of supreme beauty and in boundless quantity, and in the infinity of various forms. If any being therein who even possessed the divine-eye is able to perceive the appellations and quantity of such beauties, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 28:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if any Bodhisattva of that country of mine who possesses even the least stock of merit, should not perceive the boundless shining beauty of the Bodhi-trees of my sanctuary, their height being at least four million miles, then may I not attain enlightenment.

**Vow 29:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if any Bodhisattva of that country of mine should not all possess the wisdom of eloquent oration after having read, recited, and observed the Dharma of the sutras, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 30:**

Provided I become a Buddha, if any Bodhisattvas of that country of mine, have their wisdom of oration limited, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 31:**

When I have obtained the Buddhahood, if that country of mine should not be limpid and brilliant as to reflect the miniatures of the innumerable, inconceivable and boundless Buddha-worlds of ten directions as one's face is seen in a bright mirror, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 32:**

If after I have obtained the Buddhahood, in that country of mine, there should be magnificent palaces towering up from the ground to the void, also the lakes, winding streams, blossoming trees, and all other properties which are compounded of various jewels and thousands of kinds of perfumes, minutely embellished in the most wondrous state surpassing all heavenly and human worlds. The scent of the perfumes should thoroughly pervade the worlds of ten directions, whereof the Bodhisattvas, having smelt them thereby directed their minds to Bodhi; otherwise may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 33:**

When I obtain the Buddhahood, any being of the boundless and inconceivable buddha lands of the ten directions whose body if be touched by the rays of my splendor should not make his body and mind gentle and peaceful, in such a state that he is far more sublime than the gods and men, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 34:**

When I obtain the Buddhahood, if the beings of boundless and inconceivable Buddha-worlds should not attain the "Endurance of Nirvanic Life" (Ajatah sarvadharmah) of Bodhisattva, and the deep knowledge of Dharani after having heard my name, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 35:**

When I obtain the Buddhahood, women of boundless and inconceivable buddha lands of the ten directions after having heard my name thereby awakened in faith and joyful aspiration, and turning their minds towards Bodhi, therefore dislike their own female lives, when they be born again, in their next life should not be incarnated into a masculine body, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 36:**

When I obtain the Buddhahood, the Bodhisattvas of boundless and inconceivable buddha worlds of the ten directions after having heard my name, after their death (in their next life) will still continue their Bodhisattva-duty till they have obtained the Buddhahood, otherwise may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 37:**

When I obtain the Buddhahood, the heavenly beings of boundless and inconceivable buddha lands of the ten directions, having heard my name, should not worship me with prostrate reverence, and joyfully and faithfully perform their Bodhisattva-duty, and be honored by gods and men, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 38:**

When I obtain the Buddhahood, the heavenly beings of that country of mine, should they desire



a garment will be able to perceive themselves, as quick as thought, covered by apparitionally produced costumes, excellent to their satisfaction, worthy to be praised by the Buddha, without the work of sewing, washing, dying, etc. Otherwise may I not attain enlightenment.

**Vow 39:**

When I attain the Buddhahood, if the heavenly beings of that country of mine should not be enjoying happiness as great as that of the holy bhikkhus, (Asravakchava the finality of the stream of passions) then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 40:**

When I attain the Buddhahood, if the Bodhisattvas of that country of mine wish to see the boundless, holy, pure Buddha-worlds of the ten directions, they will at once behold them from the jewel-trees as though one's face were being reflected in a highly burnished, brilliant mirror, otherwise may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 41:**

When I attain the Buddhahood, if the Bodhisattvas of other worlds after having heard my name, should suffer from any diminution in the functional powers and not be endowed with all sense-organs in completion before reaching the Buddhahood, then may I not attain the enlightenment.

**Vow 42:**

When I obtain the Buddhahood, if the Bodhisattvas hearing my name from other Buddha-countries, should not all attain the pure Samadhi of emancipation (Suvibhaktavati) from which they could serve innumerable and inconceivable number of Buddhas, Tathagatas, by a moment of thought; and if that Samadhi of theirs should come to an end meanwhile, then may I not attain enlightenment.

**Vow 43:**

If after I have obtained the Buddhahood, that any Bodhisattva of other countries having heard my name, will be incarnated as a member of a noble family (if he so desires) when he dies, otherwise may I not attain enlightenment.

**Vow 44:**

When I obtain the Buddhahood, the Bodhisattvas of other countries having heard my name will all obtain a combination of full virtues and joyfully perform their Bodhisattva-duty, otherwise may I not attain enlightenment.

**Vow 45:**

When I have obtained the Buddhahood, the Bodhisattvas of other countries having heard my name, all will attain the "Samantanugata" (the thoroughly and equal Samadhi in a fixed state of meditation) through that Samadhi they will see innumerable and inconceivable Buddhas constantly till they have obtained the Buddhahood, otherwise may I forbear from obtaining enlightenment.

**Vow 46:**

When I obtain the Buddhahood, the Bodhisattvas of that country of mine should be able to hear the preachings of the Dharma whenever they desire (the voices of teaching will present themselves naturally to their ears), otherwise may I refrain from attaining enlightenment.

**Vow 47:**

When I have obtained the Buddhahood, if the Bodhisattvas of other countries after having heard my name should not immediately reach the state of Avaivartika (i.e. not turning back from Bodhi), then I would refrain from attaining enlightenment.

**Vow 48:**

When I have obtained the Buddhahood, if the Bodhisattvas of other countries having heard my

name should not reach the first, second and third degrees of Dharma-endurance immediately or should turn back from the Law of Buddhas, then I would refrain from attaining enlightenment.

The Buddha said to Ananda, "The Bhiksu Dharmakara, having thus proclaimed those vows, spoke the following verses:

1. I have made vows, unrivaled in all the world;

I will certainly reach the unsurpassed Way.

If these vows should not be fulfilled,

May I not attain perfect Enlightenment.

2. If I should not become a great benefactor

In lives to come for immeasurable kalpas

To save the poor and the afflicted everywhere,

May I not attain perfect Enlightenment.

3. When I attain Buddhahood,

My Name shall be heard throughout the ten quarters;

Should there be any place where it is not heard,

May I not attain perfect Enlightenment.

4. Free of greed and with deep, perfect mindfulness

And pure wisdom, I will perform the sacred practices;

I will seek to attain the unsurpassed Way

And become the teacher of devas and humans.

5. With my divine power I will display great light,

Illuminating the worlds without limit,

And dispel the darkness of the three defilements;  
Thus I will deliver all beings from misery.

6. Having obtained the eye of wisdom,  
I will remove the darkness of ignorance;  
I will block all the evil paths  
And open the gate to the good realms.

7. When merits and virtues are perfected,  
My majestic light shall radiate in the ten quarters,  
Outshining the sun and the moon  
And surpassing the brilliance of the heavens.

8. I will open the Dharma-store for the multitudes  
And endow them all with treasures of merit.  
Being always among the multitudes,  
I will proclaim the Dharma with the lion's roar.

9. I will make offerings to all the Buddhas,  
Thereby acquiring roots of virtue.  
When my vows are fulfilled and my wisdom perfected,  
I shall be the sovereign of the three worlds.

10. Like your unhindered wisdom, O Buddha,  
Mine shall reach everywhere, illuminating all;  
May my supreme wisdom  
Be like yours, Most Excellent Honored One.

11. If these vows are to be fulfilled,

Let this universe of a thousand million worlds shake in response

And let all the devas in heaven

Rain down rare and marvelous flowers."

After Bhisku Dharmakara made the above vows and spoke those verses, the entire earth shook in six ways, and a rain of wonderful flowers fell from heaven, scattering everywhere.

Spontaneous music was heard, and a voice in the sky said, 'Surely you will attain the highest, perfect Enlightenment.'

Since Bhiksu Dharmakata became Buddha, 10 kalpas have past. We have talked about the magnificence of his pure land last week and you may read more details in this sutra.

Thank you for listening!