

The Supplemental Translations

Appendix A:

The forty-eight vows of the Monk ‘Treasury of Purpose’ (Dharmākara, 法藏) from The Longer Scripture on the Buddha of Infinite Life (Sukhāvatī Vyūha Sūtra, 佛說無量壽經)

According to this scripture, when these vows were fulfilled, he ascended as the Enlightened Being Infinite Life & Light (Amita Buddha, 阿彌陀佛), the grace of whose spiritual life still descends into this world to deliver those sentient beings who accept and employ it through faith and practice.

1. If, when I attain enlightenment, the realms of hell, hunger and brutality still arise in this nation, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
2. If, when I attain enlightenment, those in the realms of humanity and heaven in this nation still fall back into the three evil paths after their lives end, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
3. If, when I attain enlightenment, those in the realms of humanity and heaven in this nation are not the color of pure gold, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
4. If, when I attain enlightenment, those in the realms of humanity and heaven in this land are not all seen to be equally beautiful, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
5. If, when I attain enlightenment, those in the realms of humanity and heaven in this land do not remember their previous lives and so recognize the events that occurred during the past hundreds, thousands and millions of lifetimes, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
6. If, when I attain enlightenment, those in the realms of humanity and heaven in this land do not possess the divine eyes of meditation that see the hundreds, thousands and millions of the Buddhas’ nations, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
7. If, when I attain enlightenment, those in the realms of humanity and heaven in this land do not possess the divine ears that hear, accept and embrace the teachings of the hundreds, thousands and millions of Buddhas, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
8. If, when I attain enlightenment, those in the realms of humanity and heaven in this land do not possess the faculty of knowing the minds of others so that they recognize the thoughts of all sentient beings in the hundreds, thousands and millions of the Buddhas’ nations, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
9. If, when I attain enlightenment, those in the realms of humanity and heaven in this land do not possess the magical feet (rddhipādāḥ, 如意足) that can travel anywhere among the hundreds, thousands and millions of the Buddhas’ nations in a single moment, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
10. If, when I attain enlightenment, those in the realms of humanity and heaven in this land should give rise to greedy thoughts of attachment to their own lives, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
11. If, when I attain enlightenment, those in the realms of humanity and heaven in this land do not abide in a collected state of meditation (samāhita, 定聚) until they definitely attain deliverance into spiritual freedom (nirvāṇa, 涅槃), I will not retain this perfect awakening.
12. If, when I attain enlightenment, the light and clarity is limited so that it does not illuminate all of the hundreds, thousands and millions of the Buddhas’ nations, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
13. If, when I attain enlightenment, the lifespan of the grace from my spiritual life (sambhoga kāya, 報身) is limited so that it does not last for hundreds, thousands and millions of lifetimes, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
14. If, when I attain enlightenment, the students of the noble path (srāvakas, 聲聞) in this nation are limited in number, or the number of self-enlightened beings (pratyeka buddhas, 緣覺) living in the hundreds, thousands and millions of worlds over the hundreds of thousands of lifetimes can be counted or known, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
15. If, when I attain enlightenment, the lifespans of those in the realms of humanity and heaven in this land should be unlimited in length, except when they are shortened voluntarily through their own wishes (to descend into the world we must all endure to deliver sentient beings as bodhisattvas). If this is not so, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
16. If, when I attain enlightenment, those in the realms of humanity and heaven in this land hear of the existence of wrongdoing here, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
17. If, when I attain enlightenment, the innumerable Buddhas in the worlds of the ten directions do not praise and glorify my name, I will not retain this perfect awakening.

18. If, when I attain enlightenment, the sentient beings of the ten directions with faithful and contented hearts who aspire to be reborn in my nation recall (my name) up to ten times without interruption, but still do not attain rebirth there, I will not retain this perfect awakening. Only excluded are those who commit the five most consequential kinds of moral offenses (pañca ānantarya, 五逆) and those who malign and ridicule the true nature of life's purpose (saddharma pratikṣepa, 誹謗正法).
19. If, when I attain enlightenment, there are sentient beings in the ten directions who inspire the awakened mind, cultivate merits and virtues and aspire to be reborn in my nation but, at the end of their lives, they do not see me appear before them surrounded by the great assembly, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
20. If, when I attain enlightenment, there are sentient beings in the ten directions who hear my name, reflect on my land, plant roots of virtue and dedicate their lives to being reborn there but do not realize its fruits, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
21. If, when I attain enlightenment, those in the realms of humanity and heaven in this land are not all endowed with the thirty-two auspicious signs found in the greatness of humanity (dvātriṃśan mahā puruṣa lakṣaṇāni, 三十二大人相), I will not retain this perfect awakening.
22. If, when I attain enlightenment, there will be bodhisattvas from the lands of different Buddhas who will descend and be reborn in my nation, they will ultimately become enlightened beings within a single lifetime (eka jāti pratibaddha, 一生補處). Excepted will be those who wish to remain in the world we must all endure as bodhisattvas for the sake of sentient beings by dint of their own free will and their original vows. These will be armored through their vows to amass a host of virtuous roots so that they may ultimately deliver and liberate all kinds of sentient beings. Traveling to many different nations of the Buddhas, they will cultivate all the different kinds of bodhisattva practices, make offerings to all the different enlightened beings that have descended into these worlds from the ten directions, cultivate all the sentient beings in these worlds that are as countless as the sands along the Ganges and establish the noble path that is most supremely true. Transcending the ordinary stages of practice, they will cultivate and learn the virtues of the Bodhisattva 'Wholly Worthy' (Samantabhadra, 普賢). If this is not so, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
23. If, when I attain enlightenment, there are bodhisattvas in my nation who make offerings to the Buddhas and receive their spiritual powers but are unable to everywhere reach all of the immeasurable and countless millions of lands of enlightened beings in the time it takes to eat a single meal, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
24. If, when I attain enlightenment, there are bodhisattvas in this nation who plant roots of virtue before the Buddhas through offerings of their own choice but still do not attain the enlightenment that they seek, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
25. If, when I attain enlightenment, there are bodhisattvas in this nation who are not able to proclaim and teach about the transcendental knowledge of all purposes (sarvajña, 一切智), I will not retain this perfect awakening.
26. If, when I attain enlightenment, there are bodhisattvas in this nation who do not attain the adamant spiritual life (vajra kāya, 金剛身) of Nārayāna (那羅延), the divine spark of the creator that is found in the primordial nature of humanity, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
27. If, when I attain enlightenment, there are sentient beings among those of heaven or humanity, including those endowed with the divine eyes (divya cakṣus, 天眼) of meditation, who can name, understand in detail or count all of the myriad things that adorned my nation with its beautifully pure light and its shapes and forms that are unique, sublime, and inexpressibly countless, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
28. If, when I attain enlightenment, there are bodhisattvas in this land, even including those with very few merits and virtues, who are not able to see the tree of spiritual awakening towering over the seat of enlightenment (bodhi druma, 道場樹) that is four million li (more than a million miles) in height with infinite colors, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
29. If, when I attain enlightenment, bodhisattvas in my land do not attain transcendental knowledge, discernment and eloquence upon accepting, reading and reciting the scriptures that teach about the sublime nature of life's purpose, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
30. If, when I attain enlightenment, the knowledge, discernment and eloquence of the bodhisattvas in this nation is restricted or limited in any way, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
31. If, when I attain enlightenment, my land is not pure of affliction and all the inconceivable worlds of the Buddhas in the ten directions are not everywhere be seen to be infinite, countless and like a clear mirror that reflects all images, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
32. If, when I attain enlightenment, my land is not endowed with the myriad adornments that span from its ground up to the empty space of the sky above, including all of its palaces, pavilions, observation towers, pools, streams, blossoms and trees, and they are not all composed of countless treasures with a hundred thousand different kinds of fragrance, they are not all adorned with a beauty that surpasses anything found in the realms of humanity and heaven, its fragrance does not perfume all the worlds of the ten directions and it does not inspire the bodhisattvas who smell them to cultivate the practices of the Buddhas, I will not retain this perfect awakening.

33. If, when I attain enlightenment, the bodies and minds of all the sentient beings in the immeasurably countless worlds of the Buddhas in the ten directions who are touched by my light are not endowed with a peace and gentleness that surpasses anything found in the realms of heaven and humanity, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
34. If, when I attain enlightenment, sentient beings in the immeasurably countless lands of the Buddhas throughout the ten directions hear these Buddhas' names but are not able to profoundly keep them in mind (gambhīra dhāraṇā, 深總持) with the enduring observation that neither arises nor perishes (anutpattika dharma kṣānti, 無生法忍), I will not retain this perfect awakening.
35. If, when I attain enlightenment, there are those who are effeminate in the immeasurably countless lands of the Buddhas throughout the ten directions and, having heard my name, rejoiced in faith, aspired to awaken their minds to life's greater, transcendental purpose and renounced the evils of being effeminate but, after their lives end, they are again reborn effeminate, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
36. If, when I attain enlightenment, there are hosts of bodhisattvas in the immeasurably countless lands of the Buddhas throughout the ten directions who hear my name but, after the end of their lives, they are unable to maintain celibacy until they have attained enlightenment, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
37. If, when I attain enlightenment, there are those in the realms of humanity and heaven in the countless lands of the Buddhas throughout the ten directions who hear my name, prostrate their five limbs on the ground before me with their head bowed in worship, rejoice in faith and aspire to cultivate the practices of bodhisattvas, but they are not revered by the gods and people of these worlds, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
38. If, when I attain enlightenment, those in the realms of humanity and heaven in this land wish to attain the clothing that is prescribed and praised by the Buddhas and these wonderful clothes spontaneously appear on their bodies, but these clothes should then need altering, dyeing, repairing or cleaning, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
39. If, when I attain enlightenment, those in the realms of humanity and heaven in this land should not enjoy joy and contentment comparable to that of monks (bhikṣus, 比丘) who have eliminated all afflictions, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
40. If, when I attain enlightenment, the bodhisattvas in this nation aspire to see the immeasurable glorious lands of the Buddha throughout the ten directions, but are not able to clearly view all of them reflected among the bejeweled trees in this land just as they can see images of their own faces reflected in a clear mirror, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
41. If, when I attain enlightenment, bodhisattvas from different lands of the Buddhas hear my name but, at any time before attaining enlightenment, their moral capacities are found to be impaired, diminished or inadequate, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
42. If, when I attain enlightenment, bodhisattvas from different nations of the Buddhas hear my name but cannot abide in the pure meditative resolve (samādhi, 三昧) that is free of all affliction, which is necessary to make offerings to countless different Buddhas and blessed ones everywhere in a single moment without losing the intent of one's meditation, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
43. If, when I attain enlightenment, the bodhisattvas from different nations of the Buddhas hear my name are not reborn into noble families after their lives end, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
44. If, when I attain enlightenment, the host of bodhisattvas from different nations of the Buddhas hear my name but do not rejoice, cultivate the practices of the bodhisattvas and plant roots of virtue, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
45. If, when I attain enlightenment, the bodhisattvas in different nations of the Buddhas hear my name but do not attain the resolve of meditation that is endowed with universal equanimity (samantānugata samādhi, 普等三昧) and abide in it until they reach enlightenment, ever seeing all the immeasurably countless enlightened beings that descend into this world (tathāgatas, 如來), I will not retain this perfect awakening.
46. If, when I attain enlightenment, the bodhisattvas in my land do not follow their aspirations and vows and spontaneously hear the teachings on the true nature of life's purpose, I will not retain this perfect awakening.
47. If, when I attain enlightenment, the bodhisattvas in the different nations of the Buddhas who hear my name do not instantly reach the stage of never turning back (avaivartika bhūmi, 不退轉), I will not retain this perfect awakening.
48. If, when I attain enlightenment, the bodhisattvas in the different nations of the Buddhas who hear my name do not immediately attain the first, second and third kinds of enduring observation into the transcendental nature of life's purpose and do not attain the stage of never turning back in all the purposes of the Buddhas, I will not retain this perfect awakening.