

THE TWELVE GREAT ASPIRATIONS OF THE MEDICINE BUDDHA

Excerpted from the Mahayana Sutra:

The Vast Attributes of the Previous Aspiration Prayers of the Noble Victor, The Deity of Medicine, Light of Lapis Lazuli

THE FIRST GREAT ASPIRATION

“At a future time when I have attained unsurpassable, ultimate, and perfectly complete enlightenment, having come to full awakening, then may the light of my body make brilliant, stable, and especially radiant the realms of this universe that are numberless, immeasurable, and beyond any count. May all sentient beings be adorned with the thirty-two marks and the eighty characteristics of a great, noble being. Thus, may all sentient beings become just as I am.” So he prayed.

THE SECOND GREAT ASPIRATION

“At a future time when I have attained unsurpassable, ultimate, and perfectly complete enlightenment, having come to full awakening, may my body resemble precious lapis lazuli, and be fully adorned with utter purity within and without, a radiant clarity free of stains, a great agility in all things, blazing glory and brilliance, physical symmetry, and a filigree of light rays brighter than the sun and moon. For those born within this world and for those who have gone their separate ways into the dark of the dead of night, may my light come in all directions bringing happiness and contentment. May it also bring about virtuous activity.” So he prayed.

THE THIRD GREAT ASPIRATION

“At a future time when I have attained unsurpassable, ultimate, and perfectly complete enlightenment, having come to full awakening, through my wisdom and immeasurable skillful means, may countless realms of sentient beings have inexhaustible wealth. May no one be deprived of anything.” So he prayed.

THE FOURTH GREAT ASPIRATION

“At a future time when I have attained unsurpassable, ultimate, and perfectly complete enlightenment, having come to full awakening, I will place on the path to awakening any

sentient being who has entered a negative path. All those who have entered the shravaka path or the pratyekabuddha path, I will guide into the mahayana.” So he prayed.

THE FIFTH GREAT ASPIRATION

“At a future time when I have attained unsurpassable, ultimate, and perfectly complete enlightenment, having come to full awakening, may any sentient being near to me maintain celibacy. Likewise, through my power, may other innumerable sentient beings beyond measure, having heard my name, hold their three vows and may their discipline not deteriorate. May those whose discipline has been corrupted, not enter into the lower realms.” So he prayed.

THE SIXTH GREAT ASPIRATION

“At a future time when I have attained unsurpassable, ultimate, and perfectly complete enlightenment, having come to full awakening, may any sentient being who has an inferior body, incomplete faculties, an un-pleasant color, a virulent, epidemic disease, impaired limbs, a hunchback, splotchy skin, may any being who is lame, blind, deaf, insane, or struck by illness, upon hearing my name, for each one, may their faculties become whole and their limbs be made perfect.” So he prayed.

THE SEVENTH GREAT ASPIRATION

“At a future time when I have attained unsurpassable, ultimate, and perfectly complete enlightenment, having come to full awakening, for any sentient being whose body is riddled with the pain of various illnesses, who has no refuge nor protector, no material goods nor medicine, no throng of relatives, and who is poor and suffering, when my name comes to their ears, may all their diseases be pacified. Until awakening, may they be free of illness and remain unharmed.” So he prayed.

THE EIGHTH GREAT ASPIRATION

“At a future time when I have attained unsurpassable, ultimate, and perfectly complete enlightenment, having come to full awakening, if some people are intensely afflicted by the faults of a negative birth, despised for having it, and wish to be free of that place of birth, may they be liberated from taking this negative birth again. Until they attain ultimate awakening, may a positive rebirth always arise for them.” So he prayed.

THE NINTH GREAT ASPIRATION

“At a future time when I have attained unsurpassable, ultimate, and perfectly complete enlightenment, having come to full awakening, I will free all sentient beings from the maras’ noose. I will establish in the correct view all those in disharmony due to various views and the problems of discord. Ultimately, I will teach them the practice of bodhisattvas.” So he prayed.

THE TENTH GREAT ASPIRATION

“At a future time when I have attained unsurpassable, ultimate, and perfectly complete enlightenment, having come to full awakening, may the power of my merit completely liberate [beings] from all harm: those who are terrorized by the fear of a ruler, who are in bondage and beaten, who have fallen into a trap, who are sentenced to death, who are under the heel of deception, who are not successful, and whose body, speech, and mind are afflicted by suffering.” So he prayed.

THE ELEVENTH GREAT ASPIRATION

“At a future time when I have attained unsurpassable, ultimate, and perfectly complete enlightenment, having come to full awakening, for those who are burning with hunger and thirst, and who commit negative actions in their continuous efforts to search for food, may I satisfy them physically with food that has [a pleasing] color, smell, and taste. Later, I will bring them to the most blissful taste of the dharma.” So he prayed.

THE TWELFTH GREAT ASPIRATION

“At a future time when I have attained unsurpassable, ultimate, and perfectly complete enlightenment, having come to full awakening, for those who experience suffering day and night, being naked with no clothes to wear, poor and miserable, [too] cold or hot, afflicted by flies and maggots, I will give generously whatever they can enjoy, [such as] clothes that have been dyed many colors. I will fulfill all their wishes just as they desire with a variety of precious ornaments and decorations, necklaces, incense, ointments, the sound of music, musical instruments, and hand cymbals.” So he prayed.

Manjushri, these are the twelve aspirations made by the Victor, the Tathagata, the Arhant, the Perfect Buddha, the Lapis Lazuli Light of Medicine, when he was practicing the conduct of a bodhisattva.

Translated by Michele Martin © March 2000.