

## The 48th Vow: All Will Attain the Position of Non-Retrogression

This is the last Vow, "All will instantly realize the state of non-retrogression." The text states, "If they are unable to instantly realize the state of non-retrogression in all Buddha-Dharmas, I will not procure Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi." This is talking about the bodhisattvas in other Buddha lands, upon hearing the name of Amitabha, will immediately obtain the position of non-retrogression, which is called *avaivartika* in Sanskrit.

There are Three Non-Retrogressions:

1. Non-retrogression in position: They have become a saint and will not regress to being a mortal. In Theravada, attaining *srota-āpanna* is non-retrogression in position. The saints of Theravada will not degenerate to any of the three evil paths and will definitely transcend The Three Realms of Desire, Form, and Formlessness in the future. After seven rounds between the heaven realm and human realm, they will attain arhathood.
2. Non-retrogression in cultivation: This cultivation refers to bodhisattva-conduct in Mahayana practice. They dwell peacefully in Mahayana-Dharma, bear all beings in their every thought, practice the Mahayana path, cultivate the Bodhisattva Way, and will not regress to learning Hinayana.
3. Non-retrogression in mind: Their minds stay in the state of neither being moved nor giving rise to thoughts. They have entered the one-true-dharma-realm.

So non-retrogression in position, in cultivation, and in mind are the Three Non-Retrogressions. They have become the bodhisattva of *avaivartika*.

## Dew-Like Aspiration for Dao (Bodhi)

The bodhisattvas in other worlds who practice other methods find it very difficult to attain such a high position of Three Non-Retrogression. According to *The Nirvana Sutra*, bodhisattvas who bring forth their bodhicitta are many. Many to what extent? Like baby fishes. There are many baby fishes, but very few can grow into adult fishes. Likewise, bodhisattvas who bring forth their bodhicitta are as many as baby fishes, but very few have achievements.

Many practitioners at the beginning of encountering Buddhism and taking refuge are indeed very sincere and joyful. They feel that being able to hear Dharma is truly phenomenal. But as a saying describes, "Learning for one year, Buddha is before his eyes." He is quite sincere. "Learning for two years, Buddha is far away on the horizon." He is not always studying, he is quite distant from Buddha. "Learning for three years, Buddha has become misty clouds and disappeared." He has regressed!

Ancient virtuous ones said, "This is the dew-like aspiration for bodhi (Dao)." This kind of aspiration is not resolute, it will be gone when encountering external temptation. So, it is NOT

EASY to learn Buddhism. Learning Buddhism without retrogression is a rarity among rarities, especially in the contaminated era of this five-turbidity world. All Buddhas praise you!

We wish not to regress in this life, particularly we have encountered the Pure Land Method, such a good condition allowing us to transcend The Three Realms and to be born into Sukhāvātī in this life. If we regress, we have no idea how many kalpas and how many reincarnations we will have to go through before we again encounter the Pure Land Method that enables us to transcend birth-death samsara.

## How to Not Regress

Despite the fact that we were also worried about retrogression, it is indeed not necessary if we delve deeply into the Pure Land Method. Why? Because there is the blessing from the mighty power of Amitabha's 48th Vow allowing us to not regress. *The Amitabha Sutra* also states very clearly: As long as we can hear this sutra, uphold it, and hear all Buddha's names, which refers to the name Amitabha, we will then not regress on the path to Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi. We will instantly attain the position of non-retrogression.

*The Amitabha Sutra* has another sentence stating even more clearly, "If there are people who have made the vow, who now make the vow, or who will make the vow to aspire to be born into Amitabha's Land, these people will not regress on the path to Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi." We are all very familiar with this text, right? Do you comprehend its meaning? If you do, you will rest assured.

Some have already made a vow to seek Sukhāvātī rebirth. Some, upon hearing the name, make the vow right now. Or some, upon hearing the name still having not let go genuinely, will make the vow in the future. All of us here are included. All will not regress on the path to Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi. What do we rely on? We rely on the blessing of Amitabha's Fundamental Vows and the blessing of all Buddhas in ten directions. This text has praised the merit of "upon hearing the name" to the extreme!

The only worry is that we do not "hear the name." If we do, we will not regress. So, "upon hearing the name," this condition is really phenomenal and rare. We truly feel grateful for the blessing of all Buddhas. We mortals cannot even eradicate one level of defilement, cannot resist temptation, yet can be non-regressed on the bodhi path. How can we possibly make it if it is not the result of Buddha's blessing? Being awakened from this truth, we will spontaneously give rise to the heart of gratitude to all Buddhas.

How do we express our gratitude? We must cultivate earnestly to repay Buddhas' benevolence. If we do not cultivate, we really forsake Buddhas. Amitabha treats us so nicely—arranging everything for us, even letting us not regress—if we still do not cultivate earnestly, we have forsaken Buddhas too much. We must set a good example, being a good role model for all beings.

This is the 48th Vow: Instantly attain non-retrogression. Amitabha said it well, “If bodhisattvas are unable to instantly attain the state of non-retrogression in all Buddha-Dharma, I will not procure Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi.” Now Amitabha has attained Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi and has become a Buddha for ten kalpas, it indicates that all these Vows have been realized. None of them is an illusive or empty vow.

Thanks everyone for learning with us. Namo Amitabha!