

## Pure Lands in Ten Directions

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Good morning!

In this month, we will talk about pure lands. In this first week, we will make clear the following concepts that may come to our mind when we talk about pure lands. What is pure land in the sutra? What are ten directions in the sutra? What are the three periods? How big is one Buddha land? How do the pure lands form? How many pure lands are there in the universe? What are the pure lands mentioned in the sutra? What do they look like?

First, what are pure lands?

Pure lands refer to clean lands, sacred lands. They are majestic places where the pure merits reside. They are accomplished by great vows brought up by the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the land of causation. In contrast, filthy lands, or dirty lands are formed by the karma of the living beings.

Second, what are the ten directions?

Ten directions in the sutras refer to the east, the south, the west, the north, the southeast, the southwest, the northeast, the northwest, the above and the below. Though it's called ten directions, in fact, they mean all directions.

The three periods of time mean the past, the future and the present.

How big is one Buddha land? One Buddha land is the space where one Buddha instructs living beings. In the sutra, it's called trichiliocosm.

According to the sutra, the Buddha said the system of one sun and one moon is one small world; one thousand small worlds are called one Small Thousand World. One thousand Small

Thousand Worlds are called one Middle Thousand World. And one thousand Middle Thousand Worlds are called one Big Thousand World. One Big Thousand World is one trichiliocosm and is one buddha land. One Buddha expounds dharma and instructs living beings in one buddha land.

How do the pure lands form? As mentioned earlier, formation of one pure land is reliant on that buddha's great vows. For example, the well-known western blissed world was formed due to the great vows of Amitabha. The pure land of Aksobhya Buddha was formed by the great vows of Aksobhya Buddha. The eastern pure Liu Li world was formed by the great vows of the Medicine Buddha. The Tusita pure land is where the to-be Buddha Maitreya lives and achieved due to Maitreya Buddha's merits. The above four pure lands are the four famous pure lands in Buddhism.

There are countless buddha lands as mentioned by the Shakyamuni Buddha in the sutras. In *the Sutra of the Buddha's Teaching on Amitabha*, the Buddha said, "... , from here, passing through ten trillion buddha lands to the west, there is a world called Utmost Happiness. In this land, a Buddha called Amitabha is teaching Dharma right now."

In *the Sutra of the Medicine Buddha*, the Buddha said, "East of this world, past countless buddha-lands, more than the grains of sand in ten Ganges Rivers, there exists a world called Pure Liu Li. The Buddha of that world is called the Medicine Buddha Liu Li Radiance Tathagata.

In *the Arya Sanghata Sutra*, the Buddha sent the Bodhisattva, Sarva-shura, to look among the world system in ten directions and see where tathagatas are appearing and where there are seats set up. When Sarva-shura came back, he said to the Buddha, "Blessed One, when I went to all the world systems of the ten directions, Blessed One, by one of my supernatural powers, I saw 99 trillions of buddha lands and by two supernatural powers, I saw 100 trillions

of buddha lands. On the seventh day, I arrived at the Padmottara world and on the way, I also saw hundreds of trillions of unshakable buddha lands. Then, Blessed one, I saw tathagatas teaching the Dharma in 92 trillion buddha fields. And on that very day, in 80 trillion buddha fields, I saw 80 trillion tathagatas arising. After making prostrations to all those blessed ones, I went further. Blessed One, on that very day, I passed 39 trillion buddha fields, and in those 39 trillion buddha fields, 39 trillion bodhisattvas arose and on that very day, they were completely enlightened in the unsurpassed, perfect and complete enlightenment. I circumambulated those blessed ones three times and passed by. Then, Blessed One, in 6 billion worlds, I saw 6 billion buddhas. I made prostrations to the buddhas and continued on straightway. Then, Blessed One, I saw 10 billion buddha lands and 10 billion buddhas were entering Nirvana. I also made prostrations to the buddhas as well and continued on...”

From the above descriptions, we know that there are countless buddha lands in all directions. So, what do they look like? Let’s see how the Buddha described the land of Tathāgata Akṣobhya in the *Akṣobhya Buddha Sutra*.

“Furthermore, Śāriputra, that buddha land is peerless in merit and magnificence among the innumerable buddha lands. Śāriputra, that Tathāgata has achieved a superbly adorned buddha land because he made those great vows when following the Bodhisattva path, just as I have now achieved what I originally vowed to achieve.

“Śāriputra, when Tathāgata Akṣobhya, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One, realized supreme enlightenment, at that instant, at that very moment, all the sentient beings of that Bid Thousand World, with or without the deva-eye, could see Tathāgata Akṣobhya. Śāriputra, it was also the fulfillment of that Tathāgata’s original vows that cause the sentient beings to attain this blessing.

“Moreover, Śāriputra, when Tathāgata Akṣobhya realized supreme enlightenment while sitting on the Bodhi-site, Pāpīyān, the king of demons, did not try to hinder him. Also, innumerable hundreds of thousands of gods made offerings to the Tathāgata with fragrant flowers and celestial music; and each one brought fine, powdered sandalwood to sprinkle over the Buddha. Those powdered incense and garlands of flowers formed a canopy in the air. Śāriputra, all this was made possible by the power of Tathāgata Akṣobhya’s original vows.”

“Furthermore, Śāriputra, when that Buddha attained enlightenment, a great light illuminated the whole Big Thousand World, outshining the lights of the suns, moons, and heavens. The appearance of this auspicious sign was also due to the fulfillment of Tathāgata Akṣobhya’s past vows.”

At the time, Śāriputra said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, when Bodhisattva Akṣobhya was following the Bodhisattva path in the past, he wore the great armor of vigor and was therefore able to make those great vows. Because he had cultivated the practices and vows of a Bodhisattva, he could cause innumerable hundreds of thousands of sentient beings to plant good roots leading to supreme enlightenment. He further dedicated those good roots to the attainment of the supreme enlightenment and of a pure Buddha-land, which were both fulfilled through the power of such a vow of dedication.”

The Buddha told Śāriputra, “Moreover, in that Buddha-land, there is a Bodhi-tree made of the seven treasures, one Yojana in height. The trunk of the tree is half Yojana in circumference, the shade of its branches and leaves, one Yojana in circumference. Under the tree is a platform, four Yojana in circumference, with steps leading down to the ground. That Buddha was seated on the platform when he realized enlightenment. Around the Bodhi-tree are rows

of palm trees and jasmine trees, which, in the gentle breeze, gave forth a harmonious and elegant sound surpassing all worldly music.

“Furthermore, Śāriputra, that buddha land does not have the three miserable realms of existence. What are the three? They are: the hell realm, the animal realm and the ghost realm. All sentient beings in that buddha land have accomplished the ten good deeds. The ground is as flat as a palm and the color of gold, with no gullies, brambles, or gravel; it is as soft as cotton, sinking as soon as one’s foot steps on it and returning to its original state as soon as the foot is lifted.

“Śāriputra, that buddha land is free of three kinds of sickness. What are the three? They are: the diseases caused by wind, coldness, and phlegm. Śāriputra, in that buddha land all sentient beings are free from lying, an ugly appearance, a bad odor, and filth. They have little desire, hatred, and ignorance. There are no jails or prisoners.

“Śāriputra, in that buddha land, no one learns or follows heterodox doctrines. The trees there are always laden with flowers and fruits, and there is also a special kind of tree named kalpataru, which produces fine garments of five colors. The garments remain bright, beautiful, fresh, lean, and extraordinarily fragrant all the time. Just as celestial flowers give forth various kinds of fragrance, so do the garments. The fragrance issuing from the bodies of those who wear these garments is exactly the same as that issuing from the garments. The sentient beings in that land, like people in this world who are rich and happy, have plenty of wonderful garments to wear as they please.

“Śāriputra, the sentient beings in that land, like those in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three, obtain the food and drink they need whenever they wish; and they do not discharge excrement, filth, or anything impure.

“Śāriputra, the palaces and towers of that land are all decorated with the seven treasures and surrounded by many ponds filled with the water of eight meritorious qualities, to be enjoyed at will. There are also many gardens and pavilions, all pure and clean. The sentient beings there all live with joy in the Dharma.

“Śāriputra, in that land, there is no jealousy among human beings. Every woman is better than the best in this world, and has achieved celestial merits of which earthly merits are less than one hundredth, one thousandth, one hundred thousandth, one of a hundred thousand million myriad parts, one of any number of parts, numerical or figurative, down to one infinitesimal part.

“Śāriputra, the people of that land possess lavishly decorated couches made of the seven treasures, in accordance with their karmic results. When they sleep or rest, they use pillows made of cotton floss. All these splendid things are achieved by virtue of Tathāgata Akṣobhya’s past vows.

“Śāriputra, the food and drink of the people in that land are the same as those of the gods in color, fragrance, and taste. Just as the people of Uttarakuru have only one king, so the people of the Land of Wonderful Joy have only Tathāgata Akṣobhya as their Dharma-Lord; and just as the gods of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three attend on Śakra, so the people of the Land of Wonderful Joy all attend on Tathāgata Akṣobhya.

“Śāriputra, you should know the merits and magnificence of Akṣobhya Buddha’s land.

Śāriputra, none of the sentient beings of that land are mentally unrestrained. Why? It is also because of the power of Tathāgata Akṣobhya’s original vows.”

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“Furthermore, Śāriputra, in that land, if the sentient beings wish it, a clean pond will appear at their thought, filled with the water of eight meritorious qualities, fit for drinking, rinsing the mouth, washing, and bathing. If anyone dislikes it, it will immediately disappear.

“Śāriputra, in that buddha land, there is a fragrant breeze, gentle, agreeable, and pleasant to everyone’s mind. The fragrant breeze carries fragrance to all gods and humans who like it, but not to those who do not like it. Śāriputra, all these merits and splendors are brought about by the power of Tathāgata Akṣobhya’s original vows. ...

“Furthermore, in that land, mother and child are safe and unsullied, from conception to birth. How can this be? All this is due to the power of Tathāgata Akṣobhya’s original vows.

Śāriputra, in that buddha land, there is such peace and bliss. “

Śāriputra, in the land of Tathāgata Akṣobhya, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One, there is neither trade nor trader, neither farms nor farming; there is happiness at all times.

“Śāriputra, in that buddha land, singing and playing do not involve sexual desire. The sentient beings there derive their joy exclusively from the Dharma.

“Śāriputra, in that buddha land, there are rows of jasmine trees and palm trees, which, when stirred by a gentle breeze, will give forth a harmonious and elegant sound that surpass even the celestial music played by gods.

“Śāriputra, any Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva who intends to acquire a buddha land should accumulate such merits, adornments, and purity for his buddha land as Tathāgata Akṣobhya did for his when he was following the Bodhisattva practices.

“Śāriputra, there is no darkness in that buddha land. It has suns and moons, but they do not give out light. Why? Because Tathāgata Akṣobhya has an ever shining light which illuminates the entire buddha land.

“Śāriputra, if a wish-fulfilling pearl is put in the center of a high, large tower with its windows and doors closed tightly, the sentient beings therein will see a brilliant light day and night. In the same matter, the sentient beings of that buddha land always see the radiance of the Tathāgata. Śāriputra, the large tower stands for the World of Wonderful Joy; the wish-fulfilling pearl stands for Tathāgata Akṣobhya; the light of the wish-fulfilling pearl, the light of that Buddha; and the sentient beings within the tower, the sentient beings in the World of Wonderful Joy.

“Śāriputra, wherever Tathāgata Akṣobhya walks or stands, a thousand petaled lotus appears spontaneously to support his feet. The flower is golden in color; there is nothing like it in this world. Śāriputra, this is also achieved by the superb power of the vows of Tathāgata Akṣobhya, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One.”

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The above is a small part of descriptions of the land of Tathagata Aksobhya Buddha. Every buddha land is inconceivable and magnificent. It is impossible to completely describe by words even in kalpas. Only by cultivating diligently and improving our Samadhi power can we one day see the buddha lands by ourselves.

Thank you for listening!