

The Smaller Pure Land Sutra

(Taisho Tripitaka 0367)

Translated during the Tang Dynasty by Tripitaka Master Yiun-Tzong
(Hsuan-tsang)

Thus have I heard. One time, the Bhagavan was residing at the Anathapindada retreat in the Jetavana Grove near Sravasti, with a great bhiksu congregation of 1,250 people, all of whom were venerable voice hearers, respected by the community, and great Arhats. Their names were: the Venerable Sariputra, Mahamaudgalyayana, Mahakasyapa, and Aniruddha. These were among the great voice hearers the foremost leaders.

Further, he was accompanied by an immeasurable number of bodhisattva-mahasattvas, all of whom resided in the seat of irreversibility [*] and were myriadly adorned by measureless merits. Their names were: Wondrous Fortune Bodhisattva, Undefeatable Bodhisattva, Always Diligent Bodhisattva, and Uninterrupted Peace Bodhisattva. These were among the great bodhisattvas the foremost leaders.

Further, Indra, the great King of the Brahma heaven, was present, as was the Lord of the Saha world, and the four defenders of the world (lokapalas). These were the foremost leaders among the hundreds of thousands of kotis of nayutas in the assembly of Gods. And from the remaining worlds a measureless number of Gods, men, and Asuras came to hear the Dharma, and who as a group seated themselves.

At that time, the World Honored One addressed Sariputra, "You should know that to the West of this realm, beyond hundreds of thousands of kotis of nayutas of Buddha lands, there is a Buddha realm named 'Blissful'. In that realm is a World Honored One whose name is 'Infinite Lifespan' and 'Infinite Light'; a Tathagata, an Arhat of perfect awakening, who completely fulfills the ten epithets of the Buddhas. There presently he resides with body and mind at rest, abides and

upholds [that realm], and for the sentient beings expounds and propagates the Dharma which is most deep, minute, and wondrous, causing them to attain that most excellent blessing of peaceful happiness.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, what are the causes and what are the conditions of that Buddha realm being called 'Blissful'? Sariputra, it originated from the sort of sentient beings in that realm, who are devoid of all bodily and mental anguish and affliction; but who instead possess an infinitely pure joyful happiness. This is why it is called the realm of bliss.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, everywhere in the blissful realm, that pure Buddha land, there are seven kinds of paths lined with wondrous and precious hand railings, seven kinds of paths lined with rows of precious Tala trees, and there are seven kinds of precious netting. Everywhere there are gardens encircled with four treasured adornments: golden treasures, silver treasures, emerald treasures, and crystalline treasures; all being wondrously ornate and beautiful. Sariputra, in that Buddha land, such are the myriads of finely ornate and beautiful meritorious adornments which are very lovely and delightful. This is why it is called the realm of bliss.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, everywhere in the blissful realm, that pure Buddha land, there are seven wondrous treasure lakes and eight meritorious waters which fill them. What are called the eight meritorious waters? 1) clarity, 2) clear ice, 3) sweetly beautiful, 4) light and soft, 5) glistening, 6) serene, 7) when drunk, it quenches the inestimable pangs of hunger and thirst, and 8) having drunk it, it supports the continuation of the roots of the four gross elements. These increase the blessings of the various and most excellent good roots, and so the many deeds of the myriad beings function to bring about constant happiness. The bottoms of the treasure lakes are covered with golden sands. On each of their four sides, entirely encircling them, there are four sets of stairs [leading into them]. These four adornments are very lovely and delightful. The lakes have all around them wondrously jeweled trees and among them are ornamented pathways with perfumed airs of a sweet aroma. The seven treasures adorn the trees are very lovely and delightful. What are the seven treasures? 1) Gold, 2) silver, 3) emerald, 4) crystal, 5) ruby, 6) marble (asman) [?], and 7) white coral (musaragalva). In these lakes, there are always variously hued lotus blossoms whose diameter was like that of cart wheels:-- blue ..., yellow ..., red ..., white ..., and all four Sariputra, in that Buddha land, such are the myriads of finely ornate and beautiful meritorious adornments which are very lovely and delightful. This is why it is

called the realm of bliss.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, spontaneously in the blissful realm, that pure Buddha land, there are constant, measureless, and boundless myriads of wondrously delightful talents. There are voices singing harmoniously, being lovely and delightful. The sentient beings who hear these wondrous voices have their unwholesome afflictions entirely and completely annulled. The infinite number of good dharmas gradually advance throughout in their long lives and speed them along to the realization of the supreme and perfect bodhi. Sariputra, in that Buddha land, such are the myriads of finely ornate and beautiful meritorious adornments which are very lovely and delightful. This is why it is called the realm of bliss.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, everywhere in the blissful realm, that pure Buddha land, pervasively the entire mass of the great earth consists of pure gold. Its touch is soft and pliable, the smell clean, and the light radiant. Measurelessly and boundlessly wondrous treasures decorate it throughout. Sariputra, in that Buddha land, such are the myriads of finely ornate and beautiful meritorious adornments which are very lovely and delightful. This is why it is called the realm of bliss.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, constantly in the realm of bliss, that pure Buddha land, day and night throughout the six periods, there rains down various sorts of wondrous Heavenly flowers which are in light blessed, in smell sweet, in feel delicate and pliable, and variously hued. Although they lead the viewer's body and mind to be pleased and joyful, there is no craving or attachment. Growing into old age, the sentient beings' most excellent merits are measureless, boundless, and inconceivable. Those sentient beings who day and night through the six periods constantly uphold and support the Infinite Lifespan Buddha, each morning collect these heavenly flowers. In the time of taking a single meal, they fly off in all directions into other infinite realms to give offerings to the hundreds of thousands of kotis of Buddhas in those Buddha places. Each, with the hundreds of thousands of kotis of flowers which they were carrying, scattered flower offerings and then returned to their original dwellings, frolicking in heavenly abodes [on the way]. Sariputra, in that Buddha land, such are the myriads of finely ornate and beautiful meritorious adornments which are very lovely and delightful. This is why it is called the realm of bliss.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, constantly in the realm of bliss, that pure Buddha land, there are various sorts of extraordinarily fine and lovely myriads of variously colored birds: geese, hawks, herons, swans, cranes, peacocks, sparrows, parrots,

kalavinkas, [all] birds of varying lifespan. These myriad birds, day and night throughout the six periods, always are gathering together in flocks to produce peaceful bird song. According to each's species, their voices promulgate and popularize the subtle Dharma, which is known as the deep, profound thought, abiding in the proper detachment. According to their spiritual capacity, the strength of their roots, are their branches of enlightenment in the measureless and subtle Dharma. The myriad beings of that land having heard their singing, each then think of the Buddha, think of the Dharma, and think of the Sangha, cultivating and sharing among themselves measureless merits. You, Sariputra:-- What do you think? Could the myriad birds of that land have come to be born into such an evil destiny and accumulate there? You should not hold this view. Why is that? That Buddha's pure land is devoid of the three evil paths. Further, the names of the three evil destinies are unknown [in that land]. How much more, then, could truly evil karma be incurred by and cause rebirth [of sentient beings as] these myriads of birds? You should know that all of them the Infinite Lifespan Buddha has conjured into being and sent off by him to propagate the measureless Dharma voice and, by so doing, bless sentient beings with a peaceful happiness. Sariputra, in that Buddha land, such are the myriads of finely ornate and beautiful meritorious adornments which are very lovely and delightful. This is why it is called the realm of bliss.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, always in the realm of bliss, that pure Buddha land, there are wondrous winds blowing through the treasure trees and the treasure nettings, producing a fine and wondrous sound, like hundreds of thousands of kotis of heavenly musical instruments playing simultaneously. They produce minutely fine sounds which are very lovely and delightful. Such are the constant and wondrous winds that are in that land. In the myriad beings of that land, who have heard this sound, there arises the thought of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, with the intention of measureless merit. Sariputra, in that Buddha land, such are the myriads of finely ornate and beautiful meritorious adornments which are very lovely and delightful. This is why it is called the realm of bliss.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, in the realm of bliss, that pure Buddha land, there are measureless, boundless, inconceivably profound and extraordinary happenings, such as the provisional explanation of the Sutras throughout hundreds of thousands of kotis of nayutas of kalpas, using their measureless hundreds of thousands of kotis of nayutas of languages. Each and every one of these languages producing immeasurable voices praising their merit and also their inexhaustibility. This is why it is called the realm of bliss.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, what are the circumstances in the realm of bliss, that pure Buddha land, leading to the Buddha there being named 'Infinite Lifespan'? Sariputra, it is from that tathagata and the sentient beings lifespan spanning infinitely countless kalpas. It is because of this circumstance that that land's tathagata is named 'Infinite Lifespan'. Sariputra, the Infinite Lifespan Buddha having come to realize the attainment of the supremely unexcelled bodhi, he has since governed his land for ten great kalpas. Sariputra, what are the circumstances leading to that Buddha being called 'Infinite Light'? Sariputra, it is from that tathagata's always emitting infinite, boundless, and wondrous lights which pervasively illuminate all the Buddha lands in the ten directions, offering those lands [a view of] that Buddha's activity without there being any obstacles. It is because of this circumstance that that land's tathagata is called 'Infinite Light'. Sariputra, the Buddha of that pure land has consummated thusly such meritorious adornments which are very lovely and delightful. This is why it is called the realm of bliss.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, in the realm of bliss, that pure Buddha land, the Infinite Lifespan Buddha always has an infinite number of voice hearer disciples, all of whom are great Arhats and have consummated various kinds of wondrous merits. Their measure is boundless, their number inestimable. Sariputra, the Buddha of that pure land has consummated thusly such meritorious adornments which are very lovely and delightful. This is why it is called the realm of bliss.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, in the realm of bliss, that pure Buddha land, the Infinite Lifespan Buddha always has an infinite number of bodhisattva disciples, all of whom have only one life bound by fetters and have consummated various sorts of wondrous merits. Their measure is boundless, and their inestimable. They have provisionally explained the Sutras throughout a countless number of kalpas, praising their merit, and the inexhaustibility of all. Sariputra, in that Buddha land, there is consummated thusly such meritorious adornments which are very lovely and delightful. This is why it is called the realm of bliss.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, if the sentient beings are to born into that land, it is necessary for them to be irreversible, never again falling into the evil destinies in the lands bordering [the pure land] down to the base, neglectful, contrary forms of transmigration. Always relaxing with the Buddhas of the Pure Land, they are extremely proficient in practicing the vows and making progress. Resolute and firm shall be their realization of the supremely unexcelled bodhi. Sariputra, in that

Buddha land, there is consummated thusly such meritorious adornments which are very lovely and delightful. This is why it is called the realm of bliss.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, if sentient beings should hear of that Western pure Buddha land of the Infinite Lifespan Buddha's myriad adornments of immeasurable merits, all shall respond by initiating the vow to be born in the Buddha land. Why is that? If they are to be born into that land, they will have attained such immeasurable merits with which they are myriadly adorned, they would be great worthies gathered into a single assembly, receiving the function of such immeasurable merits which myriadly adorn the Pure Buddha land. Their delight in the Mahayana Dharma would be constant and irreversible and measureless would be their practice of vows, their concentration increasing progressive, and so they shall quickly realize the supremely unexcelled bodhi. Sariputra, the kind of sentient beings who are born into that Buddha land will have accomplished measureless and boundless merits. Not of lesser good roots are the sentient beings who will be reborn into the Infinite Lifespan Buddha's blissful realm, that Pure Buddha Land.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, suppose there is a good son or good daughter of pure faith, who hears thusly of the Infinite Lifespan Buddha's immeasurable, boundless, and inconceivable merit, the name of his realm of 'bliss', and its meritorious adornments. Having heard of it, they will meditate upon it -- whether for one day and night, or two, or three, or four, or five, or six, or seven [days and nights] -- they think about its essence, devoid of confusion. When this good son or good daughter is on the verge of the end of their lifespan, the Infinite Lifespan Buddha accompanied by his measureless voice hearer and bodhisattva disciples will circle him front and back, and come to rest before him. Compassionately conferring aid upon them, they will cause his mind to be without disorder. When he has left his current life, he will follow that Buddha and his assembly and be born into the Infinite Lifespan Buddha's realm of bliss, that pure Buddha land.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, I have examined the circumstances leading to the blessing of peaceful happiness of that great event. And I speak sincerely and truthfully when I say that if there are good sons and good daughters of pure faith who hear thusly of the Infinite Lifespan Buddha's inconceivable merit, the name of his realm of 'bliss', that pure Buddha land, all of them will respond by faithfully receiving [this teaching] and initiate the vow to cultivate their practice to be born in that Buddha land as I have instructed.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, as I now am praising the Infinite Lifespan Buddha's measureless, boundless, and inconceivable Buddha land and merit, so to the East also there presently resides the Imperturbable Tathagata, Mountain Pendant Tathagata, Great Mountain Tathagata, Mountain Light Tathagata, and Wondrous Pendant Tathagata. These are among the Buddhas who like the sands of the Ganges reside in the East. Each one has his own pure Buddha land presently, and their long and broad tongues completely cover the billion realms all around them, and speaking sincerely and truthfully, say: 'You sentient beings! All of you should faithfully receive thusly Praise for the Inconceivable Buddha land's Merit Accumulated by All the Buddhas Dharma-Entrance'.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, thusly to the South there also presently resides the Moon and Sun Light Tathagata, the Famed Light Tathagata, the Great Light Hoard Tathagata, Vessel of Intoxicating Light Tathagata [?], Boundless Diligence Tathagata. These are among the Buddhas who like the sands of the Ganges reside to the South. Each one has his own pure Buddha land presently, and their long and broad tongues completely cover the billion realms all around them, and speaking sincerely and truthfully, say: 'You sentient beings! All of you should faithfully receive thusly Praise for the Inconceivable Buddha land's Merit Accumulated by All the Buddhas Dharma-Entrance'.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, thusly to the West there also presently resides the Infinite Lifespan Tathagata, Infinite Treasury Tathagata, Infinite Light Tathagata, Infinite Pendant Tathagata, Great Sovereign Tathagata, Great Light Tathagata, and Blazing Light Tathagata, Great Treasure Pendant Tathagata, and Light Emitter Tathagata. These are among the Buddhas who like the sands of the Ganges reside to the West. Each one has his own pure Buddha land presently, and their long and broad tongues completely cover the billion realms all around them, and speaking sincerely and truthfully, say: 'You sentient beings! All of you should faithfully receive thusly Praise for the Inconceivable Buddha land's Merit Accumulated by All the Buddhas Dharma-Entrance'.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, thusly to the North there are also presently resides the Infinite Light Adornment of Penetrating Awakened Wisdom Tathagata, Infinite Heavenly Drum Beat and Great Voice Tathagata, Great Treasury Tathagata, Network of Lights Tathagata, and Salendraraja Tathagata. These are among the Buddhas who like the sands of the Ganges reside to the North. Each one has his own pure Buddha land presently, and their long and broad tongues completely cover the billion realms all around them and, speaking sincerely and truthfully,

say: 'You sentient beings! All of you should faithfully receive thusly Praise for the Inconceivable Buddha land's Merit Accumulated by All the Buddhas Dharma-Entrance'.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, thusly to the Nadir there also presently resides the Constantly Emitted Light which Demonstrates All Subtle Dharmas of the True Principle King's Extremely Virtuous Light Tathagata, Lion Tathagata, Praiseworthy Light Tathagata, True Dharma Tathagata, Subtle Dharma Tathagata, Dharma Pendant Tathagata, Meritorious Friend Tathagata, and Meritorious Epithet Tathagata. These are among the Buddhas who like the sands of the Ganges reside to the Nadir. Each one has his own pure Buddha land presently, and their long and broad tongues completely cover the billion realms all around them and, speaking sincerely and truthfully, say: 'You sentient beings! All of you should faithfully receive thusly Praise for the Inconceivable Buddha land's Merit Accumulated by All the Buddhas Dharma-Entrance'.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, thusly to the Zenith there also presently resides the Brahma Voice Tathagata, Long Cherished King Tathagata, Incense and Light Tathagata, Very Virtuous Like the Crimson Lotus Blossom Tathagata, and Demonstration of All the Meanings of Blessing Tathagata. These are among the Buddhas who like the sands of the Ganges reside to the Zenith. Each one has his own pure Buddha land presently, and their long and broad tongues completely cover the billion realms all around them and, speaking sincerely and truthfully, say: 'You sentient beings! All of you should faithfully receive thusly Praise for the Inconceivable Buddha land's Merit Accumulated by All the Buddhas Dharma-Entrance'.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, thusly to the Southeast there also presently resides the Supreme and Extensively Great Thundercloud Voice King Tathagata. He is among the Buddhas who like the sands of the Ganges reside to the Southeast. Each one has his own pure Buddha land presently, and their long and broad tongues completely cover the billion realms all around them and, speaking sincerely and truthfully, say: 'You sentient beings! All of you should faithfully receive thusly Praise for the Inconceivable Buddha land's Merit Accumulated by All the Buddhas Dharma-Entrance'.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, thusly to the Southwest there also presently resides the Supreme Sunray Called 'Merit' Tathagata. He is among the Buddhas who like the sands of the Ganges reside to the Southwest. Each one has his own pure Buddha

land presently, and their long and broad tongues completely cover the billion realms all around them and, speaking sincerely and truthfully, say: 'You sentient beings! All of you should faithfully receive thusly Praise for the Inconceivable Buddha land's Merit Accumulated by All the Buddhas Dharma-Entrance'.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, thusly to the Northwest there also presently resides the Flame of Infinite Merit King's Light Tathagata. He is among the Buddhas who like the sands of the Ganges reside to the Northwest. Each one has his own pure Buddha land presently, and their long and broad tongues completely cover the billion realms all around them and, speaking sincerely and truthfully, say: 'You sentient beings! All of you should faithfully receive thusly Praise for the Inconceivable Buddha land's Merit Accumulated by All the Buddhas Dharma-Entrance'.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, thusly to the Northeast there also presently resides the Countless Hundreds of Thousands of Kotis of Nayutas of Extensive Wisdoms Tathagata. He is among the Buddhas who like the sands of the Ganges reside to the Northeast. Each one has his own pure Buddha land presently, and their long and broad tongues completely cover the billion realms all around them and, speaking sincerely and truthfully, say: 'You sentient beings! All of you should faithfully receive thusly the Praise for the Inconceivable Buddha land's Merit Accumulated by All the Buddhas Dharma-Entrance'.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, what the conditions of this Sutra being named 'Praise for the Inconceivable Buddha land's Merit Accumulated by All the Buddhas Dharma-Entrance'? Sariputra, it is because in this Sutra there is praise and commendation of the Infinite Lifespan Buddha's blissful realm, that inconceivable Buddha land's merits, as well as the Buddha World Honored Ones in the other ten directions. Because they desire to expeditiously bless with peaceful happiness the sentient beings, each resides in his own land demonstrating the great spiritual transformation, speaking sincerely and truthfully the words: 'O, sentient beings, faithfully receive this Dharma, etc'. This is why this Sutra is called 'Praise for the Inconceivable Buddha land's Merit Accumulated by All the Buddhas Dharma-Entrance'.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, if there is a good son or good daughter, whether having already heard this, or shall hear it, or who is now hearing it:-- once hearing this Sutra, profoundly is there born an understanding faith. Once there is born an understanding faith, a certainty about the accumulations of merit residing in the

ten directions with the Buddha World Honored Ones whose number is like the sands of ten Ganges Rivers, and they practice as instructed, all will be firmly in the supremely unexcelled bodhi. Attaining irreversibility in it, all will certainly be born in the Infinite Lifespan Buddha's blissful realm, that purified Buddha land. This is why, Sariputra, you sentient beings all should faithfully receive and understand what I as well as the Buddha World Honored Ones of the ten directions say: 'Be always diligent as instructed and cultivate your practice. Do not allow doubts and anxieties arise.'

"Furthermore, Sariputra, if there is a good son or good daughter who regarding the Infinite Lifespan Buddha's blissful realm, that purified Buddha land of meritorious adornments:-- whether they have initiated the vow, or they will initiate the vow, or they now are initiating the vow to be certain about the accumulations of merit residing in the ten directions with the Buddha World Honored Ones whose number is like the sands of ten Ganges Rivers, and they practice as instructed, all will firmly be in the supremely unexcelled bodhi. Attaining irreversibility in it, all will certainly be born in the Infinite Lifespan Buddha's blissful realm, that purified Buddha land. This is the reason, Sariputra, that if there are good sons or good daughters of pure faith, all should regarding the Infinite Lifespan Buddha's blissful realm, that purified Buddha land [have] the profound thought of understanding faith and initiate the vow to be reborn there, and not to go elsewhere.

"Furthermore, Sariputra, as I now have praised and commended the Infinite Lifespan Buddha's blissful realm, the inconceivable merits of that Buddha land, and those Buddha World Honored Ones of the ten directions, also they have commended my own inconceivable and boundless merits, composing the statement: 'Most extraordinary is Shakyamuni's tranquil purity; Shakyamuni, the Dharma king, a Tathagata, an Arhat, a perfectly enlightened one, one whose wisdom and conduct are complete, a Well Gone One, A Knower of Worlds, Unsurpassed, a Tamer of Men, a Teacher of Gods and Men, and a Buddha World Honored One. He is able in the realm of endurance, during the five periods of unwholesome decay, which are: the kalpa's decay, the decay of sentient beings, the decay of affliction, the decay of capacity, and the decay of the lifespan. Amidst this, he has realized the attainment of the supremely unexcelled bodhi. Because of his desire to expediently bestow the blessing of peaceful happiness on the sentient beings, he preaches in this world where it is extremely difficult to have faith in the Dharma. It is most extraordinary and inconceivable.'

"Furthermore, Sariputra, in this variously defiled realm of endurance, during the

five periods of decay, if there are good sons or good daughters of pure faith who hear the preaching thusly of the Dharma in all the realms where it is difficult to believe, and are able to give rise an understanding faith, receive and uphold the extensive teachings, cultivating themselves according to the teachings:-- these persons shall be known to be most extraordinary. Having with measureless buddhas accumulated their good roots, when these persons' lifetimes come to an end, they certainly will be born in the Western realm of bliss and receive the effect of the various sorts of meritorious adornments of that Pure Buddha land where the Mahayana Dharma is a delight. Day and night, throughout the six periods, they will befriend and support the Infinite Lifespan Buddha. They will frolic throughout the ten directions supporting Buddhas, and with those Buddhas hearing the Dharma and receiving prediction [of future Buddhahood]. Their deeds, wisdom, wealth, provisions, and urgency becoming completely fulfilled, they advance quickly to the realization of the unsurpassed and perfect bodhi."

When the Bhagavan had finished preaching this Sutra, the Venerable Sariputra, the great voice hearers, as well as the bodhisattva-mahasattva congregation and the measureless gods, men, and asuras:-- all in the great assembly hearing the Buddha's lecture were greatly elated, and faithfully received, transmitted, and practiced it.

Translated into English by Charles Patton
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