

How Was Sukhavati Created?

Once Bhikshu Dharmākara opened the gates to this Pure Land Method, Lokêśvararāja Buddha praised his cleverness as well as his vast and profound aspiration. His wisdom and skillful expediency indeed surpassed all other Buddhas, so Lokêśvararāja Buddha immediately revealed 21 billion Buddha lands to help him. Twenty-one billion is not just a number, it is a symbolic Dharma implication. In Esoteric Buddhism, “twenty one” often represents the great consummation; twenty one billion, this big number even more strongly represents “the great consummation.”

Bhikshu Dharmākara reviewed all the lands in ten directions, saw all the goodness and evilness in each land, and discerned the superiority and inferiority of them, which means that he had finished his Dharma learning. Nowadays we would say that he had done field research on site. How long was his studying time? One hundred billion years, he listened to the preaching for one hundred billion years.

And how long did he spend to complete the blueprint? Five kalpas. People's fortune was huge at that time, the average lifespan was forty two kalpas. A kalpa is the longest period of time in Indian cosmology, an unimaginable long unit of time. He chose and compiled the superiority of each land, and then he made a blueprint for Sukhāvātī. So, Sukhavati was not fabricated by him but was summarized, concluded, and organized from his research in each land.

*He used five kalpas to digest, absorb, and organize
all the contents of what he had learned.
Then he extracted the essence of all Buddha lands
to create a blueprint of Sukhāvātī.
In other words, this Sukhāvātī is a compilation
of the best of all Buddha lands throughout ten directions.*

Bhikshu Dharmākara at that time had already set a precedent of compilation. He completed the blueprint, then he reported to his teacher what he had achieved, which is Chapter Six of this scripture: Bringing Forth the Great Vows. As such, Sukhāvātī relied on Amitabha's aspiration to be achieved, it was not achieved by the force of karma but by the power of aspiration. To use a modern scientific term, it was achieved by the power of the mind. Amitabha used the power of His pure mind to achieve such a land.

The Merits, Virtues, and Adornments beyond language and cognition

Let's read the verse, "When I realize the supreme bodhi and accomplish Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi, the Buddha land I dwell in will be replete with inconceivably boundless merits, virtues, and adornments. There will be no existence of hells, hungry ghosts, animals, and neither flying, wriggling creatures nor the like. All beings, including those in the Yamaraja realms and three evil paths, who are born into my Buddha land and are edified by my Dharma, will all attain Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi and never again fall into the evil paths. Only having fulfilled such vows will I become a Buddha; otherwise, I will not procure Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi." These are the first two Vows among the 48 Vows:

1st Vow: The Land is free from evil realms.

2nd Vow: The inhabitants will never again fall into the evil paths.

The opening of the verse "When I realize the supreme bodhi and attain Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi, the Buddha land I dwell in will be replete with inconceivably boundless merits, virtues, and adornments" are the overall praise of the Sukhāvātī, bringing up its essential points.

This 'I' is what Bhikshu Dharmākara called himself. "Supreme bodhi" means "attain Buddhahood." He said that the Buddha land he dwells in will fully possess immeasurable merits and adornments when he attains Buddhahood. This "full possession" implies perfection; everything will be adorned and immeasurable. Furthermore, "inconceivable" is added to enforce the state of being unthinkable and unspeakable. The level of the adornment and its realm are unimaginable and inexpressible; it is beyond our language and exceeds our cognition. In other words,

The adornment of the circumstantial and personal reward of Sukhāvātī is unreachable by our language and cognition.

What is language and cognition?

It is exactly the discrimination and attachment.

If we use cogitation, we have to think. What is "think"? "Think" is discrimination, and it turns into attachment after we speak out. How could we possibly use discrimination and attachment to reach Sukhāvātī that is manifested by self-nature? Sukhāvātī is a Dharma-nature land, a land manifested naturally by our true heart, by our self-nature. Only when we renounce language and cogitation, can we reach and enter such an inconceivable realm. This is not just a description. It advises us not to use cogitation and language.

Ancient virtuous ones said,

*Dao will be exterminated when language is used,
and it will be extinguished where the mind is moved.*

This realm, as stated in *The Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, is the “four non-obstruction dharma-realm”: the realm of

- non-obstruction in noumenon,
- non-obstruction in phenomena,
- non-obstruction in noumenon and phenomena,
- and non-obstruction among all phenomena.

This “four non-obstruction dharma-realm” can only be entered when you no longer give rise to thoughts and your heart is unmoved. Once your heart is moved and you give rise to thoughts, there will be obstacles; you have prevented yourself from entering the realm of Sukhāvati, the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. In other words, Sukhāvati is a land of self-nature. This self-nature is a noumenon of emptiness and stillness. As the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng said,

Since all is void, where can the dust alight?

Is “Reciting Amitabha” Also an Attachment?

If you think of a Sukhāvati, it falls to your cogitation, you have created one thing. If you go one step further and speak it out, you add one more thing again. These are not real Sukhāvati. We can only enter the realm of Sukhāvati by renouncing delusion, discrimination, and attachment. However, it is very difficult for us to eradicate delusions, discriminations, and attachments. Why? Because they are the habits that we had formed over immeasurable kalpas. They could not be eradicated even if we desired to. What can we do? The Buddha persuades us to transform our mind. But we can neither transform nor rid our mind of delusions, discriminations, and attachments, the Buddha therefore teaches us to turn them into remembrance of Amitabha, using the thought of remembering Amitabha to replace all our delusions, discriminations, and attachments.

Is the name of Amitabha also a delusion, discrimination, and attachment? Yes. But if this delusion, discrimination, and attachment is used, you can attain Sukhāvati rebirth. Since this is in line with Amitabha's wish, you can induce His escort, you can carry your karma along to be reborn. What do you carry? You simply carry this delusion, discrimination, and attachment, which means you carry exactly the attachment of remembering Amitabha to be reborn into Sukhāvati. After arriving in Sukhāvati, you

would continue to recite because there would be no conditions for you to give rise to thoughts and have your heart moved.

Taking Two Steps for Enlightenment

It is easy to cultivate in Sukhāvātī, much better than in our world. In our world, it is simply impossible for us not to give rise to thoughts and have our heart unmoved. How many people have such indriya (*Skt. spiritual capacity)? There was no parallel before the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng and there probably will be none ever after; there was only one Hui Neng in our history, we cannot find another one. He had the top-upmost indriya.

What should we do? We should first seek Sukhāvātī rebirth. When we get to Sukhāvātī, neither will our heart move nor will we give rise to thoughts. This habit will fall off naturally and disappear, then we will be enlightened. That is why ancient virtuous ones said,

*As long as we see Amitabha,
how could we possibly worry about not getting enlightened?*

It will be so easy to get enlightened when we are born into Sukhāvātī. It is guaranteed that we will attain enlightenment. This is equal to taking two steps: we *cannot attain enlightenment in this life, but we can go to Sukhāvātī first and attain enlightenment after getting to Sukhāvātī. This is ensured, very ensured and safe, we absolutely will not go wrong. Wait until you attain enlightenment, you would understand Sukhāvātī utterly. You infuse one unity with Amitabha, Amitabha's Sukhāvātī is your own Sukhāvātī. This is indeed inconceivable!