

The 39th Vow: The Land Is Limitlessly Adorned

Let's continue to learn the 39th Vow.

"When I become a Buddha, the myriad things in my land will be solemn, pure, brilliant, and beautiful. They will be unique in shapes and colors which will be exquisite and wondrous to the extreme, and unable to be described and measured. If those living beings who obtained celestial eyes can distinguish their shape, color, brightness, appearance, name, number, or even just expound them in general, I will not procure Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi."

39th Vow: The Land is limitlessly adorned.

The main idea of this Vow is about that, when Bhikṣu Dharmākara—who is now Amitabha—became a Buddha, everything will be solemn, pure, brilliant, and beautiful in His Land. And the colors and shapes of all things there are unique, extraordinary, subtle, and exquisite to the extreme, impossible to describe and imagine. In other words, this kind of adornment, subtlety, grandeur, and beauty are incomprehensible to us; it is impossible to use language, cogitation, and inference to attain. This is about the spectacular and solemn environment of the circumstantial reward in Sukhāvātī.

How Far Can Celestial Eyes See and How Much Can They Distinguish?

In Sukhāvātī, its direct reward is adorned; there are Amitabha and all supremely good people of avaivartika bodhisattvas whose wisdom, capability, appearance, and supernal power are all inconceivable. And the adornment of their circumstantial reward—the environment they live in—is also inconceivable. It is impossible for us to imagine how wonderful they are. "The myriad things in my land..." these myriad things do not mean a number but refer to everything, all substances.

The capacity of celestial eyes far exceeds naked eyes. The range that naked eyes can see is probably only twenty kilometers even standing on the highest point without obstacles. But the range that celestial eyes can see is vast. The celestial eyes of small capacity can see a chiliocosm (*consisting of a thousand unit-worlds, some believe a unit-world is a galaxy), and the celestial eyes of great capacity can see a trichiliocosm (*an area of a thousand unit-worlds cubed, the edification area of a single buddha). In the area within their capability, they can distinctly see all substances, from as big as galaxies to as small as all fundamental particles like an atom.

The adornment of the direct and circumstantial reward in Sukhāvātī is truly unimaginable. Even arhats and bodhisattvas cannot imagine it, they cannot distinguish their shape, color, and variety. For example, the lotus has various shapes and colors. But *The Amitabha Sutra* only mentions four colors, "green lotus emits green lights, white lotus emits white lights, red lotus emits red lights, and yellow lotus emits yellow lights." Actually these four

colors are the primary colors, when mixing them, you can create infinite colors. So, the colors in the Land are numberless, boundless, and are impossible to distinguish even with celestial eyes.

And of course, even arhats using their celestial eyes cannot know the brightness, appearance, as well as the names and numbers of each kind, let alone to expound them. “To expound them in general” means to speak in big categories with no details involved, this still cannot be done. So, you can imagine, Sukhāvātī is genuinely an inconceivable dharma-realm. The Pure Land of Vairocana Buddha ([*kusuma-tala-garbha-vyūhāṃkāra](#)) mentioned in *The Avatamsaka Sūtra* is also so inconceivable. Inside the substance of each variety also contains infinite substances of other different kinds.

For instance, the lotus flowers in Sukhāvātī are one variety. Each lotus emits 360 trillion lights as described in the sutra; its brightness and appearance are incredible. In reality, it must be more than that. How do we know? Because, an arhat can see 360 trillion lights distinctly, yet the text here states that, if the living beings of bodhisattvas, of course including the capability of arhats, despite having obtained celestial eyes, are able to differentiate their shape, color, brightness, appearance, name, number or even just expound them in general, Amitabha will not procure Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi.” This suggests that the number of 360 trillion is also a Dharma-indication. To speak in reality, it is more than that.

The Non-Obstruction-Dharma-Realm

Each light manifests infinite Buddhas, which is again another category. Buddha is “the adornment of direct reward,” yet the items of the circumstantial reward can manifest the direct reward of the Buddhas who also emit light and pervasively liberate all beings within the light. This light manifests all beings and lands, its realm is truly inconceivable.

Why is it so inconceivable? Simply put, this is “All things naturally exist as thusness.” The innate virtues within self-nature are intrinsically like this. It is the non-obstruction-dharma-realm as stated in *The Avatamsaka Sūtra*:

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

According to the sutra: a mustard seed contains a Mt. Sumeru. Mt. Sumeru is the center of our galaxy. Such a vast astronomical body can exist inside a seed that is as small as a mustard seed. More amazingly, the mustard seed is not enlarged, Mt. Sumeru is not shrunken either!

In *The Avatamsaka Sutra* it states, “There is a chiliocosm in a paramāṇu ([*an extremely small particle](#)).” This has given us the most ultimate and consummate revelation. A paramāṇu is smaller than a mustard seed. It is the basic particle that scientists speak of now, the smallest

unit of matter. Now, scientists have discovered that the smallest unit of matter is no longer an atom, no longer a quark or an electron, it is the neutrino. A neutrino is equivalent to one ten billionth of an electron. It is so small that we can hardly imagine, only the concept of a number.

And there is no actual shape. What is it like? We cannot imagine it. It is too small. If a neutrino is the basic particle that is the smallest unit we are saying now, then it probably is the paramâṇu that is mentioned in Buddhist Sutras. Inside of a paramâṇu exists a trichiliocosm! A trichiliocosm is equivalent to one billion galaxies. Such vast number of galaxies are included in a paramâṇu, yet paramâṇu does not increase and the trichiliocosm does not decrease; they are not impeded by each other. This is the dharma-realm of non-obstruction among all phenomena.

Neither Big Nor Small Intrinsically

It raises the question: why is this realm like this? This theory is very profound. Simply put, both paramâṇu and trichiliocosm are all in fact manifested by our self-nature. Self-nature refers to noumenon. Noumenon is void and tranquil, it has neither form nor volume yet can manifest as all things. It can manifest as big or small. Big and small are only different in form, they are all manifested from self-nature. This noumenon is one unity; all forms and phenomena of substance are manifested from this one noumenon.

How does this noumenon manifest phenomena? Phenomena are manifested by our thoughts at the very moment when we give rise to them. Once there is a thought, it will manifest a phenomenon. Originally, there were no thoughts within our self-nature, it is intrinsically pure and limpid. All of a sudden, a thought arises, this thought will then manifest all sorts of phenomena and substance, manifesting a dharma-realm.

Its manifestation could be a mustard seed and it could be a trichiliocosm as well. They are all manifested by thoughts, intrinsically neither big nor small. When manifesting as a trichiliocosm, the thought does not increase; when manifesting as a mustard seed, it does not decrease either. Big and small are not dualities, they can accommodate each other. Therefore, Mt. Sumeru can be accommodated inside a mustard seed, the mustard seed can, of course, be accommodated in a trichiliocosm. They integrate and assimilate each other.

One contains many, and many can enter into one. Multitudinous things in a trichiliocosm can all enter into a paramâṇu. That's why small can accommodate big, and big can contain small. What's more? It even has infinite layers. How many paramâṇus are in one trichiliocosm? There are countless. Inside each paramâṇu, there are also trichiliocosms; there are countless paramâṇus, so the trichiliocosms in the paramâṇus are also countless. And the trichiliocosms inside the paramâṇus still have infinite paramâṇus, each paramâṇu contains infinite trichiliocosms, endless layers. It has multiple dimensions, not just one layer.

As such, there are dharma-realms inside each paramâṇu, and there are paramâṇus in each dharma-realm. In these paramâṇus there are dharma-realms again, and in these

dharma-realms there are paramāṇus; these multiple dimensions are endless in layers, its cross-section is even more infinite. These are the four non-obstruction-dharma-realms stated in *The Avatamsaka Sutra*, only Samantabhadra Bodhisattva can enter into this kind of dharma-realm.

Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, in his Ten Great Vows, enters each dharma-realm, enters paramāṇu-number worlds to make offerings to all Buddhas. He pays homage to all Buddhas, praises Tathagatas, and pervasively makes offerings. Samantabhadra Bodhisattva can do that. Of course, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva is not a certain individual but refers to bodhisattvas who practice the Samantabhadra Way. People who are born into Sukhāvātī are all Samantabhadra Bodhisattva because they all practice the Samantabhadra Way.

Each of the bodhisattvas in Sukhavati can all enter into these four non-obstruction-dharma-realms. It is described in *The Avatamsaka Sutra* as “entering the realm of inconceivable emancipation.” This realm is truly too subtle and wondrous to cogitate. Only among Buddhas, can they comprehend it to the ultimate extent. In other words, bodhisattvas would not necessarily fully understand it because they cannot distinctly see so many shapes and appearances with their celestial eyes due to this world being too vast, wondrous, and subtle. So, the wisdom and the mind-power of bodhisattvas cannot reach that realm, only Buddhas can.

Thanks everyone for learning with us. Namo Amitabha!