

The Dharma-Door of Praising Tathāgata Akṣobhya's Merits



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Transcribed from the book titled, "[A Treasury of Mahāyāna Sūtras](#)"

Akṣobhya Buddha's Dhāraṇī:

**Namo Bhagavate Akṣobhāya, Tathāgatāyārhate
Saṃyaksambuddhyāya, Tadyathā: Oṃ Kaṃkani Kaṃkani,
Rotsani Rotsani, Troṇani Troṇani, Trāsani Trāsani, Pratihana
Pratihana, Sarva Karma Paraṃparāṇime Sarva Sattvānañcha
Svāhā**

Chapter I

Thus have I heard. Once the Buddha was dwelling on Mount
Gr̥dhrakūṭa near Rājagṛha, together with an assembly of twelve
hundred fifty great monks. All these monks were well-known
Arhats who had extinguished all defilements and suffered
afflictions no more. They were liberated in mind and in wisdom,

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and were as free and unhindered as great dragons. They had done what should be done and abandoned the heavy burdens. They had benefited themselves and severed all bonds of existence. They were conversant with the true teaching and had reached the other shore. [Among them,] only Ānanda remained in the stage of learning.

At the time, the Venerable Śāriputra rose from his seat, uncovered his right shoulder, knelt on his right knee, joined his palms toward the Buddha, and said, "World-Honored One, how did Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas of the past resolve to pursue supreme enlightenment, cultivate all pure deeds, and wear the armor of vigor, adorning themselves with merits? How did those nonregression from the pursuit of supreme enlightenment? May the utterly kind World-Honored One reveal and expound their deeds, their vows, and their engendering of bodhicitta. World-Honored One, those Bodhisattvas-Mahāsattvas, for the benefit, peace, and happiness of gods and humans, exerted themselves to cultivate all pure deeds and wore the armor of vigor; thereby they rendered benefit, peace and happiness to all sentient beings, and illuminated the Buddha-Dharma for Bodhisattvas of the present and future. By praising merits and obtaining good roots, they caused the Bodhisattvas [of the present and future] to learn and cultivate diligently [the insight into] suchness, the Dharma-nature, and to attain supreme enlightenment without fail after hearing the Buddha-Dharma explained."

The Buddha said, "Excellent! It is excellent, Śāriputra, that you can ask me about past Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas pure deeds, their illumination, their great armor, and their praising of merits for the sake of embracing Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas of the future. Now, listen attentively and think in accordance with the truth. I will explain this to you."

Śāriputra said, "Yes, World-Honored One, I am willing and glad to listen."

The Buddha told Śāriputra, "A thousand worlds from here to the east, there is a Buddha-land named Wonderful Joy, where Tathāgata Great Eyes, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened

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One, once appeared to expound the subtle, wonderful Dharma to Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas, beginning with the six pāramitās.

Śāriputra, at the time, a monk rose from his seat, uncovered his right shoulder, knelt on his right knee, joined his palms toward the Buddha, and said, 'World-Honored One, I am determined to follow the way of the Bodhisattva as taught by the Buddha.'

"That Buddha said, 'Now, good man, you should know that the way of the Bodhisattva is very difficult to follow. Why? Because a Bodhisattva bears no malice against sentient beings.'

"Thereupon, the monk said to Buddha, 'World-Honored One, I now engender supreme bodhicitta. I will seek all-knowing wisdom by doing away with crookedness and deceit, and by invariably speaking the truth. If I bear malice against sentient beings from now until my attainment of supreme enlightenment, I will be disobeying all the Buddhas, Tathāgatas, who are now expounding the Dharma in numberless, countless, boundless worlds.

"World-Honored One, now I have resolved to pursue all-knowing wisdom and dedicate myself to this. If, during this pursuit, I feel any inclination to be a Śrāvaka or Pratyekabuddha, I will be deceiving all Buddhas.

"World-Honored One, now I have resolved to pursue all-knowing wisdom and am dedicated to this. If I generate any desire, hatred, or ignorance toward sentient beings, or am prone to stupor, arrogance, or misdeeds from now until my attainment of supreme enlightenment, I will be deceiving all Buddhas.'

"Śāriputra, at the time, certain other monks thought, 'After he has first brought forth bodhicitta, this Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva will wear the armor of vigor, and will never be moved by hatred or the like toward any sentient being.' Śāriputra, then, because of their thought, the Bodhisattva was called Akṣobhya of the Land of Wonderful Joy. When Tathāgata Great Eyes, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One, saw that this Bodhisattva had obtained the name 'Akṣobhya,' he rejoiced over the name and acclaimed it as excellent. The four deva kings, Śakra, and Brahmā, upon hearing this name, also rejoiced over it.

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“Śāriputra, in that Buddha's presence, Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva Akṣobhya continued, ‘World-Honored One, now I have resolved to pursue all-knowing wisdom and am dedicated to the attainment of supreme enlightenment. If my practice, from now until my attainment of supreme enlightenment, is ever contrary to these words, then I will be deceiving all the Buddhas, the Tathāgatas, who expound the Dharma in numberless, countless worlds.

“World-Honored One, now I have made this great decision and have dedicated myself to it. If I say anything that is not in harmony with the recollection of the Buddha or will all-knowing wisdom from now until my attainment of enlightenment, then I will be deceiving all Buddhas.

“World-Honored One, now I have brought forth this aspiration and am dedicated to it. If I remain in the household life instead of renouncing it in any lifetime from now until my attainment of supreme enlightenment, then I will be disobeying all Buddhas.

“World-Honored One, now I have resolved to pursue all-knowing wisdom. If I leave the household life in every lifetime, but do not beg for food, take only one meal a day, practice temperance in eating, ... limit my clothing to the three garments, wear garments of cast-off rags, sit anywhere, practice never lying down, live in a secluded forest, rest under a tree, sit in the open air, or live among graves from now until my attainment of supreme enlightenment, then I will be deceiving all Buddhas.

“World-Honored One, now I have resolved to pursue great enlightenment and am so dedicated. If I cannot attain unimpeded eloquence to expound the wonderful Dharma from now until my attainment of all-knowing wisdom, then I will be deceiving all Buddhas.

“World-Honored One, now I have thus resolved. If I do not remain dignified in standing, sitting, and walking from now up to my attainment of supreme enlightenment, then I will be deceiving all the innumerable Buddhas.

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“World-Honored One, now I have thus resolved. If I commit any major offense against sentient beings, or lie, or speak in a worldly or boisterous manner, or have any inclination to defeat others in argument from now until my attainment of all-knowing wisdom, then I will be deceiving all the countless Buddhas.

“World-Honored One, now I have resolved to pursue all-knowing wisdom and am firmly dedicated to the attainment of supreme enlightenment. If, when expounding the Dharma to women, I do not keep in mind impermanence, suffering, emptiness, or the absence of self, but am attracted by the women's appearance and smile broadly, then I will be deceiving all Buddhas.

“World-Honored One, I have now resolved to pursue all-knowing wisdom and am firmly dedicated to the attainment of supreme enlightenment. If I look around and gesture frivolously when expounding the Dharma, or do not regard other Bodhisattvas as great masters when I see them, then I will be deceiving numberless Buddhas.

“World –Honored One, now I have resolved to pursue all-knowing wisdom. From now until my attainment of supreme enlightenment, if I sit down to listen to [heterodox] doctrines or pay homage to heterodox Śramaṇas and brāhmins, instead of [listening to the Dharma and paying homage to] Buddhist Śramaṇas and devotees, then I will be deceiving all Buddhas.

“World-Honored One, now I have brought forth this great aspiration. From now until I attain supreme enlightenment, if, when practicing the giving of material things or the giving of the Dharma, I am partial or discriminate among the recipients of my offerings, then I will be deceiving all Buddhas.

“World-Honored One, now I have resolved to pursue all-knowing wisdom. From now until I attain supreme enlightenment, if, when seeing criminals about to be punished, I do not save them even at the risk of my own life, then I will be deceiving all Buddhas.

“Śāriputra, from the time when this Bodhisattva began to cultivate such a great practice up to his attainment of supreme enlightenment, not a single sentient being about to be punished for some crime was not rescued by him.

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“Śāriputra, at the time, a monk thought, ‘The Tathāgata will be the witness for this Dharma-practitioner, as will these gods, humans, asuras, and so forth.’

“Śāriputra, thereupon, perceiving what the monk thought, Tathāgata Great Eyes, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One, will be his witness, as will these gods, humans, asuras, and so forth. Monk, any Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva who thus wears the armor of great vigor to pursue supreme enlightenment will surely attain it.’

“Śāriputra, after that, the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva Akṣobhya further said to the Buddha, ‘World-Honored One, now I have resolved to pursue all-knowing wisdom. If I mention any offense committed by, or any dissension among, monks, nuns, laymen, or laywomen from now until my attainment of supreme enlightenment, then I will be disobeying all Buddhas, the Tathāgatas. World-Honored One, I will devote myself to the practice of this vow until I attain supreme enlightenment, so as to make my [Buddha-] land vast and pure and the Śrāvakas there all faultless.

“‘World-Honored One, from now until my attainment of supreme enlightenment, if I, who resolved to pursue all-knowing wisdom, have any sensual desire resulting in an ejaculation, even in a dream, then I will be disobeying all Buddhas, the Tathāgatas. World-Honored One, I will follow this practice until I realize supreme enlightenment, so as to make the monastic Bodhisattvas in my land free from ejaculations, even in dreams.

“‘World-Honored One, I have resolved to pursue all-knowing wisdom. If however, when I have attained supreme enlightenment, the women in my Buddha-land have the same female faults as those of women in other lands, then I will relinquish supreme enlightenment. If I do not relinquish it, then I shall be cheating all Buddhas.’...

“Śāriputra, at the time, Tathāgata Great Eyes prophesied Bodhisattva Akṣobhya's attainment of supreme enlightenment, saying, ‘Good man, in a future life you will become a Buddha named Tathāgata Akṣobhya; the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened

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One, the One Perfect in Learning and Conduct, the Well-Gone One, the World-Knower, the Unexcelled One, the Great Tamer, the Teacher of Gods and Humans, the Buddha, the World-Honored One.' The prophecy was similar to Dīpaṃkara Buddha's prophecy of my attainment of supreme enlightenment.

"Śāriputra, when Bodhisattva Akṣobhya received the prophecy, there was a great light that illuminated the whole world, and the earth quaked in the six ways, as did the billion-world universe when I realized all-knowing wisdom.

"Furthermore, Śāriputra, when Bodhisattva Akṣobhya received the prophecy from the Buddha, all the gods, dragons, yakṣas, asuras, garuḍas, kinnaras, and mahoragas of the that billion-world universe joined their palms and prostrated themselves with their heads at the Bodhisattva's feet to pay homage to him, just as all the gods, dragons, and so forth of the Sāha World did to me when I realized great enlightenment here.

"Furthermore, Śāriputra, at the moment when Bodhisattva Akṣobhya received the prophecy, all the pregnant women in the world gave birth to their children safely and peacefully, without travail or difficulty; the blind recovered their sight and the deaf restored their hearing, all just as it was when I attained Buddhahood.

"Furthermore, Śāriputra, at the two moments-when the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva Akṣobhya resolved to pursue supreme enlightenment, and when Tathāgata Great Eyes, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One, prophesied his attainment of enlightenment – no sentient being died an unnatural death, just as it was when I realized all-knowing wisdom...

"Śāriputra, when Bodhisattva Akṣobhya received the prophecy, the sentient beings of the Realm of desire brought superb delicacies to him and played celestial music for him, as offerings.

"Śāriputra, such are the merits achieved by the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva Akṣobhya after he received the prophecy."

Then the Venerable Śāriputra said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, most extraordinary is the Tathāgata, the Worthy

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One, the Perfectly Enlightened One, who is so skillful in explaining the inconceivable states of Buddhas, the inconceivable states of dhyānas, the inconceivable states of dragons, and the inconceivable karmic results. World-Honored One, when the Bodhisattva Akṣobhya abided in the initial generation of bodhicitta, he embraced the before-mentioned merits; when he received the Tathāgata's prophecy, he perfected those great, inconceivable merits."

The Buddha told Śāriputra, "So it is, so it is, as you say."

Then the Venerable Ānanda said to Śāriputra, "Most virtuous one, the World-Honored One has explained only a small portion of that novice Bodhisattva's merits of wearing the armor of vigor, not all of them."

Śāriputra said, "So it is, so it is. The Tathāgata has only touched upon them briefly. Why? Because when that Bodhisattva first brought forth bodhicitta and donned the armor of vigor, he achieved inconceivable, immeasurable merits."

Śāriputra said further to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, now you have praised briefly Bodhisattva Akṣobhya's superb merits of wearing the armor of vigor. May the World-Honored One elaborate upon them for the sake of gathering in Bodhisattvas of the present and future."

The Buddha told Śāriputra, "Inconceivable are the merits of Bodhisattva Akṣobhya when he first brought forth bodhicitta and donned the armor of vigor. Now I will further relate to you a small portion of them. Listen attentively and think well about them."

Śāriputra said, "Yes, World-Honored One. I am willing and glad to listen."

The Buddha said, "The Bodhisattva Akṣobhya once made this vow: 'Even if empty space changes, I shall not withdraw from my great vows.' Because of this vow, Bodhisattva Akṣobhya achieved all merits quickly. Śāriputra, I cannot find any Bodhisattva in the Worthy Kalpa who wears the armor of vigor as Bodhisattva Akṣobhya did. Śāriputra, the practices cultivated by Bodhisattva Precious Banner were less than a small part, or even an infinitesimal part, of those cultivated by Bodhisattva Akṣobhya."

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“Śāriputra, in wearing the armor of vigor, Bodhisattva Akṣobhya had no peer among countless thousands of other Bodhisattvas. Śāriputra, with his firm vows, Bodhisattva Akṣobhya has realized supreme enlightenment. Now he is living in the World of Wonderful Joy and is named Tathāgata Akṣobhya, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One...”

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Chapter II

At the time, Śāriputra said to the Buddha, “World –Honored One, the Buddha has explained the merits acquired by Tathāgata Akṣobhya when he was cultivating the Bodhisattva practices. I hope that the World-Honored One will reveal and elaborate upon the merits and magnificence of the present land of Tathāgata Akṣobhya. Why? So that sentient beings who follow the Bodhisattva-path may delight in the merits of that land after hearing them and desire to see worship, and make offerings to the Buddha there; and so that sentient beings in the Śrāvaka stage who have realized Arhatship may also wish to worship, make offerings to, and serve that Tathāgata after hearing of the merits and magnificence of his land.”

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The Buddha told Śāriputra, “Well said! It is excellent that you can make a request of such significance. Now listen attentively and think well about this.; I will explain it to you in detail.”

Śāriputra said, “Yes, World-Honored One, I am willing and glad to listen.”

The Buddha told Śāriputra, “When Tathāgata Akṣobhya, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One, realized all-knowing wisdom, he emitted a great light over the entire billion-world universe. At the same time, the earth quaked in the six ways. Knowing that Tathāgata Akṣobhya had realized supreme enlightenment, the sentient beings of that world did not think of food, hunger, thirst, fatigue, a resting place, or sleep for seven days and nights; they felt only peace, happiness, joy, love, and kindness. At that time, all sentient beings in that land including the gods in the Realm of Desire, were rid of sexual desire. Why were those sentient beings able to enjoy such blessings in that lifetime? It was because of the power of that Tathāgata's original vows. Śāriputra, when Tathāgata Akṣobhya, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One, realized all-knowing wisdom, all the sentient beings in that land joined their palms with utmost sincerity toward him. Due to this earnest admiration for the Tathāgata, they were able to enjoy such innumerable blessings in that lifetime.

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 billion-world universe, 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,

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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 billion-world universe, outshining the lights of the sun, moon, 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 league in height. The trunk of the tree is half a mile in circumference, the shade of its branches and leaves, one league in circumference. Under the tree is a platform, four leagues 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 planes of existence. What are the three? They are: the plane of hell-dweller, the plane of animals and the realm of Yama. All sentient beings in that Buddha-land have accomplished

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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. They 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.

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“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.”

At the time, hearing the Buddha praise the merits of the Buddha-land of Tathāgata Akṣobhya, a monk became greedily attached to it and said the Buddha, “World-Honored One, now I wish to be born in Akṣobhya Buddha's land.”

The Buddha told the monk, “With your foolishness and delusion, how can you be born there? Why? Because one with any passion or attachment cannot be born in that Buddha-land. Only those who have planted good roots and cultivated pure conduct can be born there.”

Then he addressed Śāriputra again, “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 the Tathāgata Akṣobhya's original VOWS. ...

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“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

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Tathāgata Akṣobhya, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One. “

Thereupon, Śāriputra asked the Buddha, “World-Honored One, when Tathāgata Akṣobhya enters a room, will a golden lotus support his feet or not?”

The Buddha told Śāriputra, “Why do you both to ask such a trivial question? When that Buddha, the World-Honored One, enters a village or a house, a thousand-petaled lotus appears with him. If any good man or good woman things, ‘When the Tathāgata condescends to enter this room, may the lotus beneath his feet close its petals,’ the flower will do immediately. All this is due to the Tathāgata’s awesome power.

“Śāriputra, the lotus which holds the feet [of the Tathāgata] will then be given to the people, and they will build a stūpa for it and make offerings to it.

“Śāriputra, that Buddha, the World-Honored One, travels through the whole billion-world universe to expound the Dharma; and where he goes, a flower appears with him. Moreover, in whatever land that Tathāgata manifests himself, in that land golden lotuses also appear. By the awesome power of that Buddha, his entire billion-world universe is adorned with thousand-petaled golden lotuses. “

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Chapter III

“Furthermore, Śāriputra, when Tathāgata Akṣobhya expounds the Dharma, he can skillfully subdue countless sentient beings, making them all attain Arhatship; numerous are those who will dwell in the meditation o the eightfold liberation.

“Śāriputra, Tathāgata Akṣobhya, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One, has a host of Śrāvakas incalculable in number. I cannot find any arithmetician or any arithmetician's disciple able to compute how many hundreds of thousands of millions of billions o trillions of Śrāvakas there are in the host.

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Śāriputra, no one can ascertain the total number of good men who have attained the fruit of an Arhat in that land.

“Śāriputra, [in my land,] indolent people can attain the fruit of Stream-enterer, They will be born as humans seven more times and be further taught the Dharma before they can attain the superior fruit [of an Arhat]; therefore, I call them ‘people of seven rebirths.’ Śāriputra, [in the land of Tathāgata Akṣobhya,] indolent people can attain the fruit of a Stream-enterer at Tathāgata Akṣobhya's first discourse on the Dharma, the fruit of a Once-returned at the second discourse, the fruit of a Nonreturner at the third discourse, and the fruit of an Arhat at the fourth discourse. They are said to be indolent because they fail to end all their defilements at one sitting.

“Śāriputra, in that Buddha-land, those who have attained the fruit of a Stream-enterer will be cleansed of all defilements in one lifetime, unlike the Stream-enterers of this world, who have to go through seven more births. Those who have attained the fruit of a Once-returned will be freed from all suffering in one lifetime, unlike those called Once-returneds in this world, who have to go through one more birth. Those who have attained the fruit of a Nonreturner will become Arhats in one lifetime, unlike those called Nonreturners in this world, who have to be born in the upper realms [before they are liberated] through they will not return to this earth. ...

“Furthermore, Śāriputra, in that Buddha-land, there are steps made of three precious materials – gold, silver, and lapis lazuli – extending from the Jambudvīpa to the Heaven of the Thirty-Three. Śāriputra, when the gods of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three desire to see Tathāgata Akṣobhya, to worship and make offerings to him, they ascend the precious steps to the Buddha's place. When they find him, they can descend the precious steps to the Buddha's place. When they find that the people of [that] Jambudvīpa are rich, prosperous, and have everything they need, they will become desirous and say, “We gods have the good fortune of gods, and the people of Jambudvīpa have the good fortune of human beings. Now I see that their fortune is excellent as ours. What is more, the

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people of Jambudvīpa have a good fortune even surpassing ours: Tathāgata Akṣobhya is expounding of the true Dharma there. This is why we gods always prefer the human world.'

"Śāriputra, the people of that Jambudvīpa have no desire at all to be born in the heavens. Why? Because [they think,] 'In the human world, Tathāgata Akṣobhya constantly expounds the true Dharma to benefit us, and our good fortune is not different from that of the gods. The gods of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three are no match for us.'

"Śāriputra, in that land, by the Buddha's divine power, gods and humans can see each other. Just as the people of this Jambudvīpa see the moon and stars, so, Śāriputra, the people there can look upward and see the palaces of the gods above. Śāriputra, this is also achieved by the power of the original vows which Tathāgata Akṣobhya made when he was cultivating the Bodhisattva practices.

"Śāriputra, the voice of the Buddha expounding the Dharma spreads over the entire billion-world universe, and is heard everywhere by the four kinds of devotees.

"Śāriputra, the Śrāvakas there wish for no other food than Dharma-food. When listening to the Dharma, they are single-minded and calm; they do not feel tired physically or mentally, whether sitting or standing. Śāriputra, Tathāgata Akṣobhya stays in midair when expounding the Dharma to the assembly. The Śrāvakas, whether or not they themselves have miraculous power, all stay in midair by the awesome power of the Buddha when they listen to essence of the Dharma, bearing themselves with dignity in the three deportments. What are the three? Walking, standing, and sitting.

"When these Śrāvakas intend to enter parinirvāṇa, they sit cross-legged and then immediately enter it. At that moment, the earth quakes. After their parinirvāṇa, all gods and humans come to make offerings to them.

"When the Arhats are ready for parinirvāṇa, they produce fire from their bodies to cremate themselves; or become extinct spontaneously, leaving no relics behind; or roam in the sky like

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clouds of five colors, and then disappear in an instant, without leaving a trace; or stand in the sky and then vanish like rain falling to the ground.

“Śāriputra, this also because, while cultivating the Bodhisattva practices in the past, Tathāgata Akṣobhya, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One, made this vow: ‘If I realize supreme enlightenment, the Śrāvakas [in my land] will enter parinirvāṇa with dignity in the three deportments.’

“Furthermore, Śāriputra, many Śrāvakas of that Buddha-land have attained the four fearlessnesses, and even more have attained the four bases of miraculous powers. Śāriputra, the Śrāvakas of that land have accomplished these complete merits.”

At the time, Śāriputra said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, illustrious, great, and vast indeed are the merits accomplished by the Śrāvakas of Tathāgata Akṣobhya, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One.”

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Chapter IV

At the time, the Venerable Śāriputra thought, “The World-Honored One has just now discussed the merits of the Śrāvakas. May the Tathāgata also expound the complete merits of the Bodhisattvas. Why? Because of all other merits come from them.”

Then, knowing Śāriputra’s thought, the Buddha told him, “In that Buddha-land, innumerable hundreds of thousands of [millions of] billions of Bodhisattvas attend the assembly, and, by the divine power of the Buddha, all the Bodhisattvas who have left the household life can understand, accept, uphold, read and recite what they have hear.

“Śāriputra, the Dharma which I have expounded in this world is a very small part – less than one hundredth, one thousandth, one hundred thousandth, one hundred billionth, one of any number of

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parts, one minute part, or even one infinitesimal part – of the Dharma-treasure expounded by Tathāgata Akṣobhya.

“Śāriputra, this is all because Tathāgata Akṣobhya, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One, made this vow when cultivating the Bodhisattva practices: ‘When I attain Buddhahood, may all the Bodhisattvas in my land, by my awesome power, be able to understand, accept, uphold, read, and recite whatever they hear [from the Buddha].’ Śāriputra, by the divine power of the original vow made by that Tathāgata, those Bodhisattvas are able to understand, accept, uphold, read, and recite with facility all they have heard from that Buddha.

“Furthermore, Śāriputra, if those Bodhisattvas want to go to another Buddha-land, wearing the native costume, speaking the local language with no accent, and acting in harmony with the customs of that land. They pay homage and make offerings to the Tathāgata of that land, listen to the true Dharma, ask pertinent questions. When they have done all they can, they return to Akṣobhya Buddha.

“Śāriputra, nine hundred ninety-six Buddhas will appear in this world during the Worthy Kalpa. A Bodhisattva who wishes to see these Tathāgatas should make a vow to be born in Akṣobhya Buddha's land.

Śāriputra, if good men or good women [who follow the Bodhisattva-path] after their death in this Buddha-land or another Buddha-land, have been born, are being born, or will be born in the Buddha-land of Tathāgata Akṣobhya, they will not believe or abide in the state of Śrāvakas. Why? Because those who follow the Buddha-path will always meet the Tathāgata, and give the celestial demon Pāpīyān no opportunity to hinder them. They will give up the two vehicles forever, and attain supreme enlightenment without fail. They will always participate in that Tathāgata's great assemblies.

“Śāriputra, you should know that those sentient beings who dwell in the pure Buddha-land of Tathāgata Akṣobhya will never be subject to degeneration, seduction, or regression, they will abide in

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the pursuit of supreme enlightenment, have great power, be immovable, and never regress.

“Śāriputra, if good men or good women are born in that land after their death in this world or other worlds, they will, at the time of their birth, have this thought: ‘I have entered the Tathāgata’s room and have taken up my abode in the city of fearlessness.’

“Śāriputra, those Bodhisattvas will comply with the pāramitā of wisdom in whatever they say, and they will respect one another and regard one another as teachers.

“Furthermore, Śāriputra, of the Bodhisattvas in that Buddha-land, few are householders; many are monks. By the Buddha’s divine power, they can understand, accept, uphold, read, and recite whatever they heard [from the Buddha]. Śāriputra, the lay Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas who are unable to participate in the assembly can by the Buddha’s miraculous power hear, understand, accept, uphold, read, and recite with facility the Dharma expounded, wherever sitting or standing. The Bodhisattvas who have left the household life and are not in the assembly can do the same. Also, these Bodhisattvas, in the course of decease and rebirth, never forget the sutras they heard, and can be born in any Buddha-land they wish. Śāriputra, this is also achieved through the merits of Tathāgata Akṣobhya’s original vows.

“Śāriputra, if a Bodhisattva wishes to see numerous hundreds of thousands of [millions of] billions of myriads of Buddhas in one lifetime, he should vow to be born in the land of Tathāgata Akṣobhya. After his birth there, he will see innumerable Buddhas and plan all kinds of good roots; he can also expound the essence of the Dharma to numerous hundreds of thousands of sentient beings to increase their good roots.

“Śāriputra, if Bodhisattvas, after their death in this world or other worlds, have been born, are being born, or will be born in the Buddha-land of Tathāgata Akṣobhya, they will all attain the stage of nonregression. Why? Because in that Buddha-land one is not obstructed by the celestial demon Pāpīyān or disturbed by demonic influences.

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“Śāriputra, a venomous snake subjugated by a magic spell cannot hurt anyone, insects or worms will not be worried or afraid upon seeing it. Yet, harmless as it is, it is still called a venomous snake because it has received the form of a snake as a result of its previous karmas. Śāriputra, the same is true with celestial demon Pāpīyān. When Tathāgata Akṣobhya was following the Bodhisattva practices in the past, he vowed to dedicate his good roots thus: ‘When I realize supreme enlightenment, I will subjugate all demons so that they will not cause hindrances or troubles. They will not hinder or trouble the Bodhisattvas, Śrāvakas, ordinary people, or others in the whole billion-world universe.’ [Subjugated as they are,] the demons remain in demons’ forms because of their previous karmas. They regret this in the heaven where they are born, and blame themselves for being incarnated as beings called ‘demons’ owing to their previous karmas performed from beginningless time. In spite of the power they enjoy, they loathe their state. When that Tathāgata expounds the Dharma, the demons and their retinues are often among the listeners. After hearing the Dharma, they become pure in mind and yearn to be Śrāvakas, thinking, ‘How can we, too, abide in the tranquility, have few desires, and be content?’ Because those demons have a constant desire to leave the household life and have no intention of hindering others, the Śrāvakas, Bodhisattvas, and ordinary people in that land can all abide in the peace and happiness. This is also due to the awesome power that Buddha’s previous vigor and great vows. Śāriputra, this is also a superb adornment of Akṣobhya Buddha’s land. ...

“Śāriputra, those Bodhisattvas who have received my prophecy and attained nonregression will be born in Akṣobhya Buddha’s land. However, Śāriputra this does not mean that I forsake the Bodhisattvas born in that Buddha-land. If an anointed kṣatriya king learns that an army of a hostile nation is coming to steal his wealth and throne, he will think, ‘My queen, concubines, and beloved children are not strong enough to resist the enemy. I will keep them, together with my treasures, in the palace, out of harm’s way.’ Then he will overcome this enemy, so that his country

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is blessed with peace and freed from danger, and there is no longer any fear of disaster. Śāriputra, just as the king does not abandon his treasures, beloved children, queen, and concubines, so I do not forsake the Bodhisattvas, and those who follow the Bodhisattva practices should know this. Like the palace, that Buddha-land is free from fear; like the leader of the enemies, the celestial demon Pāpīyān [in my land] tries in every way to hinder those who follow the Bodhisattva practices; and like the great king who is not disturbed by the invading enemies, the Tathāgata is not harassed by the celestial demons.

“Śāriputra, suppose a man, afraid of his creditor, runs far away to the frontier. He will be spared persecution at the hands of the creditor and others concerned. Why? Because the creditor and his family cannot reach him, due to the great distance and danger involved. In the same way, the Bodhisattvas born in the Land of Wonderful Joy are beyond the reach of Pāpīyān, who is kept away by the insurmountable difficulty of the journey.

“Śāriputra, in this billion-world universe, the celestial demon Pāpīyān hinders Bodhisattvas and Śrāvakas in every way. In the Land of Wonderful Joy, the celestial demons do not do devilish deeds. The Bodhisattvas born there in the past, present, and future are free from fear forever. Why? Because when that Tathāgata was following the Bodhisattva-path, he dedicated all his good roots thus: ‘When I realize supreme enlightenment, the celestial demons will not hinder anyone or do any devilish deeds. ‘Śāriputra, just as poison loses its toxicity and becomes food for a strong man who can take it skillfully and digest it, so the celestial demons of that land, instead of doing harm, are always beneficial.

“Śāriputra, innumerable such merits are achieved in that Buddha-land.”

At the time, Śāriputra thought, “Now I wish to see Tathāgata Akṣobhya, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One, and the Śrāvakas of that Buddha-land.” Thereupon, perceiving what was in Śāriputra’s mind, the World-Honored One, by his divine power and without rising from his seat, caused Śāriputra to see all of them.

The Buddha asked Śāriputra, “Have you seen them now?”

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Śāriputra answered, "Yes, I have."

The Buddha asked Śāriputra, "Do you see any difference, such as superiority of inferiority, among those gods and humans?"

Śāriputra answered, "No, I do not. Why? Because I see that the clothing, food and drink, and valuable objects enjoyed by the humans of the Land of Wonderful Joy are gods' implements of pleasure. Tathāgata Akṣobhya, expounding the Dharma to the assembly, is like a gold mountain, shining brilliantly. There are innumerable, limitless Śrāvakas. Just as the horizons in the four directions are boundless in the eyes of one sailing upon the great ocean, so the Śrāvakas there are limitless in number to the beholder. When those Śrāvakas are listening to the Dharma, they keep their bodies and minds as still as if they had entered dhyāna, unlike the people in this world, who say and stir, sometimes even in meditation." ...

At the time, a thought occurred to Ānanda: "Now I should test the power of Venerable Subhūti's eloquence." With this in mind, he said to Subhūti, "We should have a look at Tathāgata Akṣobhya, his disciples, and his Buddha-land."

Subhūti told Ānanda, "If you want to see that Tathāgata, you should look upwards."

"After Ānanda had looked upwards, he said to Subhūti, "I have looked upwards as far as I could, but I saw nothing except emptiness and stillness."

"Subhūti said, "Tathāgata Akṣobhya, his disciples, and his Buddha-land are similar to what you saw when you looked upwards."

Then Śāriputra said the Buddha, "World-Honored One, as the Buddha he said, the Bodhisattvas in this world whose attainment of Buddhahood has been prophesied are not different from the Bodhisattvas born in that land. World-Honored One, now I do not know why they are equal."

The Buddha told Śāriputra, "Because of the equality of the dharmadhātu, there is no difference between them."

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Chapter V

At the time, Venerable Śāriputra thought further, “The World-Honored One has spoken of the infinite merits of Tathāgata Akṣobhya, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One, in following the Bodhisattva-path. He has also spoken of the vast, great adornments of that land and the excellent, virtuous deeds of the Śrāvakas and Bodhisattvas there. I hope that the World-Honored One will further tell us about that Buddha’s parinirvāna and his deeds of deliverance thereafter.”

Then, knowing Śāriputra’s thought, the World-Honored One told him, “Śāriputra, on the day of Tathāgata Akṣobhya’s parinirvāna, his magically produced bodies will appear throughout

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all the worlds, including the hells, and will expound the wonderful Dharma. He will subdue with the Dharma numerous sentient beings, all of whom will attain Arhatship. As a result, there will be people who have attained the stage beyond learning than there were before that Buddha's parinirvāna.

“On that day, he will also predict Bodhisattva Fragrant Elephant's attainment of Buddhahood, saying, ‘After my parinirvāna, you will become a Buddha, named Tathāgata Golden Lotus, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One.’ Furthermore, Śāriputra, the merits of Tathāgata Golden Lotus's Buddha-land and the number of his disciples will be the same as those of Tathāgata Akṣobhya.

“Furthermore, Śāriputra, when Tathāgata Akṣobhya enters parinirvāna, the great earth will quake all over, and the whole billion-world universe will roar in the quake. The sound will reach up to the Akaniṣṭha Heaven. When the gods hear the sound, they will know that the Buddhas has entered parinirvāna.

“Moreover, Śāriputra, the forests and herbs of that Buddha-land will all incline toward the place where Tathāgata Akṣobhya is entering parinirvāna. At the time, the gods and humans will all scatter over the Buddha garlands of flowers, many kinds of incense, and clothing. The scattered fragrant flowers will pile up around the Buddha to a height of one league.

“Furthermore, Śāriputra, when Tathāgata Akṣobhya is entering parinirvāna, all the gods, dragons, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kinnaras, and mahoragas of the billion-world universe will join their palms to salute him; also, by the divine power of the Buddha, the gods in other lands will be able to see that Buddha enter parinirvāna. For seven days and nights, these gods will be overwhelmed with grief, will desist from the amusements of gods and humans, and will feel no desire. They will say to one another, ‘Tathāgata Akṣobhya has been the light of the world and the eye of sentient beings. Alas, why does he enter parinirvāna so soon? ...

“Furthermore, Śāriputra, Tathāgata Akṣobhya, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One, will issue fire from his own

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body to cremate himself. All his relics will be golden in color. Just as the timira tree reveals a swastika sign in its cross-section wherever it is cut, so will the relics of that Tathāgata.

“Moreover, Śāriputra, every relic of Tathāgata Akṣobhya will be round, with the auspicious swastika sign both inside and outside. Śāriputra, just as the pulaka tree reveals the auspicious swastika sign both inside and outside wherever it is cut across, so will the relics of that Buddha.

“Śāriputra, the sentient beings of that land will build stūpas out of the seven treasures for the relics all over that billion-world universe, and will offer to the stūpas thousand-petaled golden lotus flowers. These stūpas and lotus flowers will then serve as splendid adornments of that billion-world universe. ...

“Furthermore, Śāriputra, after Tathāgata Akṣobhya has entered great nirvana, the true Dharma will endure in his world for a hundred thousand kalpas.”

Thereupon, Śāriputra asked the Buddha, “World-Honored One, for a [a hundred thousand] kalpas of what kind will the true Dharma of Tathāgata Akṣobhya endure in the world?”

The Buddha told Śāriputra, “Twenty small kalpas make one kalpa, and the true Dharma will endure for a hundred thousand such kalpas.

“Śāriputra, after the extinction of the true Dharma, there will be a great light illuminating all the worlds in the ten directions, and all the earths will quake, making a great sound. However, [you should know that] the true Dharma cannot be destroyed by the celestial demons, nor will the Tathāgata and his disciples pass into oblivion of their own accord. It is because people of that time will lack interest in learning the Dharma that those who can expound the Dharma will go away from them. Hearing little of the true Dharma, the people will become more incredulous, and as a result, they will not strive to practice the Dharma. Seeing the indifference of the people, monks well-versed in the Dharma will naturally withdraw into seclusion and preach the Dharma no more. In this way, the subtle profound teachings of the Buddha will gradually disappear.

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Chapter VI

At the time, the Venerable Śāriputra asked the Buddha, “World-Honored One, what causes and good roots enable Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas to be born in that Buddha-land?”

The Buddha told Śāriputra, “Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas who wish to be born in the world of Wonderful Joy should follow the Bodhisattvas practices cultivated by Tathāgata Akṣobhya in the past, and make a great vow to be born in that land. These practices and this vow will enable them to be born in that Buddha-land.

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“Furthermore, Śāriputra, if Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas, when practicing the pāramitā of giving, dedicate the ensuing good roots to the attainment of supreme enlightenment and wish to meet Tathāgata Akṣobhya, then they will consequently be born in that Buddha-land. The same is true if they do likewise when practicing the pāramitā of discipline, and so on up to the pāramitā of wisdom.

“Moreover, Śāriputra, the light of Tathāgata Akṣobhya shines over the whole billion-world Buddha-land. One should vow to realize supreme enlightenment in a future life as a result of seeing this light, so that, after attainment great enlightenment in that way, he will in turn emanate a light from his own body to illuminate the whole world. Śāriputra, A Bodhisattva who so vows will be born in that land.

“Furthermore, Śāriputra, Tathāgata Akṣobhya, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One, has a limitless number of Śrāvakas. One should vow to see them and, afterwards, to perform deeds leading to the attainment of the Buddha's enlightenment. This will enable one to have the same limitless number of Śrāvakas after he realizes enlightenment. Śāriputra, A bodhisattva-Mahāsattva who so vows can be born in that Buddha-land.

“Furthermore, Śāriputra, in that Buddha-land, there are innumerable Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas. One should wish to see these Bodhisattvas, to learn from them the practice of meditation, to be with them at all times, to study with them, the same vehicle, and to attain the ultimate goal together with them. One should wish to meet those who pursue perfect, great kindness and compassion, who seek enlightenment and Śramaṇahood, who forgo the intention to follow the two vehicles, who abide in the real emptiness, and who are constantly mindful of the name of the All-Knowing Buddha, the Tathāgata, and the names of the Dharma and the Saṅgha.

“Śāriputra, even those good men and good women who have heard the names of such Bodhisattvas will be born in that Buddha-land, let alone those who plant good roots in harmony with the pāramitā of wisdom and dedicate them to Tathāgata Akṣobhya, the Worth One, the Perfectly Enlightened One. Śāriputra, these are

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causes and conditions which enable one to be born in that Buddha-land without fail.

“Furthermore, Śāriputra, Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas who wish to be born in that Buddha-land should often visualize the Buddhas, the Tathāgatas, expounding the subtle, wonderful Dharma in the innumerable eastern worlds, together with their disciples. They should vow: ‘I will realize enlightenment, expound the subtle, wonderful Dharma, and have [a limitless number of] disciples, just as those Buddhas do.’

“Śāriputra, these Bodhisattvas should cultivate the good roots of the three kinds of recollection; they should with to practice recollection together with all sentient beings equally, and dedicate these goods roots to the attainment of supreme enlightenment.

“Śāriputra, the Bodhisattvas’ good roots thus dedicated are limitless. Suppose all sentient beings, each holding a container with the same capacity as that of [all] space, said [to one of the Bodhisattvas], ‘Great man, please give me some of your good roots.’ Śāriputra, these good roots, supposing they were material and given to the sentient beings, would fill all their containers and the containers would be taken away without exhausting the good roots. [Why?] Because these good roots are dedicated to the attainment of supreme enlightenment, and so are infinite and unchangeable.

“Śāriputra, because of these good roots, which are achieved through these three kinds of recollection and are dedicated to all-knowing wisdom, one will be followed [and protected] by the Three Jewels wherever he goes. Śāriputra, you should know that if a Bodhisattva has achieved these good roots, he will not all to any miserable plane of existence, he will be able to subjugate Pāpīyān and other demons, and he will be born as he wishes in any Buddha-land in the east, south, west, north, northeast, northwest, southeast, southwest, the zenith, or the nadir. Therefore, A Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva should accumulate the good roots of such recollection, and, having accumulated them, dedicate them to Tathāgata Akṣobhya. In this way he can be born in that Buddha-land.

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“Furthermore, Śāriputra, the merits and vast adornments of the Buddha-land of Tathāgata Akṣobhya cannot be found in any other of the countless Buddha-lands. A Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva, therefore, should resolve thus: ‘By virtue of these good roots, I wish to see that land, acquire its adornments, and see the Bodhisattvas there.’ By doing this, Śāriputra, the Bodhisattva will be born in that Buddha-land.

“Śāriputra, Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas who wish to be born in that Buddha-land should generate an intense aspiration for it. Śāriputra, if good men or good women have generated such intense aspiration, I will predict their birth in that Buddha-land.

“Śāriputra, a city is not magnificent without such embellishments as towers, gardens, groves, ponds, and places for elephants and horses to roam, through its ruler may have power to maintain peace and order. Similarly, Śāriputra, since my Buddha-land does not have the same merits [as Tathāgata Akṣobhya's] it is not as magnificently adorned. ...

“Śāriputra, Tathāgata Akṣobhya leads the Bodhisattvas and followers of other vehicles in other lands as well as in the World of Wonderful Joy. Śāriputra, if good men and good women, after hearing the Dharma-door of Tathāgata Akṣobhya's merits, are well able to accept, uphold, read, recite, and comprehend it, and wish to be born in that land, then Tathāgata Akṣobhya will always protect and remember them until the time of their death, and will keep demons and demon's retinues from causing them to regress from their determination.

“Śāriputra, you should know that right up to their attainment of supreme enlightenment, these good men and good women will be free from the fear of regression; free from harm by water, fire, knives, cudgels, ferocious beats, and poisonous insects; and free from the terror of [evil] humans or nonhumans. Why? Because they are always protected and remember by Tathāgata Akṣobhya, and will be born in this Buddha-land.

“Śāriputra, just as the sun, through far away, gives light to the sentient beings of this world, so Tathāgata Akṣobhya, though far away, illuminates the Bodhisattvas of other worlds.

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“Śāriputra, just as a monk who has the deva-eye can see different things in the distance, so Tathāgata Akṣobhya, while remaining in his own land, can see the forms of all kinds of Bodhisattvas in other worlds.

“Śāriputra, furthermore just as a monk who has acquired the perfect command of the power of [knowing others'] thoughts can read the minds of sentient beings even if he is remote from them, so Tathāgata Akṣobhya can perceive the minds of the Bodhisattvas in other worlds.

“Śāriputra, just as a monk who has attained the deva-ear can hear any sound at a distance, so Tathāgata Akṣobhya can hear the sentient beings living in other worlds say, ‘I wish to be born in that land.’ Śāriputra, Tathāgata Akṣobhya knows the names of all such good men and good women; he knows, protects and remembers all those who accept, uphold, read, recite, and comprehend this Dharma-door of merits.”

“Śāriputra then said to the Buddha, “It is most extraordinary, World-Honored One, that the Buddha, the World-Honored One, protects and remembers those Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas.”

After Śāriputra said this, the Buddha told him, “So it is, so it is. As you say, Tathāgata Akṣobhya protects and remembers those Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas. Why? Because, by protection and remembering Bodhisattvas, he protects and remembers all sentient beings.

“Śāriputra, an anointed kṣatriya king who has many barns full of grain and beans will strictly command the keeper to guard them well. Why? Because he will then be able to relive [the hunger of] sentient beings when famine occurs. Similarly, Śāriputra, the Tathāgata renders good protection to those Bodhisattvas so that, after his parinirvāṇa, they will realize supreme enlightenment and serve as an abundant harvest during the famine of the true Dharma.

“Śāriputra, in this world, there are Bodhisattvas who, after hearing the Dharma-door of Tathāgata-Akṣobhya's merits, can accept, uphold, read, recite and comprehend it, and wish to be born

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in that Buddha-land. You should know that these people have attained nonregression. ...

“Śāriputra, good men and good women with pure faith should expound this merit-praising Dharma-door to others at all times. Those who do so will be cleansed of all defilements in their present lifetimes, or [at most] in two lifetimes.

“Furthermore, Śāriputra, this Dharma-door of praising Tathāgata Akṣobhya's merits cannot be accepted by foolish, shallow people. It can be accepted and upheld only by those with profound, vast wisdom. Śāriputra, those good men and good women [with such wisdom] will see Buddhas and will certainly obtain this merit-praising Dharma-door in their present lifetimes.

“Śāriputra, suppose there are priceless pearls taken from the sea. Who do you think will be the first to obtain these priceless treasures?”

Śāriputra said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, kings, princes, and ministers will be the first to obtain them.”

The Buddha told Śāriputra, “In the same way, Bodhisattvas will be the first to acquire the Dharma-door of that Buddha's merits, and those Bodhisattvas will attain the state of nonregression. They will surely be able to accept, uphold, read, recite, and comprehend this Dharma after hearing it; they will diligently study the nature of suchness for the purpose of attaining supreme enlightenment.”

Śāriputra said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, if Bodhisattvas wish to abide in the state of nonregression, they should accept, uphold, read, recite, and comprehend this merit-praising Dharma-door after hearing it. Why? Because Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas who abide in this Dharma-door will not regress from [their realization of] the Dharma nature.”

The Buddha told Śāriputra, “If a man in order to hear this Dharma, gave away enough gold to fill the entire world, he might still be unable to hear it. Why? Because this meritorious Dharma cannot be upheld by sentient beings with meager blessings.

“Furthermore, Śāriputra, if followers of the Śrāvaka-vehicle accept, uphold, read, and recite this meritorious Dharma-door after

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hearing it, and practice it diligently in order to conform to supreme enlightenment and suchness, they will attain realization in their next lifetimes; they will attain candidacy for Buddhahood in two lifetimes; they will attain supreme enlightenment in no more than three lifetimes. ...

“Furthermore, Śāriputra, if, in pursuit of this Dharma-door, good men and good women listen to, accept, uphold, read, recite, and circulate it in a village or town, and for this purpose live in the houses of laypeople though they themselves are monks or nuns, I will say they are faultless and will allow them to stay in such places. Why? Because these good men and good women are trying to keep this Dharma from falling into oblivion after their death. Śāriputra, even if the village or town is far away, these Bodhisattvas still should go and stay there to accept, uphold, read, and recite this Dharma-door, and reveal and expound it to others.

“Śāriputra, good men and good women should make this vow: ‘I should not think of regressing from the pursuit of supreme enlightenment, for I have heard the name of the Dharma-door of Tathāgata Akṣobhya.’. ...

Śāriputra said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, this Dharma-door can bring vast merits.”

The Buddha told Śāriputra, “So it is, so it is, as you have said. Śāriputra, if a country is assailed by hailstorms, untimely thunder, or other terrible things, good men and good women should concentrate their minds on Tathāgata Akṣobhya and invoke his name; this will put an end to all disasters. [Why?] Because in the past, that Tathāgata helped hundreds of thousands of dragons out of their sufferings. Because his compassionate original vows are genuine and sincere, and because he wishes to fulfill the dedication of his good roots without fail, all those who invoke his name will have their sorrow and distress relieved spontaneously, except those sentient beings whose previous [evil] karmas have ripened.”

Śāriputra said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, Bodhisattvas who wish to realize supreme enlightenment in this life should act as Tathāgata Akṣobhya acted when he was fulfilling his vows.”

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The Buddha told Śāriputra, "So it is, so it is. ..."
At the time, the gods of the Realm of Desire and the gods of the Brahma Heaven all joined their palms towards [Akṣobhya] Buddha, prostrated themselves to pay homage to Tathāgata Akṣobhya, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One, who is most extraordinary; and we take refuge in Tathāgata Sākyamuni, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One of this world, who is so skillful in expounding this merit praising Dharma-door.

Then the gods of the Realm of Desire strewed flowers of the coral tree and celestial incense over the Buddha. In the air, the incense and flowers fused and formed a canopy. Furthermore, the gods scattered the celestial flowers and incense toward Akṣobhya Buddha as offerings from afar. ...

When the Buddha had expounded this Dharma-door, five hundred monks acquired mental liberation concerning the undefiled Dharma; five thousand Bodhisattvas, six thousand nuns, eight thousand laymen, then thousand laywoman, and numerous gods of the realm of Desire all wished to be born in that Buddha-land. Thereupon, the Tathāgata predicted that they would all be born in that Buddha-land. ...

When the Buddha finished expounding this sutra, Śāriputra, the gods, humans, asuras, gandharvas, garuḍas, kinnaras, and mahoragas were all jubilant over the Buddha's Teaching. They accepted it with faith and began to practice it with veneration.