



Buddha Pronounces the Sūtra of Amitābha Buddha

Sukhāvativyūha

Translated from Sanskrit into Chinese in the Later Qin Dynasty by The Tripitaka Master *Kumārajīva* from *Kucha*. Translated from the Chinese Canon, Vol. 12, Text 366

Thus I have heard:

At one time the Buddha was staying in the Anāthapindada Garden of Jetavana Park in the city kingdom of Śrāvastī, together with a group of 1,250 great bhikshus, who all were great Arhats as recognised by the multitudes. Such great disciples included the Elder Śāriputra, Mahāmaudgalyāyana, Mahākāśyapa, Mahākātyāyana, Mahākaushthila, Revata, Śuddhipanthaka, Nanda, Ānanda, Rāhula, Gavāmpati, Kālodāyin, Mahākapphila, Vakkula, Aniruddha, and others. Also present were Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas, such as Manjuśrī the Dharma Prince, Ajita Bodhisattva, Gandhahastin Bodhisattva, and Persistent Energetic Progress Bodhisattva. Along with great Bodhisattvas such as these, in attendance as well were the god-king Śakro-Devānām-Indra and an innumerable multitude of gods.

At that time the Buddha told the Elder Śāriputra, "West of here, beyond 100,000 koti [one koti is ten million] Buddha Lands, is a land called Ultimate Bliss [Sukhavati]. In that land is a Buddha called

Amitābha, who is now expounding the Dharma. Śāriputra, why is that land called Ultimate Bliss? Sentient beings of that land have no suffering but only experience myriad joys. Therefore, that land is called Ultimate Bliss. Moreover, Śāriputra, the Land of Ultimate Bliss is surrounded by seven rows of railings, seven layers of nets [with bells], and seven lines of trees, all made of the four treasures [gold, silver, beryl and crystal]. Therefore, that land is called Ultimate Bliss.

In addition, Śāriputra, in the Land of Ultimate Bliss are ponds made of the seven treasures, filled with the water of the eight virtues [these qualities are: limpidity and purity, refreshing coolness, sweetness, softness, fortifying qualities, calmness, satisfaction, vigour]. Covering the bed of each pond is gold dust. The stairs and walkways on the four sides of each pond are made of gold, silver, aquamarine, and crystal. Standing majestically are lofty towers, all adorned with gold, silver, aquamarine, crystal, conch shell, ruby, and emerald. The lotus flowers in the ponds are as large as carriage wheels. The blue colours gleam with blue light; the yellow colours, yellow light; the red colours, red light; the white colours, white light. They are wonderful, fragrant, and pure. Śāriputra, the Land of Ultimate Bliss is formed with such virtues and adornments.

Furthermore, Śāriputra, celestial music is always playing in that Buddha Land, and its ground is made of yellow gold. Day and night in the six periods, māṅdarāva flowers rain down from the sky. Sentient beings of that land, at dawn, each fill their robes with wonderful flowers to make offerings to 100,000 kotis Buddhas in other lands. At mealtime, they return to their own land to eat and do walking meditation. Śāriputra, the Land of Ultimate Bliss is formed with such virtues and adornments.

In addition, Śāriputra, in that land are various kinds of unusual, wonderful birds of diverse colours, such as white cranes, peacocks, parrots, śāris, kalaviṅkas, and jīvajīvas. Day and night in the six periods, these birds sing harmonious, exquisite tones. These tones pronounce Dharmas, such as the five roots of goodness, the five powers, the seven enlightenment factors, and the Eightfold Right Path. Sentient beings of that land that hear these tones all think of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Śāriputra, do not say that these birds are born as a form of retribution for sins [in their past lives]. Why not? Śāriputra, that Buddha Land does not have the three evil life-paths. Śāriputra, even the names of the three evil life-paths do not exist in that Buddha Land, much less the actual paths. These birds are all magically created by Amitābha Buddha to have the Dharma tones flow everywhere.

Śāriputra, as breezes blow in that Buddha Land, the jewelled trees in lines and the jewelled nets [with bells, see note 1] make wonderful

music, like 100,000 melodies playing at the same time. Those who hear these tones spontaneously invoke the mind that thinks of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Śāriputra, that Buddha Land is formed with such virtues and adornments.

Śāriputra, what is your opinion? For what reason is that Buddha called Amitābha? Śāriputra, that Buddha's radiance is infinite, illuminating lands in the ten directions unhindered. Therefore, He is called Amitābha. Moreover, Śāriputra, the lifespan of that Buddha and His people lasts measureless, boundless asankhyeya [limitless] kalpas. Therefore, He is called Amitāyus. Śāriputra, it has been ten kalpas since Amitābha Buddha attained Buddhahood. In addition, Śāriputra, that Buddha has innumerable, boundless voice-hearer disciples. All of them are Arhats, their numbers unknowable by calculation. Equally unknowable is the size of the multitude of Bodhisattvas. Śāriputra, that Buddha Land is formed with such virtues and adornments!

Furthermore, Śāriputra, sentient beings reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss are at the spiritual level of *avinivartanīya* [meaning the level, from where a Bodhisattva will not fall back to lower levels]. Many among them are in the holy position to attain Buddhahood in their next life. Their numbers are so large that they are unknowable by calculation, and can only be reckoned in terms of measureless, boundless asankhyeyas [final infinities]. Śāriputra, sentient beings that have heard [of that land] should resolve to be reborn in that land. Why? To be in the same place together with people of superior virtues. Śāriputra, no one with the condition of few roots of goodness and a meagre store of merits can be reborn in that land [as a result of good karma].

Śāriputra, if, among good men and good women, there are those who, having heard of Amitābha Buddha, uphold His name for one day, two days, three days, four days, five days, six days, or seven days single-mindedly undistracted, upon their dying, Amitābha Buddha, together with a multitude of holy beings, will appear before them. When these people die, their minds will not be demented [meaning: they will depart this life with tranquil minds], and then they will be reborn in Amitābha Buddha's Land of Ultimate Bliss. Śāriputra, I see this benefit, so I speak these words. If there are sentient beings that hear what I say, they should resolve to be reborn in that land.

Śāriputra, as I now praise the inconceivable merit of Amitābha Buddha, so too do Buddhas in worlds in the east, such as Akshobhya Buddha, Meru Banner Buddha [Tathagata Merudhvaga], Great Meru Buddha [Tathagata Mahameru], Meru Light Buddha [Tathagata Meruprabhāsa], and Wonderful Tone Buddha [Tathagata Maṅgudhvaga]. Buddhas such as these, are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. Each Buddha in His own land extends His wide-ranging, far-reaching

tongue [speech], completely covering the Three-Thousand Large Thousandfold World, and speaks these truthful words: 'You sentient beings should praise the inconceivable merit and believe in this sūtra, which is protected and remembered by all Buddhas.'

Śāriputra, in worlds in the south are Sun-Moon Lamp Buddha [Tathagata Kandrasūryapradīpa], Renown Light Buddha [Tathagata Yashaprabha], Great Flame Aggregate Buddha [Tathagata Mahākiskandha, see note 2], Meru Lamp Buddha [Tathagata Merupradīpa], and Infinite Energetic Progress Buddha [Tathagata Anantavīrya]. Buddhas such as these, are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. Each Buddha in His own land extends His wide-ranging, far-reaching tongue, completely covering the Three-Thousand Large Thousandfold World, and speaks these truthful words: 'You sentient beings should praise the inconceivable merit and believe in this sūtra, which is protected and remembered by all Buddhas.'

Śāriputra, in worlds in the west are Infinite Life Buddha [Tathagata Amitayus], Infinite Aggregate Buddha [Tathagata Amitaskandha], Infinite Banner Buddha [Tathagata Amitadhvaga], Great Light Buddha [Tathagata Mahāprabha], Great Radiance Buddha, Jewel Brilliance Buddha [Tathagata Mahāratnaketu], and Pure Light Buddha [Tathagata Suddharasmiprabha]. Buddhas such as these, are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. Each Buddha in His own land extends His wide-ranging, far-reaching tongue, completely covering the Three-Thousand Large Thousandfold World, and speaks these truthful words: 'You sentient beings should praise the inconceivable merit and believe in this sūtra, which is protected and remembered by all Buddhas.'

Śāriputra, in worlds in the north are Flame Aggregate Buddha [Tathagata Mahākiskandha], Supreme Tone Buddha [Tathagata Vaisvānanirghosha], Hard-to-Vanquish Buddha [Tathagata Dushpradharsha], Sun Birth Buddha [Tathagata Adityasambhava], Web Radiance Buddha [Tathagata Prabhakara]. Buddhas such as these, are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. Each Buddha in His own land extends His wide-ranging, far-reaching tongue, completely covering the Three-Thousand Large Thousandfold World, and speaks these truthful words: 'You sentient beings should praise the inconceivable merit and believe in this sūtra, which is protected and remembered by all Buddhas.'

Śāriputra, in worlds toward the nadir are Lion Buddha [Tathagata Simha], Renown Buddha [Tathagata Yasas], Renown Light Buddha [Tathagata Yasahprabhava], Dharma Buddha [Tathagata Dharma], Dharma Banner Buddha [Tathagata Dharmadhara], and Dharma Upholder Buddha [Tathagata Dharmavadhvaga]. Buddhas such as these, are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. Each Buddha in His own

land extends His wide-ranging, far-reaching tongue, completely covering the Three-Thousand Large Thousandfold World, and speaks these truthful words: 'You sentient beings should praise the inconceivable merit and believe in this sūtra, which is protected and remembered by all Buddhas.'

Śāriputra, in worlds toward the zenith are Brahma Tone Buddha [Tathagata Brahmaghosha], Constellation King Buddha [Tathagata Nakshatrarāga], Fragrance Superior Buddha [Tathagata Gandhottama], Fragrance Light Buddha [Tathagata Gandhaprabhāsa], Great Flame Aggregate Buddha [Tathagata Mahākiskandha], Adorned with Jewelled Flowers in Diverse Colours Buddha [Tathagata Ratnakusumasampushpitagātra], Salendra King Buddha [Tathagata Sālendirāga], Jewelled Lotus Flower Splendour Buddha [Tathagata Ratnotpalasrī], Seeing All Meaning Buddha [Tathagata Sarvārthadarsa], and Sumeru Likeness Buddha [Tathagata Sumerukalpa]. Buddhas such as these, are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. Each Buddha in His own land extends His wide-ranging, far-reaching tongue, completely covering the Three-Thousand Large Thousandfold World, and speaks these truthful words: 'You sentient beings should praise the inconceivable merit and believe in this sūtra, which is protected and remembered by all Buddhas.'

Śāriputra, what is your opinion? Why is this sūtra called a sūtra protected and remembered by all Buddhas? Śāriputra, if there are good men and good women who have heard and upheld this sūtra and have heard the names of Buddhas, these good men and good women are protected and remembered by all Buddhas. They all will never regress from the *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi* mind [highest completely enlightend mind]. Therefore, Śāriputra, you all should believe and accept my words and the words spoken by all other Buddhas. If there are those who have made their resolve, are now making their resolve, or will make their resolve to be reborn in Amitābha Buddha's land, those people will never regress from the *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi* mind, whether they have already been reborn, are now being reborn, or will be reborn in that land. Therefore, Śāriputra, if, among good men and good women, there are those who believe [my words], they should resolve to be reborn in that land.

Śāriputra, as I now praise the inconceivable merit of Buddhas, so too those Buddhas praise my inconceivable merit, saying these words: 'Sakyamuni Buddha can do the extremely difficult, extraordinary thing in the Sahā World during the evil times of the five turbidities - the turbidity of a kalpa, the turbidity of views, the turbidity of afflictions, the turbidity of sentient beings, and the turbidity of their lifespan - attaining *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi* [highest completely full enlightenment]. For the sake of sentient beings, He expounds the Dharma, which the entire world finds hard to believe.'

Śāriputra, know that, in the evil times of the five turbidities, I have done this difficult thing, attaining *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*, and I expound to the entire world the hard-to-believe Dharma. It is extremely difficult!"

After the Buddha had pronounced this Sūtra, Śāriputra and other bhikshus [monks], as well as gods, humans, asuras [demi-gods], and others in the entire world, having heard what the Buddha [Sakyamuni] had said, rejoiced, believed in, and accepted the teachings. They made obeisance and departed.

Note 1: On page 92 in *Buddhist Mahāyāna Texts*, edited by E. B. Cowell and others (New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1969), F. Max Muller footnotes that he translates "kankanījālānām" (bells of nets) into *strings* of bells. However, bells can hang from nets (jālas) as described in the *Mahāyāna Sūtra of Consciousness Revealed* (Sūtra 18). So the word "nets" is retained and the bells are placed in brackets.

Note 2: The Sanskrit name "Mahārciskandha" is translated into Chinese, in Text 366, as *Great Flame Shoulder*. The Sanskrit word "arci" can mean ray or flame, and "skandha" can mean shoulder or aggregate. This name "Mahārciskandha" is translated by Master Xuanzang into Chinese, in Text 367, as *Great Light Aggregate*.

I found this text somewhere on the internet, but unfortunately, I have forgotten the exact address. I have made minor changes and additions, that have been marked with square bracelets and written in red. This was done after comparing the text with F. Max Müllers translation of the same Sutra from 1894. If someone by any chance found out the origin of this particular translation and it's translator, I would be very grateful if you would kindly inform me about your findings.

Also the longer Sutra on Sukhavati exists in translation by Max Müller. Both Sutras are found in a modern work and translation: *The Land of Bliss* by Luis O. Gomez, Hawaiian Press, ISBN: 0-8248-1694-3 (hardcover) & ISBN: 0-8248-1760-5 (paperback). You may find parts of it on Google Books.

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