

Amitabha Sutra

The Amita Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha

Translated by the Trepiṭaka Kumārajīva of the Kucha Kingdom
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Amitabha Sutra

1. Setting

Thus have I heard: At one time, The Buddha was in Anāthapiṇḍada's Park in Jeta's Grove near Śrāvastī, together with a great assembly of 1,250 bhikṣus, all of whom were great arhats, who were all well-known. The elder Śāriputra, Mahāmaudgalyāyana, Mahākāśyapa, Mahākapphiṇa, Mahākauṣṭhila, Revata, Śuddhipanthaka, Nanda, Ānanda, Rāhula, Gavāṃpati, Piṇḍola Bharadvāja, Kālodayin, Mahākapphiṇa, Vakkula, Aniruddha, and such great disciples. He was together with many bodhisattva-mahāsattvas as Mañjuśrī, the Dharma Prince, Ajita Bodhisattva, Gandhahastin Bodhisattva, and Nityodyukta Bodhisattva. In addition to such great bodhisattvas, there were also Śakra Devānām-Indra and a great assembly of countless other devas.

2. The Name of Sukhāvātī

At that time, the Buddha addressed the Venerable Śāriputra:

“In the western direction, beyond a hundred thousand koṭis of buddha-lands, there is a world called Sukhāvātī. In that land there is a buddha called Amita, who is currently abiding, teaching the Dharma.

“O Śāriputra! For what reason is that land called Sukhāvātī? The sentient beings in that land do not experience any suffering but only experience all kinds of bliss. For that reason, it is called Sukhāvātī.

3. The Adornments

“Further, O Śāriputra, the land of Sukhāvātī has seven railings, seven nets, and seven rows of trees, and all over are the four jewels. Therefore, that land is called Sukhāvātī.

4. The Ponds, Jewel Trees, and Lotuses

“Further, O Śāriputra, the land of Sukhāvātī has seven jewelled ponds filled with waters of the eight qualities. The bottoms of the ponds are covered with pure gold sand. On the four sides are staircases made of gold, silver, vaiḍūrya, and crystal. Above them are pavilions, which are gloriously adorned with gold, silver, vaiḍūrya, crystal, sapphire, ruby, and cornelian. The lotus flowers in the ponds are as big as cartwheels, and are blue in colour and blue in light, yellow in colour and yellow in light, red in colour and red in light, white in colour and white in light, and with a sublimely pure fragrance. O Śāriputra! The land of Sukhāvātī is adorned with such merits.

5. The Instruments, Flowers, and Homage to other Buddhas

“Further, O Śāriputra, in that buddha-land, there is always the sounding forth of divine music; the ground is golden; day and night, six times, divine mandāra flowers rain down. Every morning, the beings in that land take a basket of various sublime flowers to make offerings to a hundred thousand koṭis of buddhas in other lands; then, at mealtime, they return to that land to eat and stroll about.

“O Śāriputra! The land of Sukhāvātī is adorned with such merits.

6. The Birds and the Realms

“Further, O Śāriputra, in that land, there are always various wonderful and colourful birds, such as swans, peacocks, parrots, śārīs, kalaviṅkas, and jīvañjīvakas. These various birds, day and night, six times, emit harmonious and elegant calls; their calls issue forth Dharma teachings such as the five faculties, the five powers, the seven limbs of awakening, and the noble eightfold path. The beings in that land, having heard these calls, all arouse recollection of the Buddha, recollection of the Dharma, and recollection of the Saṅgha.

“O Śāriputra! Do not think that these birds are actually born as the fruition of karmic faults. For what reason? In that buddha-land, there are no three unfortunate realms. O Śāriputra! In that buddha-land, there are not even the names of the three unfortunate realms, let alone their actual existence. These various birds were all manifested by Amita Buddha to issue forth the sound of the Dharma.

7. The Sound of the Adornments

“O Śāriputra, the gentle breeze in that buddha-land causes the jewelled rows of trees and jewelled nets to issue forth subtle sounds like the simultaneous playing of a hundred thousand instruments. Those who hear those sounds will naturally arouse thoughts of recollection of the Buddha, recollection of the Dharma, and recollection of the Saṅgha.

“O Śāriputra! That buddha-land is adorned with such merits.

8. The Name Amitābha

“O Śāriputra! What do you think? For what reason is that Buddha called Amita? O Śāriputra, the light of that Buddha is immeasurable, and its illumination is unobstructed throughout the lands in the ten directions. For that reason, he is called Amit[ābha].

9. The Name Amitāyus and his Saṅgha

“Further, O Śāriputra, the life span of that Buddha and the people there spans an immeasurable, limitless asaṃkhyā of kalpas. So he is called Amit[āyus].

“O Śāriputra! It has been ten kalpas now since Amita Buddha attained buddhahood.

“Further, O Śāriputra, that Buddha has innumerable and limitless śrāvaka disciples, all of whom are arhats and whose number cannot be reckoned; the bodhisattvas there are also like that. O Śāriputra! That buddha-land is adorned with such merits.

10. Arising in that Buddha-Land

“Further, O Śāriputra! The beings who arise in the land of Sukhāvātī are all avinivartanīya. Among them, many have one more birth. Their number is extremely great, and it cannot be reckoned and can only be expressed over an immeasurable, limitless asaṃkhyā of kalpas. O Śāriputra! Those beings who hear this should always give rise to aspirations, aspiring to be born in that land. For what reason? Because they will come together with such good people.

“O Śāriputra! One cannot arise in that land by the cause and condition of insignificant wholesome roots of merit. O Śāriputra! Whichever son of good family or daughter of good family will hear the name of Amita Buddha and will firmly bear that name whether for one day, two days, three days, four days, five days, six days, or seven days, single-mindedly and without distraction, at the time of their death, Amita Buddha, together with his noble assembly, will appear before them. At the time of their death, their minds will be undisturbed, and they will attain rebirth in Amita Buddha’s land of Sukhāvātī.

“O Śāriputra! I see the benefit in this and, therefore, speak these words: If there are beings who hear this teaching, they should give rise to the aspiration to be born in that land.

11. The Buddhas of the Eastern Direction

“O Śāriputra! Just as I now praise the inconceivable merits of Amita Buddha, there are in the eastern direction also Akṣobhya Buddha, Merudhvaja Buddha, Mahāmeru Buddha, Meruprabhāsa Buddha, and Mañjuṣa Buddha. These and other buddhas as numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges River, each having covered their lands with the marks of their broad and long tongues, which completely cover a cosmos of three thousand great thousand worlds, declare the

truth, saying: ‘You beings should have faith in this declaration of inconceivable merits, this sūtra ’Protected by all Buddhas.’ ”

12. The Buddhas of the Southern Direction

“O Śāriputra! There are in the southern direction Candrasūryapradīpa Buddha, Yaśaḥprabha Buddha, Mahārciḥskandha Buddha, Merupradīpa Buddha, and Anantavīrya Buddha. These and other buddhas as numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges River, each having covered their lands with the marks of their broad and long tongues, which completely cover a cosmos of three thousand great thousand worlds, declare the truth, saying: ‘You beings should have faith in this declaration of inconceivable merits, this sūtra ’Protected by all Buddhas.’ ”

13. The Buddhas of the Western Direction

“O Śāriputra! There are in the western direction Amitāyus Buddha, Amitaskandha Buddha, Amitadhvaḥja Buddha, Mahāpradīpa Buddha, Mahāprabha Buddha, Ratnaketu Buddha, and Śuddharaśmiprabha Buddha. These and other buddhas as numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges River, each having covered their lands with the marks of their broad and long tongues, which completely cover a cosmos of three thousand great thousand worlds, declare the truth, saying: ‘You beings should have faith in this declaration of inconceivable merits, this sūtra ’Protected by all Buddhas.’ ”

14. The Buddhas of the Northern Direction

“O Śāriputra! There are in the northern direction Arciḥskandha Buddha, Vaiśvānaranirghoṣa Buddha, Duṣpradharṣa Buddha, Ādityasaṃbhava Buddha, and Jaleniprabha Buddha. These and other buddhas as numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges River, each having covered their lands with the marks of their broad and long tongues, which completely cover a cosmos of three thousand great thousand worlds, declare the truth, saying: ‘You beings should have faith in this declaration of inconceivable merits, this sūtra ’Protected by all Buddhas.’ ”

15. The Buddhas of the Nadir Direction

“O Śāriputra! There are in the nadir direction Siṃha Buddha, Yaśaḥ Buddha, Yaśaḥprabhāsa Buddha, Dharma Buddha, Dharmadhvaḥja Buddha, and Dharmadhara Buddha. These and other buddhas as numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges River, each having

covered their lands with the marks of their broad and long tongues, which completely cover a cosmos of three thousand great thousand worlds, declare the truth, saying: ‘You beings should have faith in this declaration of inconceivable merits, this sūtra ‘Protected by all Buddhas.’”

16. The Buddhas of the Zenith Direction

“O Śāriputra! There are in the zenith direction Brahmaghoṣa Buddha, Nakṣatrarāja Buddha, Gandhottama Buddha, Gandhaprabhāsa Buddha, Mahārciḥskandha Buddha, Ratnakusumasampuspitagātra Buddha, Sāleṇdrarāja Buddha, Ratnotpalaśrī Buddha, Sarvārthadarśin Buddha, and Sumerukalpa Buddha. These and other buddhas as numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges River, each having covered their lands with the marks of their broad and long tongues, which completely cover a cosmos of three thousand great thousand worlds, declare the truth, saying: ‘You beings should have faith in this declaration of inconceivable merits, this sūtra ‘Protected by all Buddhas.’”

17. The Name of the Teaching

“O Śāriputra! What do you think? Why is this sūtra called ‘Protected by All Buddhas?’ O Śāriputra! Whichever son of good family or daughter of good family who will hear this sūtra, take up, and bear it, or who will hear the name of those buddhas, those sons of good family or daughters of good family will all be protected by those buddhas together, and they will all attain non-retrogression from anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. Therefore, O Śāriputra, you should all believe in my words and what those buddhas taught.

“O Śāriputra! Whichever people have already aspired, are now aspiring, or will aspire, wishing to be born in Amita Buddha’s land, all these people will attain non-retrogression from anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi and have been born in that land or are now being born, or will be born. Therefore, O Śāriputra, sons of good family and daughters of good family, if they have faith, should give rise to the aspiration to be born in that land.

18. The Praise of Śākyamuni

“O Śāriputra! Just as I now praise those buddhas’ inconceivable merits, those buddhas also praise my inconceivable merits, and thus say:

‘Śākyamuni Buddha could do profoundly difficult and rare deeds. He could, amidst the unwholesome age of the five

degenerations of the Sahā World, the degeneration of the kalpa, the degeneration of views, the degeneration of defilements, the degeneration of beings, and the degeneration of lifespans, attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi, and, for the sake of all beings, teach the Dharma which is difficult to believe by all the world.’

19. The Most Difficult of Difficulties

“O Śāriputra! You should know that I did this difficult deed amidst the unwholesome age of the five degenerations. Having attained anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi, for the sake of all beings, I taught this Dharma, which is difficult to believe by all the world. This is profoundly difficult!”

20. Conclusion

After the Buddha had spoken this sūtra, Śāriputra and the bhikṣus, and all the world with its devas, humans, asuras, and so forth, having heard what the Buddha had said, rejoiced, faithfully took it up, paid respects, and left.

Postface

The following postface appears in the Taishō edition of the Amita Sūtra.

Amitayūs Buddha spoke the Rebirth in the Pure Land Mantra:

namo amitābhāya tathāgatāya tadyathā amṛtodbhave amṛtasiddhambhave
amṛtavikrānte gāmine gagana kīrtakare svāhā!

For one who recites this mantra, Amita Buddha will always abide on their crown, and at the end of their lives, they will effortlessly be reborn there.

Bodhisattva Nagarjuna wished to be reborn in Sukhāvātī and received this mantra in a dream.

The Trepīṭaka Narendrayāśas recited this mantra. Dharma Master Xiu of Tianping Temple received this mantra from Trepīṭaka Narendrayāśas. He said:

“The sutra text did not come from foreign countries [other than India]. The method of taking up and bearing the mantra is to recite it three times seven (twenty-one) times, day and night, six times. In the morning and evening, rinse the mouth, chew willow twigs, burn incense, kneel before the image, join palms, and recite it three times seven (twenty-one) times. Do this every day, and the faults of the four grave offences, the five heinous crimes, the ten unwholesome deeds, and slandering the vaipulya teachings will all be eradicated. In this life, one will not be disturbed by any evil ghosts or spirits, and after the end of one’s life, one will naturally be reborn in the

land of Amita. How much more so for those who take up, bear, read,
and recite it day and night: the merit is inconceivable!”

Sourced from Shaku Shingan

<https://www.shingansportal.com/s%C5%ABtra-translations/t366-the-amita-s%C5%ABtra-spoken-by-the-buddha>