

The Sutra on Amida Buddha

Delivered by Śākyamuni Buddha

Translated under the command of the Emperor

by the Tripiṭaka Master Kumārajīva

of the Yao-Ch'in Dynasty

1 Thus I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying in Anāthapiṇḍada's Garden of Jeta Grove in the city of Śrāvastī together with a great multitude of twelve hundred and fifty monks. They were all great arhats, well-known to the people.

Among them were great disciples such as the Elders Śāriputra, Mahāmaudgalyāyana, Mahākāśyapa, Mahākātyāyana, Mahākauṣṭhila, Revata, Śuddhipanthaka, Nanda, Ānanda, Rāhula, Gavāṃpati, Piṇḍolabhāradvāja, Kālodayin, Mahākapphiṇa, Vakkula, and Aniruddha. There were also many bodhisattva-mahasattvas, such as Dharma Prince Mañjuśrī, Bodhisattva Ajita, Bodhisattva Gandhahastin, and Bodhisattva Nityodyukuta. In addition to these great bodhisattvas, the Buddha was also accompanied by innumerable devas, including Śakra, the king of the gods, and many others.

2 The Buddha then said to Śāriputra, the Elder, "Beyond a hundred thousand kotis of Buddha-lands westwards from here, there is a land called 'Perfect Bliss.' In that land there is a Buddha called Amida who is expounding the Dharma at this moment."

3 "Śāriputra, why is that land called Perfect Bliss? It is because the people of that land experience no suffering. Rather, they only know every kind of pleasure. That is why it is called Perfect Bliss.

"Again, Śāriputra, in the Land of Perfect Bliss there are seven rows of balustrades, seven rows of decorative nets, and seven rows of arrayed trees, all made of four kinds of jewels. They extend over and encircle the whole land. For this reason, the land is called Perfect Bliss.

"Again, Śāriputra, in the Land of Perfect Bliss there are many pools of seven kinds of jewels, full of water with the eight excellent qualities. The bottoms of the pools are covered entirely with sands of gold. On the four sides of the pools, there are stairways made of gold, silver, lapis lazuli, and crystal. Multistoried pavilions, majestically adorned with gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, sapphire, red pearl, and carnelian stand alongside the banks. There are lotus flowers, as large as chariot wheels, growing in the pools. Those of blue color emit blue radiance; those of yellow color emit yellow radiance; those of red color emit red radiance; and those of white color emit white radiance. They are exquisite, wonderful, fragrant and pure. Śāriputra, the Land of Perfect Bliss is filled with such splendor and adornments.

"Furthermore, Śāriputra, in that Buddha-land, there is always celestial music to be heard. The ground is of gold, and six times a day, mandarava flowers gently rain down from the sky. Everyday, during the tranquility of the early morning, the people of that land fill the hem of their robes with those exquisite blossoms and go to make offerings of them to a hundred thousand kotis of Buddhas dwelling in the worlds of the other quarters. Then they return to the Land of Perfect Bliss before their mealtime. After their meal, they enjoy a stroll. Śāriputra, the Land of Perfect Bliss is filled with such splendor and adornments.

“Moreover, Śāriputra, in that land there are always many kinds of wondrously rare and beautiful birds of various colors, such as white swans, peacocks, parrots, sarikas, kalavinkas, and jivam-jivakas. Six times a day, all of these birds melodiously sing in elegant harmony, their sound proclaiming such teachings as the five faculties, the five powers, the seven factors for awakening, and the Eightfold Noble Path. When the people of that land hear those birds singing, they all become mindful of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

“But, Śāriputra, you should not assume that these are real birds, born as retribution for evil karma. The reason for this is that the three evil realms do not exist in that Buddha-land. Śāriputra, since in that land even the names of such three evil realms do not exist, how could it be possible that the realms themselves actually exist there? All of these various birds are manifested by Amida Buddha so that their singing can proclaim and spread the Dharma.

“Śāriputra, in that Buddha-land, when a gentle breeze begins to blow, causing the arrayed jeweled trees and decorative jeweled nets to stir, they produce subtle, harmonious sounds. It is as if a hundred thousand musical instruments were being played simultaneously. Everyone who hears those sounds becomes spontaneously mindful of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Śāriputra, that Buddha-land is filled with such splendor and adornments.”

4 What do you think, Śāriputra? Why is that Buddha called ‘Amida?’ Śāriputra, it is because that Buddha’s light is immeasurable and shines unhindered throughout the worlds of the ten quarters. That is why the Buddha is called ‘Amida.’ Furthermore, Śāriputra, the life of the Buddha and the people of that land lasts for immeasurable, unlimited, and uncountable kalpas. That is why the Buddha is called ‘Amida.’ Śāriputra, ten kalpas have passed since Amida Buddha attained enlightenment.

“Moreover, Śāriputra, that Buddha has an immeasurable and unlimited number of sravaka disciples, all of them arhats, whose number cannot be known by any means. It is the same for the multitude of bodhisattvas. Śāriputra, that Buddha-land is filled with such splendor and adornments.”

5 “In addition, the people that are born in the Land of Perfect Bliss dwell in the stage of nonretrogression. Among them are many who are in the stage of succession to Buddhahood after one lifetime. Their number is so great that it cannot be known by any means. It can only be reckoned by spending immeasurable, unlimited, and countless kalpas.

“Śāriputra, the people who hear of that land should aspire to be born there. Why? It is because they will be able to meet together with such sages of supreme virtue there.

“Śāriputra, one cannot be born in that land through the cause of small roots of good and small virtues. Śāriputra, if a good person, either a man or a woman who, on hearing of Amida Buddha, holds steadfast to the Name single-mindedly and unwaveringly for one day, two days, three, four, five, six, or seven days, then Amida Buddha along with a multitude of sacred beings will appear before that person at the moment of death. At the moment of death, that person, without becoming distraught, will immediately be born in Amida Buddha’s Land of Perfect Bliss.

“Śāriputra, because I see these benefits, I tell you this: All sentient beings who hear this teaching should aspire for birth in that land.”

6 “Śāriputra, just as I now praise the inconceivable virtues of Amida Buddha, so do the Buddhas residing in the eastern quarter, numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Buddhas named Immovable, Sumeru Appearance, Great Sumeru, Sumeru Light, and Wonderful Sound. In their own land, they extend their long, broad tongue which completely covers the triple-thousand great thousand worlds, and proclaim these true and sincere words: ‘All of you sentient beings should believe and accept this sutra called *Praises of the Inconceivable Virtue and Protection by All Buddhas.*’”

7 “Śāriputra, there are Buddhas residing in the southern quarter, numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Buddhas named Sun-and Moon Lamp, Renowned Light, Great Flame Shoulders, Sumeru Lamp, and Measureless Exertion. In their own land, they extend their long, broad tongue which completely covers the triple-thousand great thousand worlds, and proclaim these true and sincere words: ‘All of you sentient beings should believe and accept this sutra called *Praises of the Inconceivable Virtue and Protection by All Buddhas.*’”

8 “Śāriputra, there are Buddhas residing in the western quarter, numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Buddhas named Immeasurable Life, Immeasurable Form, Immeasurable Banner, Great Light, Great Brilliance, Jewel Form, and Pure Light. In their own land, they extend their long, broad tongue which completely covers the triple-thousand great thousand worlds, and proclaim these true and sincere words: ‘All of you sentient beings should believe and accept this sutra called *Praises of the Inconceivable Virtue and Protection by All Buddhas.*’”

9 “Śāriputra, there are Buddhas residing in the northern quarter, numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Buddhas named Flame Shoulders, Most Excellent Sound, Difficult to Injure, Sun-produced, and Net Brilliance. In their own land, they extend their long, broad tongue which completely covers the triple-thousand great thousand worlds, and proclaim these true and sincere words: ‘All of you sentient beings should believe and accept this sutra called *Praises of the Inconceivable Virtue and Protection by All Buddhas.*’”

10 “Śāriputra, there are Buddhas residing in the nadir quarter, numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Buddhas named Lion, Renown, Renown Light, Dharma, Dharma Banner, and Dharma Holding. In their own land, they extend their long, broad tongue which completely covers the triple-thousand great thousand worlds, and proclaim these true and sincere words: ‘All of you sentient beings should believe and accept this sutra called *Praises of the Inconceivable Virtue and Protection by All Buddhas.*’”

11 “Śāriputra, there are Buddhas residing in the zenith quarter, numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Buddhas named Brahmā Voice, Constellation King, Incomparable Fragrance, Fragrant Light, Great Flame Shoulders, Adorned with Jewel-flowers of Various Colors, Sāla Tree King, Jewel-flower Virtue, Discerning All Meanings, and Resembling Mount Sumeru. In their own land, they extend their long, broad tongue which completely covers the triple-thousand great thousand worlds, and proclaim these true and sincere words: ‘All of you sentient beings should believe and accept this sutra called *Praises of the Inconceivable Virtue and Protection by All Buddhas.*’”

12 “What do you think, Śāriputra? Why is that sutra called *Protection by All Buddhas*? Śāriputra, it is because if good men or women hear the Name of Amida expounded by the various Buddhas and the name of this sutra, then those good men or women will be protected by all the Buddhas and

dwell in the stage of nonretrogression for attaining the supreme perfect enlightenment. Thus, Śāriputra, all of you should believe and accept my words and what all the Buddhas expound.

“Śāriputra, those persons who have already aspired, now aspire, or will aspire to be born in the land of Amida Buddha all dwell in the stage of nonretrogression for attaining the supreme, perfect enlightenment. They have already been born, are now being born, or will be born in that land. Accordingly, Śāriputra, all good men and women who believe and accept this should aspire to be born in that land.”

13 “Just as I now praise the inconceivable virtues of other Buddhas, Śāriputra, they also praise my inconceivable virtue and state, ‘Śākyamuni Buddha has successfully accomplished an extremely difficult and rare task. In this Sahā world during the evil period of the five defilements — defiled age, defiled view, defiled passion, defiled beings, and defiled life — he has attained the supreme, perfect enlightenment, and for the sake of all beings of the world, expounds this teaching which is the most difficult in the world to believe.’

“Śāriputra, you should know that in the midst of this evil world of the five defilements, I have accomplished this difficult task. I have attained the supreme, perfect enlightenment, and for the sake of all beings of the world, I am expounding this teaching which is difficult to believe. This is an extremely difficult task.”

14 After the Buddha finished expounding this sutra, Śāriputra along with the multitude of monks, and all beings of the world, including devas, humans, and asuras, having heard the Buddha’s teaching, rejoicingly accepted it, bowed in worship, and then departed.

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