

The Amitabha Sutra

Thus have I heard: at one time the Blessed One, the Buddha Shakyamuni, was staying near the city of Shravasti, in the cloistered garden that the generous Anathapindada gave to the Buddhist Order in Prince Jeta's grove. He was staying there with a large gathering of monks numbering one thousand two hundred fifty. These monks were well known for their extraordinary powers. They were true elders, great disciples. They had all achieved the highest degree of sainthood, that of an Arhat.

Among these Arhats surrounding the Blessed One were the elder Sariputra and his close friend Maudgalyayana the Great. Kashyapa the Great was also among them, and Kapphina the Great, Katyayana the Great and Kaushthila the Great. Also among these monks were Revata and Shuddhipanthaka, and the Buddha's half-brother Nanda, and his cousin and closest disciple, Ananda, as well as Rahula, the Buddha's son. Present there was also Gavampati, and Bharadvaja, Kalodayin, Vakkula, and Aniruddha. These and other, many more, great disciples accompanied the Buddha at that time.

And the Buddha was accompanied by many of those magnificent human beings well advanced on their way to full awakening, those who are called Bodhisattvas or Mahasattvas. For instance, the Bodhisattva Manjushri, the Prince of Dharma, was present in that assembly - and so was the Bodhisattva who is the Future Buddha of our age, the Bodhisattva Maitreya, who is called Invincible. And the Bodhisattvas Gandhahastin, Nityodyukta, and Anikshiptadhura were there. These and other, many more Bodhisattvas or mahasattvas accompanied the Buddha at that time. Also present were Shakra, known also as Indra, the King of the Gods, and Brahma, Lord of this, our world, known as the Saha World. These and other heavenly beings - many hundreds of thousands of millions - accompanied the Buddha at that time.

Then, the Blessed One addressed the reverend Sariputra, saying, "To the west of us, Sariputra, a hundred thousand million Buddha-fields from where we are, there is a world called the Land of Bliss. At this very moment, the Tathagata, Arhat, perfect and full Buddha called Amitayus lives in that Buddha-field; he abides and remains there, and even now continues to teach the Dharma in that field.

Now, what do you think, Sariputra: Why is that world called the 'Land of Bliss'? Sariputra, physical and mental pain are unknown to the living beings that inhabit the world called the 'Land of Bliss'; on the contrary, they only experience conditions of boundless happiness. This is why that world is called the 'Land of Bliss.'

Furthermore, Sariputra, the world known as the Land of Bliss is adorned and enclosed on every side by tiers of seven railings and seven rows of palm trees, all decked with nets of tinkling bells. It is made colorful and attractive by four precious substances, namely, gold, silver, emerald and rock crystal. This is how that Buddha-field is adorned, Sariputra, with such a panoply of the wondrous qualities of Buddha-fields.

Furthermore, Sariputra, in the world known as the Land of Bliss there are lotus ponds all made of seven precious substances, namely, gold, silver, emerald, rock crystal, red pearl, sapphire, and mother of pearl as the seventh. These ponds are brimming with water that is cool, clear, sweet, light, soft, free from odor, free from disease, refreshing, and invigorating. In each of these ponds the bottom slopes gently along the shore, so that the water reaches the right depth in every bathing spot and a crow could drink from the edge of the pond. The bottom of each pond is covered with golden sand. And all around on each of the four sides of these lotus ponds four sets of stairways descend into the pools. These stairways are colorful,

elegant, and made of four precious substances, namely, gold, silver, emerald and rock crystal. And on every side of these lotus ponds grow gem trees, colorful and graceful, made from seven precious substances, namely, gold, silver, emerald, rock crystal, red pearl, sapphire, and mother of pearl as the seventh.

And in those lotus ponds grow lotus flowers. Some are blue - intensely blue, or with a blue sheen, or with a tinge of blue. Some are yellow - intensely yellow, or with a yellow sheen, or with a tinge of yellow. Some are red - intensely red, or with a red sheen, or with a tinge or red. Some are white - intensely white, with a white sheen, or with a tinge of white. Some are multicolored, with a sheen of many colors, or with a tinge of many colors. And these lotus blossoms are as wide as chariot wheels. This is how that Buddha-field is adorned, Sariputra, with such a panoply of the wondrous qualities of Buddha-fields.

Furthermore, Sariputra, in that Buddha-field one hears heavenly musical instruments constantly being played. And the ground all around is golden in color, pleasant to look at. And in that Buddha-field a shower of heavenly coral-tree blossoms pours down three times every day and three times every night. And the living beings who are born there travel before their forenoon meal to other worlds, where they worship a hundred thousand million Buddhas, and then return to their own world, the Land of Bliss, in time for the afternoon nap, having showered a hundred thousand million flowers upon each one of those Buddhas. This is how that Buddha-field is adorned, Sariputra, with such a panoply of the wondrous qualities of Buddha-fields.

Furthermore, Sariputra, in that Buddha-field wild geese, curlews and peacocks gather three times every night and three times every day to sing in chorus, each singing with a

different voice. And as they sing, one hears that their voices proclaim Buddhist virtues, such as the five spiritual faculties, the five spiritual powers, and the seven elements of awakening. When human beings in that world hear these sounds, their thoughts turn to the Buddha, their thoughts turn to the Buddha's teaching, the Dharma, and their thoughts turn to the Buddha's Order, the Sangha.

Now, Sariputra, what do you think? Are these birds born as retribution for their karmic offenses? You could not consider this possible. Why? Because even the names of the hells, the names of animal rebirths, and the name 'Realm of Yama, the King of Death' are unknown in that Buddha-field - let alone actual birth in any of these forms. Rather, those flocks of birds gather there to sing with the voice of the Dharma only because they have been created magically by the Buddha who presides in that field, the Tathagata Amitayus. This is how that Buddha-field is adorned, Sariputra, with such a panoply of the wondrous qualities of Buddha-fields.

Furthermore, Sariputra, when the rows of palm trees and nets of tinkling bells in that Buddha-field sway in the soft wind, a sweet and enrapturing sound issues from them. This concert of sounds is, Sariputra, like a set of heavenly cymbals, with a hundred thousand million playing parts - when these cymbals are played by expert musicians, a sweet and enrapturing sound issues from them. In exactly the same way, a sweet and enrapturing sound proceeds from those rows of palm trees and those nets of tinkling bells when they sway in the wind. When human beings in that world hear this sound, they remember the Buddha and feel his presence in their whole body, they remember the Dharma and feel its presence in their whole body, and they remember the Sangha and feel its presence in their whole body. This is how that Buddha-field is adorned, Sariputra, with such a panoply of the wondrous qualities of Buddha-fields.

Now what do you think, Sariputra? Why is that Tathagata called Amitayus, or 'Measureless Life-span'? Now, Sariputra, the length of that Tathagata's life and of the human beings in that Buddha-field is immeasurable. That is why that Tathagata is called Amitayus, 'Measureless Life-span.' And ten cosmic ages have passed, Sariputra, since this Tathagata awoke to unsurpassable, perfect, and full awakening.

What do you think, Sariputra? Why is this Tathagata called Amitabha, or 'Measureless Light'? Now, Sariputra, the light of this Tathagata spreads unimpeded over all Buddha-fields. This is why this Tathagata is called Amitabha, 'Measureless Light.' And, Sariputra, this Tathagata is surrounded by an immeasurable assembly of disciples, who are all pure Arhats and whose number is impossible to count. This is how that Buddha-field is adorned, Sariputra, with such a panoply of the wondrous qualities of Buddha-fields.

Furthermore, Sariputra, those sentient beings who are reborn in the Buddha-field of the Tathagata Amitayus as pure Bodhisattvas who will not fall back and will be separated from awakening by only one birth - the number of these Bodhisattvas, Sariputra, is not easy to reckon. One can only approximate their numbers by saying that they are immeasurable and countless.

Now, Sariputra, sentient beings should set their minds on rebirth in that Buddha-field. Why? Because there they will meet persons like themselves, who practice the good. For, Sariputra, living beings are not reborn in that Buddha-field of the Tathagata Amitayus as the result of an inferior root of merit.

Sariputra, those sons or daughters of good families who will hear the name of the

blessed Amitayus, the Tathagata, and then will bring it to mind, and will keep it in mind without distraction for one night, or two, or three, four, five, six, or seven nights - they will be met by the Tathagata at the moment of their death. When the moment of death approaches for one of these sons or daughters of good families, Amitayus, the Tathagata, surrounded by an assembly of disciples and at the head of a host of Bodhisattvas, will stand before this son or daughter, and this son or daughter will die with a mind that is free from distorted views. After they die, they will be reborn in the Land of Bliss, in the Buddha-field of Amitayus the Tathagata. Therefore, Sariputra, as I understand well the meaning of this, I declare: Sons and daughters of a good family should direct their thoughts earnestly towards rebirth in that Buddha-field.

Sariputra, in the same way that I now praise that Buddha-field, the Land of Bliss, other Buddhas, blessed ones, in the Eastern regions of the universe, praise their fields - Buddhas equal in number to the grains of sand in all the Ganges rivers in every world in the eastern regions of the universe. Led by the Unmoved Buddha Aksobhya, Sumeru Appearance Buddha, Great Mystical Mountain Buddha, Excellent Mountain Illuminating Buddha and Wondrous Voice Buddha, each one of these Buddhas covers his own Buddha-field with his tongue and then reveals all that is in it. You should place your trust in this discourse on Dharma, called 'Embraced by All Buddhas,' which extols inconceivable wondrous qualities.

In the same manner, other Buddhas, blessed ones, in the Southern regions of the universe, praise their fields - Buddhas equal in number to the grains of sand in all the Ganges rivers in every world in the southern regions of the universe. Led by Sun and Moon Lantern Buddha, the Well Known Illuminating Buddha, the Great Blazing Shoulders Buddha, Sumeru Lantern Buddha, and Unlimited Pure Progress Buddha, each covers his own Buddha-field with

his tongue and then reveals all that is in it. You should place your trust in this discourse on the Dharma, called, 'Embraced by All Buddhas,' which extols inconceivable qualities.

In the same manner, other Buddhas, blessed ones, in the Western regions of the universe, praise their fields - Buddhas equal in number to the grains of sand in all the Ganges rivers in every world in the western regions of the universe. Led by Boundless Life Span Buddha, Immeasurable Characteristics and Marks Buddha, Immeasurable Curtain Buddha, Great Illuminating Buddha, Great Wisdom Buddha, Jeweled Appearance Buddha and Pure Light Buddha, each covers his own Buddha-field with his tongue and then reveals all that is in it. You should place your trust in this discourse on the Dharma, called, 'Embraced by All Buddhas,' which extols inconceivable qualities.

In the same manner, other Buddhas, blessed ones, in the Northern regions of the universe, praise their fields - Buddhas equal in number to the grains of sand in all the Ganges rivers in every world in the northern regions of the universe. Led by Blazing Shoulders Buddha, All-Conquering Sound Buddha, Difficult-to-Injure Buddha, Rising Sun Buddha and Net of Wisdom Buddha, each covers his own Buddha-field with his tongue and then reveals all that is in it. You should place your trust in this discourse on the Dharma, called, 'Embraced by all Buddhas,' which extols inconceivable wondrous qualities

In the same manner, other Buddhas, blessed ones, in the Lower regions of the universe, praise their fields - Buddhas equal in number to the grains of sand in all the Ganges rivers in every world in the lower regions of the universe. Led by Lion Buddha, Renown Buddha, Famous Light Buddha, Dharma Buddha, Dharma Curtain Buddha and Dharma Protecting Buddha, each covers his own Buddha-field with his tongue and then reveals all that is in it.

You should place your trust in this discourse on the Dharma, called, 'Embraced by All Buddhas,' which extols inconceivable wondrous qualities.

In the same manner, other Buddhas, blessed ones, in the Higher regions of the universe, praise their fields - Buddhas equal in number to the grains of sand in all the Ganges rivers in every world in the higher regions of the universe. Led by Pure Sound Buddha, Lord of Past Lives Buddha, Superior Fragrance Buddha, Fragrant Light Buddha, Great Blazing Shoulders Buddha, Many Colored Jewels and Flower Adornment Body Buddha, Sala Tree King Buddha, Jeweled Flower Virtue Buddha, Vision of All Truths Buddha, and Such as Mount Sumeru Buddha, each covers his own Buddha-field with his tongue and then reveals all that is in it. You should place your trust in this discourse on the Dharma, called 'Embraced by All Buddhas,' which extols inconceivable wondrous qualities.

Now what do you think about this, Sariputra, why is that discourse on Dharma called, 'Embraced by All Buddhas?' Those sons or daughters of a good family who hear the name of this discourse on the Dharma and remember the names of these Buddhas, blessed ones, will all be embraced by all these Buddhas and will never retreat in their pursuit of unsurpassable, perfect and full awakening. Therefore, Sariputra, believe in me, and believe in these Buddhas, blessed ones; place your trust in us, and do not doubt us.

Those sons or daughters of a good family, Sariputra, who have set their minds on rebirth in the Buddha-field of Amitayus, the Blessed One, the Tathagata, or those who are now setting their minds, or will set their minds, on such rebirth, they will never retreat in their pursuit of unsurpassable, perfect, and full awakening; they have been reborn, are now being reborn, or will be reborn in that Buddha-field. Therefore, Sariputra, sons or daughters of good families

who have faith should actively direct their thoughts towards rebirth in that Buddha-field.

And, Sariputra, just as I at present here extol the inconceivable wondrous qualities of other Buddhas, blessed ones, so in the same manner, Sariputra, all those other Buddhas, blessed ones, extol these inconceivable wondrous qualities of mine, saying: 'A most difficult task has been accomplished by the Blessed One, Shakyamuni, the Sage of the Shakyas, the Monarch of the Shakyas. After he awakened to unsurpassable, perfect, and full awakening in this Saha World, he taught a Dharma that the whole world was reluctant to accept, at a time when the cosmic age was in a period of decay, when living beings were in a period of decay, when views and opinions corrupted human beings, when the length of human life had declined, when the afflictions vitiated human beings.

This was, even for me, Sariputra, a most difficult task, namely, that after I awakened to unsurpassable, perfect, and full awakening in this Saha World, I taught a Dharma that the whole world was reluctant to accept, at a time when living beings were in a period of decay, when views and opinions corrupted human beings, when the afflictions vitiated human beings, when the length of human life had declined, when the cosmic age was in a period of decay.'"

This was spoken by the Blessed One, the reverend Sariputra, and the Bodhisattvas, and the whole world as well - including its gods, humans, asuras, and heavenly gandharva musicians - felt enraptured, and they rejoiced at the words spoken by the Blessed One.