

# Amitabha Sutra

The Sutra on Amida Buddha

Translated into Chinese during the Yao-Ch'in dynasty by the  
Tripitaka Master Kumarajiva from Kuccha

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# Amitabha Sutra

## Preface

Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was staying in the Jeta Grove monastery of Anathapindada's Garden at Shravasti, together with a large assembly of twelve hundred and fifty monks, who were all great arhats, well-known to the people. Among them were great disciples such as the Elders Shariputra, Mahamaudgalyayana, Mahakashyapa, Mahakatyayana, Mahakausthila, Revata, Shuddhipanthaka, Nanda, Ananda, Rahula, Gavampati, Pindola-Bharadvaja, Kalodayin, Mahakapphina, Vakkula and Aniruddha. He was also accompanied by many bodhisattvas, mahasattvas, such as the Dharma Prince, Manjushri, the Bodhisattva Ajita, the Bodhisattva Sweet-smelling Elephant, and the Bodhisattva Constant Endeavor, and by innumerable devas, including Shakra, lord of the gods, and many others.

## The land and the Buddha are introduced

The Buddha then said to the Elder Shariputra: "If you travel westward from here, passing a hundred thousand kotis of Buddha-lands, you come to the land called 'Utmost Bliss,' where there is a Buddha named 'Amida.' He is living there now, teaching the Dharma.

## Why the land is called 'Utmost Bliss'

"Shariputra, why is that land called 'Utmost Bliss'? The beings in that land suffer no pain but only enjoy pleasures of various kinds. For this reason, that land is called 'Utmost Bliss.' Again, Shariputra, in that Land of Utmost Bliss there are seven rows of balustrades, seven rows of decorative nets, and seven rows of trees. They are all made of four kinds of jewels and extend over the whole land, encompassing everything. For this reason, that land is called 'Utmost Bliss.' Again, Shariputra, in the Land of Utmost Bliss there are seven-jewelled ponds, filled with water of the eight excellent qualities. The beds of the ponds are covered solely with gold sand, and from the four sides of each pond rise stairs of gold, silver, beryl and crystal. Above these stand pavilions adorned with gold, silver, beryl, crystal, sapphire, rosy pearls, and carnelian. In the ponds are lotuses as large as chariot-wheels – the blue ones radiating a blue light, the yellow a yellow light, the red a red light and the white ones a white light. They are marvelous and beautiful, fragrant and pure. Shariputra, the Land of Utmost Bliss is filled with such splendid adornments.

"Again, Shariputra, in that Buddha-land heavenly music is played continually. The ground is made of gold. Six times during the day and night mandarava flowers rain down from the sky. Every day, in the serenity of the early morning, the people of that land fill the hem of their robes with exquisite flowers and go to make offerings to a hundred thousand kotis of Buddhas dwelling in the worlds

of other quarters. Then they return for their morning meal. After the meal they enjoy a stroll. Shariputra, the Land of Utmost Bliss is filled with such splendid adornments.

“Again, Shariputra, in that land there are always many kinds of rare and beautiful birds of various colors, such as swans, peacocks, parrots, sharis, kalavinkas and jivamjivakas. Six times during the day and night birds sing with melodious and delicate sounds, which proclaim such teachings as the five roots of goodness, the five powers, the seven practices leading to Enlightenment, and the Eightfold Noble Path. On hearing them, the people of that land become mindful of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. But, Shariputra, you should not assume that these birds are born as retribution of their evil karma. The reason is that none of the three evil realms exists in that Buddha-land. Shariputra, even the names of the three evil realms do not exist there; how much less the realms themselves? These birds are manifested by Amida Buddha so that their singing can proclaim and spread the Dharma.

“In that Buddha-land, Shariputra, when soft breezes waft through the rows of jewelled trees and jewelled nets, they produce subtle, wonderful sounds. It is as if a hundred thousand musical instruments were playing together. Everyone who hears the sounds spontaneously becomes mindful of the Buddha, the Dharma and Sangha. Shariputra, that Buddha-land is filled with such splendid adornments.

### **Why the Buddha is called ‘Amida’**

For what reason, Shariputra, do you think that Buddha is called ‘Amida’? Shariputra, the Buddha’s light shines boundlessly and without hindrance over all the worlds of the ten quarters. It is for this reason that he is called ‘Amida’ (Amitabha). Again, Shariputra, the lives of the Buddha and the people of his land last for immeasurable, unlimited and incalculable kalpas. It is for this reason that the Buddha is called ‘Amida’ (Amitayus). Shariputra, ten kalpas have passed since Amida Buddha attained Enlightenment. Moreover, Shariputra, he has an immeasurable and unlimited number of shravaka disciples, all of them arhats, whose number cannot be reckoned by any means. His assembly of bodhisattvas is similarly vast. Shariputra, that Buddha-land is filled with such splendid adornments.

### **Why one should aspire to be born there**

“Again, Shariputra, all sentient beings born in the Land of Utmost Bliss dwell in the Stage of Non-retrogression. Many of them are in the Stage of Becoming a Buddha after One More Life. Their number is so great that it is beyond reckoning; it can only be described as innumerable, unlimited and incalculable.

“Shariputra, those sentient beings who hear of that land should aspire to be born there. Why? Because they will be able to meet such sages of supreme virtue. Shariputra, one cannot attain birth in that land with few roots of goodness

or a small stock of merit. Shariputra, if a good man or woman who hears of Amida Buddha holds fast to his Name even for one day, two days, three, four, five, six or seven days with a concentrated and undistracted mind, then, at the hour of death, Amida Buddha will appear before them with a host of holy ones. Consequently, when their life comes to an end, the aspirants' minds will not fall into confusion and so they will be born immediately in the Land of Utmost Bliss of Amida Buddha. Shariputra, perceiving these benefits, I say: All sentient beings who hear this teaching should aspire to birth in that land.

### **Praise of Amida's virtue by Buddhas of the six quarters**

“Shariputra, just as I praise the inconceivable virtue of Amida Buddha, so do the Buddhas in the eastern quarter, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Aksobhya Buddha, Meru-dhvaja Buddha, Mahameru Buddha, Meru-prabhasa Buddha, and Manju-svara Buddha. While dwelling in their own lands, they extend their long, broad tongues and, encompassing with them the universe of a thousand million worlds, pronounce these words of truth: Sentient beings should accept this sutra entitled ‘Praise of the Inconceivable Virtue and Protection by All Buddhas.’

“Shariputra, there are in the southern quarter Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Candara-surya-pradipa Buddha, Yashah-prabha Buddha, Maharci-skandha Buddha, Meru-pradipa Buddha, and Ananta-virya Buddha. While dwelling in their own lands, they extend their long, broad tongues and, encompassing with them the universe of a thousand million worlds, pronounce these words of truth: Sentient beings should accept this sutra entitled ‘Praise of the Inconceivable Virtue and Protection by All Buddhas.’

“Shariputra, there are in the western quarter Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Amitayus Buddha, Amita-ketu Buddha, Amita-dhvaja Buddha, Mahaprabha Buddha, Mahaprabhasa Buddha, Ratna-ketu Buddha and Shuddha-rashmi-prabha Buddha. While dwelling in their own lands, they extend their long, broad tongues and, encompassing with them the universe of a thousand million worlds, pronounce these words of truth: Sentient beings should accept this sutra entitled ‘Praise of the Inconceivable Virtue and Protection by All Buddhas.’

“Shariputra, there are in the northern quarter Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Arci-skandha Buddha, Vaishvanara-nirghosa Buddha, Duspradharsa Buddha, Aditya-sambhava Buddha and Jalini-prabha Buddha. While dwelling in their own lands, they extend their long, broad tongues and, encompassing with them the universe of a thousand million worlds, pronounce these words of truth: Sentient beings should accept this sutra entitled ‘Praise of the Inconceivable Virtue and Protection by All Buddhas.’

“Shariputra, there are in the nadir Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Simha Buddha, Yashas Buddha, Yashah-prabhasa Buddha, Dharma Buddha, Dharma-dhvaja Buddha and Dharma-dhara Buddha. While

dwelling in their own lands, they extend their long, broad tongues and, encompassing with them the universe of a thousand million worlds, pronounce these words of truth: Sentient beings should accept this sutra entitled ‘Praise of the Inconceivable Virtue and Protection by All Buddhas.’

“Shariputra, there are in the zenith Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Brahma-ghosa Buddha, Naksatra-raja Buddha, Gandhottama Buddha, Gandha-prabhasa Buddha, Maharci-skandha Buddha, Ratna-kusuma-sampuspita-gatra Buddha, Salendra-raja Buddha, Ratnotpalashri Buddha, Sarva-artha-darsha Buddha and Sumeru-kalpa Buddha. While dwelling in their own lands, they extend their long, broad tongues and, encompassing with them the universe of a thousand million worlds, pronounce these words of truth: Sentient beings should accept this sutra entitled ‘Praise of the Inconceivable Virtue and Protection by All Buddhas.’

### **Why this sutra is called ‘Praise of the Inconceivable Virtue ...’**

“Shariputra, why do you think this teaching is called ‘the Sutra of Protection by All Buddhas’? Shariputra, all good men and women who hear the Name of Amida Buddha expounded by all the Buddhas and the name of this sutra<sup>1</sup>) are protected by all the Buddhas and dwell in the Stage of Non-retrogression for realizing the highest, perfect Enlightenment. This is why, Shariputra, you should accept my words and the teachings of all the Buddhas.

“Shariputra, those who have already aspired, now aspire or in the future will aspire to be born in Amida Buddha’s land, all dwell in the Stage of Non-retrogression for realizing the highest, perfect Enlightenment. They have already been born, are now being born, or will be born in that land. Hence, Shariputra, good men and women of faith should aspire to birth there.

### **Praise of Shakyamuni’s virtue by all the Buddhas**

“Shariputra, just as I now praise the inconceivable virtue of other Buddhas, they also praise my inconceivable virtue, saying, ‘Shakyamuni Buddha, you have accomplished an extremely difficult and unprecedented task. In this Saha world, during the evil period of the five defilements – those of time, views, passions, sentient beings, and life-span – you have attained the highest, perfect Enlightenment and, for the sake of sentient beings, have delivered this teaching, which is the most difficult in the world to accept in faith.’

“Shariputra, you must realize that I have accomplished this difficult task during the period of the five defilements. That is to say, having attained the highest, perfect Enlightenment, I have, for the sake of all the world, delivered this teaching, which is so hard for them to accept. This is indeed an extremely difficult task.”

## Epilogue

When the Buddha delivered this sutra, Shariputra and all the monks, together with beings of the whole world, including devas, humans and asuras, rejoiced at what they had heard and reverently accepted it. Having worshipped him, they departed.

*[Note 1] The Taisho Tripitaka edition reads: all good men and women who hear this sutra and hold fast to it and also those who hear the names of those Buddhas.*

## Sourced from Shaku Shingan and Amida Net

<https://www.shingansportal.com/amida-net-reproduction/dharma-treasury-index/amida-sutra-kumarajiva>