

Shorter Sukhāvativyūha Sūtra

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Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was dwelling in the Jeta Grove of Anāthapiṇḍada's park, along with a great saṃgha of twelve hundred and fifty bhikṣus. All were great arhats well known to the assembly. Among them were Elder Śāriputra, Mahāmaudgalyāyana, Mahākāśyapa, Mahākātyāyana, Mahākauṣṭhila, Revata, Śuddhipanthakena, Nanda, Ānanda, Rāhula, Gavāṃpati, Piṇḍolabhāradvāja, Kālodayin, Mahākapphiṇa, Vakkula, Aniruddha, and many other such great śrāvakas. With them were bodhisattva-mahāsattvas such as Dharma Prince Mañjuśrī, Ajita Bodhisattva, Gandhahastin Bodhisattva, Nityodyukta Bodhisattva, and many other such bodhisattva-mahāsattvas. There was also Śakra, Lord of the Devas, along with innumerable multitudes from all the heavens.

At that time, the Buddha addressed Elder Śāriputra, saying, “From here, going to the west past ten trillion buddha-lands, there is a world realm called Sukhāvātī. In this land there is a buddha called Amitābha who is presently expounding the Dharma. Śāriputra, for what reason is this land called Sukhāvātī? In this land, all sentient beings do not have a multitude of afflictions, but rather experience every type of bliss, and for this reason it is called Sukhāvātī. Moreover, Śāriputra, this land is completely encircled and surrounded by seven tiers of railings, seven layers of netting, and seven rows of trees. These are all made of four kinds of precious jewels, and therefore this land is called Sukhāvātī.

“Moreover, Śāriputra, Sukhāvātī has pools of the Seven Precious Jewels, filled with waters of the Eight Meritorious Qualities, and the bottoms of these pools are pure because they are gold sand. On the four sides there are steps made of combined gold, silver, beryl, and crystal. Above, there is a tower gloriously adorned with gold, silver, beryl, crystal, mother of pearl, ruby, and coral. Within the pools there are lotus flowers as large as chariot wheels. They shine with green, yellow, red, and white rays of light, and have a subtle fragrance. Śāriputra, Sukhāvātī is accomplished thusly, adorned with these merits.

“Moreover, Śāriputra, this buddha-land continuously produces heavenly music, and the ground is yellow gold. In the six periods of the day and night, the heavens rain down māṇḍārava flowers. In this land throughout the early morning, due to the precepts, all sentient beings have an abundant multitude of exquisite flowers. With these flowers, they make offerings to the ten trillion buddhas of the other directions. At mealtime, each returns to his original land to eat and walk about. Śāriputra, Sukhāvātī is accomplished thusly, adorned with these merits.

“Moreover, Śāriputra, this land always has all kinds of marvelous, many-colored birds: swans, peacocks, parrots, egrets, kalaviṅkas, and two-headed birds. There are many multitudes of birds, and they produce harmonious music in the six periods of the day and night. Their music elucidates the Five Roots, the Five Powers, the Seven Factors of Bodhi, the factors of the Noble Eightfold Path, and thusly the Dharma. In this land, all sentient beings who hear such sounds are altogether mindful of the Buddha, mindful of the Dharma, and mindful of the Saṃgha. Śāriputra, you should not speak of such birds as being produced as retribution for evil actions. Why? This buddha-land does not have the Three Evil Destinies. Śāriputra, in this buddha-land, there are not even the names of the Three Evil Destinies, let alone their actual

existence. These many multitudes of birds were created by Amitābha Buddha by transformation, in order for the sound of the Dharma to be proclaimed everywhere. Śāriputra, in this buddha-land, a gentle breeze is expelled, causing the rows of jeweled trees and jeweled nets to produce subtle music, as though 100,000 notes were in harmony. The minds of all those who hear such sounds are naturally mindful of the Buddha, mindful of the Dharma, and mindful of the Saṃgha. Śāriputra, this buddha-land is accomplished thusly, adorned with these merits.

“Śāriputra, what do you think? For what reason is this buddha called Amitābha? Śāriputra, the radiance of this buddha is immeasurable, illuminating the lands of the ten directions without obstruction, and for this reason he is called Amitābha. Moreover, Śāriputra, the lifespan of this buddha extends for immeasurable, limitless eons, and for this reason he is also called Amitāyus. Śāriputra, since Amitābha Buddha attained buddhahood, ten eons have passed. Moreover, Śāriputra, this buddha has innumerable, limitless śrāvaka disciples, all arhats with unfathomable true abilities and knowledge. The many bodhisattvas are also such as this. Śāriputra, this buddha-land is accomplished thusly, adorned with these merits.

“Moreover, Śāriputra, in the land of Sukhāvātī, all sentient beings are avinivartaniya. Those who have only one more birth are also extremely many, innumerable and inconceivable in number. Only in innumerable, limitless, incalculable eons could their number be spoken. Śāriputra, all sentient beings hearing this should vow to be born in this land. For what reason? When they gather thusly, many high and virtuous people are able to join together in one place. Śāriputra, those with few good roots and the causes of merit, may not attain birth in this land. Śāriputra, if there is a virtuous man or virtuous woman who hears and speaks ‘Amitābha Buddha,’ holding and maintaining his name for one, two, three, four, five, six, or seven days single-mindedly without confusion, then at the end of his or her life, Amitābha Buddha will appear with the multitude of holy beings. At the end of this person’s life, with a mind unconfused, he or she will quickly attain rebirth in Amitābha Buddha’s land of Sukhāvātī. Śāriputra, because I see this benefit, I speak these words: if there are sentient beings who hear this teaching, they should vow to be born in this land.

“Śāriputra, thus do I now praise and extoll the inconceivable merit of Amitābha Buddha. In the East there are also Akṣobhya Buddha, Appearance of Sumeru Buddha, Great Sumeru Buddha, Radiance of Sumeru Buddha, Wondrous Sound Buddha, and thusly as many buddhas as there are sand grains in the Ganges River. Each in his own land sends out a broad and long tongue completely covering three thousand great thousand-worlds, speaking these true words: ‘All you sentient beings should believe this sūtra, which all buddhas praise for its inconceivable merit and virtue, and are truly protective and mindful of.’

“Śāriputra, in the southern world realm there are Lamp of the Sun and Moon Buddha, Renowned Radiance Buddha, Great Flaming Shoulders Buddha, Lamp of Sumeru Buddha, Immeasurable Vigor Buddha, and thusly as many buddhas as there are sand grains in the Ganges River. Each in his own land sends out a broad and long tongue completely covering three thousand great thousand-worlds, speaking these true words: ‘All you sentient beings should believe this sūtra, which all buddhas praise for its inconceivable merit and virtue, and are truly protective and mindful of.’

“Śāriputra, in the western world realm there are Amitāyus Buddha, Innumerable Qualities Buddha, Immeasurable Banner Buddha, Great Radiance Buddha, Great Brilliance Buddha,

Jeweled Characteristics Buddha, Clear Light Buddha, and thusly as many buddhas as there are sand grains in the Ganges River. Each in his own land sends out a broad and long tongue completely covering three thousand great thousand-worlds, speaking these true words: ‘All you sentient beings should believe this sūtra, which all buddhas praise for its inconceivable merit and virtue, and are truly protective and mindful of.’

“Śāriputra, in the northern world realm there are Flaming Shoulders Buddha, Most Victorious Sound Buddha, Indestructible Buddha, Born of the Sun Buddha, Net of Brilliance Buddha, and thusly as many buddhas as there are sand grains in the Ganges River. Each in his own land sends out a broad and long tongue completely covering three thousand great thousand-worlds, speaking these true words: ‘All you sentient beings should believe this sūtra, which all buddhas praise for its inconceivable merit and virtue, and are truly protective and mindful of.’

“Śāriputra, in the nadir world realm there are Lion Buddha, Renown Buddha, Renowned Radiance Buddha, Dharma Buddha, Dharma Banner Buddha, Dharma Maintainer Buddha, and thusly as many buddhas as there are sand grains in the Ganges River. Each in his own land sends out a broad and long tongue completely covering three thousand great thousand-worlds, speaking these true words: ‘All you sentient beings should believe this sūtra, which all buddhas praise for its inconceivable merit and virtue, and are truly protective and mindful of.’

“Śāriputra, in the zenith world realm there are Brahma Sound Buddha, Constellation King Buddha, Fragrance Above Buddha, Fragrant Radiance Buddha, Great Flaming Shoulders Buddha, Assorted Jewel Flower Adorned Body Buddha, Sāla Tree King Buddha, Jewel Flowers of Virtue Buddha, Seeing Every Meaning Buddha, Sumeru Likeness Buddha, and thusly as many buddhas as there are sand grains in the Ganges River. Each in his own land sends out a broad and long tongue completely covering three thousand great thousand-worlds, speaking these true words: ‘All you sentient beings should believe this sūtra, which all buddhas praise for its inconceivable merit and virtue, and are truly protective and mindful of.’

“Śāriputra, with regard to the meaning, why is it called a sūtra that all buddhas are truly protective and mindful of? Śāriputra, if there are virtuous men and virtuous women who hear, accept, and maintain this sūtra, and hear the names of all these buddhas, these virtuous men and virtuous women will truly be protected and watched over by every buddha. In all cases they attain non-regression from Anuttarā Samyaksambodhi. For this reason, Śāriputra, all of you should accept and believe my words, which are truly spoken by all buddhas.

“Śāriputra, if there are people who have already made the vow, who are making the vow presently, or who will make the vow to be born in the land of Amitābha Buddha, then these people all attain non-regression from Anuttarā Samyaksambodhi. Whether in a past life, present life, or future life, they will be in this land. Śāriputra, it is for this reason that all virtuous men and virtuous women who believe this should vow to be born in this land.

“Śāriputra, as I now praise the inconceivable merits of all buddhas thusly, they also speak of my inconceivable merit, saying: ‘Śākyamuni Buddha is able to accomplish what is extremely difficult and exceedingly rare! Within this Sahā Land, in the world of the five impurities—the impurity of the kalpa, the impurity of views, the impurity of afflictions, the impurity of sentient beings, and the impurity of life—he attains Anuttarā Samyaksambodhi and speaks this Dharma that is so difficult to believe!’ Śāriputra, understand that in the world of the five

impurities, I perform this difficult task, attaining Anuttarā Samyaksam̐bodhi, and in every world speaking this Dharma that is difficult to believe, so very difficult!”

After the Buddha had spoken this sūtra, Śāriputra along with all the bhikṣus, as well as the devas, humans, and asuras from every world, heard what the Buddha had said. Blissfully believing and accepting, they paid their respects and departed.

Pure Land Rebirth Mantra:

namo amitābhāya tathāgatāya tadyathā
amṛtabhave amṛtasam̐bhave
amṛtavikrānte amṛtavikrāntagāmini
gagana kīrtichare svāhā

For one who recites this mantra, Amitābha Buddha will constantly abide at the crown of the head, and after dying, he or she will be assigned this rebirth. Nāgārjuna Bodhisattva, wishing to give rise to peace, perceived this mantra in a dream. Trepīṭaka Yaśas recites this mantra, and Dharma Master Xiu from Tianping Monastery received this mantra from the mouth of Trepīṭaka Yaśas. He says, “The true roots of this sūtra are not in any foreign kingdom. Accept and maintain this mantra method in the six periods of the day and night, thirty-seven times at each. In the morning and at night, one should bathe, rinse his or her mouth, and chew a neem twig. Make proper offerings of incense before an image, kneeling with palms joined, and recite this mantra thirty-seven times. Persist in this way every day, and it will annihilate the four grave acts, the five terrible crimes, and the ten evils. Every sort of offense can be eliminated. Being without the many evil ghosts and spirits of anger and confusion, at the end of one’s life, rebirth will be assigned in the land of Amitābha. Moreover, for those who continuously accept, maintain, recite, and study, the merits are truly inconceivable!”

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