

The Amitābha Sūtra

Translated by Hisao Inagaki; revised by Piya Tan, 2009

‘The Amitābha Sūtra’ was translated into Chinese by the Tripitaka Master Kumārajīva in the beginning of the 5th century. As the Sūtra is comparatively short and can be written into 4 pieces of paper, the Sūtra also called ‘Shi-shi-kyo (*Four-Pieces of paper-Sūtra*)’ or ‘Sho-kyo (*Smaller-Sūtra*)’.

	Traditional Chinese	English translation
*	<p>仏説阿彌陀經 姚秦三藏法師鳩摩羅什奉詔訳</p>	<p>The Sūtra on Amitābha Buddha Translated into Chinese by the Tripitaka Master Kumarajiva</p>
1	<p>如是我聞。一時仏在。舍衛國。祇樹給孤獨園。与大比丘衆。千二百五十人俱。皆是大阿羅漢。衆所知識。長老舍利弗。摩訶目犍連。摩訶迦葉。摩訶迦旃延。摩訶俱絺羅。離婆多。周利槃陀伽。難陀。阿難陀。羅睺羅。憍梵波提。賓頭盧頗羅墮。迦留陀夷。摩訶劫賓那。薄拘羅。阿菟樓駄。如是等。諸大弟子。并諸菩薩摩訶薩。文殊師利法王子。阿逸多菩薩。乾陀訶提菩薩。常精進菩薩。与如是等。諸大菩薩。及釈提桓因等。無量諸天。大衆俱。</p>	<p>Thus have I heard. 1 At one time the Buddha was staying in the Jeta Grove of Anathapindada’s Garden at Shravastī, together with a large assembly of twelve hundred and fifty monks, who were all well-known great arhats. Among them were great disciples such as Elders Śāriputra, Mahā Maudgalyayana, Mahā Kaśyapa, Mahā Katyayana, Mahā Kausthila, Revata, Śuddhi Panthaka, Nanda, Ānanda, Rāhula, Gavampati, Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja, Kalodayin, Mahā kapphina, Vakkula and Aniruddha. He was also accompanied by many bodhisattvas, mahasattvas, such as the Dharma Prince, Mañjuśrī, the Bodhisattva Ajita, the Bodhisattva Gandhastin, and the Bodhisattva Nityodyukta, and by innumerable devas, including Śakra, lord of the gods.</p>
2	<p>爾時仏告。長老舍利弗。從是西方。過十萬億仏土。有世界。名曰極樂。其土有仏。号阿彌陀。今現在說法。</p>	<p>2a The Buddha then said to the Elder Śāriputra: “If you travel westwards from here, passing a hundred thousand kotis¹ of Buddha-lands, you come to the land called ‘Sukhāvātī’, where there is a Buddha named ‘Amitābha’. He is living there now, teaching the Dharma.</p>
3	<p>舍利弗。彼土何故。名為極樂。其國衆生。無有衆苦。但受諸樂。故名極樂。</p>	<p>2b “Śāriputra, why is that land called ‘Sukhāvātī’? Because beings there suffer no pain but only enjoy pleasures² of various kinds.</p>
	<p>又舍利弗。極樂國土。七重欄楯。七重羅網。七重行樹。皆是四宝。周匝圍繞。是故彼國。名曰極樂。</p>	<p>3 Furthermore, Śāriputra, in that Land of Sukhāvātī there are <u>seven rows of balustrades, seven rows of decorative nets, and seven rows of trees</u>. They are all made of four kinds of jewels and extend over the whole land, and so it is called ‘Sukhāvātī’.</p>

¹ A *koti* is 10,000,000.

² Usually equivalent with Skt *vedanā*, “feeling.”

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<p>又舍利弗。極樂國土。有七寶池。八功德水。充滿其中。池底純以金沙布地。四邊階道。金銀瑠璃。玻瓈合成。上有樓閣。亦以金銀瑠璃。玻瓈碑磬。赤珠碼瑙。而嚴飾之。池中蓮華。大如車輪。青色青光。黃色黃光。赤色赤光。白色白光。微妙香潔。舍利弗。極樂國土。成就如是。功德莊嚴。又舍利弗。彼佛國土。常作天樂。黃金為地。晝夜六時。而雨曼陀羅華。其國衆生。常以清旦。各以衣祴。盛衆妙華。供養他方。十萬億佛。即以食時。還到本國。飯食經行。舍利弗。極樂國土。成就如是。功德莊嚴。</p>	<p>4 Furthermore, Śāriputra, in the Land of Sukhāvātī there are <u>seven-jewelled ponds</u>, filled with water of the eight excellent qualities.³ The beds of the ponds are of 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 cornelian.</p> <p>5 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.</p> <p>6 They are marvellous and beautiful, fragrant and pure. Śāriputra, the Land of Sukhāvātī is filled with such excellence and splendor.</p> <p>7 “Furthermore, Śāriputra, in that Buddha-land <u>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.</u> Every day, in the stillness of dawn, the people of that land fill their baskets with exquisite flowers and go to make offerings to a hundred thousand kotis of Buddhas dwelling in the worlds of other directions. Then they return for their morning meal. After the meal they enjoy a stroll.</p> <p>8 Śāriputra, the Land of Sukhāvātī is filled with such excellence and splendour.</p>
<p>復次舍利弗。彼國常有。種種奇妙。雜色之鳥。白鵠孔雀。鸚鵡舍利。迦陵頻伽。共命之鳥。是諸衆鳥。晝夜六時。出和雅音。其音演暢。五根五力。七菩提分。八聖道分。如是等法。其土衆生。聞是音已。皆悉念佛。念法念僧。舍利弗。汝勿謂此鳥。實是罪報所生。所以者何。彼佛國土。無三惡趣。舍利弗。其佛國土。尚無三惡道之名。何況有實。是諸衆鳥。皆是阿彌陀佛。欲令法音宣流。變化所作。舍利弗。彼佛國土。微風吹動。諸寶行樹。及寶羅網。出微妙音。譬如百千種樂。同時俱作。聞是音者。皆自然生。念佛念法。念僧之心。舍利弗。其佛國土。成就如是。功德莊嚴。</p>	<p>9 “Furthermore, Śāriputra, in that land there are always many kinds of rare and beautiful birds of various colours, such as swans, peacocks, parrots, mynahs, cuckoos and jīvamjīvakas (two-head birds). <u>Six times a day birds sing with melodious and delicate sounds</u>, which proclaim such teachings as the five faculties,⁴ the five powers, the seven factors of enlightenment,⁵ and the noble eightfold path. On hearing them, the people of that land are mindful of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.</p> <p>10 But, Śāriputra, 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. Śāriputra, even the names of the three evil realms do not exist there; how much less the realms themselves? These birds are manifested by Amitābha Buddha so that their singing can proclaim and spread the Dharma.</p> <p>11 “In that Buddha-land, Śāriputra, when soft breezes waft through the rows of jewelled trees and jewelled nets, they produce harmonious sounds. It is as if a hundred thousand musical instruments were playing together. Everyone who hears the sounds is spontaneously mindful of the Buddha, the Dharma and Sangha.</p> <p>12 Śāriputra, that Buddha-land is filled with such excellence and splendour.</p>

³ That is, pure; cool; sweet; soft; moist; peaceful; when drunk gets rid of hunger, thirst, etc, measureless calamities; after drinking it, one is able to cultivate and nourish all good roots.

⁴ Faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, wisdom.

⁵ Mindfulness, dharma-investigation, effort, zest, tranquillity, concentration, equanimity.

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4	<p>舍利弗。於汝意云何。彼仏何故。号阿弥陀。舍利弗。彼仏光明無量。照十方国。無所障碍。是故号为阿弥陀。又舍利弗。<u>彼仏寿命。及其人民。無量無边。阿僧祇劫。故名阿弥陀。舍利弗。阿弥陀仏。成仏已来。於今十劫。又舍利弗。彼仏有無量無边。声聞弟子。皆阿羅漢。非是算数。之所能知。諸菩薩衆。亦復如是。舍利弗。彼仏国土。成就如是。功德莊嚴。</u></p>	<p>13 For what reason, Śāriputra, do you think that Buddha is called ‘Amitābha’ [immeasurable light]?</p> <p>Śāriputra, the Buddha’s light shines boundlessly and without hindrance over all the worlds in the ten directions.</p> <p>It is for this reason that he is called ‘Amitābha’.</p> <p>14 Furthermore, Śāriputra, <u>the lives of the Buddha and the people of his land last for immeasurable</u>, unlimited and incalculable kalpas. It is for this reason that the Buddha is called ‘Amitāyus’ [Immeasurable Life].</p> <p>Śāriputra, ten aeons (kalpa) have passed since Amitābha Buddha attained Enlightenment.</p> <p>15 Moreover, Śāriputra, he has an immeasurable and unlimited number of shravaka [listener] disciples, all of them arhats, whose number cannot be reckoned by any means.</p> <p>His assembly of bodhisattvas is similarly vast.</p> <p>16 Śāriputra, that Buddha-land is filled with such excellence and splendour.</p>
5	<p>又舍利弗。極樂国土。衆生者。皆是阿毘跋致。其中多有。一生補处。其数甚多。非是算数。所能知之。但可以無量無边。阿僧祇劫說。舍利弗。衆生聞者。应当發願。願生彼国。所以者何。得与如是。<u>諸上善人。俱会一处。</u>舍利弗。不可以少善根。福德因緣。得生彼国。</p>	<p>17 “Furthermore, Śāriputra, all sentient beings born in the Land of Sukhāvātī dwell in the stage of non-retrogression.⁶</p> <p>Many of them are in the Stage of Becoming a Buddha after One More Life.</p> <p>Their number is so great as to be beyond reckoning, and can only be described as innumerable, unlimited and incalculable.</p> <p>18 “Śāriputra, those sentient beings who hear of that land should aspire to be born there, because <u>they will be able to meet such sages of supreme virtue</u>.</p> <p>Śāriputra, one cannot attain birth in that land with few roots of goodness or a small store of merit.</p>
	<p>舍利弗。若有善男子。善女人。聞說阿弥陀仏。執持名号。若一日。若二日。若三日。若四日。若五日。若六日。若七日。一心不乱。其人臨命終時。<u>阿弥陀仏。与諸聖衆。現在其前。</u>是人終時。心不顛倒。即得往生。阿弥陀仏。極樂国土。舍利弗。我見是利。故說此言。若有衆生。聞是說者。应当發願。生彼国土。</p>	<p>19 Śāriputra, if a good man or woman who hears of Amitābha 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, <u>Amitābha Buddha will appear before them with a host of holy ones</u>.</p> <p>Consequently, when their life comes to an end, the aspirant’s mind will not fall into confusion and so he will be born in the Land of Sukhāvātī of Amitābha Buddha.</p> <p>Śāriputra, perceiving these benefits, I say: ‘All sentient beings who hear this teaching should aspire to birth in that land.’</p>
6	<p>舍利弗。如我今者。讚歎阿弥陀仏。不可思議功德。<u>東方亦有。阿閼鞞仏。須弥相仏。大須弥仏。須弥光仏。妙音仏。如是等。恒河沙数諸仏。各於其国。出広長舌相。徧覆三千。大千世界。說誠実言。汝等衆生。当信是称讚。不可思議功德。一切諸仏。所護念經。</u></p>	<p>20 “Śāriputra, just as I praise the inconceivable virtue of Amitābha Buddha, so do the Buddhas in the eastern direction, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Akṣobhya Buddha, Meru-dhvaja Buddha, Mahāmeru Buddha, Meru-prabhāsa Buddha, and Mañju-śvara Buddha.</p> <p>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:</p> <p>‘All you sentient beings should believe, praise, and revere the inconceivable merit and virtue of this Sūtra the Mindful One of Whom All Buddhas Protect.’</p>

⁶ *Avaivartika*, or “irreversible,” ie beyond the 7th ground (*bhūmi*). Cf Pali *anāgāmi*, “non-return” and their abode, *suddh’āvāsa*, “pure abode.”

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7	<p>舍利弗。南方世界。有日月灯仏。名聞光仏。大焰肩仏。須弥灯仏。無量精進仏。如是等。恒河沙数諸仏。各於其国。出広長舌相。徧覆三千。大千世界。說誠実言。汝等衆生。当信是称讚。不可思議功德。一切諸仏。所護念經。</p>	<p>21 “Śāriputra, there are in the southern direction Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Candra-sūrya-pradīpa Buddha, Yaśah-prabhā Buddha, Mahārci-skandha Buddha, Meru-pradīpa Buddha, and Ananta-vīrya Buddha.</p> <p>While dwelling in their own lands, they extend <u>their long, broad tongues</u> and, encompassing with them the universe of a thousand million worlds, pronounce these words of truth:</p> <p>‘All you sentient beings should believe, praise, and revere the inconceivable merit and virtue of this ‘Sūtra the Mindful One of Whom All Buddhas Protect.’</p>
8	<p>舍利弗。西方世界。有無量寿仏。無量相仏。無量幢仏。大光仏。大明仏。宝相仏。淨光仏。如是等。恒河沙数諸仏。各於其国。出広長舌相。徧覆三千。大千世界。說誠実言。汝等衆生。当信是称讚。不可思議功德。一切諸仏。所護念經。</p>	<p>22 “Śāriputra, there are in the western direction Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Amit’āyus Buddha, Amita-ketu Buddha, Amita-dhvaja Buddha, Mahāprabhā Buddha, Mahāprabhāsa Buddha, Ratna-ketu Buddha and Śuddha-raśmi-prabhā Buddha.</p> <p>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:</p> <p>‘All you sentient beings should believe, praise, and revere the inconceivable merit and virtue of this ‘Sūtra the Mindful One of Whom All Buddhas Protect.’</p>
9	<p>舍利弗。北方世界。有焰肩仏。最勝音仏。難沮仏。日生仏。網明仏。如是等。恒河沙数諸仏。各於其国。出広長舌相。徧覆三千。大千世界。說誠実言。汝等衆生。当信是称讚。不可思議功德。一切諸仏。所護念經。</p>	<p>23 “Śāriputra, there are in the northern direction Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Arci-skandha Buddha, Vaiśvanara-nirghoṣa Buddha, Duṣpradharṣa Buddha, Aditya-sambhava Buddha and Jālinī-prabhā Buddha.</p> <p>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:</p> <p>All you sentient beings should believe, praise, and revere the inconceivable merit and virtue of this ‘Sūtra the Mindful One of Whom All Buddhas Protect.’</p>
10	<p>舍利弗。下方世界。有師子仏。名聞仏。名光仏。達摩仏。法幢仏。持法仏。如是等。恒河沙数諸仏。各於其国。出広長舌相。徧覆三千。大千世界。說誠実言。汝等衆生。当信是称讚。不可思議功德。一切諸仏。所護念經。</p>	<p>24 “Śāriputra, there are in the nadir Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Simha Buddha, Yaśas Buddha, Yaśah-prabhāsa Buddha, Dharma Buddha, Dharma-dhvaja Buddha and Dharma-dhara Buddha.</p> <p>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:</p> <p>‘All you sentient beings should believe, praise, and revere the inconceivable merit and virtue of this ‘Sūtra the Mindful One of Whom All Buddhas Protect.’</p>
11	<p>舍利弗。上方世界。有梵音仏。宿王仏。香上仏。香光仏。大焰肩仏。雜色宝華嚴身仏。娑羅樹王仏。宝華徳仏。見一切義仏。如須弥山仏。如是等。恒河沙数諸仏。各於其国。出広長舌相。徧覆三千。大千世界。說誠実言。汝等衆生。当信是称讚。不可思議功德。一切諸仏。所護念經。</p>	<p>25 “Śāriputra, there are in the zenith Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Brahma-ghoṣa Buddha, Nakśatra-rāja Buddha, Gandhottama Buddha, Gandha-prabhāsa Buddha, Mahārci-skandha Buddha, Ratna-kusuma-sampuṣpita-gatra Buddha, śalendra-rāja Buddha, Ratnotpalaśri Buddha, Sarva-artha-darśa Buddha and Sumeru-kalpa Buddha.</p> <p>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:</p> <p>‘All you sentient beings should believe, praise, and revere the</p>

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		inconceivable merit and virtue of this ‘Sūtra the Mindful One of Whom All Buddhas Protect.’
12	<p>舍利弗。於汝意云何。何故名為。一切諸佛。所護念經。舍利弗。若有善男子。善女人。聞是諸佛諸說名。及經名者。是諸善男子。善女人。皆為一切諸佛。共所護念。皆得不退轉。於阿耨多羅。三藐三菩提。是故舍利弗。汝等皆當。信受我語。及諸佛諸說。舍利弗。若有人。已發願。今發願。當發願。欲生阿彌陀佛國者。是諸人等。皆得不退轉。於阿耨多羅。三藐三菩提。於彼國土。若已生。若今生。若當生。是故舍利弗。諸善男子。善女人。若有信者。應當發願。生彼國土。</p>	<p>26 “Śāriputra, why do you think this teaching is called ‘the Sūtra of Protection by All Buddhas’? Śāriputra, all good men and women who hear Amitābha’s Name or the name of this Sūtra which all the Buddhas expound¹⁾ are protected by all the Buddhas and dwell in the stage of non-retrogression for realizing the supreme, full self-enlightenment. This is why, Śāriputra, you should accept my words and the teachings of all the Buddhas. 27 “Śāriputra, those who have already aspired, now aspire, or in the future will aspire to be born in Amitābha Buddha’s land, all dwell in the stage of non-retrogression for realizing the supreme, full self-enlightenment (<i>anuttara samyak sambodhi</i>). They have already been born, are now being born, or will be born in that land. Hence, Śāriputra, <u>good men and women of faith should aspire to birth there.</u></p>
13	<p>舍利弗。如我今者。稱讚諸佛。不可思議功德。彼諸佛等。亦稱說我。不可思議功德。而作是言。釈迦牟尼佛。能為甚難。希有之事。能於娑婆國土。五濁惡世。劫濁見濁。煩惱濁。衆生濁。命濁中。得阿耨多羅。三藐三菩提。為諸衆生。說是一切世間。難信之法。舍利弗。當知我於。五濁惡世。行之難事。得阿耨多羅。三藐三菩提。為一切世間。說此難信之法。是為甚難。</p>	<p>28 “Śāriputra, just as I now praise the inconceivable virtue of other Buddhas, they also praise my inconceivable virtue, saying, ‘Śākyamuni Buddha, you have accomplished an extremely difficult and unprecedented task. In this Sahā world, during the evil period of <u>the five turbidities</u> — those of time, views, passions, sentient beings, and life-span—you have attained the supreme, full self-enlightenment and, for the sake of sentient beings, have delivered this teaching, which is the most difficult in the world to accept in faith.’ 29 “Śāriputra, you must realize that I have accomplished this difficult task during the period of the five turbidities. That is to say, having attained the supreme, full self-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.”</p>
14	<p>佛說此經已。舍利弗。及諸比丘。一切世間。天人阿脩羅等。聞佛所說。歡喜信受。作禮而去。</p>	<p>30 When the Buddha had spoken this Sūtra, Śāriputra and all the monks, together with beings of the whole world, including devas, humans and asuras, <u>rejoiced at what they had heard and reverently accepted it. Having worshipped him, they departed.</u></p>
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