

THE SUTRA ON PRAISE OF THE PURE LAND AND PROTECTION BY SHAKYAMUNI

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[1] Thus have I heard:

At one time the Bhagavat was staying in Jeta Grove monastery in Anathapindada's Garden at Shravasti, together with a large company of twelve hundred and fifty monks, who were all venerable Sravakas and well-known great Arhats. They were headed by eminent Sravakas, such as the Venerable Shariputra, Mahamaudgalyayana, Mahakashyapa, and Aniruddha. He was also accompanied by innumerable bodhisattvas, Mahasattvas, who were all dwelling in the Stage of Non-retrogression and were adorned with immeasurable merits and virtues, headed by great bodhisattvas, such as Bodhisattva Manjushri, Bodhisattva Ajita, Bodhisattva Nityodyukta, and Bodhisattva Aniksipta-dhura. Also in the assembly were a hundred thousand kotis of nayutas [of devas] headed by Shakra along with the King of Mahabrahma Heaven, the Lord of Saha world, as well as the Four Guardian Kings and others. Many demi-gods, innumerable heavenly and human beings, asuras, and others assembled and took their seats to hear the Dharma.

[2] The Bhagavat said to Shariputra: "Do you know that if you travel westward from here, passing a hundred thousand kotis of nayutas of Buddha-lands, you come to the land called 'Utmost Bliss,' where there is a Bhagavat named 'Amitayus' or 'Amitabha' with ten titles, including Tathágata, Arhat and Samyaksambuddha. He is living there at this very moment, teaching the profound and wonderful Dharma to sentient beings to give them supreme benefit and bliss.

[3] "Why, Shariputra, is that land called 'Utmost Bliss'? Shariputra, beings in that land suffer no afflictions and pain but experience only pure immeasurable joy and happiness. For this reason, that land is called 'Utmost Bliss.'

"Again, Shariputra, in the pure Buddha-land of Utmost Bliss there are seven rows

of jeweled balustrades, seven rows of jeweled tala-trees, and sevenfold jeweled nets, which surround everywhere and are completely decorated with four jewels, namely, gold, silver, beryl and crystal. Shariputra, that Buddha-land is full of such glorious adornments of supreme qualities, which are most pleasing to the mind. For this reason, that land is called 'Utmost Bliss.'

"Again, Shariputra, in the pure Buddha-land of Utmost Bliss here and there are many seven-jeweled ponds filled with water of eight excellent qualities, namely, (1) pure, (2) cool, (3) sweet-tasting, (4) soft, (5) moistening, (6) comforting, (7) quenching thirst, hunger and many other needs, and (8) nourishing the senses, increasing the activities of the four elements and producing superior goodness. Sentient beings with a large stock of merits always enjoy using such water. The bottom of these ponds is lined with gold sand, and from the four sides of each pond rise stairs made of the four jewels, most pleasing to the mind. Marvelous jeweled trees surrounding the ponds are evenly spaced, scented with rich fragrance and decorated with the seven delightful jewels, namely, gold, silver, beryl, crystal, rosy pearls, carnelian and sapphire.

"In the ponds, at all times, lotuses of various colors as large as chariot-wheels are in bloom. Blue flowers radiate blue light, brilliance and splendor; yellow ones radiate yellow light, brilliance and splendor; red ones radiate red light, brilliance and splendor; white ones radiate white light, brilliance and splendor; four-colored ones radiate four-colored light, brilliance and splendor. Shariputra, that Buddha-land is full of such glorious adornments of supreme qualities, which are most pleasing to the mind. For this reason, that land is called 'Utmost Bliss.'

"Again, Shariputra, in that pure Buddha-land of Utmost Bliss limitless exquisite music is spontaneously played at all times. The sound is harmonious and most pleasant to hear. When sentient beings hear its excellent sound, their evil passions are completely removed, numerous good acts multiply, and they soon attain the highest perfect Enlightenment. Shariputra, that Buddha-land is full of such glorious adornments of supreme qualities, which are most pleasing to the mind. For this reason, that land is called 'Utmost Bliss.'

"Again, Shariputra, the ground throughout that pure Buddha-land of Utmost Bliss is of true gold. It is soft to the touch and refreshing, shining boundlessly and adorned with rare jewels. Shariputra, that Buddha-land is full of such glorious adornments of supreme qualities, which are most pleasing to the mind. For this reason, that land is called 'Utmost Bliss.'

"Again, Shariputra, in that pure Buddha-land of Utmost Bliss, six times during the day and night, various heavenly blossoms of rare beauty continuously rain down from the sky. They are brilliant and refreshing, soft and variegated, pleasing to the

mind and the senses. They do not rouse greedy attachment, but increase countless inconceivable merits in sentient beings. Six times during the day and night, the beings in that land offer those blossoms to Amitayus in homage. Every morning they take those heavenly blossoms and, in such a short time it takes for a meal, fly to innumerable other lands to pay homage to a hundred, thousand kotis of Buddhas. They offer to each Buddha a hundred thousand kotis of such blossoms and return home to the Pure Land, as if to enjoy leisure in a heavenly abode. Shariputra, that Buddha-land is full of such glorious adornments of supreme qualities, which are most pleasing to the mind. For this reason, that land is called 'Utmost Bliss.'

"Again, Shariputra, in that pure Buddha-land of Utmost Bliss there are always many rare species of beautiful birds of various colors, such as swans, geese, herons, storks, cranes, peacocks, parrots, kalavinkas and jivamjivakas. Six times during the day and night, those birds form a flock and sing with melodious and delicate tones, producing diverse sounds to proclaim numerous wonderful teachings, such as the [four] mindful acts, the [four] ways of stopping evils, the [four] miraculous powers, the [five] roots of goodness, the [five] powers, the [seven] factors of wisdom, and the [Eightfold] Noble Path. Having heard their singing, the sentient beings in that land gain innumerable merits through mindfulness of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and their bodies long retain the perfume of virtue. Shariputra, do you think that the birds in that land belong to the evil realm of animals? Do not hold such a view! The reason is that none of the three evil realms, not even their names, exist in that Buddha's Pure Land; how much less should there be real birds belonging to the realm of animals born as retribution for evil karma? You should know that they are manifestations created by Amitayus so that they can proclaim innumerable sounds of the Dharma to give benefit and bliss to sentient beings. Shariputra, that Buddha-land is full of such wonderful glorious adornments, which are most pleasing to the mind. For this reason, that land is called 'Utmost Bliss.'

"Again, Shariputra, in that pure Buddha-land of Utmost Bliss soft breezes always blow. When they waft through the jeweled trees and jeweled nets, wonderful sounds are produced. As if a hundred thousand kotis of celestial musical instruments were playing together to produce exquisite sounds, when soft breezes which constantly arise in that land waft through the jeweled trees and jeweled nets, they produce various excellent sounds, which proclaim many teachings of the Dharma. Having heard those sounds, sentient beings in that land give rise to numerous meritorious acts, such as mindfulness of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Shariputra, that Buddha-land is full of such glorious adornments of supreme qualities, which are most pleasing to the mind. For this reason, that land

is called 'Utmost Bliss.'

"Shariputra, in that pure Buddha-land of Utmost Bliss there are wonderful manifestations such as those, which are innumerable and inconceivable. Even if a hundred thousand kotis of nayutas of innumerable tongues should praise their excellent qualities for a hundred thousand kotis of nayutas of kalpas, each tongue producing immeasurable voices, they would not be able to praise them to the full. For this reason, [that land] is called the Land of Utmost Bliss.

[4] "Again, Shariputra, why is the Buddha of the pure Buddha-land of Utmost Bliss called 'Amitayus'? Because, Shariputra, the life-span of that Tathágata and all beings living there last for immeasurable and innumerable great kalpas, the Tathágata of that land is called 'Amitayus.' Shariputra, why is the Buddha also called 'Amitabha'? Shariputra, the Tathágata always emits boundless and innumerable rays of glorious light, illuminating all the Buddha-lands of the ten directions without hindrance, so as to display Buddhist activities. For this reason, the Tathágata of that land is called 'Amitabha.' Shariputra, the Pure Land of that Buddha is full of such glorious adornments, which are most pleasing to the mind. For this reason, that land is called 'Utmost Bliss.'

"Again, Shariputra, the Buddha Amitayus of that pure Buddha-land of Utmost Bliss always has Sravaka disciples, all of them Arhats, who are possessed of various excellent merits and whose number is unlimited and incalculable. Shariputra, the Pure Land of that Buddha is full of such glorious adornments, which are most pleasing to the mind. For this reason, that land is called 'Utmost Bliss.'

"Again, Shariputra, the Buddha Amitayus of that pure Buddha-land of Utmost Bliss always has innumerable bodhisattva disciples, all of them in the Stage of Becoming a Buddha after One More Life. They are possessed of various excellent merits, and their number is unlimited and incalculable. Even if one praised their merits for innumerable kalpas, one would not be able to praise them fully. Shariputra, that Buddha-land is filled with such glorious adornments, which are most pleasing to the mind. For this reason, that land is called 'Utmost Bliss.'

[5] "Again, Shariputra, sentient beings born in that land all dwell in the Stage of Non-retrogression, and will not fall again into an evil realm, be born in a border-land or in the state of debased people or mleccas. They always enjoy visiting pure lands of other Buddhas. With their excellent vows and practice advancing and developing every moment, they will unfailingly realize the highest, perfect Enlightenment. Shariputra, that Buddha-land is full of such glorious merits, which are most pleasing to the mind. For this reason, that land is called 'Utmost Bliss.'

"Again, Shariputra, if sentient beings hear of the glorious manifestations of

countless merits in that pure Buddha-land of Amitayus, they should all awaken aspiration to be born there. The reasons are: first, those born there will meet those Great Beings adorned with such countless merits as mentioned above; second, they will enjoy the pleasure of the Mahayana Dharma intrinsic to this pure Buddha-land adorned with such innumerable merits; and third, with their own immeasurable vows and practice advancing and developing every moment, they will quickly realize the highest perfect Enlightenment. Shariputra, those who are to be born in that Buddha-land do not have few but already countless and unlimited merits, so such sentient beings can attain birth in the pure Buddha-land of Utmost Bliss of the Buddha Amitayus.

"Again, Shariputra, if good men or women of pure faith, having heard Amitayus Buddha's name of innumerable, boundless and inconceivable merits and also heard of the glorious adornments of the Land of Utmost Bliss, concentrate their thoughts on them with undistracted mind even for one day, two days, three, four, five, six or seven days, then, at the hour of death, Amitayus, surrounded by innumerable Sravaka disciples and bodhisattvas, will appear before those good men or women and give them compassionate protection to keep their minds from falling into confusion. Thus, after death, following the Buddha Amitayus and his retinue, they will be born in his Pure Land of Utmost Bliss.

"Shariputra, as I perceive that such blissful benefits are matters of great importance, I pronounce these words of truth: Good men and good women of pure faith who hear Amitayus Buddha's name of inconceivable merits and also learn of the pure Buddha-land of Utmost Bliss should all receive [the teaching] in faith, arouse aspiration, practice the method as prescribed, and attain birth in that Buddha-land.

[6] "Shariputra, just as I praise the innumerable, unlimited and inconceivable merits of the Buddha-land of Amitayus, so do the Buddhas of the eastern direction as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Aksobhya Tathágata, Merudhvaja Tathágata, Mahameru Tathágata, Meru-prabhasa Tathágata, and Manjurdhvaja Tathágata. While dwelling in their own pure lands of the east, 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 all receive in faith this gate of the Dharma concerning praise of the inconceivable merits of the Buddha-land and protection by all Buddhas.

[7] "Again, Shariputra, there are in the southern direction Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Candra-surya-pradipa Tathágata, Yashah-prabha Tathágata, Maharci-skandha Tathágata, Meru-pradipa Tathágata and Ananta-virya Tathágata. While dwelling in their own pure lands of the south, 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 all receive in faith this gate of the Dharma concerning praise of the inconceivable merits of the Buddha-land and protection by all Buddhas.

[8] "Again, Shariputra, there are in the western direction Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Amitayus Tathágata, Amita-skandha Tathágata, Amita-prabha Tathágata, Amita-dhvaja Tathágata, Maheshvara Tathágata, Mahaprabha Tathagata, Jvalana Tathágata, Maharatna-ketu Tathágata and Sphutarashmi Tathágata. While dwelling in their own pure lands of the west, 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 all receive in faith this gate of the Dharma concerning praise of the inconceivable merits of the Buddha-land and protection by all Buddhas.

[9] "Again, Shariputra, there are in the northern direction Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Amita-prabha-vyuha-abhijna-buddhi Tathágata, Mahaskandha Tathágata, Amita-divya-dundubhi-vaishvanara-nirghosa Tathágata, Jaleniprabha Tathágata and Salendra-raja Tathágata. While dwelling in their own pure lands of the north, 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 all receive in faith this gate of the Dharma concerning praise of the inconceivable merits of the Buddha-land and protection by all Buddhas.

[10] "Again, Shariputra, there are in the nadir Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Sarvasaddharma-darshana-yukti-sadajvalana-rajottamashri-prabha Tathágata, Simha Tathagata, Yashas Tathagata, Yashah-prabhasa Tathágata, Dharma Tathágata, Saddharma Tathágata, Dharma-dhvaja Tathágata, Guna-mitra Tathágata and Guna-nama Tathágata. While dwelling in their own pure lands of the nadir, 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 all receive in faith this Dharma-gate expounding praise of the inconceivable merits of the Buddha-land and protection by all Buddhas.

[11] "Again, Shariputra, there are in the zenith Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Brahma-ghosa Tathágata, Naksatra-raja Tathágata, Gandhaprabhasa Tathágata, Utpala-shri-kalpa Tathágata and Sarvartha-darsha Tathágata. While dwelling in their own pure lands of the zenith, 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 all receive in faith this gate

of the Dharma concerning praise of the inconceivable merits of the Buddha-land and protection by all Buddhas.

[12] "Again, Shariputra, there are in the south-eastern direction Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Uttama-vipula-megha-ghosa-raja Tathágata. While dwelling in their own pure lands of the south-east, 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 all receive in faith this gate of the Dharma concerning praise of the inconceivable merits of the Buddha-land and protection by all Buddhas.

[13] "Again, Shariputra, there are in the south-western direction Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Uttama-surya-prabha-yasho-guna Tathágata. While dwelling in their own pure lands of the south-west, 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 all receive in faith this gate of the Dharma concerning praise of the inconceivable merits of the Buddha-land and protection by all Buddhas.

[14] "Again, Shariputra, there are in the north-western direction Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Amita-guna-jvalanadhipati-prabhasa Tathágata. While dwelling in their own pure lands of the north-west, 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 all receive in faith this gate of the Dharma concerning praise of the inconceivable merits of the Buddha-land and protection by all Buddhas.

[15] "Again, Shariputra, there are in the north-eastern direction Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Asamkhya-shata-sahasra-kotinayuta-vipula-buddhi Tathágata. While dwelling in their own pure lands of the north-east, 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 all receive in faith this gate of the Dharma concerning praise of the inconceivable merits of the Buddha-land and protection by all Buddhas.

[16] "Shariputra, why is this sutra named 'the Dharma-gate expounding praise of the inconceivable merits of the Buddha-land and protection by all Buddhas? Shariputra, it is revealed in this sutra that the inconceivable merits of Amitayus Buddha's Land of Utmost Bliss are praised and glorified and that all Buddhas, Bhagavats, of the ten directions, while dwelling in their own lands, display glorious and wonderful manifestations and pronounce words of truth, urging sentient beings to receive this teaching in faith, in order to guide and benefit them

and give them peace and bliss. For this reason, this sutra is called 'the gate of the Dharma concerning praise of the inconceivable merits of the Buddha-land and protection by all Buddhas.'

"Shariputra, if good men or women, who have heard this sutra, now hear or will hear it, have already awakened or will awaken deep faith, they are embraced by those Buddhas, Bhagavats, dwelling in the ten directions, as numerous as ten times the number of the sands of the Ganges. All who practice as prescribed will not regress but will definitely attain the highest perfect Enlightenment and be born in the Pure Land of Utmost Bliss of Amitayus. For this reason, Shariputra, all sentient beings should receive in faith and understand well my words and the words of the Buddhas, Bhagavats, of the ten directions, and should make great efforts and diligently practice as prescribed. Do not allow any doubt to arise.

"Again, Shariputra, if good men or women have already aspired or will aspire or now aspire to the glorious adornments in the Pure Land of Utmost Bliss of Amitayus, they will be definitely embraced by those Buddhas, Bhagavats, dwelling in the ten directions, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, even ten times that number. All who practice as prescribed will not regress but will definitely attain the highest perfect Enlightenment and be born in the Pure Land of Utmost Bliss of Amitayus. For this reason, Shariputra, good men and women of pure faith should all believe deeply in Amitayus Buddha's Pure Land of Utmost Bliss and aspire to be born there. Do not be indolent.

[17] "Shariputra, just as I now praise and glorify the inconceivable merits of Amitayus Buddha's Land of Utmost Bliss, all other Buddhas, Bhagavats, of the ten directions likewise praise my boundless inconceivable merits, saying: 'How marvelous it is that Shakyamuni, Shakya Dharma-King, Tathágata, Arhat, Samyaksambuddha, Possessed of Wisdom and Practice, Sugata, Knower of the World, the Unsurpassed, Tamer of Men, Teacher of Gods and Humans, Buddha and Bhagavat, has appeared in this Saha world during the period of the five corruptions: namely, those of time, sentient beings, passions, views and life-span, and that, having attained the highest perfect Enlightenment, delivered this teaching, most difficult for the world to accept, in order to guide and benefit sentient beings and give them peace and bliss.'

"Thus, Shariputra, you should know that I have appeared in this Saha world of various defilements during the period of the five corruptions and, having attained the highest perfect Enlightenment, delivered this teaching, most difficult for the world to accept, in order to guide and benefit sentient beings and give them peace and bliss. This is indeed a rare and marvelous task, which is beyond comprehension. "If, Shariputra, there are good men or women of pure faith who,

having heard this teaching, most difficult for the world to accept, receive it in faith, uphold and expound it to others, and practice it as prescribed, you should know that such people are extremely rare. In the past they have planted roots of goodness in the presence of innumerable Buddhas. After death they will surely be born in the Western Land of Utmost Bliss, where they will enjoy various glorious adornments and the pleasure of Mahayana Dharma embodied in the Buddha's Pure Land. They can approach Amitayus Buddha and make offerings to him six times during the day and night. They can also fly to [the lands in] the ten directions to make offerings to Buddhas, where they will hear the Dharma taught by them and will receive assurances of their attainment of Buddhahood. Thus they will be able to perfect quickly the merits and wisdom and realize the highest perfect Enlightenment."

[18] When the Bhagavat had delivered this sutra, all the great Sravakas, such as the Venerable Shariputra, and bodhisattvas, Mahasattvas, together with all beings, including innumerable devas, humans and asuras, greatly rejoiced at the Buddha's exposition and received it in faith.