



English translation of The Smaller Sukhâvatî Vyûha

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The Smaller Sukhâvatî Vyûha

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The Smaller Sukhâvatî-vyûha

ADORATION TO THE OMNISCIENT!

1.

Thus it was heard by me: At one time the Blessed (Bhagavat, i.e. Buddha) dwelt at Srâvastî, in the Geta-grove, in the garden of Anâthapîndaka, together with a large company of Bhikshus (mendicant friars), viz. with twelve hundred and fifty Bhikshus, all of them acquainted with the five kinds of knowledge, elders, great disciples, and Arhats

such as Sâriputra, the elder, Mahâmaudgalyâyana, Mahâkâsyapa, Mahâkapphina, Mahâkâtâyana, Mahâkaushthila, Revata, Suddhipanthaka, Nanda, Ânanda, Râhula, Gavâmpati, Bharadvâga, Kâlodayin, Vakkula, and Aniruddha. He dwelt together with these and many other great disciples, and together with many noble-minded Bodhisattvas, such as Mañgusrî, the prince, the Bodhisattva Agita, the Bodhisattva Gandhastin, the Bodhisattva Nityodyukta, the Bodhisattva Anikshiptadhura. He dwelt together with them and many other noble-minded Bodhisattvas, and with Sakra, the Indra or King of the Devas, and with Brahman Sahâmpati. With these and many other hundred thousand nayutas of sons of the gods, Bhagavat dwelt at Srâvastî.

2.

Then Bhagavat addressed the honoured Sâriputra and said, 'O Sâriputra, after you have passed from here over a hundred thousand koṭis of Buddha countries there is in the Western part a Buddha country, a world called Sukhâvatî (the happy country). And there a Tathâgata, called Amitâyus, an Arhat, fully enlightened, dwells now, and remains, and supports himself, and teaches the Law.

'Now what do you think, Sâriputra, for what reason is that world called Sukhâvatî (the happy)? In that world Sukhâvatî O Sâriputra, there is neither bodily nor mental pain for living beings. The sources of happiness are innumerable there. For that reason is that world called Sukhâvatî (the happy).

3.

'And again, O Sâriputra, that world Sukhâvatî is adorned with seven terraces, with seven rows of palm-trees, and with strings of bells. It is enclosed on every side, beautiful, brilliant with the four gems, viz. gold, silver, beryl and crystal. With such arrays of excellences peculiar to a Buddha country is that Buddha country adorned.

4.

'And again, O Sâriputra, in that world Sukhâvatî there are lotus lakes, adorned with the seven gems, viz. gold, silver, beryl, crystal, red pearls, diamonds, and corals as the seventh. They are full of water which possesses the eight good qualities, their waters rise as high as the fords and bathing-places, so that even crows may drink there; they are strewn with golden sand. And in these lotus-lakes there are all around on the four sides four stairs, beautiful and brilliant with the four gems, viz. gold, silver, beryl, crystal. And on every side of these lotus-lakes gem-trees are growing, beautiful and brilliant with the seven gems, viz. gold, silver, beryl, crystal, red pearls, diamonds, and corals as the

seventh. And in those lotus–lakes lotus–flowers are growing, blue, blue–coloured, of blue splendour, blue to behold; yellow, yellow–coloured, of yellow splendour, yellow to behold; red, red–coloured, of red splendour, red to behold; white, white–coloured, of white splendour, white to behold; beautiful, beautifully–coloured, of beautiful splendour, beautiful to behold, and in circumference as large as the wheel of a chariot.

5.

'And again, O Sâriputra, in that Buddha country there are heavenly musical instruments always played on, and the earth is lovely and of golden colour. And in that Buddha country a flower–rain of heavenly Mândârava blossoms pours down three times every day, and three times every night. And the beings who are born there worship before their morning meal a hundred thousand koṭis of Buddhas by going to other worlds; and having showered a hundred thousand koṭis of flowers upon each Tathâgata, they return to their own world in time for the afternoon rest. With such arrays of excellences peculiar to a Buddha country is that Buddha country adorned.

6.

'And again. O Sâriputra, there are in that Buddha country swans, curlews, and peacocks. Three times every night, and three times every day, they come together and perform a concert each uttering his own note. And from them thus uttering proceeds a sound proclaiming the five virtues, the five powers, and the seven steps leading towards the highest knowledge. When the men there hear that sound, remembrance of Buddha, remembrance of the Law, remembrance of the Church, rises in their mind.

'Now, do you think, O Sâriputra, that there are beings who have entered into the nature of animals (birds, &c.)? This is not to be thought of. The very name of hells is unknown in that Buddha country, and likewise that of (descent into) animal bodies and of the realm of Yama (the four apâyas). No, these tribes of birds have been made on purpose by the Tathâgata Amitâyus, and they utter the sound of the Law. With such arrays of excellences, &c.

7.

'And again, O Sâriputra, when those rows of palm–trees and strings of bells in that Buddha country are moved by the wind, a sweet and enrapturing sound proceeds from them. Yes, O Sâriputra, as from a heavenly musical instrument consisting of a hundred thousand koṭis of sounds, when played by Âryas, a sweet and enrapturing sound proceeds, a sweet and enrapturing sound proceeds from those rows of palm–trees and strings of bells moved by the wind. And when the men hear that sound, reflection on Buddha arises in them, reflection on the Law, reflection on the Church. With such arrays of excellences, &c.

8.

'Now what do you think, O Sâriputra, for what reason is that Tathâgata called Amitâyus? The length of life (âyus), O Sâriputra, of that Tathâgata and of those men there is immeasurable (amita). Therefore is that Tathâgata called Amitâyus. And ten kalpas have passed, O Sâriputra, since that Tathâgata awoke to perfect knowledge.

9.

'And what do you think, O Sâriputra, for what reason is that Tathâgata called Amitâbha? The splendour (âbhâ), O Sâriputra, of that Tathâgata is unimpeded over all Buddha

countries. Therefore is that Tathâgata called Amitâbha.

'And there is, O Sâriputra, an innumerable assembly of disciples with that Tathâgata, purified and venerable persons, whose number it is not easy to count. With such arrays of excellences, &c.

10.

'And again, O Sâriputra, of those beings also who are born in the Buddha country of the Tathâgata Amitâyus as purified Bodhisattvas, never to return again and bound by one birth only, of those Bodhisattvas also, O Sâriputra, the number is not easy to count, except they are reckoned as infinite in number.

'Then again all beings, O Sâriputra, ought to make fervent prayer for that Buddha country. And why? Because they come together there with such excellent men. Beings are not born in that Buddha country of the Tathâgata Amitâyus as a reward and result of good works performed in this present life.

No, whatever son or daughter of a family shall hear the name of the blessed Amitâyus, the Tathâgata, and having heard it, shall keep it in mind, and with thoughts undisturbed shall keep it in mind for one, two, three, four, five, six or seven nights,—when that son or daughter of a family comes to die, then that Amitâyus, the Tathâgata, surrounded by an assembly of disciples and followed by a host of Bodhisattvas, will stand before them at their hour of death, and they will depart this life with tranquil minds. After their death they will be born in the world Sukhâvatî in the Buddha country of the same Amitâyus, the Tathâgata. Therefore, then, O Sâriputra, having perceived this cause and effect, I with reverence say thus, Every son and every daughter of a family ought with their whole mind to make fervent prayer for that Buddha country.

11.

'And now, O Sâriputra, as I here at present glorify that world, thus, in the East, O Sâriputra, other blessed Buddhas, led by the Tathâgata Akshobhya, the Tathâgata Merudhvaga, the Tathâgata Mahâmeru, the Tathâgata Meruprabhâsa, and the Tathâgata Mañgudhvaga, equal in number to the sand of the river Gangî, comprehend their own Buddha countries in their speech, and then reveal them.

Accept this repetition of the Law, called the "Favour of all Buddhas," which magnifies their inconceivable excellences.

12.

'Thus also in the South do other blessed Buddhas, led by the Tathâgata Kândrasûryapradîpa, the Tathâgata Yasaḥprabha, the Tathâgata Mahârkiskandha, the Tathâgata Merupradîpa, the Tathâgata Anantavîrya, equal in number to the sand of the river Gangâ, comprehend their own Buddha countries in their speech, and then reveal them. Accept, &c.

13.

'Thus also in the West do other blessed Buddhas, led by the Tathâgata Amitâyus, the Tathâgata Amitaskandha, the Tathâgata Amitadvaga, the Tathâgata Mahâprabha, the

Tathâgata Mahcâratnaketu, the Tathâgata Suddharasmiprabha, equal in number to the sand of the river Gangâ, comprehend, &c.

14.

'Thus also in the North do other blessed Buddhas, led by the Tathâgata Mahârkiskandha, the Tathâgata Vaisvânaranirghosha, the Tathâgata Dundubhisvaranirghosha, the Tathâgata Dushpradharsha, the Tathâgata Âdityasambhava, the Tathâgata Galeniprabha (Gvalanaprabha?), the Tathâgata Prabhâkara, equal in number to the sand, &c.

15.

'Thus also in the Nadir do other blessed Buddhas, led by the Tathâgata Simha, the Tathâgata Yasas, the Tathâgata Yasaḥprabhâva, the Tathâgata Dharma, the Tathâgata Dharmadhara, the Tathâgata Dharmadhvaga, equal in number to the sand, &c.

16.

'Thus also in the Zenith do other blessed Buddhas, led by the Tathâgata Brahmaghosha, the Tathâgata Nakshatrarâga, the Tathâgata Indraketurdhvagarâga, the Tathâgata Gandhottama, the Tathâgata Gandhaprabhâsa, the Tathâgata Mahârkiskandha, the Tathâgata Ratnakusumasampushpitagâtra, the Tathâgata Sâlendrarâga, the Tathâgata Ratnotpalasrî, the Tathâgata Sarvârthadarsa, the Tathâgata Sumerukalpa, equal in number to the sand, &c.

17.

'Now what do you think, O Sâriputra, for what reason is that repetition (treatise) of the Law called the Favour of all Buddhas? Every son or daughter of a family who shall hear the name of that repetition of the Law and retain in their memory the names of those blessed Buddhas, will be favoured by the Buddhas, and will never return again, being once in possession of the transcendent true knowledge. Therefore, then, O Sâriputra, believe, accept, and do not doubt of me and those blessed Buddhas!

'Whatever sons or daughters of a family shall make mental prayer for the Buddha country of that blessed Amitâyus, the Tathâgata, or are making it now or have made it formerly, all these will never return again, being once in possession of the transcendent true knowledge. They will be born in that Buddha country, have been born, or are being born now. Therefore, then, O Sâriputra, mental prayer is to be made for that Buddha country by faithful sons and daughters of a family.

18.

'And as I at present magnify here the inconceivable excellences of those blessed Buddhas, thus, O Sâriputra, do those blessed Buddhas magnify my own inconceivable excellences.

'A very difficult work has been done by Sâkyamuni, the sovereign of the Sâkyas. Having obtained the transcendent true knowledge in this world Sahâ, he taught the Law which all the world is reluctant to accept, during this corruption of the present kalpa, during this corruption of mankind, during this corruption of belief, during this corruption of life, during this corruption of passions.

19.

'This is even for me, O Sâriputra, an extremely difficult work that, having obtained the transcendent true knowledge in this world Sahâ, I taught the Law which all the world is reluctant to accept, during this corruption of mankind, of belief, of passion, of life, and of this present kalpa.'

20.

Thus spoke Bhagavat joyful in his mind. And the honourable Sâriputra, and the Bhikshus and Bodhisattvas, and the whole world with the gods, men, evil spirits and genii, applauded the speech of Bhagavat.

This is the Mahâyânasûtra
called Sukhâvatî-vyûha.

--Part 1 --