

Saṅkhār'upapatti Sutta

Rebirth through Aspiration

[How to choose a good rebirth]
(Majjhima Nikāya 120/3:99-103)
Translated by Piya Tan ©2003

1 Key terms

The word *saṅkhāra* in the sutta title is usually rendered as “mental formations,” but here it is used to denote its special aspect that could be rendered into English as “acts of will” (Jayatilke 1978-79) or “aspirations” (M:ÑB no 120).¹ In fact, in *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, the sutta is entitled “Reappearance by Aspiration” (M:ÑB 959), which I follow. “Aspiration” here denotes a conscious mental effort, a “determination.”² *Upapatti* usually translates as “rebirth.”

The Majjhima Commentary initially explains that *saṅkhār'upapatti* means either the rebirth of “mere formations,” not of a being or person, or the rebirth of the aggregates in a new existence “through meritorious karma-formations (*puññābhisāṅkhāra*).”³ In a later passage, however, it glosses *saṅkhāra* as *patthāna*, “aspiration, wish.” (MA 4:146)

2 Desirable rebirth

This sutta lists 24 desirable planes⁴ of rebirth, ie excluding the following:

- (12) the realm of the Great Brahma’s host [retinue] (*brahmā parisajjā*),
- (13) the realm of the Great Brahma’s ministers [chaplains] (*brahmā purohitā*), and
- (22) the realm of non-percipient beings (*asañña, sattā*).

The gods of realms (12) and (13) have no special powers except for the blessings mentioned here. The gods of realm 22 is a sort of mental hibernation, existing only a subtle form. As such, rebirths in these three planes are not attractive to pleasure-loving beings.

Except for the three sections here on rebirth in the human realms—(5a) (5b) (5c)—the rest of the sutta is a sort of recollection on the devas (*devatānussati*), an “energizing” meditation to help one when one is having difficulties in the major meditation methods, such as the breath meditation.

The sutta has almost identical cosmological and rebirth teachings as **the Sāleyyaka Sutta** (M 41), which however explains the ten courses of unwholesome actions (*akusala kamma, patha*) and ten courses of wholesome actions (*kusala kamma, patha*) in some detail.⁵ There the ten courses of wholesome actions

¹ In his *Glossary*, Ñānamoli translates *saṅkhāra* as “determinations.”

² “Aspiration,” *saṅkhāra*. Although usually rendered as “mental formations,” here “aspiration” denotes a sense of a conscious mental effort, a “determination.” Ñānamoli tr it as “determinations.” Comy initially explains that *saṅkhār'upapatti* means either the rebirth of “mere formations,” not of a being or person, or the rebirth of the aggregates in a new existence “through meritorious mental formations (*puññābhisāṅkhāra*).” Comy later glosses *saṅkhāra* as *patthāna*, “aspiration, wish.” (MA 4:146). See foll n.

³ “Meritorious mental formations” (*puññābhisāṅkhāra*). There are 3 kinds of *abhisāṅkhāra*, “accumulation of mental formations” or better simply as “karma-formations” (M 1:297; A 1:112): (1) *puññābhisāṅkhāra*; (2) *apuññābhisāṅkhāra* (demeritorious karma-formations); and (3) *āneñjābhisāṅkhāra* (imperturbable karma-formations) (D 3:217; S 2:82; Vism 330). The term *abhisāṅkhāra* is syn with *saṅkhāra* as the 2nd link of the dependent origination (*paṭicca samuppāda*), that is, signifying its “cumulative” aspect. These 3 type of karma-formations covers the karmic activity of all forms of existence: the meritorious karma-formations extend to the sense-sphere and the form-sphere; the demeritorious karma-formations only to the sense-sphere; and the imperturbable karma-formations to the formless sphere. See prec n & BDict: *saṅkhāra*.

⁴ However, see §23, where Ee has *Subhā devā*, which is not found in other MSS. If we consider the Subha devas, then the total desirable planes would be 25—but this should not be the case, as *Subha deva* is only a generic name (referring to a type of devas, not any specific realm): see §19 n.

⁵ M 41/1:285-290 = SD 5.7.

(instead of the fivefold noble growth here), properly practised, forms the way to happy rebirth through one's aspiration.⁶

The fivefold noble growth mentioned in the Saṅkhār'upapatti Sutta are found in the very short Vaḍḍhi Sutta, of which there are two versions: **the (Sappurisa) Vaḍḍhi Sutta** (found in the Aṅguttara Nikāya) and **the (Upāsikā) Vaḍḍhi Sutta** (found in the Saṃyutta Nikāya and the Aṅguttara Nikāya).⁷

3 (Sāvaka) Vaḍḍhi Sutta (A 5.63)

2 Bhikshus, growing in the fivefold growth,⁸ a male noble disciple⁹ grows with the noble growth, and wins the essence, gains the best, of the body.¹⁰ What are the five?¹¹

- 3 (1) He grows in faith;¹²
 (2) he grows in moral virtue;¹³
 (3) he grows in spiritual learning;¹⁴
 (4) he grows in charity;¹⁵ and

⁶ For another angle on Buddhist cosmology, see **Brahmā Nimantanika S** (M 49) = SD 11.7 Intro (4-6).

⁷ See also **(Gati) Mahānāma S** (S 55.21.4/5:369) = SD 23.1a.

⁸ "Fivefold growth," ie the fivefold noble growth (*ariya,vaḍḍhi*), A 3:80; cf the five virtues conducive to growth (*vaḍḍhi,dhamma*, A 5.246/2:245): see foll sutta & "Entering the Stream" = SD 3.3.3(1). A simpler set of 4 qualities—minus "learning" (*suta*)—taught to Mahānāma is that of the 4 qualities of a lay follower—(1) moral virtue, (2) faith, (3) charity, and (4) wisdom—found in **(Upāsaka,sampadā) Mahānāma S** (S 55.37/5:395) = SD 6.2.

⁹ "Noble male disciple," *ariya,sāvaka*, normally tr simply as "noble disciple." But here it is in contrast with *ariya,sāvika*, "female noble disciple" in §2.

¹⁰ "The body," *kāya*. Here *kāya* has the sense as used in *bhāvita,kāya*, "of developed or cultivated body" (A 3.99.2/3:249), ie restraint of body and speech in terms of mindfulness. The expl to this term and *abhāvita,kāya* ("of undeveloped body") are found in **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36) where Saccaka initially identifies *kāya,bhāvanā* ("the development of body") as "self-mortification" (M 36.4/1:237). Comy explains that the Buddha takes "development of body" to mean "cultivation of insight" (*vipassanā bhāvanā*) and "development of mind" to be "cultivation of calmness" (*samatha bhāvanā*) (MA 2:285). Considering that the dividing of meditation into "insight" and "calmness" is not canonical, we might take the term *abhāvita,kāya* to simply mean "torturing the body," "not restrained in speech and action," or "not taking proper care of one's health" (or all of them), and that *bhāvita,kāya* to mean "well-restrained in body and speech in terms of mindfulness." It can also mean a personal experience of meditation and samadhī, esp dhyana.

¹¹ From the lack of mention of the qualities relating to meditation, "noble disciple" here apparently refers to the stream-winner, and perhaps also the once-returned. See **Dūta S** (A 8.16) = SD Intro (8.2).

¹² "Faith," *saddhā*. The streamwinner has "faith with a good cause" (*ākāravati,saddhā*), faith founded on understanding (M 1:320,8 401,23); also called *avecca-p,pasāda* (wise faith), faith founded on seeing (S 12.41.11/2:69). "Wise faith" is vital if one wishes to transcend rebirth, even those in the heavens. An excellent (and humorous) example of a layman's wise faith is that of **Citta Gaha,pati**: in **Nigaṇṭha Nāta,putta** (S 41.8), Citta explains that since he has experienced dhyana (meditation absorption) for himself, he does not need to rely on faith in anyone, since he has experienced it directly for himself (S 41.8/4:298) = SD 40.7. For more details on faith, see **Pañca,bhera,bhaya S** (S 12.41/2:68-70) = SD 3.3(4.2) §11.

¹³ The lay follower is said to be accomplished in moral virtue (*sīla,sampadā*) if he consistently keeps to the 5 precepts, which is the first of the 4 qualities of a true lay follower: **(Upāsaka,sampadā) Mahānāma S** (S 55.37/5:395) = SD 6.2.

¹⁴ The disciple's early training is best described as the 12-stage learning process given in **Caṅkī S** (D 95) and **Kīṭa,giṇi S** (M 70, called "the gradual training," *anupubba,sikkhā*), viz: (1) faith, (2) approaching, (3) respectfully drawing near (serving the teacher), (4) lending the ear, (5) listening to the Dharma, (6) remembering it, (7) investigating its meaning, (8) reflectively accepting the Teaching, (9) will-power, (10) exertion, (11) weighing, and (12) striving on. (M 70.23-24/1:480 = SD 11.1; M 95.20/2:173 = SD 21.15 Intro (5))

¹⁵ The true lay practitioner is not only generous at home and outside, but he also encourages others to give, and enjoys having a share in communal giving: see **(Upāsaka,sampadā) Mahānāma S** (S 55.37/5:395) = SD 6.2. An example of a saint's giving is that of **Ugga** as described in **Ugga S 2** (A 8.22), where although he knows that there are those of "unvirtuous, evil nature" amongst the saints, he gives equally to all the monks as a sangha (A 8.22.10/-4:215). This is also called "the true individual's giving": see **Sappurisa,dāna S** (A 5.148/3:172 f) = SD 22.15 Intro

(5) he grows in wisdom.¹⁶

Growing in the fivefold growth, a male noble disciple grows with the noble growth, and gains the essence, wins the best, of the body.

Here he grows in faith and in virtue,
In wisdom, and both in charity and in learning—
Such a true individual,¹⁷ sharp-eyed,
Wins the essence right here for himself. (A 5.63/3:80)

4 (Sāvikā) Vaddhī Sutta (S 37.34 = A 5.64)

2 Bhikshus, growing in the fivefold growth, a female noble disciple¹⁸ grows with the noble growth, and wins the essence, gains the best, of the body. What are the five?

3 She grows in faith;
she grows in moral virtue;
she grows in spiritual learning;
she grows in charity;
she grows in wisdom.

Growing in the fivefold growth, a female noble disciple grows with the noble growth, and gains the essence, wins the best, of the body.

Here she grows in faith and in virtue,
In wisdom, and both in charity and in learning—
Such a virtuous laywoman,
Wins the essence right here for himself. (S 37.34/4:250 = A 5.63/3:80)

5 Contrast

In contrast to this somewhat “worldly” sutta—dominated by the idea of rebirth in some fortunate family or heavenly plane—the **Mūla,pariyāya Sutta** (M 1) says, for example,

He perceives Brahma as Brahma. Having perceived Brahma as Brahma, he conceives Brahma. He conceives (himself) in Brahma. He conceives (himself apart) from Brahma. He conceives: ‘Brahma is mine.’ He delights in Brahma. What is the reason? It is because it has not been fully understood by him, I say! (M 1.10/1:2)

In the case of the learners (*sekha*), that is, those bound for awakening, they train themselves not to regard Brahmā or anything in this manner, while the adepts (*asekha*), that is, the full-fledged arhats do not regard beings and things in this manner at all. This last remark is reflected in the closing statement of the Buddha here [37]. The nun **Sumedhā** puts it more succinctly:

(2). Elsewhere, the disciple is admonished to practise “discriminate giving” (*viceyya,dāna*), ie, giving to the gift-worthy first: see eg **Sādhu S** (S 1.33/1:20-22 = SD 22.10c); (**Dāna**) **Vaccha,gotta S** (A 3.57/1:160-162 = SD 22.12 Intro (2)); **Āditta J** (J 424 = SD 22.10a Intro (1.3)).

¹⁶ The lay follower’s wisdom (leading to streamwinning) is directed to “the arising and passing away” (*uday’-athagāmini*) of phenomena, ie, the perception of impermanence: (**Upāsaka,sampadā**) **Mahānāma S** (S 55.37/-5:395) = SD 6.2. The best example of a learner (*sekha*) layman with exceptional wisdom is **Citta Gaha,pati**: see **Citta Saṃyutta** (S 41/4:281-304), who taught both the laity and the monks.

¹⁷ “True individual,” *sappurisa*, also “virtuous person,” or “ideal person.” The qualities of a *sappurisa* are given at **D** 33.2.2(6)/3:252, 34.1.8(7)/3:283; **M** 110.14-24/3:23 f, 113 = SD 23.7 Intro (2); **A** 7.64/4:113, 8:38/4:144 f.

¹⁸ “Noble female disciple,” *ariya,sāvikā*.

Most,¹⁹ not understanding the truths taught by the Noble Buddha,
 Rejoice in existence and desire to born amongst the gods.
 Birth even amongst the gods is not forever, but an impermanent state of being.
 But the foolish fear not being born again and again. (Thī 454 f)

The Majjhima Commentary says that the five qualities—the fivefold noble growth [3]—are sufficient for rebirth in the (happy) sense-sphere realms. For rebirth in the higher realms and destruction of the mental influxes,²⁰ however, more is required. If, basing oneself on the five qualities, one attains mental absorption, such as through *kaṣiṇa* meditation,²¹ one is reborn in the brahma world. If one attains any of the formless attainments, one is reborn in that formless realm. If one cultivates insight and attains the fruit of non-return, one is reborn in the Pure Abodes. And if one reaches the path of arhathood, then one attains the destruction of the mental influxes . (MA 4:148)

— — —

¹⁹ “Most,” *bahutarā*, lit “more,” “majority” (Tha:N 454).

²⁰ “Mental influxes,” *āsava*. The term *āsava* (lit “inflow, outflow”) comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as influxes, taints (“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists 4 *āsava*: the influx of (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) [43] is probably older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these *āsavas* is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict: *āsava*.

²¹ *Kaṣiṇa* meditation. The term *kaṣiṇa* refers to an external device (like a colour or one of the 4 primary elements) used to produce and develop mental concentration and attainment of four dhyanas (*jhāna*). *Kaṣiṇa* meditation only leads to calm (*samatha*), but properly used can be helpful to the realization of insight (*vipassanā*). See Vism chs 4-5; DhsA:PR (*Expositor*) 248-251.

The Discourse on Rebirth Through Aspiration (M 120/3:99-103)

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying in Anāthapiṇḍika's Park in Jeta's Grove near Sāvattthī. Then the Blessed One addressed the monks thus:

“Bhikshus!”

“Venerable sir!” the monks answered the Blessed One in assent.

The Blessed One said this:

The fivefold noble growth

2 “Bhikshus, I will teach you rebirth through aspiration.²² Listen well, pay close attention, I will speak.”

“Yes, venerable sir!” the monks replied answered the Blessed One in assent.

The Blessed One said this:

3 Here, bhikshus, a monk is²³

accomplished in faith (saddhā),²⁴

accomplished in moral virtue (sīla),

accomplished in spiritual learning (suta),²⁵

accomplished in charity (cāga),

accomplished in wisdom (paññā).

Rebirth in the human world

(5a)²⁶ He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish, after death, with the body's breaking up, I would arise in **the company of wealthy kshatriyas!**’

He fixes his mind upon it, resolves his mind on it, cultivates his mind on it. [100] These aspirations²⁷ and this abiding²⁸ of his, thus cultivated, thus often developed, leads him to be reborn there. This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.²⁹

4 (5b) Again, bhikshus, a monk is accomplished in *faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish, after death, with the body's breaking up, I would arise in **the company of wealthy brahmins!**’

He fixes his mind upon it,.... This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

²² “Aspiration,” *saṅkhāra*. Although usually rendered as “mental formations,” here “aspiration” denotes a sense of a conscious mental effort, a “determination.” See Intro (1).

²³ These is the fivefold noble growth (*ariya, vaḍḍhi*, A 3:80). See **Vaḍḍhi Ss** in Intro (4).

²⁴ “Faith,” *saddhā*, see Intro 3n above.

²⁵ “Spiritual learning,” *suta*, lit “listening,” ie “one who has heard much Dharma,” cognate with today's “well-read, learned,” but in spiritual matters.

²⁶ This numbering in parentheses continues from the first four suffering states (*apāya, bhūmi*): (1) the hells (*niraya*), (2) the animal kingdom (*tiracchāna, yoni*), (3) the realm of the departed (*pitti, visāya*), and (4) the demon hosts (*asura, kāya*).

²⁷ “Aspirations,” *saṅkhārā*. Here used in the special sense of the sutta's context of fixing one's mind on a certain desirable rebirth. See Intro (1).

²⁸ “Abiding,” *viḥāro*. Here meaning “cultivating” is the sense of meditation, such as the “divine abodes” (*brahma, viḥāra*).

²⁹ Comy: The “way” here refers to the fivefold noble growth [3]. If one has only the 5 qualities without the aspiration, or only the aspiration without the 5 qualities, there is no fixed birth. (MA 4:147)

5 (5c) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish, after death, with the body’s breaking up, I would arise in **the company of wealthy householders!**’

He fixes his mind upon it,... This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

Rebirth in the divine sense-worlds

6 (6) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He hears that **the devas of the four great kings** (*cātum, mahā, rājika*) are long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness. He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish, after death, with the body’s breaking up, I would arise in the company of the devas of the four great kings!’

He fixes his mind upon it, resolves his mind on it, cultivates his mind on it. These aspirations and this abiding of his, thus cultivated, thus often developed, leads him to be reborn there. This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

7 (7) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish...I would arise in the company of **the Tāvātimsa devas [the thirty-three gods]!**’

He fixes his mind upon it,... This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

8 (8) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish...I would arise in the company of **the Yāma devas!**’

He fixes his mind upon it,... This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

9 (9) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish...I would arise in the company of **the Tusita devas [the contented gods]!**’

He fixes his mind upon it,... This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

10 (10) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish...I would arise in the company of **the Nimmāṇa, ratī devas [the gods who delight in creating]!**’

He fixes his mind upon it,... This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

11 (11) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He hears that **the Para, nimmīta, vasavattī devas [the gods who lord over the creation of others]**³⁰ are long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness. He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish, after death, with the body’s breaking up, I would arise in the company of the Para, nimmīta, vasavattī devas [who lord over the creation of others]!’

He fixes his mind upon it, resolves his mind on it, cultivates his mind on it. These aspirations and this abiding of his, thus cultivated, thus often developed, leads him to be reborn there. This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

³⁰ Māra the evil one is said to reside in this heaven, lording over a part of it (MA 1:33 f). The ruler of this realm here is called Vasavattī (D 1:219; A 4:243). Māra is also called Vasavattī (but distinct from his namesake) because he is “lord with great power over the 6 sense realms” (*māro mahānubhāvo cha, kāmāvar’issaro vasavattī*, MA 2:201). Māra is also called Pajāpati, “the lord of creation,” because he lords over this “generation” (*pajā*) of living beings (M 1.9/1:2; MA ad loc).

Rebirth in the Realm of the Great Brahmās (1st dhyana)

[]³¹
12 (14a) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished* [101] in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom. He hears that **Brahma of a thousand** (*sahasso brahmā*) is long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness. Bhikshus, Brahma of a thousand dwells resolved on pervading a world-system of a thousand worlds, and he dwells resolved on pervading³² the beings that have arisen there.

Just as a man with good sight might take a myrobalan³³ in his hand and review it, so Brahma of a thousand dwells resolved on pervading a world-system of a thousand worlds, and he dwells resolved on pervading the beings that have arisen there.

He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish, after death, with the body’s breaking up, I would arise in the company of Brahma of a thousand!’

He fixes his mind upon it, resolves his mind on it, cultivates his mind on it. These aspirations and this abiding of his, thus cultivated, thus often developed, leads him to be reborn there. This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

13 (14b) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He hears that **Brahma of two thousand** (*divi, sahasso brahmā*) is long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness....

Just as a man with good sight might take two myrobalans in his hand and review it, so Brahma of two thousand dwells resolved on pervading *his world-system and the beings there*.

He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish,... I would arise in the company of Brahma of two thousand!’

He fixes his mind upon it,... This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

14 (14c) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He hears that **Brahma of three thousand** (*ti, sahasso brahmā*) is long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness ...

Just as a man with good sight might take three myrobalans in his hand and review it, so Brahma of three thousand dwells resolved on pervading *his world-system and the beings there*.

He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish,... I would arise in the company of Brahma of three thousand!’

He fixes his mind upon it,... This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

15 (14d) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He hears that **brahma of four thousand** (*catu, sahasso brahmā*) is long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness....

³¹ Comy to Mūla, pariyāya S (S 1) explains that “Brahma of a thousand, Brahma of two thousand, etc” refers to Mahā Brahmā (MA 1:34). The **Kosala S** (A 10.29) says that “Mahā Brahmā is called the foremost in the thousand world system” (A 10.29/5:59 f). Omitted here are (12) the realm of the Great Brahmā’s retinue or attendants (*brahmā parisajjā*) and (13) the realm of the Great Brahmā’s ministers or chaplains (*brahmā purohitā*) who have no special powers except for the blessings mentioned here.

³² “Pervading,” *pharivā*. Comy explains that there are **5 kinds of pervasion** (*pharaṇa*): pervasion of mind, ie knowing the minds of beings throughout a thousand world-systems; pervasion of the kasina, ie extending the kasina meditation image throughout a thousand world-systems; pervasion of the divine eye, ie seeing a thousand world-systems through clairvoyance; pervasion of light, ie radiating light throughout a thousand world-systems; and pervasion of the body, ie extending one’s body aura throughout a thousand world-systems. (MA 4:148)

³³ “Myrobalan,” *āmaṇḍa*, “the *āmalaka* [or *āmalakī*] or emblic myrobalan” (CPD foll MA 4:147); “castor-oil seed” (Monier Williams; Childers; DP); “myrobalan” (M:ÑB ad loc). Pali for the castor-oil plant (*Ricinus communis*) is *eraṇḍa* (ts). Among the Indian vernacular names for this are *amanakkam* and *amadam*, George Watt, *Commercial Products of India*, London, 1908:915 (qu Horner, M:H 3:140 n3). The Indian myrobalan or yellow myrobalan (Skt *haritāki*, *haritāka*) is *Terminalia chebula*, hence it is also called the chebulic myrobalan. By the best common denominator, I have rendered *āmaṇḍa* with the general term “myrobalan.”

Just as a man with good sight might take four myrobalans in his hand and review it, so Brahma of four thousand dwells resolved on pervading *his world-system and the beings there*.

He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish,...I would arise in the company of Brahma of four thousand!’

He fixes his mind upon it,... This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

16 (14e) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He hears that **Brahma of five thousand (*pañca,sahasso brahmā*)** is long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness. Bhikshus, Brahma of five thousand dwells resolved on pervading a world-system of five thousand worlds, and he dwells resolved on pervading the beings that have arisen there.

Just as a man with good sight might take five myrobalans in his hand and review it, so Brahma of five thousand dwells resolved on pervading a world-system of five thousand worlds, and he dwells resolved on pervading the beings that have arisen there.

He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish, after death, with the body’s breaking up, I would arise in the company of Brahma of five thousand!’

He fixes his mind upon it, resolves his mind on it, cultivates his mind on it. These aspirations and this abiding of his, thus cultivated, thus often developed, leads him to be reborn there. This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

Rebirth in the realms of the Great Brahma (1st dhyana)

17 (14f) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He hears that **Brahma of ten thousand (*dasa,sahasso brahmā*)** is long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness. Bhikshus, Brahma of ten thousand dwells resolved on pervading **[102]** a world-system of ten thousand worlds, and he dwells resolved on pervading the beings that have arisen there.

Just as a beryl, a gem of the purest water, eight-faceted, well cut, lying on red brocade, glows, radiates and shines,³⁴ so Brahma of ten thousand dwells resolved on pervading a world-system of ten thousand worlds, and he dwells resolved on pervading the beings that have arisen there.

He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish,...I would arise in the company of Brahma of ten thousand!’

He fixes his mind upon it,... This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

18 (14g) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He hears that **Brahma of a hundred thousand (*sata,sahasso brahmā*)** is long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness. Bhikshus, Brahma of a hundred thousand dwells resolved on pervading *his world-system and the beings there*.

Just as an ornament of river gold, very skillfully wrought from the mouth by a crucible of a skilled goldsmith, lying on red brocade, glows, radiates and shines,³⁵ so Brahma of hundred thousand dwells resolved on pervading *his world-system and the beings there*.

He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish,...I would arise in the company of Brahma of hundred thousand!’

He fixes his mind upon it,... This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

Rebirth in the realms of the gods of radiance (2nd dhyana)

19 Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He hears that **the gods of radiance [the gods of light] (*abhā devā*)³⁶** are long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness.

³⁴ *Seyyathā pi bhikkhave maṇi veḷuriyo subho jātimā aṭṭhamo suparikammakato paṇḍū,kambale nikkhitam bhāsati ca tapati ca virocati ca...*

³⁵ *Seyyathā pi bhikkhave nekkham jambonadam dakkha,kammāra,putta,ukkā,mukhe sukusala,sampahaṭṭha paṇḍū,kambale nikkhitam bhāsati ca tapati ca virocati ca...*

He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish,...I would arise in the company of the gods of radiance!’

He fixes his mind upon it,... This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

20 (15) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He hears that **the gods of limited radiance** (*paritt’ābhā devā*) are long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness.

He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish,...I would arise in the company of the gods of limited radiance!’

He fixes his mind upon it,... This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

21 (16) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He hears that **the gods of boundless radiance** (*appamāṇ’ābhā devā*) are long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness.

He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish,...I would arise in the company of the gods of boundless radiance!’

He fixes his mind upon it,... This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

22 (17) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He hears that **the gods of streaming radiance** (*ābhassarā devā*)³⁷ are long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness.

He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish,...I would arise in the company of the gods of streaming radiance!’

He fixes his mind upon it,... This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

Rebirth in the realms of the gods of glory (3rd dhyana)

³⁸[**23** Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He hears that **the gods of glory** (*subhā devā*) are long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness.

He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish,...I would arise in the company of the gods of glory!’

He fixes his mind upon it,... This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.]

24 (18) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He hears that **the gods of limited glory** (*paritta,subhā devā*) are long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness.

He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish,...I would arise in the company of the gods of limited glory!’

He fixes his mind upon it,... This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

25 (19) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He hears that **the gods of boundless glory** (*appamāṇa,subhā devā*) are long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness.

He thinks thus:

‘Oh how I wish,...I would arise in the company of the gods of boundless glory!’

He fixes his mind upon it,... This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

26 (20) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He hears that **the gods of radiant glory**³⁹ (*subha,kiṇṇā devā*) are long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness.

³⁶ “The gods of radiance,” *abhā devā*. Comy to Sāleyyaka S (M 41) explains that *ābha deva* are not a separate class of gods, but a collective or generic name for the 3 classes that follow. See n on *subha deva* [§23]. (MA 2:333, 4:149). See Sāleyyaka S (M 41) = SD 5.7 Intro (3.2) & M:ÑB 46-48.

³⁷ “Streaming gods,” *ābhassara*. This is where beings of the sense world and the form world are reborn when their worlds are destroyed during the collapsed cycle. See **Aggañña S** (D 27.10/3:84 f) = SD 2.19.

³⁸ This whole section is found only the Ee (PTS), followed by IB Horner & Ñāṇamoli/Bodhi, but not found in Be, Ce, Se. See n on *ābha deva* at §19.

He thinks thus:

'Oh how I wish,...I would arise in the company of the gods of radiant glory!'

He fixes his mind upon it,... This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

Rebirth in the form realms (4th dhyana)

27 (21) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, [103] moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He hears that **the gods of abundant fruit (veha-p,phalā devā)** are long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness.

He thinks thus:

'Oh how I wish,...I would arise in the company of the gods of abundant fruit!'

He fixes his mind upon it,... This, bhikshus, is the path, the way that leads to rebirth there.

(22) The realm of non-percipient beings (*asañña,sattā*).]⁴⁰

Rebirth in the Pure Abodes⁴¹ (4th dhyana)

28 (23) Again, bhikshus,... He hears that **the Āvihā devas ["not abundant" gods] (avihā devā)** are long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness.

He thinks thus: 'Oh how I wish,...I would arise in the company of the Āvihā Gods!'

29 (24) Again, bhikshus,... He hears that **the Ātappā devas [the serene gods] (atappā devā)** are long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness.

He thinks thus: 'Oh how I wish,...I would arise in the company of the Ātappā Gods!'

30 (25) Again, bhikshus,... He hears that **the Sudassā devas⁴² [the gods of clear beauty] (sudassā devā)** are long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness.

He thinks thus: 'Oh how I wish,...I would arise in the company of the Sudassā Gods!'

31 (26) Again, bhikshus,... He hears that **the Sudassī devas [the clear-visioned gods] (sudassī devā)** are long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness.

He thinks thus: 'Oh how I wish,...I would arise in the company of the Sudassī Gods!'

32 (27) Again, bhikshus,... He hears that **the Akaniṭṭhā devas [the supreme brahma devas] (akaniṭṭhā devā)** are long-lived, beautiful, enjoying great happiness.

He thinks thus: 'Oh how I wish,...I would arise in the company of the Akaniṭṭhā devas!'

Rebirth in the formless realms

33 (28) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He hears that **the gods of the realm of infinite space (ākāsānañ,c'āyatana)** are long-lived, long-lasting, enjoying great happiness.

He thinks thus: 'Oh how I wish,...I would arise in the company of the god of infinite space.'

34 (29) Again, bhikshus, a monk,... He hears that **the gods of the realm of infinite consciousness (viññānañ,c'āyatana)⁴³** are long-lived, long-lasting, enjoying great happiness.

He thinks thus: 'Oh how I wish,...I would arise in the company of the god of infinite consciousness.'

35 (30) Again, bhikshus, a monk,... He hears that **the gods of the realm of nothingness (ākīñcañ-ñ'āyatana)** are long-lived, long-lasting, enjoying great happiness.

He thinks thus: 'Oh how I wish,...I would arise in the company of the god of nothingness.'

³⁹ Alt tr "Steady glory."

⁴⁰ Understandably the realm of non-percipient or unconscious beings (*asañña,sattā*) is not very attractive since beings here exist only physically without any consciousness. Once when a thought arises in them, they fall from that state. See Nyanatiloka, *Guide Through the Abhidhamma-Piṭaka*, 3rd ed 1971:68, 79, 96, 99, 105, 107, 109.

⁴¹ **The pure abodes (suddh'āvāsa)** are the 5 highest heavens of the form world (*rūpa,loka*) inhabited only by non-returners who assume their last birth to and attain nirvana as arhats (D 3:237, M 3:103, Vbh 425, Pug 42-46).

⁴² PTS text only has *Sudassī devā* with vl *Sudassā*.

⁴³ Properly, this should be spelt *viññāṇānañc'āyatana*.

36 (31) Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He hears that **the gods of the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*n'eva-saññā, nāsaññāyatana*)** are long-lived, long-lasting, enjoying great happiness.

He thinks thus: ‘Oh how I wish, ... I would arise in the company of the god of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.’

37 Again, bhikshus, a monk is *accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity, and wisdom*. He thinks:

‘Oh how I wish that right here and now having realized for myself through direct knowledge, upon attaining the liberation of mind and the liberation by wisdom⁴⁴ that are influx-free with the destruction of the mental influxes, I would dwell therein!’⁴⁵

And having right here and now realized for himself through direct knowledge, upon attaining the liberation of mind and the liberation by wisdom that are influx-free with the destruction of the mental influxes, he dwelt therein.

This monk, bhikshus, does not arise anywhere at all!⁴⁶

The Blessed One said this. The monks rejoiced and approved of the Blessed One’s word.

— evaṃ —

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⁴⁴ “Liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom,” respectively, *ceto, vimutti* (or, liberation by concentration, ie through destruction of the mental hindrances) and *paññā, vimutti* (liberation through insight) (A 1:60). One who is “liberated by wisdom” “may not have reached the 8 liberations (*vimokkha*) in his own body, but through seeing with wisdom, his mental influxes are destroyed” (M 70.16/1:478). All arhats are perfectly liberated in the same way from ignorance and suffering, but are distinguished into 2 types on the basis of their proficiency in concentration. Those who can attain the 8 liberations (*aṭṭha, vimokkha*), which include the 4 formless attainments and the attainment of cessation, are called “liberated both ways,” ie, liberated from the physical body by means of the formless dhyanas, and from all defilements by the path of arhathood. Arhats like Sāriputta and Moggallāna are “liberated both ways” (*ubhato, bhāga, vimutta*). The differences between the two types of liberation are given in **Mahā, nidāna S** (D 2:70 f) and **Kīṭāgiri S** (M 1:477 f). For full list of the 8 deliverances, see **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15.35/ 2:70 f) = SD 5.17.35. See also D 3:262, 228; **Vimokkha S**, A 8.66/4:306; also M 120.37/3:103 = SD 3.4.37.

⁴⁵ “Mental influxes,” *āsavā*, see Intro (5) n above.

⁴⁶ *Ayam bhikkhave bhikkhu na katthaci uppajjati na kuhiñci uppajjati*. Both *katthaci* and *kuhiñci* mean “anywhere.” Despite giving the ways to be reborn in the happy states, the Buddha ultimately closes with the best of all “states”: awakening itself. See Intro (5).