

3

Nakula,mātā Sutta

The Discourse to Nakula,mātā | A 8.48/4:268 f

Theme: On how women can be reborn among the gods

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2003

Introduction

The Nakula,mātā Sutta contains a well known pericope on the eight virtues of a wife that would bring her rebirth amongst the Manāpa,kāyikā devas. There are three such suttas in the Aṅguttara Nikāya: the first addressed to Anuruddha, the second to the lady Visākhā and the third to the housewife Nakula,mātā.

According to **the (Manāpa,kāyika,devā) Anuruddha Sutta** (A 8.46), a number of devas possessing beautiful form once approached him at Ghosit'ārāma near Kosambī and announced that they could assume any colour, produce any sound and obtain any happiness they desired. Anuruddha tested their claim and found it to be true. Some of them sang, some danced, some clapped, some played on various musical instruments. However, finding that Anuruddha was unmoved by their actions, they left him. Anuruddha then reported the matter to the Buddha, who explained to him the eight qualities which when possessed by women would bring them rebirth amongst the Manāpa,kāyikā devas. (A 8.46/4:262-266)

The (Manāpa,kāyika,devā) Visākhā Sutta (A 8.47) is a short sutta merely recounting the Buddha mentioning the eight qualities to the lady Visākhā. Similarly, the Nakula,mātā Sutta (A 8.48) recounts how the Buddha mentions the eight qualities to the housewife Nakula,mātā.

Apparently, the pericope found in these three suttas is an extended version of the shorter one with only five qualities mentioned in **the Uggaha Sutta** (A 5.33) given at Bhaddiya (near the Jātiyā Forest in Aṅgā country) to the daughters of Uggaha, Meṇḍaka's grandson (*nattā*), just before their marriage (A 5.33/3:36-38). In this sutta, the last three qualities—the going for refuge, moral virtue and charity—are omitted. The closing verse (*gāthā*) is common to all these four suttas.

The Aṅguttara Commentary says that **the Manāpa,kāyikā devas** are the Nimmāna,ratī gods (who delight in their own creations) (AA 3:248 f). These gods inhabit the second highest realm in the sense-world. The highest of the sense realms is that of the Para,nimmita,vasavatti (those who lord over the creations of others).

— — —

The Discourse on Nakula,mātā

A 8.48/4:268 f

[268]

1 At one time the Blessed One was staying in the Deer Park¹ in the Bhesakaḷā Forest² at Sumsumāra,giri³ in the Bhaggā country.⁴ Then the housewife Nakula,mātā approached the Blessed One and saluted him, and then sat down at one side. Seated thus at one side, the Blessed One said this to the housewife Nakula,mātā:

2 “Nakula,mātā, a woman who is endowed with these eight qualities, after death, when the body has broken up, will arise in companionship with the Manāpa,kāyikā devas. What are the eight?”

¹ “Deer Park,” *miga,dāya*. This park in the Bhesakaḷā forest is mentioned at M 1:95, 332, S 4:116; A 3:295. Another well known Deer Park is outside Benares (S 5:421), where the First Discourse was given.

² So called because it is the home of the yakshini Bhesakaḷā (SA 2:249). The house of Nakula,pitā and Nakula,mātā is nearby.

³ Sumsumāra,giri: see SD 5.4 Intro (1).

⁴ Bhagga was not amongst the 16 great states, for which see (**Tad-ah**) Uposatha S (A 3.70) in SD 4.18 Appendix.

3 (1) Here, Nakula,mātā, to whichever husband her parents gives her, being compassionate, she desires for his wellbeing, cares for his good. Out of compassion for him, she rises before him, retires after him, readily acquiescing to his requests, pleasant in conduct, pleasant in speech.⁵

(2) Whoever the husband honours as mother, father, recluse, brahmin, she shows them hospitality, shows them respect, holds them in high esteem and reveres them (with offerings), offering them seats and water.

(3) Whatever work the husband does at home, such as in wool or cotton, therein she is skillful and diligent, endowed with skill-in-means and an inquiring mind, putting in sufficient effort, making sufficient preparations.⁶

(4) Whatever comprises the husband's household—slaves or messengers or workers—she knows the work of each of them by what has been duly done or duly undone; she knows when they are ill and when they are strong or weak; she distributes food, both hard and soft, giving each and everyone their share.⁷

(5) When the husband brings back wealth or grain or silver or gold, she keeps them well-protected and well-guarded; and in this regard, she is not depraved, no thief, no addict to drink, nor one who squanders.⁸

(6) She is a female lay follower who has gone to the Buddha as refuge, gone to the Dharma as refuge, gone to the Sangha as refuge.⁹

(7) She is virtuous, refraining from harming life, from taking the not-given, from sexual misconduct, from false speech, from strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness.

(8) She is charitable, [269] dwelling in the house with a heart free from the stain of avarice, devoted to charity, open-handed, delighting in giving, devoted to alms-giving, delighting to have a share in giving.¹⁰

Nakula,mātā, a woman who is endowed with these eight qualities, after death, when the body has broken up, will arise in companionship with the Manāpa,kāyikā devas.”

Whoever bears it all, always zealous, industrious,
Bringing every joy to him as a man well-cared,¹¹ wrongs not her husband.
The blessed wife moves not her husband to anger with spiteful words.
She honours all those whom her husband honours, wise is she.

⁵ *Idha Nakula,māte mātugāmo yassa mātā,pitaro bhattuno denti attha,kāmā hitesino anukampakā anukampaṃ upādāya, tassa hoti pubb'uttāyini pacchā,nipātinī kiṃ,kāra,paṭissavinī manāpa,cārinī piya,vādinī.* In **Mahā Sudasana S** (D 17), these qualities form part of those of “the woman jewel” (*itthi, ratana*) or ideal woman for a world monarch (D 17.1.15/2:175 f). In **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2), **Madhurā S** (M 84) and **Yamaka S** (S 22.85), these are the qualities of a good servant (D 2.35/1:60, M 84.5/2:84, S 22.85.41/3:113; see DA 1:168). Cf Bṛhaspati Smṛti 24.6 (SBE 33:368): “Rising before others, paying reverence to the elders of the family, preparing food and condiments and using a low seat and bed—thus have the duties of women been declared.” See A:H 3:29 n2.

⁶ *Ye te bhattu abbhantarā kammantā uṇṇā ti vā kappāsā ti vā, tattha dakkhā hoti analasā tatr'upāyāya vīmaṃsāya samannāgatā alaṃ katuṃ alaṃ saṃvidhātuṃ.*

⁷ *Ye ye bhattu abbhantarā anto,jano “dāsā ti vā “pessā ti vā “kamma,karā ti vā, tesaṃ kataṃ ca katato jānāti akataṃ ca akatato jānāti gilānakānaṃ ca balābalaṃ jānāti, khādaniyaṃ bhojaniyaṃ c'assa paccamsena saṃvibhaji.*

⁸ *Yaṃ bhattā āharati dhanam vā dhaññam vā rajatam vā jāta.rūpaṃ vā, taṃ ārakkhena guttiyā sampādeti, tattha ca hoti adhuttā athenī aṣoṇḍī avināsikā.*

⁹ PTS ed unwittingly omits “gone to the Sangha as refuge,” *saṅghaṃ saraṇam gatā*, but found in the *peyyālā* (repetitions) of the other preceding suttas.

¹⁰ This passage also in **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54.14/4:284) as the def for “the accomplishment in charity” (*cāga,sampadā*).

¹¹ “As a man well-cared,” *posam*. A word play: (1) = *purisa*, man; (2) ger of *poseti*, “he feeds, nourishes.”

Rising early, industrious, well caring the household.
Sweetly she conducts herself before her lord, guarding his wealth.
Such a good woman¹² goes with her husband's will.
She shall arise amongst the gods called pleasant (*manāpā*).

— evaṃ —

040414; 090912 NYF; 091103 LEG; 111125

¹² “A good woman,” *sotthi* = *su-itthi* (SA 3:248).