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(Nānā,karaṇa) Mettā Sutta 1

Paṭhama (Nānā,karaṇa) Mettā Sutta | A 4.125

The First Discourse on (the Diversity in) Lovingkindness

Theme: Going to heaven can end up in being reborn in the hells

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1 Danger of eternalism

The (Nānā,karaṇa) Mettā Sutta 1 (A 4.125) is about how the cultivation of the four “divine abodes” (*brahma, vihāra*) [2]—lovingkindness, compassion, gladness, and equanimity—can result in heavenly rebirths. The meditator of these divine abodes can be reborn in the corresponding planes of the brahma world, where they may live in celestial bliss and glory for as long as 500 world cycles (or even longer).

There is, however, a karmic catch to all this. Heaven is our own making, fuelled by karma, and lasts only as long as our wholesome karma. When the karmic momentum wears out, and this always happens, we will fall (*cavati*)—and we always “fall” from such karmic heavens—we will land in the subhuman realms: the hells, the animal kingdom, or the preta realm [§1c etc].

This sutta, as such, highlights the special problem posed by eternalist views, such as that we have an eternal soul, which goes to an eternal heaven or an eternal hell after death, and so on. Such view might motivate some meditators “to attain states of deep meditative bliss, which they interpret as union with divine reality or realization of an eternal self.”¹

From the perspective of the Buddha’s teaching, however, such attainments merely generate the kind of consciousness that characterizes those heavens. The mental states we are habitually familiar with tend to follow us beyond the grave. Such meditative attainments, in other words, generate rebirth in a corresponding realm in the form or the formless worlds. While many religions teach eternal heavenly life as the final goal of their believers, and the best, even only, way out of the human condition, the Buddha’s teaching regard whatever exists as being impermanent, including the heavens.

Whatever exists can only do so in impermanence, and are as such subject to its vagaries. The notion of a heaven of eternal bliss is imaginatively simplistic, as it fails to understand that pleasure only exists in opposition to pain. They are relative to one another, and can only be felt in opposition to one another. On a light note, we might even say that it is not that the evil do not go to heaven. Due to their habitual unheavenly ways, they would find heaven profoundly boring. Informed Buddhists, however, are not attracted to heavenly life because such states are karmic structures and, even if lasting for aeons, they still end, with disastrous aftermaths.

Practising Buddhists know that they can reject heaven and avoid hell, too—by keeping to the middle way. This middle way is the growing understanding that everything that exists is impermanent. In accepting the true reality of existence, we blissfully harmonize with it. In due course, we have a fuller vision of how we create our own worlds and inhabit them. When we realize the way to rise above such existential creativity, we also end our existential destructivity. This is nirvana.

2 The divine abodes

The Buddha has very important reasons for teaching **the (Nānā,karaṇa) Mettā Sutta 1** (A 4.125). Firstly, the divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*)² are a pre-Buddhist set of meditations that he has adopted as a skillful means or bridge for those who need an external source of succour. Secondly, the divine abodes help in the cultivation of inner stillness and wholesome social emotions. Thirdly, they can bring about rebirth in the heavens, though they are not eternal. [1]

The refrain at the end of each of the four passages on the divine abodes [§1b etc], shows how each abode becomes fully developed. In simple terms, the phrase “**above, below, across, everywhere**” (*uddham adho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi*) refers to the directional radiating (*pharivā*) of the divine abode. This divine quality should be cultivated “**to everyone as well as to himself**” (*sabb’attatāya*): the quality is only total

¹ Bodhi, *In the Buddha’s Words*, Boston, 2005:190.

² On the 4 divine abodes, see *Brahma, vihāra*, SD 38.5.

and boundless when it also includes oneself. For, we cannot pervade the universe (meaning both the world of beings and our own awareness of that world) if we does not have that quality ourselves.³

The phrase “**a mind...vast, great, boundless, free from hate, free from ill will**” (*cetasā vipulena maha-g, gatena appamaṇena averena avyāpajjhena*) [§1b etc] describes a meditator who is *fully focussed*. The word “vast” or “bountiful” (*vipula*) means he has attained samadhi or full concentration, and as such is “grown great” (*mahaggata*), that is, free (least temporarily) of all the mental hindrances,⁴ and thereby attained to dhyana. Only such a mind can truly be “boundless” or “measureless” (*appamana*) because, at least momentarily, going beyond conceit, the meditators *does not measure anyone but sees all beings as they really are*, without regarding anyone as a stranger or an enemy, or harbouring any negative thought: he is “free from hate, free from ill will” (*averena avyāpajjhena*).

3 Related suttas

3.1 DHYANA AND HEAVENLY REBIRTH. The (Nānā,karaṇa) Mettā Sutta 1 (A 4.125) parallels **the (Nānā,karaṇā) Puggala Sutta** (A 4.123)⁵ in presenting the potentiality of meditators for rebirth in heavenly realms. While the former refers to the model of the four divine abode (*brahma, vihāra*), the latter uses the framework of the four dhyanas. Both suttas warn that worldly devas (that is, those who are not saints of the path), after death, *immediately* fall from their celestial lives into the subhuman states⁶ [§1d etc].

Another interesting about these two suttas is that they show the respective correspondences between four dhyanas and the four divine abodes, that is, lovingkindness = the first dhyana; compassion = the second dhyana; gladness = the third dhyana; and equanimity = the fourth dhyana. **The Visuddhi,magga**, however, says that all the first three divine abodes can bring us up to the third dhyana, thus:

• lovingkindness	}	1 st -3 rd dhyana	(Vism 3.104-133/110-112) ⁷
• compassion			
• gladness			
• equanimity	—	4 th dhyana	

3.2 DHYANA, DIVINE ABODES, FORMLESS ATTAINMENTS, LIBERATION.

3.2.1 The progressive abodes and the divine abodes. The Aṭṭhaka,nāgara Sutta (M 52),⁸ also preserved as **the Dasama Gaha,pati Sutta** (A 11.17,⁹ takes the cultivation of the progressive abodes a step further, by inserting the four divine abodes after the four form dhyanas, and just before the first three formless attainments (that is, omitting the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception).

Having attained any of the four form dhyanas, he then reflects on it, thus: “This dhyana is conditioned and volitionally constructed. But whatever is conditioned and volitionally constructed is impermanent, subject to cessation.”¹⁰ If he is steadfast in this reflection, he will attain arhathood. If he fails to do so, that is, “because of that desire in dharmas, that delight in dharmas,”¹¹ he will attain non-return.¹²

³ On how this practice can lead to spiritual liberation, see **Brahma,vihāra S** (A 10.208/5:299), SD 2.10.

⁴ See Intro 5.3(2)n.

⁵ A 4.123/2:129 f), SD 23.8a.

⁶ See **(Nānā,karaṇā) Puggala S 1** (A 4.123), SD 23.8a (3.3) (Do all devas fall right into the subhuman planes?).

⁷ See esp Vism 3.107/111. See also Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism*, Oxford, 1998:178 (Table 4) & H Gunaratana, *The Path of Serenity and Insight*, Delhi, 1985:219-221 (App 3).

⁸ M 52.8-14/1:351 f), SD 41.2.

⁹ A 11.17.5-6/5:344 f), SD 32.9.

¹⁰ *Idam pi kho (ākāsānañc’āyatanam | viññāṇ’añc’āyatanam | ākiñcāññ’āyatanam) abhisāṅkhatam abhisāñceta-yitam. Yam kho pana kiñci abhisāṅkhatam abhisāñceta-yitam, tad aniccaṃ nirodha,dhamman ti.*

¹¹ “Desire...delight in dharmas” (*dhamma,rāga dhamma,nandī*), as at **Aṭṭhaka,nagara S** (M 52.4/1:350), where Comy explains that these 2 terms refer to the desire and lust (*chanda-rāga*), here meaning simply “attachment,” with respect to calm and insight. If one is able to let go of all attachment to calm and insight, one becomes an arhat. If one

Similarly, having attained any of the four divine abodes, the meditator then reflects, thus: “This liberation of mind is through ⟨lovingkindness, etc⟩ is conditioned and volitionally constructed. But whatever is conditioned and volitionally constructed is impermanent, subject to cessation.”¹³ If he is steadfast in this reflection, he will attain arhathood. If not, that is, “because of that desire in dharmas [states], that delight in dharmas,” he will attain non-return.

Finally, having attained any of the first three formless attainments, the meditator then reflects, thus: “This attainment of ⟨the sphere of infinite space | the sphere of infinite consciousness | the sphere of nothingness⟩ is conditioned and volitionally constructed. But whatever is conditioned and volitionally constructed is impermanent, subject to cessation.”¹⁴ If he is steadfast in this reflection, he will attain arhathood. If not, that is, “because of that desire in dharmas, that delight in dharmas,” he will attain non-return.

In other words, any of the progressive abodes (*anupubba, vihāra*)—except for the last two¹⁵—or any of the four divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*), may be cultivated, and with its attainment we could go on to see it with insight. If we successfully persist in doing this, we would attain arhathood, but if we still show some attachment to any of the mental states (*dhamma*), we would attain non-return.

3.2.2 Divinity, brahmahood, imperturbability, aryahood. Another relatively short discourse puts together four kinds of spiritual states. **The (Saṅgha) Uposatha Sutta** (A 4.190) records the Buddha as declaring that the community of monks, sitting in noble silence, are a field of merit, worth meeting even if we have to travel from afar with only a backpack—for four reasons. That is, there are amongst such saints those

- (1) who have attained to divinity (*deva-patta*) or deva states, that is, they are attainers of the form dhyanas;
- (2) who have attained to brahmahood (*brahma-p.patta*) or brahma states, that is, they have mastered the four divine abodes;
- (3) who have attained to imperturbability (*ānejjā-p.patta*) or the unshakable states, that is, they have mastered the four formless attainments; and
- (4) who have attained to aryahood or true nobility (*ariya-p.patta*), that is, they have truly understood the four noble truths, the arhats. (A 4.190.4/2:184), SD 15.10b

3.3 DEMYTHOLOGIZATION. There are many other discourses that treat the four divine abodes, often giving us new insights into their benefits. **The Tevijja Sutta** (D 13), for example, adds the parable of the conch-blower (*saṅkha, dhama*) after describing each of the 4 abodes, thus:

Just as a mighty conch-blower, Vāseṭṭha, might with little difficulty make a proclamation to the four quarters, so by this cultivation, Vāseṭṭha, by this liberation of the mind through gladness, any limited karma that was done neither remains nor persists there.

This, Vāseṭṭha, is the way to fellowship with Brahmā. (D 13,76-79/1:250 f), SD 1.8

Here, in the Tevijja Sutta, the Buddha is addressing two brahmin youths, teaching them the cultivation of the divine abodes, a teaching they are familiar with. For the brahmins believe that through their chants and prayers, they could actually be reborn in the presence of Mahā Brahma. The Buddha here

cannot discard them then one becomes a non-returner and is reborn in the Pure Abodes (MA 3:14). *Dhamma* here clearly does not mean “teaching” or “Teaching,” but meditative states; as such, it is best rendered as “dharma.”

¹² See (**Āsava-k,khaya**) **Jhāna S** (A 9.36.2d/4:423), SD 33.8: see §2d etc.

¹³ *Idam pi kho (mettā | karuṇā | muditā | upekkhā) ceto, vimutti abhisāṅkhatam abhisāṅcetaṅgāni. Yam kho pana kiñci abhisāṅkhatam abhisāṅcetaṅgāni, tad aniccāni nirodha, dhamman ti.*

¹⁴ *Idam pi kho (mettā | karuṇā | muditā | upekkhā) ceto, vimutti abhisāṅkhatam abhisāṅcetaṅgāni. Yam kho pana kiñci abhisāṅkhatam abhisāṅcetaṅgāni, tad aniccāni nirodha, dhamman ti.*

¹⁵ There are 9 progressive abodes: the 4 form dhyanas, the 4 formless dhyanas, and the cessation of perception and feeling. The two abodes omitted here are the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception and cessation. These last two abodes are too subtle to be contemplated on. See (**Āsava-k,khaya**) **Jhāna S** (A 9.36), SD 33.8 (2).

teaches that we need not do this posthumously, but we can right here and now, through the cultivation of the divine abode, beginning with lovingkindness (*mettā*), attain to such a boundless level of consciousness that we can *internalize* those very godly qualities that make Mahā Brahmā. We don't have to go to God, as it were, we can cultivate "Him" in our very being. God is not out there; He is *in* here (our hearts).

This kind of teaching approach is called "demythologization" by some scholars. **Demythologization** is effort to see beyond a specific cultural definition of religion or ethics. Its intention is not so much to debunk narrow biases, as to discern a deeper, timeless truth beneath the cultural and mythical layers. It is an effort at unpacking, or repackaging, of religion to open a window of insight into the living spirit of truth and liberation that would otherwise be missed or misread by the masses.¹⁶

3.4 LIMITING OF KARMIC EFFECTS. **The Te,viṅga Sutta** (D 13),¹⁷ **the Saṅkha(dhama) Sutta** (S 42.8)¹⁸ and **the (Karaja,kāya) Brahma,viḥāra Sutta** (A 10.208)¹⁹ contain an interesting technical term, "karma done in a limited way" or "limited karma" (*pamāṇa,kataṃ kammaṃ*), which the Āṅguttara Commentary says refers to sense-sphere karma (*kāmmāvacara,kamma*) (AA 5:78), and that "unlimited karma" (*appamāṇa,kataṃ kammaṃ*) refers to form-sphere karma (*rūpāvacara,kamma*). It is called "unlimited" because it is done by transcending the limit, for it is developed by way of specified, unspecified and directional pervasion.²⁰

The Commentary on the Saṅkha(dhama) Sutta explains that "When (simple) lovingkindness is said, this can be interpreted either as access concentration²¹ or as dhyana, but when it is qualified as 'liberation of mind' (*ceto,vimutti*) it definitely means dhyana (*jhāna*)" (SA 3:105). The point is that if a person masters the "liberation of mind by lovingkindness" at the level of dhyana, the karmic potential of this dhyana attainment will take precedence over sense-sphere karma and will generate rebirth into the form realm.²²

3.5 OTHER RELATED SUTTAS. The following is a list of discourses and texts that lists the cultivation of the four divine abodes (*brahma,viḥāra*)

The Mahā Sudassana Sutta (D 17.2.4/2:187). An ancient king Mahā Sudassanā cultivates the four divine abodes. (SD 36.12)

The Mahā Govinda Sutta (D 19.59/2:250). Mahā Govinda, the purohit of king Reṇu, cultivates the abodes. (SD 63.4)

The Udumbarika Siha,nāda Sutta (D 25.17/3:49 f). The Buddha instructs Nigrodha and the wanderers on the abodes, as part of the Buddha's training for the monks. (SD 1.4)

The Cakka,vatti Siha,nāda Sutta (D 26.28/3:78). The divine abodes are called "the wealth of a monk." (SD 36.10)

The Saṅgīti Sutta (D 33.1.11(6)/3:224) lists the abodes as the four "boundless states" or "illimitables" (*appamañña*).

The Vatthūpama Sutta (M 7.13-16/1:38). The abodes as a means inner baptism or purification instead of ritual washing in a sacred river. (SD 28.12)

The Cūḷa Assa,pura Sutta (M 40.9-13/1:283 f). The abodes as a mean of attaining inner peace. (SD 41.8)

¹⁶ See **Sigāl'ovāda S** (D 31), SD 4.1 (3).

¹⁷ **Te,viṅga S** (D 13.77/1:251), SD 1.8.

¹⁸ S 42.8.17/4:322. It also has the parable of the conch-blower, like **Te,viṅga S** (D 13.76-79/1:250 f), SD 1.8.

¹⁹ A 10.208.1/5:299, SD 2.10.

²⁰ DA 2:406; MA 3:450; SA 3:105; ItA 1:92.

²¹ In commentarial terms, there are **3 levels of mental images (nimitta)**: (1) the preparatory image (parikamma nimitta) or the meditation object perceived at the start of one's meditation. (2) When this image has reached some degree of focus, albeit still unsteady and unclear, it is called the acquired image (uggaha nimitta). (3) On greater mental focus, an entirely clear and immovable image arises, and becomes the counter-image (paṭibhāga nimitta). As soon as this image arises, the meditator has attained access (or neighbourhood) concentration (upacāra samādhi). It is also by means of the counter-image that one gains full concentration (appanā samādhi). See **Nimitta**, SD 19.7 (3), & **Dhyana**, SD 8.4 (7) (What happens what one reaches dhyana).

²² See Vism 9.49-58/309-311; also S:B 1149 n346; A:B 315 n73.

The Mahā Vedalla Sutta (M 43.31/1:297). The abodes are called “the immeasurable liberation of mind” (*appamāṇā ceto,vimutti*). (SD 35.1)

The Māra Tajjanīya Sutta (M 50.14-15/1:335). The four divine abodes keeps out Māra’s influence on the monks’ minds. (SD 36.4)

The Jīvaka Sutta (M 55.6-11/1:369 f). The Buddha and the monks cultivate the four divine abodes to those on whom they live in dependence, but without making any demands. (SD 43.4)

The Makhā,deva Sutta (M 83.5-10/2:76-78, 17-19/2:81 f). On noticing grey hairs on his head, king Makhā,deva renounces the world and cultivated the abodes, doing so right to the end of his life. (SD 60.8)

The Dhānañjāni Sutta (M 97.32-35/2:195). Sāriputta instructs the dying Dhānañjāni to cultivate the four divine abodes. (SD 4.9)

The Subha Sutta (M 99.24-27/2:207 f). The Buddha teaches the brahmin youth Subha, son of Todeyya, the true to “companionship with Brahmā” (*brahmā,sahavyatā*). (SD 38.6)

The Anuruddha Sutta (M 127.7/3:146). Anuruddha explains to the carpenter Pañcak’āṅga the difference between “the immeasurable liberation of mind” (*appamāṇā ceto,vimutti*) and “the exalted liberation of mind” (*mahagatā ceto,vimutti*). (SD 54.10)

The Go,datta Sutta (S 41.7/4:296 f). Citta the houselord explains to the monk Go,datta that the proper cultivation of the four divine abodes as “the immeasurable liberation of mind” (*appamāṇā ceto,vimutti*). (SD 60.4)

The Pāṭaliya Sutta (S 42.13/4:350-356). The Buddha explains to the headman Pāṭaliya how when the divine abodes are properly cultivated, such a concentration helps us abandon spiritual doubt; hence, it is called “Dharma samadhi.”²³ (SD 65.1)

The Mettā Sahagatā Sutta (S 46.54/5:115-121). The Buddha explains how his teaching on the liberation by the divine abodes is different from the non-Buddhist version. (SD 10.11)

The Venāga,pura Sutta (A 3.63.6/1:183). The Buddha explains to Vaccha,gotta, the brahmin of Venāga,pura, that his (the Buddha’s) clear and radiant complexion is not account of resting well on “high and great couches” (*uccā,sayana mahā,sayana*), but his “couch” is the four divine abodes. (SD 21.1)

The Kesa,puttiya Sutta (A 3.65.15/1:192). The Buddha explains that the four divine abodes gives four self-assurances of true happiness, notwithstanding there is an afterlife or not, or that negative karma takes effect or not. (SD 35.4a)

The Sālha Sutta (A 3.66.13/1:196). The monk Nandaka explains to Sālha how the cultivation of the divine abodes can bring mental focus with which to examine and clear away one’s defilements, and so “become perfect” (*brahma,bhūta*).²⁴ (SD 43.6)

The (Catukka) Metta Sutta 1 (A 4.125/2:129). The divine abodes bring about rebirth in the heavens. (SD 33.9)

The (Catukka) Metta Sutta 2 (A 4.126.2/2:130). The divine abodes bring about rebirth in the Pure Abodes, that is, the attainment of non-return. (SD 33.10)

The Doṇa Brāhmaṇa Sutta (A 5.192.3/3:225). The Buddha explains to the brahmin Doṇa that through cultivating the four divine abodes, one becomes “equal with brahma” (*brahma-sama*). (SD 36.14)

The Nav’aṅ’uposatha Sutta (A 9.18.10/4:390). Cultivating the divine abodes on an uposatha day is to live like arhats. (SD 60.7)

Paṭisambhidā,magga (Pm 5.20/2:39). Chapter on *Vimokkha*: an analysis of the divine abodes.

Vibhaṅga (Vbh 13/272-282). Chapter on *Appamañña*: an analysis of the divine abodes.

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²³ Comy however gives different interpretations of this term: see SD 65.1.

²⁴ PED: “divine being, most excellent being, said of the Buddha” (D 3:84; M 1:111, 3:195, 224; S 4:94; A 5:226; It 57); said of arhats (A 2:206; S 3:83).

The First Discourse on (the Diversity in) Lovingkindness

A 4.125

1 Bhikshus, there are these four persons to be found in the world. What are the four?

Lovingkindness and the Brahma,kāyika devas

1.2 (1) Here, bhikshus, a certain person,²⁵ with a heart of **lovingkindness**, dwells suffusing one quarter;

so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth;

thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone as well as to himself,

he dwells suffusing all the world with **lovingkindness**

that is vast, grown great [exalted],²⁶ immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.²⁷

He relishes it, longs for it, and finds joy in it.²⁸ He remains therein, intent upon it, dwells much in it, without falling from it.

1.3 When he dies, he is reborn in the company of **the Brahma,kāyika devas** [the high gods].²⁹

Bhikshus, the life-span of the Brahma,kāyika devas is *an aeon* [a world cycle].

The worldling, having dwelled there for a whole lifespan, having spent all of the lifespan of devas there, goes to hell, or to the animal kingdom, or to the preta realm.³⁰

1.4 But the Blessed One's disciple, having dwelled there for a whole lifespan, and having exhausted it all up, attains nirvana in that very state.

This, bhikshus, is the distinction, this is the disparity, this is the difference, of the learned noble disciple from the unlearned worldling, that is to say, with regard to destination and rebirth.³¹

Compassion and the Ābhassara devas

2 (2) Furthermore, bhikshus, here, a certain person, with a heart of **compassion**, dwells suffusing one quarter,

so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth;

²⁵ “A certain person” (*ekacco puggalo*), in other words, as lay person. Further, in **Dhānañjāni S** (M 97), Sāriputta teaches the divine abodes to the layman Dhānañjāni (addressing him directly) (M 97,32.2), SD 4.9. More commonly, the subject of the divine abode practice is given as “a monk”: **Te,vijja S** (D 13,76-79/1:251), SD 1.8; see also: **D 2:185, 250, 3:49, 78, 223; M 1:38, 283, 297, 335×2, 351, 369, 2:76, 77, 78, 81, 195, 207, 3:146; S 4:296, 322, 351, 352×2, 5:115, 116, 117, 118; A 1:183, 192, 2:172, 175, 184, 3:225, 4:390, 5:299, 343, 344.** “A monk” (*bhikkhu*) here refers to any meditator. Even a lay person, properly meditating, attains the state of monkhood (*bhikkhu, bhāva*): **Satipatṭhāna S** (M 10,3A) +n, SD 13.3; SD 13.1 (3.1.1.5); SD 16.7 (1.1.1.2).

²⁶ The mind “grown great” (*maha-g, gatā*) or exalted perception refers to the mind in dhyana, ie in the form sphere (*rūpāvacara*). See **Catuttha Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.4), SD 24.14 (4).

²⁷ The recurrence of these last two phrases—“without hate, without ill will”—attests to the fact that **lovingkindness** is the basis for all the other three abodes, ie, they are actually a refinement of lovingkindness applied on deeper and broader levels.

²⁸ *So tad assādeti, tam nikāmeti, tena ca vittiṃ āpajjati: A 3.114/1:267,7+22, 268,5, 4.123/2:126,20, 127,4, 4.125-1/2:129,5, 7.47/4:54,17.*

²⁹ *Brahma,kāyika* lit tr “one of perfect body,” ie a body of pure light; alt tr “Brahma’s host,” a generic term for the whole of the 1st-dhyana brahma realm, which should not be confused with the more specific “Brahma’s Retinue” (*brahma,pārisajja*). See (**Nāna,karaṇā**) **Puggala S 1** (A 4.123), SD 23.8a (3.2.1).

³⁰ *Tattha puthujjano yāvat ’āyukam thatvā yāvatakam tesam devānam āyu-p,pamāṇam tam sabbam khetvā nirayam pi gacchati, tiracchāna,yonim pi gacchati, petti,visayam pi gacchati,.* This passage seems to suggest that worldling devas (that is, those who are not saints of the path), after death, *immediately* fall from their celestial life into the subhuman states; see (**Nāna,karaṇā**) **Puggala S 1** (A 4.123), SD 23.8a (3.3).

³¹ On one’s choice of rebirth by aspiration, see (**Nāna,karaṇā**) **Puggala S 1** (A 4.123), SD 23.8a (4).

thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone as well as to himself,
 he dwells suffusing all the world with compassion
 that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

He relishes it, longs for it, and finds joy in it. He remains therein, intent upon it, dwells much in it, without falling from it.

2.2 When he dies, he is reborn in the company of **the Ābhassara devas** [the devas of streaming radiance].³²

Bhikshus, the life-span of the Ābhassara devas is *two aeons* [two world cycles]. The worldling, having dwelled there for a whole lifespan, having spent all of the lifespan of devas there, goes to hell, or to the animal kingdom, or to the preta realm.

2.3 But the Blessed One's disciple, having dwelled there for a whole lifespan, and having exhausted it all up, attains nirvana in that very state.

This, bhikshus, is the distinction, this is the disparity, this is the difference, of the learned noble disciple from the unlearned worldling, that is to say, with regard to destination and rebirth.

Gladness and the Subha,kiṇha devas

3 (3) Furthermore, bhikshus, here, a certain person, with a heart of **gladness**
 dwells suffusing one quarter,

so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth;

thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone as well as to himself,

he dwells suffusing all the world with gladness

that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

He relishes it, longs for it, and finds joy in it. He remains therein, intent upon it, dwells much in it, without falling from it.

3.2 When he dies, he is reborn in the company of **the Subha,kiṇha devas** [devas of radiant glory].³³

Bhikshus, the life-span of the Subha,kiṇha devas is *four aeons* [four world cycles].

The worldling, having dwelled there for a whole lifespan, having spent all of the lifespan of devas there, goes to hell, or to the animal kingdom, or to the preta realm.

3.3 But the Blessed One's disciple, having dwelled there for a whole lifespan, and having exhausted it all up, attains nirvana in that very state.

This, bhikshus, is the distinction, this is the disparity, this is the difference, of the learned noble disciple from the unlearned worldling, that is to say, with regard to destination and rebirth.

Equanimity and the Vaha-p,phala devas

4 (4) Furthermore, bhikshus, here, a certain person, with a heart of **equanimity**,
 dwells suffusing one quarter,

so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth;

thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone as well as to himself,

he dwells suffusing all the world with equanimity

that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

He relishes it, longs for it, and finds joy in it. He remains therein, [128] intent upon it, dwells much in it, without falling from it.

4.2 When he dies, he is reborn in the company of **the Vaha-p,phala devas** [the devas of abundant fruit].³⁴

³² “Ābhassarā,” a celestial world, one of the form worlds of the 2nd dhyana, is populated by luminescent beings who live on zest (*pīti*) and emanate lightning-like radiance. When the physical universe devolves or “contracts” (*samivaṭṭati*) due to “fire,” it reaches up to Ābhassara (CA 11; Vism 13.41/416 f). See **Aggañña S** (D 27.10/3:84 f), SD 2.19.

³³ On the Subha,kiṇha brahmas, see (**Nānā,karana**) **Puggala S 1**, SD 23.8a (3.2.4).

³⁴ On the Vaha-p,phala brahmas, see (**Nānā,karana**) **Puggala S 1**, SD 23.8a (3.2.5).

Bhikshus, the life-span of the Veha-p.phala devas is *500 aeons* [500 world cycles].

The worldling, having dwelled there for a whole lifespan, having spent all of the lifespan of devas there, goes to hell, or to the animal kingdom, or to the preta realm.

4.3 But the Blessed One's disciple, having dwelled there for a whole lifespan, and having exhausted it all up, attains final nirvana in that very state.

This, bhikshus, is the distinction, this is the disparity, this is the difference, of the learned noble disciple from the unlearned worldling, that is to say, with regard to destination and rebirth.

These, bhikshus, are the four kinds of individuals existing in the world.

— evaṃ —

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