8

Appamattaka Vagga

Ee: The Chapter on the Few | A 1.19

Ce Vaggo Tatiyo The 3rd Subchapter (A 1.16.4 of Eka, dhamma, pāḷi)
Se Vaggo Tatiyo The 3rd Subchapter of Eka, dhamma, pāḷi

Theme: The rarity of good rebirths
Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2008, 2020

1 Introduction

1.1 Summary

The Appamattaka Vagga (A 1.19) is a set of 45 suttas divided into 2 cycles. The 1st, the Dharma Cycle, has 15 suttas, arranged in ascending order, from the most conducive place and kind of birth for learning and cultivating wisdom, to meeting the Buddha, and hearing, learning and practising his teaching, to living the holy life and gaining spiritual freedom. The 2nd, the Rebirth Cycle, has 30 suttas, reflecting on the rarity of being born as humans and as devas, and that these beings are more likely to fall into the 3 subhuman states, that is, hell, the animal womb and the preta realm.¹

1.2 Nature of the Texts

1.2.1 Peyyāla

1.2.1.1 The Pali term, peyyāla, has come down through modern Thai as pe or la, which are its abbreviated forms, also found in the modern printed Pali texts of Sri Lanka, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand (Siam) and India (such as the Nalanda edition). In modern Thai usage, pe or la is just like “etc” (et cetera), “and so on” in English.

In other words, it is clear that what has been omitted is either a well known repetition or a list that can and should be easily supplied at least mentally. However, this is not so easy when we read abbreviated Pali passages, and also modern translations with such abridgements (as is notoriously the case with Bh Bodhi’s translations). [1.2.1.3]

1.2.1.2 K R Norman tells us that peyyāla probably represents an eastern dialect form.² Peyyāla, then, is a Magadhism for paryāya³—meaning “repetition, succession, formula; way of saying, phrase.” R Gethin adds that it “appears to represent the Sanskrit paryāya in the sense of ‘repetition’: paryāya → payyāya → peyyāya → peyyāla.”⁴ He also notes that “the technical sense of ‘repetition’ seems to be reserved for this particular form, which occurs alongside Pali, pariyāya.”⁵

In religious literature, we probably see the most extensive and developed use of the “contractions and expansions”—as represented by peyyāla—in Pali literature. In our present context, peyyāla simply refers to “repeated passages,” that, says the commentator Dhammapāla, we should have been familiar with, “because of the repetitive texts in certain books” (ekaccessu potthakesu pāḷi, peyyāla, vasena, VvA 117).

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¹ For related suttas, see SD 57.21 (2).
³ BHS piyāla and peyāla (Mvst 3:202, 219).
⁵ On paryāya, see SD 3.9 (75.1); SD 50.25 (1.4); SD 56.11 (3.1); Parīyāya nipparīyāya, SD 68.2.
By “literature,” we mean the written texts, since they are the earliest and most often mentioned in the Pali Commentaries, which, as noted above, mention “books” (potthaka). When the texts had been written down, such abridgements were used probably either to omit tedious repetitions of well known passages—mentioned only in its 1st occurrence in the sutta itself, or earlier in the text itself—or to save space and labour in writing these texts.6

1.2.1.3 Those who are familiar with the vitality of the reflective and practical nature of the early Buddhist texts, understand the necessity of reciting or reading the Pali passages in full—keeping to the original oral tradition, the live transmission of the Buddha Dharma, even if it is today easily available in print or on some media, as a scribal tradition. Clearly, the Dharma must be fully lived by us for it to be fully alive in us that we may live it to win deathfree nirvana.

British scholar L S Cousins’ famous criticism of Bh Bodhi’s commercial translation, The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha (1995), is worth repeating and heeded:

“Although there are obvious advantages to having the whole work in one volume, especially for the newcomer, the disadvantage is the systematic elimination of repetition. Many readers may see this as a gain but it does amount to the deliberate removal of a meditative element from many suttas. In the original language, when the suttas are chanted rather than read, there is an effect upon the mind which is very much part of their traditional purpose. Moreover, the emphasis is often changed quite critically: when a phrase that is repeated in the original ten times is given only once in translation, it ceases to be a central part which is always retained in memory. The result is that what the sutta tries to stress as important becomes much less noticeable in translation.” (Journal of Buddhist Ethics 4, Sep 1997:261 f; emphases added)7

1.2.1.4 The Buddha Dharma, when printed, is still sacred literature, but may lose or lessen the vital advantage of a full and living translation that promotes both personal learning and communal fellowship. The print should not merely satisfy commercial or production standards of economizing space squeezing liberating texts into tight pages for a neat profit.

The nature of the Pali tradition is such that it must be laid out in full whenever it refers to the teaching for reflection and practice—and this covers most of the texts. These should be arranged to help guide our reading eye, flow smoothly and joyfully with the words, phrases, verses, lines, paragraphs and passages, with the clarity and charm of musical notes: we only need to read or recite these words to see them, know them, feel them and free them from the pages to fill our heart and life.

In time, we learn to remember these key passages either in the letter, as they are printed, or in the spirit, as they brightly light up our mind and heart. Like musical notes, these Dharma notes remain on the pages, but their eternal sound from the Buddha’s awakening keeps ringing gently and clearly in our ears as we step closer to the path of awakening.

An unopened book is but a block, a closed mind. A book, especially a sacred text, left on a shelf draws dust and decays. As long as it is unopened, unread, unlived, our heart remains closed, cold, dark and dead. We may be in the business of Buddhism, with only the burden of worldly profits, distracting us from the real purpose of what we must do, and what we do with it—just as we treasure our breath, and it frees us from death and darkness into the deathfree light.

6 See SD 52.4 (1.3.3.2).
7 On L S Cousins’s vital advice, see further: SD 49.1 (6); SD 52.4 (esp 1.3.3.3 f). For further reading of peyyāla, see Gethin, “What’s in a repetition?” JPTS 29 2007:365-387.
1.2.2 Authorship

1.2.2.1 From the somewhat regimented nature of the repetition of the Appa,mattaka Vagga passages (Ee, Se) or suttas (Be, Ce), it is unlikely to have been actually spoken by the Buddha. His method is always to speak viva voce, “in living voice,” rather than in such a formally structured manner. However, this is not to say that it is not the Buddha word. A short and simple explanation is that these are “variations on a theme” of Buddha Dharma,

Clearly, this is the work of wise, compassionate and diligent sutta redactors, familiar with the Buddha’s oral teachings, and crafting aspects of these teachings into a handy and ready compass of the teachings to move different individuals, especially in our own times, to Dharma action.

It is not clear exactly when such teachings were compiled. We will surely not be wrong to imagine that the practice might certainly have started in the Buddha’s own lifetime, with his approval. These are vital teaching tools for the benefit of the burgeoning sangha all over the central Gangetic plains and elsewhere, especially when and where the Buddha is always present—as in our case today.

1.2.2.2 M Allon, in his analysis of the Udumbarikā Siha,nāda Sutta (D 25, SD 1.4), distinguishes 5 types of repetition: verbatim, repetition with minor modifications, repetition with important modifications, repetition of structure types 1 and 2. Gethin conveniently summarizes these 5 categories into 2 related kinds: “narrative repetition” and “structural repetition.”

By narrative repetition is meant the repetition of blocks, with or without modification, in the course of a narrative. Thus, a text, for example, describes events related to person A, who then relates them to persons, who in turn relates to person C in full (usually the Buddha), who then meets person A, and asks him, recounting the whole event yet again, whether they are true.

Structural repetition refers to a formal or structural frame as the basis of repetitions for substituting different points of teaching, and/or modifying the structure to accommodate various thematic variations. We see this repetition in the well known Gaṅga Peyyāla (the Ganges cycle) in the Saṁyutta, using the following frame: “Just as the river Ganges flows earthwards, even so, a monk who cultivates the noble eightfold path, resorting to solitude, flows towards nirvana.”

In place of “the Ganges,” a different great river is inserted each time, and the different limbs of the eightfold path mentioned for each frame; and for “the east,” different expressions for “resorting to solitude” is inserted—a whole series of repetition is thus worked out (S 45.91-138/5:18-41). Such repetitions are especially common in the Saṁyutta and the Aṅguttara, and also the Abhidhamma texts.

The Appa,mattaka Vagga is not really a standard repetition cycle, since it only omits the opening comparison of the pleasantness and rarity of “the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu,dvīpa” to the pervasiveness of “the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains” [$1 etc].

In a sense, this is a “narrative repetition” (it narrates the beauty of Jambu,dvīpa, the rarity that is the surrounding wilderness). Yet, the stress is on the reflection that follows in each of the 45 suttas of the Vagga. This comparison unifies these reflections, which are, in themselves, a “didactic cycle,” a series of instructive reflections, and which may be taken as a subtype of “structural repetition.”

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8 M Allon, Style and Function: A study of the dominant stylistic features of the prose portions of the Pāli canonical sutta text and their mnemonic function, Tokyo, 1997:287.

9 We see this narrative repetition in, eg, Alagaddūpama S (D 22), SD 3.13: see K R Norman op cit 2006:70 f.


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2 Appamattaka Vagga

2.1 Structure

2.1.1 The 1st cycle

2.1.1.1 The Sinhala (Ce) Buddha Jayanti Tipiṭaka (BJT) edition not only gives the full Pali listing (without any abridgement) but counts a total of 15 suttas in the 1st cycle: Suttas 1-15. The Burmese (Be) and the Siamese (Se) editions combine the 2nd and 3rd Suttas, thus giving 14 Suttas. The European (Ee) Pali Text Society (PTS) edition merges all these short sutta into one Sutta.

2.1.1.2 All these 15 suttas of the 1st set, the Dharma cycle, follow the same template, repeating the opening Jambudvīpa parable. All editions, except Ce, mention this parable only in the 1st Sutta, and gives the remaining sutta without the parable. Only Ce lays down the parable in full for every Sutta. The same parable also runs through all the sutta of the 2nd cycle in the same manner (with only Ce repeating the parable).

In the 1st cycle, however, its last Sutta—the (Appamattaka) Vimutti, rasa Sutta (A 1.19.15)—has a conclusion, the Buddha’s calling us to practise Dharma [§15.3]. The names of these 45 short sutta come from the key idea in each of them.

2.1.1.3 In the 2nd set, the rebirth cycle—comprising Suttas 16-45—there is a total of 30 suttas, as in all the editions, except the European PTS edition which merges all these short sutta into one. As a whole, both cycles total 45 sutta as given in this translation.

The whole of this rebirth cycle closely parallels chapter 11, the Gatiyo Pañcaka (the 5 destinies),11 cycle (S 56.102-131), totalling 30 short sutta, of the Mahāvagga, the 5th and last book, of the Samyutta Nikāya, closing it.12 The only difference is that each of the 30 sutta of S 56 starts with the reason why beings are reborn in a lower realm: it is because of “not seeing” (adiṭṭha), that is, not having understood, the 4 noble truths, which are then listed out in full.

2.2 Contents

2.2.1 Titles and numbers

For the convenience of referencing, I have named each sutta to reflect their key idea, and numbered them according to their sequence and set (which will be further explained below). The contents of the Appamattaka Vagga are as follows below. The last column refers to benefits of our good karma [§§1-15], and the rebirths of beings [§§16-45]:

§§1-16 The Dharma cycle

| §§1-5 | The right conditions for spiritual life | SD 57.8(1) | dry land |
| A 1.19,1 (Appamattaka) Thala,ja Sutta | SD 57.8(1) | dry land |
| A 1.19,2 (Appamattaka) Manussa Sutta | SD 57.8(2) | human beings |
| A 1.19,3 (Appamattaka) Majjhima,janapadā Sutta | SD 57.8(3) | the middle countries |
| A 1.19,4 (Appamattaka) Paññava Sutta | SD 57.8(4) | the wise |
| A 1.19,5 (Appamattaka) Paññā, cakkhu Sutta | SD 57.8(5) | the wisdom-eye |

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11 The sutta therein are all entitled Pañca,gati.
12 S 56.102-131/5:474-477.
§§6-10  Learning the Buddha Dharma
A 1.19,6 (Appa,mattaka) Dassana Sutta  SD 57.8(6)  seeing the Buddha
A 1.19,7 (Appa,mattaka) Suta Sutta  SD 57.8(7)  hearing the Dharma
A 1.19,8 (Appa,mattaka) Dhata Sutta  SD 57.8(8)  remembering the Dharma
A 1.19,9 (Appa,mattaka) Attha Sutta  SD 57.8(9)  understanding the Dharma
A 1.19,10 (Appa,mattaka) Paṭipatti Sutta  SD 57.8(10)  practising the Dharma

§§11-15  Practising the Buddha Dharma
A 1.19,11 (Appa,mattaka) Sarîvega Sutta  SD 57.8(11)  feeling spiritual urgency
A 1.19,12 (Appa,mattaka) Padhâna Sutta  SD 57.8(12)  exerting spiritual effort
A 1.19,13 (Appa,mattaka) Samâdhi Sutta  SD 57.8(13)  gaining samadhi
A 1.19,14 (Appa,mattaka) Ânâra Sutta  SD 57.8(14)  renunciants living on alms
A 1.19,15 (Appa,mattaka) Vimutti,rasa Sutta  SD 57.8(15)  the taste of freedom

§§16-45  The Rebirth Cycle

§§16-18  Humans are rarely reborn as humans
A 1.19,16 (Appa,mattaka) Manussâ Manussâ Sutta 1  SD 57.8(16)  nīrāya (hell)
A 1.19,17 (Appa,mattaka) Manussâ Manussâ Sutta 2  SD 57.8(17)  tiracchāna,yoni (animal)
A 1.19,18 (Appa,mattaka) Manussâ Manussâ Sutta 2  SD 57.8(18)  petti,visaya (preta)

§§19-21  Humans are rarely reborn as devas
A 1.19,19 (Appa,mattaka) Manussâ Devâ Sutta 1  SD 57.8(19)  nīrāya
A 1.19,20 (Appa,mattaka) Manussâ Devâ Sutta 2  SD 57.8(20)  tiracchāna,yoni
A 1.19,21 (Appa,mattaka) Manussâ Devâ Sutta 3  SD 57.8(21)  petti,visaya

§§22-24  Devas are rarely reborn as devas
A 1.19,22 (Appa,mattaka) Devâ Devâ Sutta 1  SD 57.8(22)  nīrāya
A 1.19,23 (Appa,mattaka) Devâ Devâ Sutta 2  SD 57.8(23)  tiracchāna,yoni
A 1.19,24 (Appa,mattaka) Devâ Devâ Sutta 2  SD 57.8(24)  petti,visaya

§§25-27  Devas are rarely reborn as humans
A 1.19,25 (Appa,mattaka) Devâ Manussâ Sutta 1  SD 57.8(25)  nīrāya
A 1.19,26 (Appa,mattaka) Devâ Manussâ Sutta 2  SD 57.8(26)  tiracchāna,yoni
A 1.19,27 (Appa,mattaka) Devâ Manussâ Sutta 3  SD 57.8(27)  petti,visaya

§§28-30  Hell-beings are rarely reborn as humans
A 1.19,28 (Appa,mattaka) Nirayâ Manussâ Sutta 1  SD 57.8(28)  nīrāya
A 1.19,29 (Appa,mattaka) Nirayâ Manussâ Sutta 2  SD 57.8(29)  tiracchâna,yoni
A 1.19,30 (Appa,mattaka) Nirayâ Manussâ Sutta 2  SD 57.8(30)  petti,visaya

§§31-33  Hell-beings are rarely reborn as devas
A 1.19,31 (Appa,mattaka) Niraya Devâ Sutta 1  SD 57.8(31)  nīrāya
A 1.19,32 (Appa,mattaka) Niraya Devâ Sutta 2  SD 57.8(32)  tiracchāna,yoni
A 1.19,33 (Appa,mattaka) Niraya Devâ Sutta 3  SD 57.8(33)  petti,visaya

§§34-36  Animals are rarely reborn as humans
A 1.19,34 (Appa,mattaka) Tiracchâna Manussâ Sutta 1  SD 57.8(34)  nīrāya
A 1.19,35 (Appa,mattaka) Tiracchâna Manussâ Sutta 2  SD 57.8(35)  tiracchâna,yoni
A 1.19,36 (Appa,mattaka) Tiracchâna Manussâ Sutta 3  SD 57.8(36)  petti,visaya
§§37-39  Animals are rarely reborn as devas
A 1.19,37 (Appa,mattaka) Tiracchāna Devā Sutta 1  SD 57.8(37)  niraya
A 1.19,38 (Appa,mattaka) Tiracchāna Devā Sutta 2  SD 57.8(38)  tiracchāna,yoni
A 1.19,39 (Appa,mattaka) Tiracchāna Devā Sutta 3  SD 57.8(39)  petti,visaya

§§40-42  Pretas are rarely reborn as humans
A 1.19,40 (Appa,mattaka) Petā Manussā Sutta 1  SD 57.8(40)  niraya
A 1.19,41 (Appa,mattaka) Petā Manussā Sutta 2  SD 57.8(41)  tiracchāna,yoni
A 1.19,42 (Appa,mattaka) Petā Manussā Sutta 3  SD 57.8(42)  petti,visaya

§§43-45  Pretas are rarely reborn as devas
A 1.19,43 (Appa,mattaka) Petā Deva Sutta 1  SD 57.8(43)  niraya
A 1.19,44 (Appa,mattaka) Petā Deva Sutta 2  SD 57.8(44)  tiracchāna,yoni
A 1.19,45 (Appa,mattaka) Petā Deva Sutta 3  SD 57.8(45)  petti,visaya

2.2.2 Analysis of the Appa,mattaka Vagga (1)

2.2.2.1 The 1st part of the Appa,mattaka Vagga, called the Dharma Cycle [§§1-16], lists the best conditions for living [§§1-5]; for learning the Dharma [§§6-10], and for practising it [§§11-15]. The suttas of the Dharma Cycle has 3 pentads, sets of 5 short suttas, the first of which can be summarized, thus:

The right conditions for spiritual life
A 1.19,1: The best living condition for the ancient Indians is the safe, fertile and beautiful land rather than being born as water creatures (or even on water).
A 1.19,2: We can only truly renounce as humans, but there are much more water creatures.
A 1.19,3: The best place for learning is as humans in the middle countries in the central Gangetic plains, but more are those reborn in the outlying regions amongst less civilized tribesmen who are difficult to teach, and there are very much more of such people.
A 1.19,4: It is easier to cultivate wisdom when we are wise, when we are able to differentiate good from bad, but there are more of those who are unable to do so.
A 1.19,5: Finally, only with wisdom are we able to develop the wisdom-eye of awakening, but more are those who are ignorant and confused, unable to even reach the path of awakening.

2.2.1.2 The other pentads of the Dharma Cycle can be summarized as follows:

Learning the Buddha Dharma
A 1.19,6: The best way to discover true reality and be liberated is to see the Buddha, but there are more of those who do not even get to know of him.
A 1.19,7: To learn about true reality, we start by listening to the wise teachings, the Dharma-Vinaya, without which we will be spiritually ignorant and deluded; but there are more of those who have never heard of it.
A 1.19,8: Having heard the Buddha Dharma, we should remember it, but most do not recall it in any useful way.
A 1.19,9: Remembering the Buddha Dharma, we should examine its meaning, but most do not do so.
A 1.19,10: Having examined the meaning of the Buddha Dharma, we should practise it, but most do not practise it.

Practising the Buddha Dharma
A 1.19,11: Having examined the Buddha Dharma, we should be moved by spiritual urgency, but most are not.
A 1.19,12: Having been moved by spiritual urgency, we should **strive on spiritually**, but most do not.

A 1.19,13: Having strived on spiritually, we should free our mind with **samadhi**, but most do not.

A 1.19,14: Having gained samadhi, we should **renounce the world** and live on simple almsfood, but most do not.

A 1.19,15: Having renounced the world, we should **taste spiritual freedom**, but most do not. As such, the Buddha exhorts us to strive for the taste of the true freedom of **awakening**.

This 1<sup>st</sup> sequence of 15 short sutras, forming the **Dharma cycle** of the Vagga, can be seen to be quite neatly divided into sets of 5 respectively keeping to the framework of the **3 good truths** (**saddhamma**) of study (**pariyatti**), practice (**patipatti**) and realization (**pativedha**).<sup>13</sup> The main idea of these short teachings, ending the Samyutta and starting the Aṅguttara [2.1.1.3], is very significant: they serve as reminders especially for the lay followers or non-Buddhists that, even now, despite the Buddha’s passing, the Buddha Dharma is still present for our benefit.

**2.2.3 Analysis of the Appa,mattaka Vagga (2)**

**2.2.3.1** The 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the **Appa,mattaka Vagga** is called the **Rebirth Cycle** [§§17-45] because it deals solely with rebirth, basically reminding us how difficult it is for us to be born as **humans**, or more exactly, to feel and follow **sadhana**, that is, not just to have a human body, but also a human **mind and heart**, of wisdom and compassion. It is also difficult to be reborn as **devas**, that is, to attain **divinity**, that is, love, compassion, joy and peace.

**2.2.3.2** The **Rebirth Cycle** [§§17-45] of the Appa,mattaka Vagga contains the remaining 30 sutras [A 1.19,18-45]. They are arranged in a sequence of 10 **pairs of triads**, each pair beginning with **humans**, **devas**, **animals**, ** pretas** and **hell-beings**, respectively, in a similar format, as follows:

- §§16-18 **Humans** are rarely reborn as **humans**—but are more often as **hellbeings**, **animals**, **pretas**.
- §§19-21 **Humans** are rarely reborn as **devas**—but are more often as **hellbeings**, **animals**, **pretas**.
- §§22-24 **Devas** are rarely reborn as **devas**—but are more often as **hellbeings**, **animals**, **pretas**.
- §§25-27 **Devas** are rarely reborn as **humans**—but are more often as **hellbeings**, **animals**, **pretas**.
- §§28-30 **Hell-beings** are rarely born as **humans**—but are more often as **hellbeings**, **animals**, **pretas**.
- §§31-33 **Hell-beings** are rarely reborn as **devas**—but are more often as **hellbeings**, **animals**, **pretas**.
- §§34-36 **Animals** are rarely reborn as **humans**—but are more often as **hellbeings**, **animals**, **pretas**.
- §§37-39 **Animals** are rarely reborn as **devas**—but are more often as **hellbeings**, **animals**, **pretas**.
- §§40-42 **Pretas** are rarely reborn as **humans**—but are more often as **hellbeings**, **animals**, **pretas**.
- §§43-45 **Pretas** are rarely reborn as **devas**—but are more often as **hellbeings**, **animals**, **pretas**.

**2.2.3.3** Only the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 are truly good rebirths since as **humans**, so long as we diligently seek the Dharma, we will know the Dharma whether we meet the Buddha or not. As **devas**, we enjoy great happiness, which can be distracting even in the highest places, from which we will fall into the suffering depths when our good karma is exhausted. Even then, as Sakra, lord of the devas,<sup>14</sup> has shown, even a deva may attain at least streamwinning when he properly tries.

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<sup>13</sup> On the **3 good truths**, see SD 40a.4 esp (2); SD 40a.1 (3.4).

<sup>14</sup> On Sakra and his streamwinning, see SD 54.8 (1.2.4).
The human birth now is the most precious: we need to act now as humans to learn, practise and reach the path in this life itself. For, when we do not at least aspire for the path in this life, at its end, it is unlikely we will regain a human birth; most of us would be reborn as hellbeings, animals or pretas. The painful reality is that most of us even today may have human bodies, but our minds are often, habitually, that of an addictive preta (running after things but never really enjoying them), or a gullible animal (lacking a love for learning good), or a violent hell-being (who deliberately and mercilessly harms others).

This human life is not about preparing for a “better” rebirth, human or divine, but to seek the Dharma right here and now. This is the raft or boat which we take to cross the dangerous waters of samsara to reach the safe shores of nirvana in this life itself. We initiate this process by aspiring for streamwinning, and follow up by habitually reflecting on impermanence. That way, we have not wasted our human life, since we are now sure of attaining the path in this life itself, if not, surely at the moment of passing away.15

3 Key words

3.1 JAMBUDĪPA

3.1.1 Definitions

3.1.1.1 Jambu, dīpa, the “Jambul Continent,”16 is the southern continent, in the ancient Indian Buddhist cosmology. The other 3 continents are Apara,goyāna to the west, Uttara,kuru to the north, and Pubba, videha to the east. According to the Commentaries, Jambudvipa is named after the “great jambul tree” (also called nāga tree) in the Himalayas, which is 100 yojanas (yojana) wide, with branches 50 yojanas long and a trunk 15 yojanas in diameter.17 On account of this special tree, the subcontinent is called Jambul Grove (jambu,sanḍa).18

The subcontinent itself is 10,000 yojanas in extent, of which 4,000 are covered by the ocean, 3,000 by the Himalayas, and 3,000 inhabited by humans.19 On account of this size, it is called “great” (mahā), that is, Mahā Jambu,dīpa.20 It is watered by 5 great rivers: the Ganges, the Yamunā, the Sarabhū, the Acira, vatī and the Mahī, all flowing eastward into the ocean.21

3.1.1.2 The ancient Indians defined their civilization according to their understanding and imagination of the world then, and which was relatively advanced for their age. Like the major ancient cultures around their time (such as the ancient Greeks), the Indians up to the Buddha’s time imagined their subcontinent as being located below (south) of Mount Sumeru, a sacred name (like Olympus) for the Himalayas, especially her sacred mountains (like Mount Kailash).

15 See (Anicca) Cakkhu S (S 25.1), SD 16.7.
16 Jambu is not “rose-apple,” which did not exist in ancient India (or is it possible that it did, but no more?): SD 57.10 (1.5.1.1 f).
17 V 1:30 (VA 1:119); DA 2:623; MA 2:422, 4:172, 223; AA 2:34, 4:107; UA 300; SnA 2:437, 443; Vism 1:205 f. For the ancient geography of Jambudvipa, see SD 57.10 (1.5.1.2). On yojana as a league (11.25 km or 7 mi = 4 gāvutas):
Magha V (DhA 2.7,50), SD 54.22; Pahārāda S (A 8.19,9.1 n), SD 45.18; SD 47.8 (2.4.4.1).
18 Sn 552; SnA 1:121.
19 SnA 2:437; UA 300.
20 DA 2:429.
Their idea of distance was more imaginary than real measurements (as we have them today). Hence, Mount Sumeru also functions as their “axis mundi,” cosmic axis, around which their universe revolves. In other ancient cultures, this might be a tree, a vine or even a column of smoke. The idea was that it connects earth and heaven, and the ancient Indians wove a fascinating world-system around their cosmic centre. This was their ancient cosmology.

The only practical geography the ancient Indians had was that of “the middle country” (majjhima janapada), which is usually referred to the broad extent of the central Gangetic plains, which was then going through the Iron Age and prospering with the rise of nascent empires and growing prosperity and cultural development. [3.2]

3.1.2 Why is Jambudvipa special?

3.1.2.1 It is said that buddhas, pratyeka-buddhas, great disciples, and true followers, are born only here. Everything beyond these bounds are called the “outlying countries” (paccantima janapada). The definitions are clearly flexible since the Commentary also says that all of Jambudvipa can also be called “middle country” and the other continents the “outlying countries.”

3.1.2.2 In 4th-century Sri Lanka (in the time of the commentators), the Anuradhapura district was considered the “middle region” and the rest of the country the outlying provinces. We also see this idea of their inhabited country as being the “world centre” held for millennia by the Chinese empires.

Imagining their country as being the world’s centre meant that these ancient cultures each saw themselves as being culturally the most advanced, but also accepted the existence of distant lands. Often such distances promised precious products (like red sandalwood from SE Asia) and also terrible dangers, such as falling off the edge of the flat-disc world (the world’s end, pātāla).

3.2 Majjhima Janapada

3.2.1 The Middle Country (majjhima,janapada)

3.2.1.1 As we have noted, while the ancient Indians had an extensive 3-dimensional cosmology of beings and world laid out in time and space [3.1.1.2], their this-world geography was almost exclusively the central Gangetic plains. Apparently, by Commentarial times, the ancient Indians have sailed to (and maybe beyond) the southern tip of Africa, and also to the southeast Asian peninsula and archipelago.

Other than the mention of travels through the Deccan Plateau by way of the “south route” (dakkhina, patha) through the Vindhya mountains, we come across little mention of the lands south of the central Gangetic plains. The inhabitants of these outlying areas were generically categorized as less civilized tribal milakkha [§3.2]. The ancient Indians were also aware of hill-tribes in the mountains of north-
west India, and even lands beyond that. In fact, ancient Greek accounts tell us of Indians serving as soldiers in Alexander the Great’s army.

3.2.1.2 The Vinaya gives this traditional definition of the “middle country” (majjhima janapada):

“To the east is the market-town of Kajāṅgala, and beyond it is Mahā,sālā. Beyond that are the border districts; on this side are the middle districts. In the middle of the south-eastern region is the river Salla,vatī. Beyond that are the border districts; on this side are the middle districts. To the west is the brahmin village of Thūna. Beyond that are the border districts; on this side are the middle districts.

To the north are the mountains (pabbata) called Usīra-d,haja. Beyond that are the border districts; on this side are the middle districts.

To the south is the market-town of Seta,kaṇṇika. Beyond that are the border districts; on this side are the middle districts.

He quotes Cunningham: Ancient Geography of India, 1871:xliii n2; 1924:xliii n2. Sthāneśvara is today Thanesar, in Haryana state, north of Delhi.


J 2:49 omits this last designation. It adds that this whole area (the “Middle Country”) is 300 yojanas long, 250 yojanas wide, and 900 yojanas in circumference (J 1:49). A yojana, “league,” 11.25 km = 7 mi = 4 gāvutas. See SD 4.17 (1.2.2); SD 47.8 (2.4.4.1). This means the dimensions are: 3375 km (2097 mi) × 2813 km (1748 mi) × 10,125 km (6,291 mi).

This def designates the “border districts” (paccanta janapada), where the Buddha allows suitable candidates “ordination by a group of 5 monks with a Vinaya expert” (vinaya.dhara,pañcama gaṇa upasampadā, V 1:197,19). Qu for defining the boundaries of the Middle Country (majjhima,(pa)desa) at J 1:49; DA 173; MA 2:200; AA 1:97; KhpA 132. For some of these names, see B C Law, Geography of Early Buddhism, 1932:2. For details, see SD 52.1 (2.2.1.10).
From this map, we can see that the ancient Gangetic plains, called “the middle country,” had only 2 ways of access to the outside worlds. The first was over the Northwest Passage to the west (Persia and the Mediterranean) and northwards, via the Silk Road, to Central Asia and China. The other opening to the world was down the Ganges into the Bay of Bengal for the sea-routes to SE Asia.

Of course, from Bombay and other ports, especially those on the west coast, Indian sailors could take the sea-route to anywhere down the African coast or round the Horn of Africa and beyond. Or, they might go east to the SE Asian archipelago. They could also reach mainland SE Asia by land across NE India (Bengal) for Burma, China and beyond.

Travels from such routes (including those mentioned above) and meeting with travellers from them came the information for their ancient geography, and beyond that, their cosmology. The early Buddhist cosmology was, for good reason, quite different from those of religions that were God-based, while early Buddhism sees all as impermanent, conditioning one another, and going through cycles (this last idea is, of course, common to other Indian cosmologies).

3.2.2 The geography of the middle countries

3.2.2.1 The middle country (as a unit) was about the size of peninsular Malaysia, or of England and Wales. It comprises the 16 great states (mahā janapada) [Map 3.2.2]. Many of these great states—like Kāsi, Kosala, Kuru-Paṅcāla, Maccha, Gandhāra (in modern Afghanistan) and Kambojā (in the northwest)—appeared to have existed since ancient times since they were mentioned in Vedic literature. The rest—Anāgā, Magadha, Vajjī, Malla, Čedi, Vacchā, Sūrasena, Assaka and Avanti—were new states that arose from declining old ones or new areas coming into prominence.

Note that of these 16 states, only 2—Vajjī and Assaka—were republics. The Sakya, the Buddha’s clan, was not even listed: it has been annexed by Kosala—as stated in the Mahā Pabbajja Sutta (Sn 3.1). This Sutta also records the Buddha’s 1st meeting with king Pasenadi of Kosala, and who is since devoted to the Buddha.

3.2.2.2 Interestingly, in the Appamattaka Vagga, “the middle countries” (majjhima, janapadesu, ins) are referred to in the plural [§3.2]. The Middle Country is thus not referred to as a whole, in any political or even geographical unit, but in terms of its individual states, especially those located in the central Gangetic plains themselves. The Buddha, in his Dharma-tours taught in almost all these countries, but most of his teachings were given in Kosala, especially in Anātha,piṇḍika’s park-monastery outside Sāvatthī, Kosala’s capital. The idea is that one need not be from the 16 great states, but being present there to hear the Dharma is certainly of great wholesomeness, even promising awakening itself.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/State</th>
<th>Capital &amp; towns (Sanskrit &amp; modern names in brackets)</th>
<th>Modern districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Aṅga</td>
<td>Campā (Bhagalpur) Bhaddiyā (Bhadrikā) Assapura (Aśvapura)</td>
<td>Bengal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Magadha</td>
<td>Rājagaha (Rāgir, Giri-b, baja Girivraja) Bārāṇasī (Varanaras) Savatthī (Śrīvasti; Sahars Maheth) Sāketa (Ayodhyā)</td>
<td>Southern Bihar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Kāśi (Kāśi)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Banaras/Vārānasī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Kosala (Kośala)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Oudh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Vaijī (Vṛjī)</td>
<td>Vesālī (Vaiśāli; Besarh) of the Licchavis; Mithilā (Janakpur) of the Videhas</td>
<td>Northern Bihar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Malla (Malloi)</td>
<td>Kusinārā (Kusinagara; Kasia) Pāvā (Padaraona) Sahajāti (Śuktimati; Tripuri)</td>
<td>Gorakhpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Cedi (Caitya)</td>
<td>Kosambī (Kausāmbi; Kosam) (Indraprashta; Delhi) (Hastinapura) (N Ahicchatra; Rāmnagar) (S Kāmpilya; Kampil)</td>
<td>Bundelkhand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Vamsā (Vatsā)</td>
<td>Kosambī (Kausāmbi; Kosam) (Indraprashta; Delhi) (Hastinapura) (N Ahicchatra; Rāmnagar) (S Kāmpilya; Kampil)</td>
<td>Allahābād</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Kuru</td>
<td>Virāṭa (Bairāt) Mathurā Potali or Potana (Bodhan)</td>
<td>District of Thānesar, Delhi &amp; Meerut Rohilkhand Central Doāb Jaipur Nizam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Pañcāla</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Maccha (Matsya)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Surasena (Sūrasena)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Assaka (Aśmaka or Assakenus*)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Avanti*</td>
<td>Ujjēni (Ujjayini; Ujjain); (Māhiṣmati) Takkaśilā (Takṣaśilā) Kambojā</td>
<td>Mālwā &amp; Nimār Peshāwār &amp; Rawalpiṇḍi SW Kaśmīr &amp; Kāfīrstān</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Gandhārā or Yonā*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Kambojā*</td>
<td>Kambojā</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Map 3.2.2 (A 1:213 = 4:252 f = Nc 247) [See E Lamotte, History of Indian Buddhism, 1988:8] [44]

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41 An asterisk (*), eg “Avanti*,” denotes that it was outside the Middle Country; two asterisks (**) is a republic.
42 The names in italics, e.g. Malloi, are those found in ancient Greek writings.
43 Kambojā, one of the “great states” (mahā, janapada), not in the Middle Country, but in the “north country” region (uttara, patha), an ancient Indo-Iranian kingdom, orig (during the Vedic period) in the Pamirs and Badakshan in Central Asia, and after 2nd cent CE prob extending over SW Kashmir and Kafiristan (the Hindu Kush, straddling Afghanistan and Pakistan). The name is prob related to Cambyses of Anshan (6th cent BCE). The Kambojas were prob the descendants of Indo-Iranians known as Sassanians and Parthians.
44 See SD 4.18 App; SD 9 (16): map (16.3); Mahā Assā, pura S (M 39) @ SD 10.13 (1); (Tad-ah’) Uposatha S (A 3.70,-18), SD 4.18 & App; SD 6.1 (1).
Appamattaka Vagga
The Chapter on the Few
A 1.19

THE DHARMA CYCLE: §§1-15

The right conditions for the spiritual life

(Appamattaka) Thala,ja Sutta (A 1.19,1), SD 57.8(1)

1 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.  
   1.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings born on (flat) dry land, but more numerous are those beings born in water.

(Appamattaka) Manussa Sutta (A 1.19,2), SD 57.8(2)

2 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.  
   2.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings born among humans, but more numerous are those beings born as other than humans.

(Appamattaka) Majjhima,janapadā Sutta (A 1.19,3), SD 57.8(3)

3 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.  
   3.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings born in the middle countries, but more numerous are those beings born in the outlying regions among intractable tribesmen.  

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45 Seyyathā'pi bhikkhave appamattakaṁ imasmiṁ jambudīpe ārāma,rāmaṇeyyakaṁ vana,rāmaṇeyyakaṁ bhūmi,rāmaṇeyyakaṁ pokkharaṇī,rāmaṇeyyakaṁ. Jambudīpa: see (3.1).

46 Atha kho etad eva bahu,taram yad idam ukkūla,vikūlaṁ nadī,viduggaṁ khāṇaḥ,kaṇṭakādhānaṁ pabbata,visāmaṁ.

47 Evam eva kho bhikkhave appakā te sattā ye manussā cutā manussasasu paccājāyanti. “Are ... born,” paccājāyanti (pl) from pati, “(prefix) back, return” + ā (passive infix) + jāyati, “to be reborn into a new existence” (M 3:169; S 2:263, 5:466, 474; past part paccājāta.

48 Evam eva kho bhikkhave appakā te sattā ye manussā cutā manussasasu paccājāyanti. “Are ... born,” paccājāyanti (pl) from pati, “(prefix) back, return” + ā (passive infix) + jāyati, “to be reborn into a new existence” (M 3:169; S 2:263, 5:466, 474; past part paccājāta.

49 In the middle countries,” majjhima,janapadesu (pl), or “in the countries of majjhima,desa [the middle country],” in the central Gangetic plains of north India: [3.2.2.2].


114 http://dharmafarer.org
(Appa,mat-taka) Paññava Sutta (A 1.19,4), SD 57.8(4)

4 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa,
   but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns,
   and rocky mountains.

4.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who are wise, clear-headed, not drivelling, astute, able to discern the meaning of the well said and the badly said, but more numerous are those beings who are unwise, muddled, drivelling, dull, unable to discern the meaning of the well said and the badly said.

(Appa,mat-taka) Paññā,cakkhu Sutta (A 1.19,5), SD 57.8(5)

5 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa,
   but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns,
   and rough rocky mountains.

5.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who are accomplished in the noble wisdom-eye, but more numerous are those beings stuck in ignorance, confused.

The opportunity for learning the Buddha Dharma

(Appa,mat-taka) Dassana Sutta (A 1.19,6), SD 57.8(6)

6 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa,
   but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns,
   and rocky mountains.

6.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who get to see the Tathagata [the Buddha thus-come], but more numerous are those beings who do not get to see the Tathagata.

mleccha, which SED defines as “a foreigner, barbarian, non-Aryan, man of an outcast race, any person who does not speak Sanskrit and does not conform to the usual Hindu institutions.” The term “Hindu” here is anachronism; read “brahminical,” Historically, there was no Hinduism in the Buddha’s time. The predominant religion then was Brahmanism or Vedic religion. Hinduism as we know it began in the Gupta period (200-543 CE). Even the word “Hindu” was not originally Indian. See W Doniger, “On Hinduism,” Oxford, 2014:6-9.

50 Paññavanto ajaḷā aneḷa, mūgā paṭibalā subhāsita, dubbhāsitassa attham-aññātuṁ. This phrase: D 33, 3(4h+i)/3:265,16 (without these qualities, we lack the opportunity, akkhana, for living the holy life) = A 1.19, 4/1:35,20 (pl) = 8.29/4:227,3 (sg). On the 1st 3 words, Comy says that one is wise and accomplished regarding karma, dhyana (meditation), insight, the path and its fruits (AA 2:37,19-21). Words: a-jaḷā: D 3:265,16; A 1:35,20 (Comy amūḥhā), 3:137,16, 175,22, 176,11, 443,4, 4:227,3; an-eḷa, mūga: M 5,32.3 (SD 37.3); M 107,15 (SD 56.3); A 5.167/3:199,16 (SD 88.1); also A 1:35,20, 3:137,18, 262,3, 437,4, 4:227,3; A 4:441,8; Sn 70; paṭibalā: V 1:58, 342, 2:103, 300, 2:158; A 4:71; subhāsita ... aññātuṁ: D 33, A 1.19, 8.19 (above).

51 Duppaññā jalā ela, mūgā na paṭibalā subhāsita, dubbhāsitassa attham-aññātuṁ. 52 Ariyena paññā, cakkhunā samannāgatā. Comy: the noble wisdom-eye is “insight into the path” (vipassana,-magga, AA 2:38,2).

53 Avijjā,gatā sammūḍhā. This means we overcome ignorance and delusion, thus awakening on the path.

54 Ye labhanti tathāgato dassanāya.
(Appamattaka) Sutta Sutta (A 1.19,7), SD 57.8(7)

7 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa,
   but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.
   7.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who get to hear the Dharma-Vinaya declared by the Tathagata,
   but more numerous are those beings who do not get to hear the Dharma-Vinaya declared by the Tathagata.

(Appamattaka) Dhata Sutta (A 1.19,8), SD 57.8(8)

8 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa,
   but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.
   8.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, having heard the Dharma, bear it in mind [remember it],
   but more numerous are those beings who, having heard the Dharma, do not bear it in mind.

(Appamattaka) Attha Sutta (A 1.19,9), SD 57.8(9)

9 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa,
   but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.
   9.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, bearing the Dharma in mind, examine its meaning,
   but more numerous are those beings who, bearing [remembering] the Dharma in mind, do not examine its meaning.

(Appamattaka) Paṭipatti Sutta (A 1.19,10), SD 57.8(10)

10 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa,
   but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.
   10.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, having examined the Dharma, go on to practise it,
   but more numerous are those beings who, having examined the Dharma, do not practise it.

55 Ye labhanti tathagata-p,oveditaṁ dhamma,vinayaṁ savaṇāya.
56 Ye sutvā dhammaṁ dhārenti.
57 Ye dhatanāṁ dhammānaṁ atthaṁ upaparikkhanti.
58 Ye dhatanāṁ attham aññāya dhamm aññāya dhammaṁ paṭipajjanti.
59 Be Ce Se aṭṭha kho ete va sattā. bahutarā ye attham-aṅgāya dhammam-aṅgāya dharmāṇudhammaṁ na patipajjanti; Ee ete va sattā bahutara ye na attham annaya na dhammam annaya dhammanudhammaṁ na patipajjanti. In Be Ce Se na precedes and negates the finite verb which applies to all the preceding absolutives. Ee is wr, though supported by an older Sri Lankan printed edition.
Practising the Dharma

(Appa,mattaka) Samvega Sutta (A 1.19,11), SD 57.8(11)

11 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu,-dvipa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.

11.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who are endowed with a sense of spiritual urgency, but more numerous are those beings who are not endowed with a sense of spiritual urgency.

(Appa,mattaka) Padhāna Sutta (A 1.19,12), SD 57.8(12)

12.1 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu,-dvipa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.

12.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings with a sense of spiritual urgency, who strive on wisely, but more numerous are those beings who are not endowed with a sense of spiritual urgency.

(Appa,mattaka) Vimutti Sutta (A 1.19,13), SD 57.8(13)

13.1 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu,-dvipa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.

13.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, having made a mental object of freedom, gain samadhi in oneness of mind, but more numerous are those beings who do not, having made a mental object of release, gain samadhi in oneness of mind.

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60 Ye saṁvejanīyesu ṭhānesu saṁvijjanti. On spiritual urgency (samvega), see Katuvīya S (A 3.126/1:280), SD 19.17, Patoda S (A 4.113/2:115); Somanassa S (It 37/29 f), SD 9(7.6); SD 1.11 (3). Comys list the 8 bases of spiritual urgency” (attha samvega, vatthūni): birth; old age; death; the suffering in the lower states of existence; the misery of the past rooted in the cycle of rebirth; the misery of the future rooted in the cycle of rebirth; and the misery of the present rooted in the search for sustenance (DA 3:795,6-9; MA 1:298,24-28; SA 3:163,-23+26; AA 2:68,9-12); KhpA 235 = Vism 4.63/135; UA 2-5 (UA:M 2-6); SD 9 (7.6).

61 Ye saṁviggā yoniso padahanti.

62 Ye vavassaggārammanam karitvā labhanti samādhiṁ, labhanti cittassa ekaggam. Comy: “Having made a mental object of freedom” (vavassaggārammanam karitvā): freedom is nirvana. The meaning is: having made that (freedom) the object. “Gain samadhi” (labhanti samādhiṁ): they obtain concentration that is the path and concentration that is the fruit” (magga, samādhiṁ ca phala, samādhiṁ ca pāpuṇānti) (AA 2:38,21 f). This expression is used as the def of concentration faculty (samādh'indriya) in (Indriya) Vibhaṅga S 1 (S 48.9/5:197,14-16), SD 74.7a; (Indriya) Vibhaṅga S 2 (S 48.10/5:198,24 f), SD 74.7b. It simply refers to a samadhi directed to the freedom of nirvana. In fact, vossagga,parināmin, “maturing in release,” is the closing phrase of the viveka,nissita pericope [SD 20.4 (1.1); SD 30.3 (2.7.3)], and often describes the noble eightfold path [S 3.18/1:88, SD 34.3], the 7 awakening-factors [D 33,1.11(10)/3:226; M 118,42/3:88, SD 7.13; A 4.14/2:16], and the 5 faculties [S 43.12/4:365]. Vossagga and vavassagga are synonymous byforms.
(Appa,mattaka) Āhāra Sutta (A 1.19,14), SD 57.8(14)

14.1 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.

14.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who get the exquisite taste of the best foods, but more numerous are those beings who do not get the exquisite taste of the best foods, but subsist on scraps from an almsround with an almsbowl.

(Appa,mattaka) Vimutti,rasa Sutta (A 1.19,15), SD 57.8(15)

15 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.

15.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who gain the taste of the goal, the taste of the truth, the taste of freedom, but more numerous are those beings who do not gain the taste of the goal, the taste of the truth, the taste of freedom.

15.3 Therefore, bhikshus, you should train yourselves thus: ‘I shall be among those who gain the taste of the goal, the taste of the truth, the taste of freedom!’ Thus, indeed, bhikkhave, you should train yourselves. [37]

THE REBIRTH CYCLE: §§16-45

Humans are rarely reborn as humans


16 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.

16.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying as humans, are reborn among humans (as humans), but more numerous are those beings who, dying as humans, are reborn in hell.

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63 Ye ann’aggā, ras’aggānam lābhino.
64 Ye ann’aggā, ras’aggānam na lābhino uṭchena kapāl’ābhatena yāpenti.
65 Ye attha, rasassa dhamma, rasassa vimutti, rasassa lābhino. Comy: the “taste of the goal” (attha, rasa) are the 4 fruits, the “taste of the Dharma” (dhamma, rasa) the 4 paths, and the taste of freedom (vimutti, rasa) the deathfree nirvana (amata, nibbāna) (AA 2:39,16-18). See Pahārāda S (S 8.19): “This Dhamma-Vinaya has only one taste, the taste of freedom” (ayam dhamma, vinayoyo eka, raso vimutti, raso) (S 8.19,16/4:203), SD 45.18.
66 Evam eva kho bhikkhave appakā te sattā ye manussā cutā manussesse paccājāyanti.
67 Atha kho ete’va sattā bahu, tarā, ye manussā cutā niraye paccājāyanti.
(Appa,mattaka) Manussā Manussā Sutta 2 (A 1.19,17), SD 57.8(17) \(\approx S\ 56.103/5:474\).

17 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.

17.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying as humans, are reborn among humans (as humans), but more numerous are those beings who, dying as humans, are reborn in the animal womb.\(^{68}\)

(Appa,mattaka) Manussā Manussā Sutta 3 (A 1.19,18), SD 57.8(18) \(\approx S\ 56.104/5:475\).

18 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.

18.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying as humans, are reborn among humans (as humans), but more numerous are those beings who, dying as humans, are reborn in the preta realm.\(^{69}\)

Humans are rarely reborn as devas

(Appa,mattaka) Manussā Devā Sutta 1 (A 1.19,19), SD 57.8(19) \(\approx S\ 56.105/5:475\).

19 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.

19.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying as humans, are reborn among the devas, but more numerous are those beings who, dying as humans, are reborn in hell.

(Appa,mattaka) Manussā Devā Sutta 2 (A 1.19,20), SD 57.8(20) \(\approx S\ 56.106/5:475\).

20 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.

20.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying as humans, are reborn among the devas, but more numerous are those beings who, dying as humans, are reborn in the animal womb.

(Appa,mattaka) Manussā Devā Sutta 3 (A 1.19,21), SD 57.8(21) \(\approx S\ 56.107/5:475\).

21 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.

\(^{68}\)“The animal womb,” tiracchāna,yoniṣṭhé.

\(^{69}\)“The preta realm [range],” petti,visaye.
21.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying as humans, are reborn among the devas, but more numerous are those beings who, dying as humans, are reborn in the preta realm.

Devas are rarely reborn as devas


22 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvīpa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains, 22.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying as devas, are reborn among the devas, but more numerous are those beings who, dying as devas, are reborn in hell.


23 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvīpa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains, 23.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying as devas, are reborn among the devas, but more numerous are those beings who, dying as devas, are reborn in the animal womb.


24 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvīpa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains, 24.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying as devas, are reborn among the devas, but more numerous are those beings who, dying as devas, are reborn in the preta realm.

Devas are rarely reborn as humans


25 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvīpa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains, 25.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying as devas, are reborn among humans (as humans), but more numerous are those beings who, dying as devas, are reborn in hell.


26 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvīpa,
but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains,

26.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings **who, dying as devas, are reborn among humans (as humans)**,

but more numerous are those beings **who, dying as devas, are reborn in the animal womb.**


27 Bhikshus, just as few are **the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvīpa,**

but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains,

27.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings **who, dying as devas, are reborn among humans (as humans),**

but more numerous are those beings **who, dying as devas, are reborn in the preta realm.**

Hell-beings are rarely reborn as humans


28 Bhikshus, just as few are **the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvīpa,**

but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains,

28.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those **who, dying from hell, are reborn among humans (as humans),**

but more numerous are those beings **who, dying from hell, are reborn in hell (again).**


29 Bhikshus, just as few are **the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvīpa,**

but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains,

29.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those **who, dying from hell, are reborn among humans (as humans),**

but more numerous are those beings **who, dying from hell, are reborn in the animal womb.**


30 Bhikshus, just as few are **the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvīpa,**

but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains,

30.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those **who, dying from hell, are reborn among humans (as humans),**

but more numerous are those beings **who, dying from hell, are reborn in the preta realm.**
Hell-beings are rarely reborn as devas


31 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu,-dvipa,
but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns,
and rocky mountains,
31.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those who, dying from hell, are reborn among the devas,
but more numerous are those beings who, dying from hell, are reborn in hell.


32 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu,-dvipa,
but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns,
and rocky mountains,
32.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying from hell, are reborn among the devas,
but more numerous are those beings who, dying from hell, are reborn in the animal womb.


33 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu,-dvipa,
but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns,
and rocky mountains,
33.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying from hell, are reborn among the preta realm.

Animals are rarely reborn as humans

(Appa,mattaka) Tiracchāna Manussā Sutta 1 (A 1.19,34), SD 57.8(34). ≈ S 56.120/5:476.

34 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu,-dvipa,
but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns,
and rocky mountains,
34.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying from the animal womb, are reborn among humans (as humans),
but more numerous are those beings who, dying as animals, are reborn in hell.

(Appa,mattaka) Tiracchāna Manussā Sutta 2 (A 1.19,34), SD 57.8(34). ≈ S 56.121/5:476.

35 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu,-dvipa,
but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns,
and rocky mountains,
35.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying from the animal womb, are reborn among humans (as humans),
but more numerous are those beings who, dying as animals, are reborn in the animal womb.


36 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa,
but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.
36.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying from the animal womb, are reborn among humans (as humans),
but more numerous are those beings who, dying as animals, are reborn in the preta realm.

Animals are rarely reborn as devas


37 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa,
but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.
37.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying from the animal womb, are reborn among the devas,
but more numerous are those beings who, dying as animals, are reborn in hell.

(Appa,mattaka) Tiracchāna Devā Sutta 2 (A 1.19,37), SD 57.8(37) ≈ S 56.124/5:476.

38 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa,
but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.
38.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying from the animal womb, are reborn among the devas,
but more numerous are those beings who, dying as animals, are reborn in the animal womb.


39 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa,
but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.
39.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying from the animal womb, are reborn among the devas,
but more numerous are those beings who, dying as animals, are reborn in the preta realm.
Pretas are rarely reborn as humans


40 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains,

40.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying from the preta realm, are reborn among humans (as humans), but more numerous are those beings who, dying as pretas, are reborn in hell.


41 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains,

41.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying from the preta realm, are reborn among humans (as humans), but more numerous are those beings who, dying as pretas, are reborn in the animal womb.


42 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains,

42.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying from the preta realm, are reborn among humans (as humans), but more numerous are those beings who, dying as pretas, are reborn in the preta realm.

Pretas are rarely reborn as devas


43 Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains,

43.2 even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying from the preta realm, are reborn among the devas, but more numerous are those beings who, dying as pretas, are reborn in hell.
Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.

... even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying from the preta realm, are reborn among the devas, but more numerous are those beings who, dying as pretas, are reborn in the animal womb.

Bhikshus, just as few are the delightful parks, groves, landscapes and lotus ponds in this Jambu-dvipa, but more numerous are the hills and slopes, rivers hard to cross, clumped with stumps and thorns, and rocky mountains.

... even so, bhikshus, few are those beings who, dying from the preta realm, are reborn among the devas, but more numerous are those beings who, dying as pretas, are reborn in the preta realm.