

Dānūpapatti Sutta

The Discourse on Rebirth Due to Giving

[The morally virtuous who give can choose their rebirth]

(Aṅguttara Nikāya 8.35/4:239-241)

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2008

Introduction

The Dānūpapatti Sutta (A 8.35) is a brief statement by the Buddha on how to choose the *happy rebirth* we want. This kind of teaching is also found in **the (Saddha) Jāṇussoṇī Sutta** (A 10.177), which states that a person who is immoral but generous would still enjoy the benefits of his giving—but there is a twist.

Since immoral but generous people do not keep to a wholesome course of conduct, they are reborn as well-treated and well-cared for domesticated animals, such as elephants, horses, cows, and chickens (and we might assume as cats, dogs and other pets)!¹ The point is that for a truly happy rebirth, we should be both charitable and morally virtuous.

The Sumanā Sutta (A 5.31), on the other hand, discusses the case of one morally virtuous *but who does not give*. Such a person will still be reborn in a happy or heavenly state, but he would not enjoy the greater happiness of one who is both morally virtuous and practises charitable giving.² This point is reiterated in **the Dānūpapatti Sutta** (A 8.35), where the Buddha briefly states that we are capable of actually choosing a happy rebirth on these two conditions, namely:³

- (1) we must make a sustained and fervent wish to be reborn in that happy state; and, more importantly,
- (2) we must to be morally virtuous.

The (Saddha) Jāṇussoṇī Sutta (A 10.177) explains the second point—on being morally virtuous—as *the keeping to the ten courses of wholesome karma* [§§7f-g]. In short, to prepare ourselves for a good rebirth we should:

- (1) practise charitable giving,
- (2) be morally virtuous, and
- (3) fervently aspire for the happy rebirth that we desire.

The wise practitioner (especially the lay-follower) understands that it is within his power to work towards something even better than being reborn in heaven, that is, being “reborn” as a *streamwinner* in this life itself. This is attainable through the constant practice of the perception of impermanence, such as those taught in the ten suttas of **the Okkanti Saṃyutta**.⁴

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¹ A 10.177.7b-e/5:271 f = SD 2.6.

² A 5.31/3:32-34 = SD 22.14.

³ A 3.85/4:239-241 = SD 23.12.

⁴ S 25/3:225-228: see (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1/3:225) = SD 16.7.

The Discourse on Rebirth Due to Giving

(A 8.35/4:239-241)

Originating in Sāvattihī.

1 “Bhikshus, there are these eight types of rebirth due to giving. What are the eight?

2 (1) Here, bhikshus, a certain person makes an offering to an ascetic or a Brahmin, giving him food, drink, clothing, vehicle; garlands, scents and unguents; bedding, lodging and lighting.

He has a motive in this.⁵ He sees kshatriyas of great halls, or brahmins of great halls, or householders of great halls, enjoying themselves, replete and ample with the five objects of sense-pleasures.

It occurs to him:

‘Ah, if only, after death, with the body’s breaking up, that I may be reborn in the society of the kshatriyas of great halls, or of the brahmins of great halls, or of the householders of great halls!’ He sets his mind on it; he fixes his mind on it; he works his mind on it.

This mind of his is aimed low, and if uncultivated to what is high, it will lead him to just such a rebirth. After death, with the body’s breaking up, he will be reborn in the society of the kshatriyas of great halls, or of the brahmins of great halls, or of the householders of great halls.

But this is so only for the morally virtuous, I say, not for the immoral. For, bhikshus, it is on account of purity [of the mind’s purity] that the heart’s wish is fulfilled.⁶

3 (2) Here, bhikshus, a certain person makes an offering to an ascetic or a Brahmin, giving him food, drink, clothing, vehicle; garlands, scents and unguents; bedding, lodging and lighting.

He has a motive in this. He hears that the devas of the four great kings [240] are long-lived, beautiful, of great happiness.

It occurs to him:

‘Ah, if only, after death, with the body’s breaking up, that I may be reborn in the host of the devas of the four great kings!’ He sets his mind on it; he fixes his mind on it; he works his mind on it.

This mind of his is aimed low, and if uncultivated to what is high, it will lead him to just such a rebirth. After death, with the body’s breaking up, he will be reborn in the host of the devas of the four great kings.

But this is so only for the morally virtuous, I say, not for the immoral. For, bhikshus, it is on account of purity [of the mind’s purity] that the heart’s wish is fulfilled.

4 (3) Here, bhikshus, a certain person makes an offering to an ascetic or a Brahmin, giving him food, drink, clothing, vehicle; garlands, scents and unguents; bedding, lodging and lighting.

He has a motive in this. He hears that the devas of the thirty-three [Tāvatisa] are long-lived, beautiful, of great happiness.

It occurs to him:

‘Ah, if only, after death, with the body’s breaking up, that I may be reborn in the host of the devas of the thirty-three!’ He sets his mind on it; he fixes his mind on it; he works his mind on it.

This mind of his is aimed low, and if uncultivated to what is high, it will lead him to just such a rebirth. After death, with the body’s breaking up, he will be reborn in the host of the devas of the thirty-three.

But this is so only for the morally virtuous, I say, not for the immoral. For, bhikshus, it is on account of purity [of the mind’s purity] that the heart’s wish is fulfilled.

5 (4) Here, bhikshus, a certain person makes an offering to an ascetic or a Brahmin, giving him food, drink, clothing, vehicle; garlands, scents and unguents; bedding, lodging and lighting.

He has a motive in this. He hears that the Yāma devas are long-lived, beautiful, of great happiness.

It occurs to him:

⁵ *Tam paccāsimati.*

⁶ *Ijjhati bhikkhave sīlavato ceto, paṇidhi visuddhattā.*

‘Ah, if only, after death, with the body’s breaking up, that I may be reborn in the host of the Yāma devas!’ He sets his mind on it; he fixes his mind on it; he works his mind on it.

This mind of his is aimed low, and if uncultivated to what is high, it will lead him to just such a rebirth. After death, with the body’s breaking up, he will be reborn in the host of the Yāma devas.

But this is so only for the morally virtuous, I say, not for the immoral. For, bhikshus, it is on account of purity [of the mind’s purity] that the heart’s wish is fulfilled.

6 (5) Here, bhikshus, a certain person makes an offering to an ascetic or a Brahmin, giving him food, drink, clothing, vehicle; garlands, scents and unguents; bedding, lodging and lighting.

He has a motive in this. He hears that the Tusita devas are long-lived, beautiful, of great happiness.

It occurs to him:

‘Ah, if only, after death, with the body’s breaking up, that I may be reborn in the host of the Tusita devas!’ He sets his mind on it; he fixes his mind on it; he works his mind on it.

This mind of his is aimed low, and if uncultivated to what is high, it will lead him to just such a rebirth. After death, with the body’s breaking up, he will be reborn in the host of the Tusita devas.

But this is so only for the morally virtuous, I say, not for the immoral. For, bhikshus, it is on account of purity [of the mind’s purity] that the heart’s wish is fulfilled.

7 (6) Here, bhikshus, a certain person makes an offering to an ascetic or a Brahmin, giving him food, drink, clothing, vehicle; garlands, scents and unguents; bedding, lodging and lighting.

He has a motive in this. He hears that the devas who delight in creating [Nimmāna,ratī] are long-lived, beautiful, of great happiness.

It occurs to him:

‘Ah, if only, after death, with the body’s breaking up, that I may be reborn in the host of the devas who delight in creating!’ He sets his mind on it; he fixes his mind on it; he works his mind on it.

This mind of his is aimed low, and if uncultivated to what is high, it will lead him to just such a rebirth. After death, with the body’s breaking up, he will be reborn in the host of the devas who delight in creating.

But this is so only for the morally virtuous, I say, not for the immoral. For, bhikshus, it is on account of purity [of the mind’s purity] that the heart’s wish is fulfilled.

8 (7) Here, bhikshus, a certain person makes an offering to an ascetic or a Brahmin, giving him food, drink, clothing, vehicle; garlands, scents and unguents; bedding, lodging and lighting.

He has a motive in this. He hears that the devas who lord over the creations of others [Para,nimmita,-vasavattī] are long-lived, beautiful, of great happiness.

It occurs to him:

‘Ah, if only, after death, with the body’s breaking up, that I may be reborn in the host of the devas lord over the creations of others!’ He sets his mind on it; he fixes his mind on it; he works his mind on it.

This mind of his is aimed low, and if uncultivated to what is high, it will lead him to just such a rebirth. After death, with the body’s breaking up, he will be reborn in the host of the devas lord over the creations of others.

But this is so only for the morally virtuous, I say, not for the immoral. For, bhikshus, it is on account of purity [of the mind’s purity] that the heart’s wish is fulfilled.

9 (8) Here, bhikshus, a certain person makes an offering to an ascetic or a Brahmin, giving him food, drink, clothing, vehicle; garlands, scents and unguents; bedding, lodging and lighting.

He has a motive in this. He hears that the devas of the Brahma world [the Brahma,kāyika devas] are long-lived, [241] beautiful, of great happiness.

It occurs to him:

‘Ah, if only, after death, with the body’s breaking up, that I may be reborn in the host of the devas of the Brahma world!’ He sets his mind on it; he fixes his mind on it; he works his mind on it.

This mind of his is aimed low, and if uncultivated to what is high, it will lead him to just such a rebirth. After death, with the body’s breaking up, he will be reborn in the host of the devas of the Brahma world.

But this is so only for the morally virtuous, I say, not for the immoral. For, bhikshus, it is on account of purity [of the mind's purity] that the heart's wish is fulfilled.

These, bhikshus, are the eight types of rebirth due to giving.

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