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(Navaka) Satt'āvāsa Sutta

The (Nines) Discourse on the Abodes of Beings | A 9.24
Theme: The various kinds of existence that rebirth takes
Translated by Piya Tan ©2017, 2020

1 Summary and significance

1.0 STUDY METHOD

If you are new to this topic, you may like to start by reading **Viññāṇa-ṭṭhiti** (SD 23.14), which is an introduction to the teaching on the stations of consciousness. **SD 23.14** deals with the following topics:

- (1) **karma** as the basis: the 4 stations of constructive consciousness (*abhisankhāra viññāṇa-ṭṭhiti*), that is, **the 1st 4 aggregates** as the bases for consciousness;
- (2) **rebirth** as the basis: the 7 stations of consciousness (*paṭisandhi viññāṇa-ṭṭhiti*);
- (3) the 9 kinds of “abodes” or **existence** that rebirth can take.

Having studied SD 23.14, then, read **the (Sattaka) Viññāṇa-ṭṭhiti Sutta** (A 7.41), after which return to **SD 57.18** to study **the (Navaka) Viññāṇa-ṭṭhiti Sutta** (A 7.41), which deals with (3) the 9 abodes of beings.

1.1 SUMMARY

1.1.1 The (Navaka) Satt'āvāsa Sutta (A 9.24) is a short “topical” sutta that lists the 9 ways in which rebirth can arise, that is, as any of the 9 abodes of being (*satt'āvāsa*). The 9 abodes of being are as follows:

They are beings who are:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (1) different in body | and different in perception |
| (2) different in body | but same in perception |
| (3) same in body | but different in perception |
| (4) same in body | and same in perception |
| (5) 4 th dhyana | (form base) |
| (6) formless | (subtle perception) |
| (7) formless | (subtle perception) |
| (8) formless | (subtle perception) |
| (9) formless | (subtle perception) |

for example:

- humans, some devas, some in the lower world
1st-dhyana brahmas
Ābhassara devas (2nd dhyana)
Subha,kiṇha devas (3rd dhyana)

non-conscious beings

- the base of infinite space
the base of infinite consciousness
the base of nothingness

the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception

1.1.2 Abodes 1-4 [§§2-5] and 6-8 [§§7-8] are included in the 7 stations of consciousness. Only abodes 5 and 9 are not included in the septad because these 2 are not “stations of consciousness” (*viññāṇa-ṭṭhiti*)—consciousness does not arise there as in the 7 stations—but beings are reborn there, in the base of the non-percipient beings (*asañña,sattā*) and the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, and fall away from there.¹

¹ Non-learners (*asekha*), those who are not path saints, not only fall from these high states, but when their good karma is exhausted, are reborn in one of the suffering states, incl hell: **(Nānā,karaṇa) Puggala S 1** (A 4.123), SD 23.-8a; **Appa,mattaka Vg** (A 1.19), SD 57.8.

1.2 THE FIRST 4 AGGREGATES

1.2.1 The term “**station of consciousness**” (*viññāṇa-t,thiti*) is used here in a different sense than in the **Bīja Sutta** (S 22.54), where the 4 stations of consciousness are the first 4 aggregates—form, feeling, perception and formations— functioning as the supports for the 5th aggregate, **consciousness** (*viññāṇa*).²

1.2.2 In the present sutta (A 7.41)—as in the **(Sattaka) Viññāṇa-t,thiti Sutta** (A 7.41)—consciousness is seen as of those arising in the various planes of rebirth. The Commentary calls them here “dwelling places” (*vasana-t,thāṇāni*). (AA 4:190,21 f). The 7 stations of consciousness, on the other hand, are “grounds for the rebirth-consciousness.”³

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(Navaka) Satt’āvāsa Sutta

The (Nines) Discourse on the Abodes of Beings

A 9.24

1 “Bhikshus, there are these **9 abodes of beings**.
What are the nine?”

2 (1) There are, bhikshus, beings that are different in **body** and *different in perception*, such as humans, some devas, and some of the downfallen beings.⁴
This is the 1st abode of beings.

3 (2) There are, bhikshus, beings that are different in **body** but same in **perception**, such as the devas of Brahma’s host (*brahma,kāyika*) that are reborn through the 1st (dhyana).
This is the 2nd abode of beings.

4 (3) There are, bhikshus, beings that are same in **body** but *different in perception*, such as the Ābhassara devas (of streaming radiance).
This is the 3rd abode of beings.

5 (4) There are, bhikshus, beings that are same in **body** and *same in perception*, such as the Subha,kiṇha devas (of radiant glory).
This is the 4th abode of beings.

² S 22.54/3:54,26 (SD 8.3(9)).

³ See SD 57.17 (1.2).

⁴ “The downfallen beings,” (*vinipātika*), those of the downfallen state (*vinipāta*), ie, any of the 4 lower worlds (*apāya*), those of animals, of pretas (*peta*), demons (*asura*), and hell (*niraya*): **(Pañca) Gati S** (A 9.68), SD 2.20; (Vism 13.92/427).

6 (5) There are, bhikshus, beings that are non-percipient, without experience, such as the Asañña, satta devas, This is the 5th abode of beings.

who are **non-percipient**.

7 (6) There are, bhikshus, beings that, with the complete transcending of perceptions of forms, with the passing away of perceptions of sensory impingement, with non-attention to perceptions of diversity, (perceiving) 'Space is infinite,' attain This is the 6th abode of beings.

the base of the infinity of space.

8 (7) There are, bhikshus, beings that, by completely transcending the base of the infinity of space, (perceiving) 'Consciousness is infinite,' attain This is the 7th abode of beings.

the base of the infinity of consciousness.

9 (8) There are, bhikshus, beings that, by completely transcending the base of the infinity of consciousness, (perceiving) 'There is nothing,' attain This is the 8th abode of beings.

the base of nothingness.

10 (9) There are, bhikshus, beings that, by completely transcending the base of nothingness, attain

the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

This is the 9th abode of beings.

11 These are the 9 abodes of beings." [402]

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