

ANĀLAYO
REBIRTH AND THE GANDHABBA

ABSTRACT

*The present article examines the concept of rebirth in early Buddhist canonical discourses preserved in the Pāli Nikāyas and the Chinese Āgamas from a set of related angles, after which it explores the implications of the gandhabba as one of the three conditions for conception to take place.**

Rebirth as a principle and an actual experience is a recurring theme in the early discourses. Thus birth, which due to the endless faring on in *samsāra* of living beings is inevitably always a rebirth,¹ is considered a dilemma of life as much as old age, disease and death. A case in point is the autobiographical record of what motivated Gotama, the Buddha-to-be, to go forth. According to the *Ariyapariyesana-sutta*, his noble quest was for that which is beyond birth:

Before my awakening, when I was still unawakened ... I thought: "Being myself subject to birth and having seen the disadvantage of birth, should I not seek what is beyond birth, the unsurpassable freedom from bondage of Nibbāna?"²

The accomplishment of this quest on the night of the Buddha's awakening similarly involved the theme of birth or rebirth, a theme that can be seen to underlie all three of the higher knowledges he attained on this occasion. The first of these, according to the account given in the *Bhayabherava-sutta*, involves retrospective knowledge of past lives:

I recollected numerous former lives, that is, one birth, two births ... a hundred-thousand births ... [remembering] "There I was of such name, of such clan, of such appearance, [partaking] of such nourishment, experiencing such pleasure and pain, with such length of life, and passing away from there I arose elsewhere."³

This knowledge enabled him to directly access memories of his own past lives and experiences, providing a vivid illustration of the nature of *saṃsāra*, the incessant round of birth and death. The second higher knowledge, the divine eye, builds on this vision with a change of perspective. Instead of remembering his own past lives, now the faring on of others in *saṃsāra* received his attention. This takes place by directly witnessing the passing away and re-arising of others:

With the purified divine eye that surpasses [the vision] of humans I saw beings passing away and reappearing, inferior and superior, of beautiful and ugly appearance, fortunate and unfortunate, and I understood how beings fare in accordance with their deeds.⁴

The *Bhayabherava-sutta* continues its account of this second higher knowledge by describing how the past deeds of beings shape their future destiny, evil conduct by body, speech and mind leading to rebirth in hell, wholesome conduct to rebirth in heaven.

The *Saṅghabhedavastu*, a work belonging to the (Mūla-)sarvāstivāda Vinaya, explains the sequence of these higher knowledges attained by the Buddha in the night of his awakening. According to its description, after the bodhisattva had recollected his past lives, he wanted to find the underlying cause of this *saṃsāric* process.⁵ Developing the divine eye provided an answer to this, since it revealed to him that living beings migrate through *saṃsāra* in accordance with their karmic deeds.

Based on this comprehensive vision of the continuous passing away and being reborn of living beings in *saṃsāra*, according to the *Saṅghabhedavastu* the bodhisattva understood that the operating mechanism behind *saṃsāric* migration are the three influxes of sensuality, of [desire for] existence and of ignorance.⁶ Once he knew that these three influxes need to be eradicated, according to the *Saṅghabhedavastu* account, the bodhisattva developed insight into the four noble truths, eradicated the influxes and reached full liberation, thereby going beyond any future transmigration in *saṃsāra*.

Going beyond future transmigration in *saṃsāra* is to go beyond future rebirth. The transcendence of future birth is quite explicitly mentioned in the standard description of the attainment of full liberation in the early discourses, which invariably begin by referring to the destruction of birth. In the case of Buddha's awakening, this explicit reference to the destruction of birth can be found in the *Bhayabherava-sutta* and its Chinese parallel, as well as in the Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan versions of the *Saṅghabhedavastu*. The relevant passage reads: "Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more of this hereafter."⁷

Hence birth, as actual rebirth, forms a continuous theme from the beginning of the Buddha's quest for awakening to its end. In view of this it is hardly surprising that rebirth is a central element of the teachings given by the Buddha after his awakening. This central role is reflected in what can well be considered to represent the Buddha's teaching in a nutshell - the four noble truths.

The presentation of these four noble truths appears to parallel a procedure employed in ancient Indian medicine, where the diagnosis of a disease leads to determining its cause, the 'virus' so to say. This is followed by envisaging a state of health that can be reached by overcoming the disease, and by prescribing a practical cure that leads to this state of health. From the Buddha's perspective, the dis-ease is *dukkha*, craving is the 'virus', *Nibbāna* the state of health and the eightfold noble path the practical cure.

The first step in this scheme, the diagnosis of *dukkha* provided in the first noble truth, starts off with birth itself.⁸

Birth is *dukkha*; old age is *dukkha*; death is *dukkha*; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are *dukkha*; not obtaining what one wishes is *dukkha*; in short, the five aggregates of clinging are *dukkha*.⁹

Birth appears not only in the first noble truth, but also in the standard presentation of *paṭicca samuppāda*, which treats the "dependent arising" of *dukkha* in detail. Here birth is explicitly

mentioned as the eleventh link in the twelve-link series. According to the traditional three-lives explanation, birth would also be implicit in the third link of consciousness.¹⁰ The detailed examination of *paṭicca samuppāda* offered in the *Mahānidāna-sutta* lends support to this interpretation. Regarding consciousness as the third link in the series, according to the *Mahānidāna-sutta* the Buddha had the following to say: "If consciousness, Ānanda, were not to descend into the mother's womb, would name-and-form arise in the mother's womb?"¹¹ Ānanda has to deny, and the exposition continues by exploring the possibility that consciousness might leave the mother's womb again, or else may depart from the child after birth. Clearly, the implication of this passage is actual rebirth.

This, however, does not mean that the doctrine of *paṭicca samuppāda* is concerned only with rebirth. That each of the twelve links of *paṭicca samuppāda*, including the link "birth" itself, can be applied to single mind-moments is already recognized in the *Vibhaṅga*, the second and probably earliest book of the *Abhidhammapiṭaka*.¹² The *Vibhaṅga* explains that "birth", in such a context, simply stands for the arising of mental phenomena.¹³

This explanation is found in the *Abhidhammabhājanīya* of the *Vibhaṅga*, its exposition of a particular matter from the viewpoint of the *Abhidhamma*. In the *Vibhaṅga's Suttantabhājanīya*, which gives the complementary perspective of the discourses, birth stands for actual rebirth.¹⁴

Thus, at least from the perspective of the *Vibhaṅga*, the term 'birth' can meaningfully be applied to the coming into being of mental states in the present moment as well as to rebirth in another life, without one of these modes of understanding contradicting the other. After all, the main point of *paṭicca samuppāda* is the dependent arising of *dukkha*, and that takes place in the mind here and now as well as in future lives.

The dependent arising of *dukkha* in future lives is closely related to karmic retribution, which governs rebirth into another life. The *Cūlakammavibhaṅga-sutta*, a discourse dedicated to the theme of karmic retribution, establishes a clear link between presently undertaken deeds and their karmic effect.¹⁵ According to this discourse, killing will lead to a short lifespan in future lives; harming others will result in becoming oneself diseased and sick;

irritability causes ugliness; stinginess leads to poverty; and arrogance brings rebirth in lowly conditions.

This straightforward exposition of the dynamics that determine the quality of future rebirth appears to have been of considerable interest to successive generations of Buddhists, since this exposition has been translated altogether six times into Chinese, in addition to which two Sanskrit parallels are extant, two Tibetan translations, and parts of the same discourse have also been preserved in Khotanese, Sogdian and Tocharian.¹⁶ The popularity of this theme is also reflected in Buddhist art, with sculptures in Borobodur, Java, illustrating the relationship between deeds and their future retribution.¹⁷

The karmic retribution for unwholesome deeds, described in the *Cūlakammavibhaṅga-sutta*, extends not only to rebirth in the human realm, but can lead also to rebirth in hell. Detailed descriptions of the sufferings that await the evildoer on rebirth in hell are given in the *Devadūta-sutta*. In this discourse, the principle of karmic retribution is personalized in the god Yama, whom the evildoer will have to face on passing away. Yama's function is to remind the culprit of his deeds and of the inevitability of their retribution.¹⁸ This interrogation by Yama also appears to have exerted considerable interest among Buddhists, since it has been preserved in altogether ten Chinese translations.¹⁹

In addition to treating rebirth from the perspective of the causes that affect the quality of the next life, the early Buddhist analysis also takes up the causes for actual conception. These are treated in the *Assalāyana-sutta*, a discourse that records how a Brahmin attempted to challenge the Buddha on the issue of caste superiority. At the end of a discussion in which the Buddha made it clear that the Brahminical belief in caste superiority is groundless, the conditions required for rebirth are listed: "The descent into the womb takes place through the junction of these three [conditions]: there is a union of mother and father, the mother is in season and the *gandhabba* is present."²⁰

The point of bringing up these three conditions in the *Assalāyana-sutta's* discussion is that it cannot be said to which caste the being belongs that is about to be born. This then forms another argument against Brahminical caste presumptions. Thus the discourse continues: "Sirs, do you know for sure if that *gandhabba* is [a

member of the] warrior [caste], or the Brahmin [caste], or the merchant [caste], or the worker [caste]?"²¹

What makes this passage particularly intriguing is its use of the term *gandhabba*. The Buddhist conception of a *gandhabba* appears to have its roots in the Vedic *gandharva*, which had the particular function of transmitting things from one world to another.²² Should we then understand the *gandhabba* in the *Assalāyana-sutta* to be similar to Yama in the *Devadūta-sutta*, in the sense that while Yama presides over rebirth in hell, the *gandhabba* presides over human conception?²³

Yet, according to the commentary to the *Assalāyana-sutta*, the *gandhabba* rather stands for the being to be reborn.²⁴ In fact, the Vedic *gandharva* as a 'god of transfer' was at times identified with what was under his custody.²⁵ This sense would seem to be more appropriate to the present context, since the inquiry after the caste of the *gandhabba* would be meaningful only if it refers to the being to be reborn, not to a god that presides over conception.²⁶ Thus, though the Vedic concept of a 'god of transfer' helps to explain how the *gandhabba* would have come to be associated with the transition from one life to another, in its Buddhist usage the term seems to have lost this connotation and appears to stand merely for the being about to be reborn.²⁷

An *Ekottarika-āgama* parallel to the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya-sutta* does not employ the term *gandhabba*, but instead speaks of the "external consciousness" or of the "aspiring consciousness", in the sense of the consciousness that aspires to be reborn.²⁸ The *Madhyama-āgama* parallel to the *Assalāyana-sutta*, however, also speaks of a **gandhabba*, as does a *Madhyama-āgama* parallel to another listing of the same three conditions in the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya-sutta*.²⁹ The corresponding expression *gandharva* is also found in a reference to the three conditions for conception in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*; in the *Divyāvadāna*; in the *Pravrajyāvastu* of the (Mūla-) sarvāstivāda Vinaya; and in the *Mahāvibhāṣā*.³⁰

The terminology used in the *Ekottarika-āgama* discourse corresponds more closely to what other discourses employ when treating the question of conception. The above quoted passage from the *Mahānidāna-sutta* speaks of "consciousness" that descends into the womb, and the *Sampasādaniya-sutta* speaks of the "stream of

consciousness" that could be established in this world or in another.³¹ In a context clearly related to rebirth, the *Āneñjasappāya-sutta* mentions the "evolving consciousness".³² Finally the record of the suicide of the monk Vakkali reports that Māra was hovering around in search of Vakkali's consciousness.³³

In contrast, references to the *gandhabba* in other contexts clearly intend a celestial being. Thus a celestial musician from the retinue of Sakka is introduced in the *Sakkapañha-sutta* as a *gandhabba* by the name of Pañcasikha.³⁴ Elsewhere the term *gandhabba* stands for celestial beings that feed on fragrance.³⁵ A *gandhabba* may dwell in the sea,³⁶ or in the sky,³⁷ and belongs to a realm inferior to the four great kings.³⁸ Such passages reflect conceptions of the *gandhabba* as a celestial being that are evidently of pre-Buddhist origin.³⁹

The Buddha's use of this term in the *Assalāyana-sutta*, however, employs this term without any substantialist notions.⁴⁰ That the early Buddhist conception of rebirth did not involve the transmigration of a substantial self comes up for explicit discussion in the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya-sutta*, a discourse that also lists these three conditions for conception. This discourse begins by describing how a monk obstinately held on to his view that the self-same consciousness fares on through the round of rebirths.⁴¹ The Buddha was quick to rebuke him for this misunderstanding. While this monk swerved in the direction of eternalism, another monk appears to have had the opposite type of misunderstanding. According to the *Mahāpunṇama-sutta*, this other monk had the deluded idea that the teaching of not-self implied that there is nobody to whom karmic retribution would apply.⁴² Here, too, the Buddha was quick to correct this misunderstanding of his teaching.

These passages make it clear that, though employing terms like the *gandhabba*, the discussion of the three conditions for conception does not involve any substantialist notion. In fact, the whole point of the *Assalāyana-sutta* was, after all, the issue of caste. Even earlier in the discussion the Buddha made use of Brahminical conceptions in order to drive home his point. A particularly telling instance is when, with a good dose of humour, he takes up the notion that Brahmins are born from the mouth of Brahmā and wonders why Brahmin women are seen to become pregnant, give birth and give suck.⁴³ Similar to this ironic comment on the belief that Brahmins

are born from Brahmā's mouth, the original intent of the Buddha's reference to the *gandhabba* would just have had the intention to adopt his presentation to the thought world of his audience by using a loan word from Brahminical ideas about rebirth.

Thus the point introduced in this way in the *Assalāyana-sutta* is simply that Brahminical conceptions of caste purity only take into account the condition provided by the mother and father, assuming that their caste identity sufficiently accounts for the caste identity of the child. By employing Brahminical conceptions on the role of the *gandhabba* in relation to conception, the Buddha was able to point out an inconsistency in the Brahminical scheme, in as much the caste affiliation of the being to be reborn could not be determined. It may be from this original intent of the discussion of the three conditions for conception in the *Assalāyana-sutta* that references to this presentation in other discourses and later works originated.

To employ already existing terms and ideas in order to express a particular point is in fact a recurrent feature of the expositions given by the Buddha in the early discourses. This appears to have been particularly the case with Brahminical notions and ideas. In this way, even the term Brahmin itself is reinterpreted in the discourses to stand for mental nobility. Similarly the three higher knowledges, *tevijjā*, which for the Brahmins represent knowledge of the three *Vedas*, in early Buddhism come to stand for abilities open to anyone who is willing to undertake the required course of meditative training to attain them.

By attaining the first two of these three higher knowledges, the Buddha had investigated the issue of rebirth in the most comprehensive manner possible. By attaining the third higher knowledge of full awakening, he transcended it forever. Some of his disciples followed him by also developing all three higher knowledges. Others directly became arahants, without developing recollection of past lives or the divine eye. After all, what really counts from the early Buddhist perspective is to go beyond rebirth, to transcend it once and for all.

[What is] born, become, produced,
Made, compounded and not lasting,

[What is] conjoined with old age and death,
 A nest of disease and perishable,
 [What has] come into being and is supported by nutriment -
 This is not worth delighting in.
 The peaceful escape from that,
 The stable that is beyond thought,
 The not-born and not arisen,
 The sorrowless and stainless path,
 The cessation of all states of *dukkha*,
 This stilling of all formation is happiness [indeed].⁴⁴

ABBREVIATIONS

(Pāli references are to the PTS edition, Chinese references to the Taishō edition, Tibetan references to the Derge edition)

AN	<i>Aṅguttara-nikāya</i>	Ps	<i>Papañcasūdanī</i>
DĀ	<i>Dīrgha-āgama</i>	SĀ	<i>Samyukta-āgama</i> (T 99)
DN	<i>Dīgha-nikāya</i>	SĀ ²	'other' <i>Samyukta-āgama</i> (T 100)
EĀ	<i>Ekottarika-āgama</i>	SN	<i>Samyutta-nikāya</i>
MĀ	<i>Madhyama-āgama</i>	T	Taishō edition
MN	<i>Majjhima-nikāya</i>	Vibh	<i>Vibhaṅga</i>
Mp	<i>Manorathapūraṇī</i>		

ENDNOTES

* I am indebted to Bhikkhu Bodhi for comments on an earlier draft of this article.

¹ SN 15.1 at SN II 178,6: *anamataggāyaṃ ... saṃsāro*. The Chinese parallel SĀ 940 at T II 241b16 similarly states that there is no beginning point for the being born and passing away of living beings, for their faring on for a long time: 眾生無始生死, 長夜輪轉; cf. also SĀ² 333 at T II 486c8.

² MN 26 at MN I 163,9: *pubbe va sambodhā anabhisambuddho ... mayhaṃ ... etad ahosi ... yan-nūnāhaṃ ... attanā jātidhammo samāno jātidhamme ādīnavaṃ viditvā ajātaṃ anuttaraṃ yogakkhemaṃ nibbānaṃ pariyeseyyaṃ*. The Chinese parallel MĀ 204 at T I 776a26 does not mention birth, but only treats old age, disease and death, (which are also mentioned in the Pāli version, in addition to birth).

³ MN 4 at MN I 22,11: *so anekavihitaṃ pubbenivāsaṃ anussarāmi, seyyathidaṃ: ekam pi jātiṃ dve pi jātiyo ... jātisatasahassam pi ... amutr' āsiṃ evannāmo evaṃgotto evaṃvaṇṇo evamāhāro evaṃ sukhadukkhaṇṇapaṭisaṃvedī evamāyupariyanto, so tato cuto amutra udapādiṃ*. The description of this and the next higher knowledge in the Chinese parallel EĀ 31.1 at T II 666b24 is closely similar.

⁴ MN 4 at MN I 22,30: *so dibbena cakkhunā visuddhena atikkantamānusakena satte passāmi cavamāne upapajjamāne, hīne paṇīte suvaṇṇe dubbaṇṇe sugate duggate, yathākammūpage satte pajānāmi*.

⁵ Gnoli 1977: 118,11: *eṣāṃ māraḥkarāṇāṃ ke apāyagāmināḥ, ke neti?*

⁶ Gnoli 1977: 118,27: *amī bhavantaḥ sattvāḥ kāmāśraveṇa bhavāśraveṇāvidyāśraveṇa ca saṃsāre saṃsaranti.*

⁷ MN 4 at MN I 23,24: *khīṇā jāti, vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ, kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ, nāparam itthattāya*; and EĀ 31.1 at T II 666c18: 生死已盡, 梵行已立, 所作已辦, 更不復受胎. Gnoli 1977: 119,3: *kṣīṇā me jātir, uṣitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ, kṛtaṃ karaṇīyaṃ, nāparam asmād bhavaṃ*; T 1450 at T XXIV 124b6: 我生已盡, 梵行已立, 應作已作, 不受後有; and Derge edition 'dul ba gzhi, nga 33a7: *bdag gi skye ba zad do, tshangs par spyod pa la bsten to, bya ba byas so, 'di las srid pa gzhan mi shes so.*

⁸ Premasiri 2006: 209 comments that "one might contend that the first Truth of the unsatisfactory nature of life (*dukkha*) may be understood without the hypothesis of rebirth, but it becomes completely meaningful only under that hypothesis".

⁹ MN 141 at MN III 249,9: *Jāti pi dukkhā, jarā pi dukkhā, maraṇam pi dukkhaṃ, sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā pi dukkhā; yam p' icchaṃ na labhati tam pi dukkhaṃ; saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā.* The parallel MĀ 31 at T I 467b29 reads: 生苦, 老苦, 病苦, 死苦, 怨憎會苦, 愛別離苦, 所求不得苦, 略五盛陰苦, thereby adding "disease" as well as "association with what is not liked" and "dissociation from what is liked" to the listing in MN 141, items also listed in the *Dhammacakkapavattana-sutta's* definition of *dukkha* in SN 56.11 at SN V 421,20. The same items are also included in another parallel to MN 141, EĀ 27.1 at T II 643b18: 生苦, 老苦, 病苦, 死苦, 憂悲惱苦, 怨憎會苦, 恩愛別苦, 所求不得苦, 取要言之, 五盛陰苦.

¹⁰ Paṭis I 52,22: *idha paṭisandhi viññāṇam, okkanti nāma-rūpaṃ.*

¹¹ DN 15 at DN II 63,2: *viññāṇam va hi, Ānanda, mātu kucchiṃ na okkamissatha, api nu kho nāma-rūpaṃ mātu kucchismiṃ samucchissatha?* The Chinese parallel DĀ 13 at T I 61b9 presents the matter similarly: 若識不入母胎者, 有名色不?

¹² Vibh 144,2: *yasmiṃ samaye akusalaṃ cittaṃ uppannaṃ hoti ... tasmīṃ samaye avijjāpaccayā saṅkhāro, saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇam, viññāṇapaccayā nāmaṃ, nāmapaccayā chaṭṭāyatanam, chaṭṭāyatanapaccayā phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā, vedanāpaccayā taṇhā, taṇhāpaccayā upādānam, upādānapaccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti, jātipaccayā jarāmaraṇam. Evam etassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti.* Notably, this mode of presentation speaks only of "name" instead of "name-and-form", and also only of the "sixth sense-sphere", as appropriate in an application to mind-moments.

¹³ Vibh 145,14: *Tattha katamā bhavapaccayā jāti? Yā tesam dhammānaṃ jāti sañjāti nibbatti abhinibbatti pātubhāvo, ayaṃ vuccati bhavapaccayā jāti.*

¹⁴ Vibh 137,13: *Tattha katamā bhavapaccayā jāti? Yā tesam tesam sattānaṃ tamhi tamhi sattanikāye jāti sañjāti okkanti nibbatti abhinibbatti khandhānaṃ pātubhāvo, āyatanānaṃ paṭilābho, ayaṃ vuccati bhavapaccayā jāti,* which thus differs from the definition given in regard to the 'birth' of mind-moments by explicitly speaking of "beings" among "type of beings", and also by mentioning a "descending", the appearance of the "aggregates" and the "obtaining of the sense-spheres".

¹⁵ MN 135 at MN III 202.

¹⁶ The Chinese versions are MĀ 170 at T I 703c; T 78 at T I 887b; T 79 at T I 888b; T 80 at T I 891a; T 81 at T I 895b and T 755 at T XVII 588c. One Sanskrit version has

been edited by Hoernle 1970: 48ff, the other by Kudo 2004, 2006 and 2007. One Tibetan version has been edited by Lévi 1932, the other is found in the Derge edition as no. 339 at *mdo sde sa* 298b. The Khotanese version has been edited by Maggi 1995; the Sogdian version by Rosenberg 1920; and the Tocharian version by Lévi 1933 (cf. also Sieg 1938).

¹⁷ For a description of these sculptures cf. Lévi 1996.

¹⁸ MN 130 at MN III 179,17; cf. also AN 3:35 at AN I 138,16. Marasinghe 2002: 631 explains that "Yama, the Ṛg Vedic god of death and the king and ruler of the underworld, has been reduced in Buddhism to a mere passive onlooker at the uninfluenced operation of the law of *kamma*".

¹⁹ DĀ 30.4 at T I 126b23; T 24 at T I 331a5; T 25 at T I 386a1; MĀ 64 at T I 503c29; T 42 at T I 827a27; T 43 at T I 828c12; T 86 at T I 909b29; EĀ 32.4 at T II 674c4; T 212 at T IV 668c3; T 741 at T XVII 547a10.

²⁰ MN 93 at MN II 157,1: *idha mātāpitāro va sannipatitā honti, mātā ca utunī hoti, gandhabbo va paccupaṭṭhito hoti, evaṃ tiṇṇaṃ sannipātā gabbhassa avakkanti hoti.*

²¹ MN 93 at MN II 157,4: *jānanti pana bhonto yagghe so gandhabbo khattiyo vā brāhmaṇo vā vesso vā suddho vā?*

²² Oberlies 2005: 101 speaks of the function of the *gandharva* "Dinge aus einer anderen in diese Welt zu bringen".

²³ This sense of the term is suggested in Rhys Davids 1993: 244 s.v. *gandhabba*, explaining that the *gandhabba* as a heavenly musician or demigod is "also said to preside over child-conception".

²⁴ Ps II 310, in relation to another listing of the three conditions for rebirth in MN 38 at MN I 265,37, explains '*gandhabbo*' *ti tatrūpagasatto*. As Malalasekera 1995: 746 points out, to understand the *gandhabba* as that which presides over conception would conflict with this commentarial explanation.

²⁵ Oberlies 2005: 105 notes that "der *Gandharva* bisweilen mit dem, was in seine Obhut gelangt, identifiziert wird".

²⁶ Karunaratne 1991: 294 points out that in the *Assalāyana-sutta* the *gandhabba* clearly refers "to the 'spirit' of a previously dead *khattiya*, *brāhmaṇa*, *vessa* or *sudda*". In fact Pischel 1889: 78 renders *gandhabba* in this context as "foetus", taking the sense of the inquiry to be whether the foetus can be reckoned as belonging to any particular caste.

²⁷ According to Blum 2004: 204, in the intermediate state between death and the next life "one is transformed into an entity called a *gandharva*, originally a semi-divine being associated with fertility and the god Soma in pre-Buddhist Indian myths". Harvey 1995: 105 also relates the *gandhabba* to the intermediary existence, which is denied by the Theravāda tradition, but is accepted by other early Buddhist schools. Langer 2000: 14 suggests that the nuance of fertility and sexuality inherent in the vedic *gandharva* conception could explain the dynamics responsible for attracting the *gandhabba* as the being about to be reborn to the sexual act of its future parents. Somaratne 2005: 177 concludes that the *gandhabba* is "the evolving consciousness that survives physical death and comes to generate the new personality".

²⁸ EĀ 21.3 at T II 602c19+20: 外識 and 欲識 (or 識欲, according to a 宋, 元, 明 and 聖 variant reading).

²⁹ MĀ 151 at T I 666a11 and MĀ 201 at T I 769b24: 香陰已至 (parallel to MN 38 at MN I 265,37), which has "birth aggregate", 生陰, as a 宋, 元 and 明 variant reading.

³⁰ Pradhan 1967: 121,23 (3.12); Cowell 1886: 440,13; Dutt 1984: 25,11; T 1545 at T XXVII 356c26.

³¹ DN 28 at DN III 105,16: *viññāṇa-sotaṃ ... idha-loke patitṭhitaṇca para-loke patitṭhitaṇca*; the parallel DĀ 18 at T I 77b20 speaks instead of the "mind-consciousness", 心識在何處住, 為在今世, 為在後世.

³² MN 106 at MN II 262,16: *kāyassa bhedaṃ paraṃ maraṇā ... taṃ saṃvattanikaṃ viññāṇaṃ*. The parallel passage in MĀ 75 at T I 542b23 is formulated differently and does not refer to consciousness at all.

³³ SN 22.87 at SN III 124,9: *Māro pāpimā Vakkalissa kulaputtassa viññāṇaṃ samannesati*. The parallel SĀ 1265 at T II 347b9 similarly speaks of consciousness in this context: 惡魔之像, 周匝求覓跋迦梨善男子 識神當生何處; as does another parallel EĀ 26.10 at T II 643a7: 魔波旬, 欲得知婆迦梨神識所在, both discourses additionally qualifying this consciousness to be the "spirit", 神, of the departed.

³⁴ DN 21 at DN II 265,7. His musical performance in front of the Buddha is also reported in the parallels DĀ 14 at T I 62c21 and MĀ 134 at T I 633a25.

³⁵ SN 31.1 at SN III 250,4. The entire *Gandhabbasamyutta* does not appear to have a Chinese counterpart. A listing of different types of *gandharvas* can, however, be found in the *Mahāvīyutpatti* § 171 in Sakaki 1926: 235 (nos. 3381-3390).

³⁶ AN 8.19 at AN IV 200,5 and its parallel MĀ 35 at T I 476a24.

³⁷ AN 4.36 at AN II 39,4: *vihaṅgamo*, explained by the commentary Mp III 79 as *ākāsacaro*. A Gāndhārī counterpart in fact reads [*ghadharvo*] *va dihaḡhama*, indicating that the *gandharvas* "fly through the air", cf. the reconstruction and translation in Allon 2001: 124-125 (the Chinese *Āgama* parallels do not have a counterpart to this expression, which, however, may be due to the need to keep to the pentasyllabic count in verse). Wayman 1974: 231 notes that already "in the Vedic period the *gandharva* is a kind of spirit generally placed in the *antarikṣa* (intermediate space between earth and sky) along with the *Pitaras* (ancestors) and *Asuras* (demi-gods)".

³⁸ DN 18 at DN II 212,14 (where the counterpart DĀ 4 at T I 35c6 does not mention *gandhabbas*); cf. also DN 21 at DN II 271,25, where rebirth as a *gandhabba* is classified as an inferior type of rebirth. Hecker 1972: 198 reasons that the *gandhabbas* as celestial musicians are the type of celestial beings most closely similar in nature to humans and may for this reason have been chosen as *pars pro toto* for the otherworldly. Windisch 1908: 14 notes that less merit is required for being reborn as a *gandhabba* compared to rebirth in higher heavenly realms. He suggests that therefore a being to be reborn among humans would come with higher probability from the merit-wise nearby realm of the *gandhabbas*, rather than coming from a higher heavenly realm. This would have made the *gandhabbas* a natural choice to represent a being about to be reborn in the human realm.

³⁹ Wijesekera 1994: 192 explains that "already in the *Ṛgveda* [the] gandharva Viśvāvasu is implored to 'sing ... this song for us'" and in the *Atharvaveda* the gandharvas "appear as 'dancing and crested' (*sikhinah*)", which "throws much light on the origin of the famous character of the gandharva Pañcaśikha". He also notes that their feeding on fragrance "clearly goes back to the Atharvavedic association of *gandha* and *gandharva*"; and relates their dwelling in the sea to the "Indo-Iranian, if not even more primitive, aqueous implication of the *gandharva*-myth"; while their "moving in the sky ... reflects the epithet 'flying in the vault of heaven' applied to the *gandharva* conceived as bird (*patariṅga* or *suparṇa*) in the *Ṛgveda*".

⁴⁰ A substantialist notion is assumed to stand behind the *gandhabba* as one of the three conditions for conception by Rhys Davids 1978: 250.

⁴¹ MN 38 at MN I 256,14: *tad ev' idaṃ viññāṇaṃ sandhāvati saṃsarati, anaññaṃ*, a proposition expressed in similar terms in the parallel MĀ 201 at T I 766c3: 今此識, 往生, 不更異. Norman 1993a: 256 draws attention to passages that reflect ideas similar to this view in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4.2 and 4.4.22.

⁴² MN 109 at MN III 19,12: *anattakatāni kammāni, kam attānaṃ phusissanti?* (cf. also SN 22.82 at SN III 103,27); a deluded thought reported similarly in the parallel SĀ 58 at T II 15a12: 作無我業, 於未來世, 誰當受報?

⁴³ MN 93 at MN II 148,29; Norman 1993b: 272 explains that by referring to "the way in which brahmans are born, the Buddha satirises the Puruṣasūkta of the *Ṛgveda*".

⁴⁴ It 2.6 at It 37,13: *Jātaṃ bhūtaṃ samuppannaṃ, kataṃ saṅkhatam addhuvam, jarāmaranaṣaṅkhatam, rogaṇiḷam pabhaṅguṇam, āhāranettippabhavam, nālam tad abhinanditum. Tassa nissaraṇam santam, atakkāvacaram dhuvam, ajātam asamuppannam, asokaṃ virajaṃ padaṃ, nirodho dukkhadhammānam, saṅkhārūpasamo sukho.*

REFERENCES

- Allon, Mark 2001: *Three Gāndharī Ekottarikāgama-Type Sūtras*, British Library Karoṣṭhī Fragments 12 and 14, Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Blum, Mark L. 2004: "Death", in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, R.E. Buswell (ed.), New York: Macmillan, vol. 1 pp. 203-210.
- Cowell, E.B. et al. 1886: *The Divyāvadāna, a Collection of Early Buddhist Legends*, Cambridge: University Press.
- Dutt, Nalinaksha 1984: *Gilgit Manuscripts, Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinayavastu, vol. III part 4*, (*Bibliotheca Indo-Buddhica* No. 19), Delhi: Sri Satguru
- Gnoli, Raniero 1977: *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Saṅghabhedavastu, Being the 17th and Last Section of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin*, (*Serie Orientale Roma XLIX, 1*), Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, part 1.
- Harvey, Peter 1995: *The Selfless Mind; Personality, Consciousness and Nirvāṇa in Early Buddhism*, Richmond Surrey: Curzon.
- Hecker, Helmut 1972: *Wegweiser zu den Lehrreden des Buddha, Ein Kommentar zu den 152 Reden der Mittleren Sammlung in der Übersetzung von Karl Erich Neumann, Herrnschrot: Beyerlein & Steinschulte.*

- Hoernle, A.F. Rudolf 1970 (1916): *Manuscript Remains of Buddhist Literature Found in Eastern Turkestan*, Amsterdam: St. Leonards Ad Orientem.
- Karunaratne, U. 1991: "Gandhabba", in *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, G.P. Malalasekera (ed.), Sri Lanka: Department of Buddhist Affairs, vol. 5 no. 2 pp. 293-295.
- Kudo, Noriyuki 2004: *The Karmavibhaṅga, Transliterations and Annotations of the Original Sanskrit Manuscript from Nepal*, (*Biblioteca Philologica et Philosophica Buddhica VII*), Tokyo: Soka University.
- Kudo, Noriyuki et al. 2006: "The First Three Folios of Manuscript B of the Karmavibhaṅga", and "One More Manuscript of the Karmavibhaṅga in the National Archives of Nepal, Kathmandu: Transliteration of Manuscript E (1)", in *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhism at Soka University*, Tokyo: Soka University, vol. 9 pp. 33-60.
- Kudo, Noriyuki 2007: "One More Manuscript of the Karmavibhaṅga in the National Archives of Nepal, Kathmandu: Transliteration of Manuscript E (2)", in *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhism at Soka University*, Tokyo: Soka University, vol. 10 pp. 93-116.
- Langer, Rita 2000: *Das Bewusstsein als Träger des Lebens, einige weniger beachtete Aspekte des viññāṇa im Pālikanon*, Wien: Arbeitskreis für tibetische und buddhistische Studien.
- Lévi, Sylvain 1932: *Mahā-Karmavibhaṅga (La Grande Classification des Actes) et Karmavibhaṅgopadeśa (Discussion sur le Mahā-Karmavibhaṅga)*, Paris: Ernest Leroux.
- Lévi, Sylvain 1933: *Fragments de Textes Koutchéens, Udānavarga, Udānastotra, Udānalaṅkāra et Karmavibhaṅga*, (*Cahiers de la Société Asiatique, Première Série*), Paris: Imprimerie Nationale.
- Lévi, Sylvain 1996: "Le Karmavibhaṅga, Illustré par les Sculptures de la Galerie Souterraine au Boro-Budur", in *Mémorial Sylvain Lévi*, E. Franc (ed.), Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, pp. 427-433.
- Maggi, Mauro 1995: *The Khotanese Karmavibhaṅga*, (*Serie Orientale Roma, Vol. LXXIV*), Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente.
- Malalasekera, G.P. 1995: *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, vol. 1.
- Marasinghe, M.M.J. 2002: "Māra", in *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, W.G. Weeraratne (ed.), Sri Lanka: Department of Buddhist Affairs, vol. 6 no. 4 pp. 628-632.
- Norman, K. R. 1993a: "Death and the Tathāgata", in *Collected Papers*, K.R. Norman (ed.), Oxford: Pali Text Society, vol. 4 pp. 251-263; orig. publ. 1991 in *Studies in Buddhism and Culture, In Honour of Professor Dr. Egaku Mayeda*, Tokyo, pp. 1-11.
- Norman, K. R. 1993b: "Theravāda Buddhism and Brahmanical Hinduism", in *Collected Papers*, K.R. Norman (ed.), Oxford: Pali Text Society, vol. 4 pp. 271-280; orig. publ. 1991 in *The Buddhist Forum*, T. Skorupski et al. (ed.), London: School of Oriental and African Studies, vol. 2 pp. 193-200.
- Oberlies, Thomas 2005: "Der Gandharva und die Drei Tage Währende 'Quarantäne'", in *Indo-Iranian Journal*, vol. 48 pp. 97-109.
- Pischel, Richard et al. 1889: *Vedische Studien*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, vol. 1.

-
- Pradhan, P. 1967: *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, (Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series Vol. VIII), Patna: K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute.
- Premasiri: "Buddhist Philosophy on Rebirth", in *Studies in Buddhist Philosophy and Religion, Collected Papers of Professor P.D. Premasiri*, G.A. Somaratne (ed.), Sri Lanka: University of Peradeniya; orig. publ. 2001 in *Trends in Rebirth Research*, Sarvodaya Vishva Lekha.
- Rhys Davids C.A.F. 1978 (1936): *The Birth of Indian Psychology and its Development in Buddhism*, Delhi: Oriental Books
- Rhys Davids, T.W. 1993 (1921-1925): *Pali-English Dictionary*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Rosenberg, Fr. 1920: "Deux fragments sogdien-bouddhiques du Ts'ien-fo-tong de Touen-houang, II: Fragment d'un Sūtra", in *Bulletin de l'Académie des Sciences de Russie*, pp. 399-420.
- Sakaki, R. 1926: 翻譯名義大集 [Mahāvvyutpatti], Tokyo: Suzuki Research Foundation.
- Sieg, E. 1938: "Die Kutschischen Karmavibhaṅga-Texte der Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (zu Prof. Sylvain Lévi's Ausgabe und Übersetzung)", in *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Sprachforschung auf dem Gebiet der Indogermanischen Sprachen*, vol. 65 pp. 165-172.
- Somaratne, G.A. 2005: "Citta, Manas and Viññāṇa: Aspects of Mind as Presented in Early Buddhist Pali Discourses", in *Dhamma-Vinaya, Essays in Honour of Venerable Professor Dhammavihari (Jotiya Dhirasekera)*, A. Tilakaratne et al. (ed.), Colombo: Sri Lanka Association for Buddhist Studies, pp. 169-202.
- Wayman, Alex 1974: "The Intermediate-State Dispute in Buddhism" in *Buddhist Studies in Honour of I.B. Horner*, L.S. Cousins et al. (ed.), Dordrecht: D. Reidel, pp. 227-239.
- Wijesekera, O.H. de A. 1994: *Buddhist and Vedic Studies, A Miscellany*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass: 175-212
- Windisch, Ernst 1908: *Buddha's Geburt und die Lehre von der Seelenwanderung*, (*Abhandlungen der Philosophisch-Historischen Klasse der Königlich-Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften XXVI*), Leipzig: B.G. Teubner.

Note: Due to editorial negligence, several errors have been introduced in the printed version of this article. In the present pdf, these have been removed. Otherwise, the pdf corresponds to the printed version in respect to pagination etc.