MN 120 — Rebirth by Choice

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Text

Middle Discourses 120

Rebirth by Choice

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. There the Buddha addressed the mendicants, "Mendicants!"

"Venerable sir," they replied. The Buddha said this:

"I shall teach you rebirth by choice. Listen and apply your mind well, I will speak."

"Yes, sir," they replied. The Buddha said this:

"Take a mendicant who has faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom. They think: 'If only, when my body breaks up, after death, I would be reborn in the company of well-to-do aristocrats!' They settle on that thought, stabilize it, and develop it. Those choices and meditations of theirs, developed and cultivated like this, lead to rebirth there. This is the path and the practice that leads to rebirth there.

Furthermore, take a mendicant who has faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom. They think: 'If only, when my body breaks up, after death, I would be reborn in the company of well-to-do brahmins … well-to-do householders!' They settle on that thought, stabilize it, and develop it. Those choices and meditations of theirs, developed and cultivated like this, lead to rebirth there. This is the path and the practice that leads to rebirth there.

Furthermore, take a mendicant who has faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom. And they've heard: 'The gods of the four great kings are long-lived, beautiful, and very happy.' They think: 'If only, when my body breaks up, after death, I would be reborn in the company of the gods of the four great kings!' They settle on that thought, stabilize it, and develop it. Those choices and meditations of theirs, developed and cultivated like this, lead to rebirth there. This is the path and the practice that leads to rebirth there.

Furthermore, take a mendicant who has faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom. And they've heard: 'The gods of the thirty-three … the gods of Yama … the joyful gods … the gods who love to create … the gods who control what is created by others are long-lived, beautiful, and very happy.' They think: 'If only, when my body breaks up, after death, I would be reborn in the company of the gods who control what is created by others!' They settle on that thought, stabilize it, and develop it. Those choices and meditations of theirs, developed and cultivated like this, lead to rebirth there. This is the path and the practice

that leads to rebirth there.

Furthermore, take a mendicant who has faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom. And they've heard: 'The Divinity of a thousand is long-lived, beautiful, and very happy.' Now the Divinity of a thousand meditates focused on pervading a thousandfold galaxy, as well as the sentient beings reborn there. As a person with clear eyes might pick up a gallnut in their hand and examine it, so too the Divinity of a thousand meditates focused on pervading a thousandfold galaxy, as well as the sentient beings reborn there. They think: 'If only, when my body breaks up, after death, I would be reborn in the company of the Divinity of a thousand!' They settle on that thought, stabilize it, and develop it. Those choices and meditations of theirs, developed and cultivated like this, lead to rebirth there. This is the path and the practice that leads to rebirth there.

Furthermore, take a mendicant who has faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom. And they've heard: 'The Divinity of two thousand … the Divinity of three thousand … the Divinity of four thousand … the Divinity of five thousand is long-lived, beautiful, and very happy.' Now the Divinity of five thousand meditates focused on pervading a five-thousandfold galaxy, as well as the sentient beings reborn there. As a person with clear eyes might pick up five gallnuts in their hand and examine them, so too the Divinity of five thousand meditates focused on pervading a five-thousandfold galaxy, as well as the sentient beings reborn there. They think: 'If only, when my body breaks up, after death, I would be reborn in the company of the Divinity of five thousand!' They settle on that thought, stabilize it, and develop it. Those choices and meditations of theirs, developed and cultivated like this, lead to rebirth there. This is the path and the practice that leads to rebirth there.

Furthermore, take a mendicant who has faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom. And they've heard: 'The Divinity of ten thousand is long-lived, beautiful, and very happy.' Now the Divinity of ten thousand meditates focused on pervading a ten-thousandfold galaxy, as well as the sentient beings reborn there. Suppose there was a beryl gem that was naturally lustrous, eight-faceted, well-worked. When placed on a cream rug it would shine and glow and dazzle. In the same way the Divinity of ten thousand meditates focused on pervading a ten-thousandfold galaxy, as well as the sentient beings reborn there. They think: 'If only, when my body breaks up, after death, I would be reborn in the company of the Divinity of ten thousand!' They settle on that thought, stabilize it, and develop it. Those choices and meditations of theirs, developed and cultivated like this, lead to rebirth there. This is the path and the practice that leads to rebirth there.

Furthermore, take a mendicant who has faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom. And they've heard: 'The Divinity of a hundred thousand is long-lived, beautiful, and very happy.' Now the Divinity of a hundred thousand meditates focused on pervading a hundred-thousandfold galaxy, as well as the sentient beings reborn there. Suppose there was a pendant of Black Plum River gold, fashioned by a deft smith, well wrought in the forge. When placed on a cream rug it would shine and glow and dazzle. In the same way the Divinity of a hundred thousand meditates focused on pervading a hundred-thousandfold galaxy, as well as the sentient beings reborn there. They think: 'If only, when my body breaks up, after death, I would be reborn in the company of the

Divinity of a hundred thousand!' They settle on that thought, stabilize it, and develop it. Those choices and meditations of theirs, developed and cultivated like this, lead to rebirth there. This is the path and the practice that leads to rebirth there.

Furthermore, take a mendicant who has faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom. And they've heard: 'The radiant gods … the gods of limited luminosity … the gods of limitless luminosity … the gods of sublime luminosity … the gods of limited beauty … the gods of limitless beauty … the gods of universal beauty … the gods of abundant fruit … the gods of Aviha … the gods of Atappa … the gods fair to see … the fair seeing gods … the gods of Akaniṭṭha … the gods of the dimension of infinite space … the gods of the dimension of infinite consciousness … the gods of the dimension of nothingness … the gods of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception are long-lived, long-lasting, and very happy.' They think: 'If only, when my body breaks up, after death, I would be reborn in the company of the gods of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception!' They settle on that thought, stabilize it, and develop it. Those choices and meditations of theirs, developed and cultivated like this, lead to rebirth there. This is the path and the practice that leads to rebirth there.

Furthermore, take a mendicant who has faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom. They think: 'If only I might realize the undefiled freedom of heart and freedom by wisdom, and live having realized it with my own insight in this very life due to the ending of defilements!' They realize the undefiled freedom of heart and freedom by wisdom. And they live having realized it with their own insight in this very life due to the ending of defilements. And, mendicants, that mendicant is not reborn anywhere."

That is what the Buddha said. Satisfied, the mendicants approved what the Buddha said.