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 samsāra, 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 samsāra 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.  

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 samsāric process. Developing the divine eye provided an answer to this, since it revealed to him that living beings migrate through samsāra in accordance with their karmic deeds.

Based on this comprehensive vision of the continuous passing away and being reborn of living beings in samsāra, according to the Saṅghabhedavastu the bodhisattva understood that the operating mechanism behind samsāric migration are the three influxes of sensuality, of [desire for] existence and of ignorance. 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 samsāra.
Going beyond future transmigration in *samsāra* 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."

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:

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*.

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. 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?" 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 Abhidhammapitaka. The Vibhaṅga explains that "birth", in such a context, simply stands for the arising of mental phenomena. This explanation is found in the Abhidhammabhājaniya of the Vibhaṅga, its exposition of a particular matter from the viewpoint of the Abhidhamma. In the Vibhaṅga's Suttantabhājaniya, which gives the complementary perspective of the discourses, birth stands for actual rebirth.

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 this 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. 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. 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.

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 Devadāta-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.

This interrogation by Yama also appears to have exerted considerable interest among Buddhists, since it has been preserved in altogether ten Chinese translations.

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." 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]?

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. 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?

Yet, according to the commentary to the Assalāyana-sutta, the *gandhabba* rather stands for the being to be reborn. In fact, the Vedic *gandharva* as a 'god of transfer' was at times identified with what was under his custody. 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. 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.

An *Ekottarika-āgama* parallel to the Mahātaṇṭha-saṅkhaya-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. 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 Mahātaṇṭha-saṅkhaya-sutta. 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 Vi-naya; and in the Mahāvibhāṣā.

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

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. Elsewhere the term gandhabba stands for celestial beings that feed on fragrance. A gandhabba may dwell in the sea, or in the sky, and belongs to a realm inferior to the four great kings. Such passages reflect conceptions of the gandhabba as a celestial being that are evidently of pre-Buddhist origin.

The Buddha's use of this term in the Assalāyana-sutta, however, employs this term without any substantialist notions. That the early Buddhist conception of rebirth did not involve the transmigration of a substantial self comes up for explicit discussion in the Mahātā/uni1E47hāsa/uni1E45khaya-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 selfsame consciousness fares on through the round of rebirths. 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 Mahāpu/uni1E47/uni1E47ama-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. 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. 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].

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

AN An̄guttara-nikāya
DĀ Dīrgha-āgama
DN Dīgha-nikāya
EĀ Ekottarika-āgama
MĀ Madhyama-āgama
MN Majjhima-nikāya
Mp Manorathapūrīṇī
Ps Papañcasūdanī
SĀ Samyukta-āgama
SN Sa/uni1E43yutta-nikāya
T Taishō edition
Vibh Vibhanga

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 ... saṁsāro*. 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 SĀ 102 333 at T II 486c8.
2 MN 26 at MN I 163,9: *pubbe va saṁbodhā anabhīsambuddho ... mayhaṃ ... etad ahosi ... yan-nūñāha/uni1E43 ... attanā jātidhammo samāno jātidhamme  ādīnava/uni1E43 viditvā gītān̄ān̄aṃ yagakkmhema/uni1E43 nibbānam̄aṃ pariveseyyaṃ*. 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 anekavītiḍham pubbenivāsaṃ anussarāmi, seyyathādham: ekam pi jātiṃ ḍvī pi jātiyo ... jātisatasaḥassam pi ... amatru/uni1E43 āśīm evampanno evampannho evamāhāro evam sukhadukkhapātiṣamvedi evamāyupariyanto, so tato cuto amatru udāpatiṃ*. 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 atikkantamānuṣakena satte passāmi cavamāne upapajjamāne, hīne paniṭe suvaṇe dubbanne sugate duabbage, yathākammūpāge satte pajānīmi*. 
5 Gnoli 1977: 118,11: esāṃ māraṇaṃkarāṇāṃ ke apāyaṃgāmināḥ, ke neti?
7 MN 4 at MN I 23,24: khaṇā jāti, vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ, karamaṇaṃ karaniyaṃ, nāparanaṃ itthattāya; and EĀ 31.1 at T II 666c18: 生死已盡, 梵行已立, 所作已辨, 便不復受胎.
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 pī dukkhā, jārā pī dukkhā, maraṇam pī dukkhā, sokaridevadukkhhadomassupāyā pī dukkhā; yam p’ icchām na labhati tam pī dukkhāṃ; sankhittena pañcupāpādākkhandhā dukkhā. The parallel MĀ 31 at T I 467b9 reads: 生苦, 老苦, 病苦, 死苦, 惱惱會苦, 識愛别苦, 所求不得苦, 略五盛除苦, 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 Dhammacakkavatāsutta’s definition of dukkha in SN 56.11 at SN V 421,20.
10 Paṭiṣi I 52,22: idha paṭiṣandhī viññā, okkanti nāma-rūpa.
11 DN 15 at DN II 63,2: viññā va hi, Ānanda, mātu kucchi na okkamissathā, api nu kho nāma-rūpa mātu kucchissathā? 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: yasmin samaye akusalaṃ cittaṃ uppannaṃ hoti ... tasmiṃ samaye avijjāpaccayā sañcāro, viññāpaccayā nāma, nāmapaccayā chattaṭṭhatānaṃ, chaṭṭhatānappaccayā phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā, vedanāpaccayā tanṭhā, tanṭhāpaccayā upādānaṃ, upādānappaccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti, jātipaccayā jarāmarāṇaṃ. Evam etassa kevalassā dukkhakkhandhassā samudaya hoti.
14 Vibh 137,13: Tattha katamā bhavapaccayā jāti? Yā tesam sañcaśam tamhi tamhi sattanikāye jāti sañjāti okkanti nibbatti abhinibbatti khandhānaṃ pātubhāvo, āyataniyaṃ patilabhā, ayam vuuccati 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 versions 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 Rg 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 mātāpitā va sānnapātā honti, mātā ca uṭunī hoti, gandhabbo va paccuṣṭhito hoti, evaṃ tiṣṇam sānnapātā gabbhassa avakkanti hoti.

21 MN 93 at MN II 157,4: jānanti pana bhonto yaghe so gandhabbo khattiya va brāhmaṇa va vesso va suddha va?

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 tatrūpagašatto. 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 Karunarathne 1991: 294 points out that in the Assalāyana-sutta the gandhabba clearly refers "to the 'spirit' of a previously dead khattiya, brāhmaṇa, vessa or suddā". 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".
ANĀLAYO

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.
31 DN 28 at DN III 105,16: viññā/uni1E47a-sota/uni1E43 ... idha-loke pati/uni1E6D/uni1E6Dhitañca para-loke pati/uni1E6D/uni1E6Dhitañca; 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 bhedā para/uni1E43 mara/uni1E47ā ... ta/uni1E43 sa/uni1E43vattanika/uni1E43 viññā/uni1E47a/uni1E43. The parallel passage in MĀ 75 at T I 542b23 is formulated differently and does not refer to consciousness at all.
33 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.
34 SN 22.87 at SN III 124,9: Māro pāpimā Vakkalissa kulapatissa viññā/uni1E47a/uni1E43 samann esati. 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.
35 AN 8.19 at AN IV 200,5 and its parallel MĀ 35 at T I 476a24.
36 AN 4.36 at AN II 39,4: viha/uni1E45gamo, explained by the commentary Mp III 79 as ākāsacaro. A Gāndhārī counterpart in fact reads [ghadharvo] va dihaghama, 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 (semi-gods)".
37 AN 8.38 at AN IV 200,5 and its parallel MĀ 35 at T I 476a24.
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.
Wijesekera 1994: 192 explains that "already in the R̐gveda [the] gandharva Viśvāvasu is implored to 'sing ... this song for us'" and in the Atharvaveda the gandharvas "appear as 'dancing and crested' (śikhinah)", 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 (pataṅga or suparṇa) in the R̐gveda".

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

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

MN 109 at MN III 19,12: anattatāni 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?

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 R̐gveda".

It 2.6 at It 37,11: Jātām bhūtaṃ samuppānam, katham sankhatam addhuvam, jarāmaranasaṅkhatam, rojaṇīlam pabhāṣyam, āhārāṇettippabhavam, nālaṃ tad abhinanditaṃ. Tassa nissaraṇaṃ santām, atakkāvacaro dhuvam, ajātām asamuppānam, asokām virujām padaṃ, nirodho dukkhadhammānam, saṅkhārāpasamo sukho.

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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.