





TO  
THE SACRED MEMORY OF  
T. W. RHYS DAVIDS  
AND TO  
MRS. C. A. F. RHYS DAVIDS.

## FOREWORD

The organising efforts and unostentatious labour of the late good scholar T. W. Rhys Davids have placed students of Indian History and Culture of all grades not only in a heavy debt of obligation to him and his collaborators but also in possession of a very much desired volume of material from one main source of early Indian History namely Buddhistic. The whole mass of literature is there, more or less complete, in a form ready for use even by those that may not have the requisite scholarship to go to the originals. That, however, is only one part of the work. The details of information contained in this mass of literature have to be collected, sorted and analysed before they can be made use of for purposes of history generally. Mr. Bimala Charan Law is among the few earnest and assiduous students of Buddhist literature, who have devoted their energies to this, I do not wish to say thankless, necessary work of collecting and analysing these *disjecta membra* of historical value. Mr. Law is already known by his previous publications such as the *Kshatriya Clans in Buddhist India, Historical Gleanings* already published. The following pages deal with

another detail of importance to cultural history, 'Conception of spirits in Buddhist literature'. He has taken for his work one book *Petavatthu* which forms part of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* of the *Suttapitaka*, and as such belongs to the early Buddhist literature and therefore of the southern canon. This work has the benefit of a commentary by *Dharmapāla* of *Kānchi*, the famous principal of the *Nālandā* University about the middle of the seventh century A. D. Mr. Law's work is based mainly on this commentary.

The conception of spirits, as it appears in this work, has features which on the face of it, appear the same as the Hindu conception of spirits as such, of a limited character. In the main, the Buddhists seem to have conceived of spirits as continuing to exist, after leaving the mortal body, either in their various heavens as the result of good deeds, or undergoing various degrees of sufferings as spirits in this world of ours or Buddhist hells. They offer in their latter character in particular, close affinity to the Hindu conception of spirits of those who died unnatural deaths. The Buddhist does not seem to carry the idea of the spirit any further than that. Mr. Law offers a very good analysis of the *Petavatthu* so far as this particular topic is concerned, and makes a comparative study of this with similar conceptions prevalent among the other sections of the population of India, possible.

It was very good of Mr. Law to have asked

a Foreword of me, and I accede to his request with the greatest pleasure as it gives me an opportunity of expressing my own appreciation of his disinterested labour. It is to be hoped that the work will meet with sufficiently encouraging reception to stimulate him to continue the good work.

MADRAS UNIVERSITY

*15th July 1923.*

} **S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar**

## PREFACE

My object, in writing this short treatise, has been to acquaint the public, as far as possible, with what the ancient Buddhists thought about spirits and the spirit world. A study of the preta belief among the Southern Buddhist is likely to be attractive. Materials have been drawn for the first time, from the Hinayāna Buddhist literature and specially from the *Paramatthadīpanī* ('The Elucidation of the Highest Meaning') on the *Petavatthu* (preta stories), that is, the commentary on the *Petavatthu* which is one of the books of the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, written by *Dhammapāla* of *Kāñcipura* (Conjevaram). I fully agree with Mrs. Rhys Davids that the foolish little poems contained in the *Petavatthu* are no good but the stories given in its commentary, present before us a very interesting side of the preta belief. I am glad to find that the *Petavatthu* has been translated into German by Dr. Stede, but its commentary has not yet been translated into any modern language.

Prof. Nīlmaṇi Chakravarty, M. A. has contributed a paper on "Spirit belief in the *Jātaka Stories*" (*J. A. S. B.*, Vol. X., New series No. 7. pp. 257-263) in which an attempt has been made to give a brief account of spirit belief,

as far as it can be gathered from the Jātaka stories. The materials for his subject have been collected from the Jātakas only save and except a very few which are noticed in my treatise.

I am indebted to Rao Saheb Dr. S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, M. A., Ph. D. of the University of Madras for his foreword.

CALCUTTA,	}	Bimala Charan Law.
24 Sukea's Street,		
June, 1923.		

# CONTENTS

Foreword  
Preface

	Page
CHAPTER I	
Spirits in the Pāli Buddhist Literature ...	1
CHAPTER II	
Spirits in the Petavatthu & its Commentary...	10
Concluding Remarks ...	85
Index ...	93



# The Buddhist Conception of Spirits

## CHAPTER I

### Spirits in the Pāli Buddhist Literature

The spirit in Buddhist literature is designated by the word 'Peta' (i. e. *preta*) meaning literally 'the departed one,' and hence 'the departed spirit,' 'the spirit of a dead person,' as Childers puts it.<sup>1</sup> The belief that after death the departed spirits roam about enjoying the fruits of their good and bad deeds here upon earth, is one of the central ideas of the Buddhist faith, and a treatise dealing with spirits and the spirit-world, the *Petavatthu*, is included in the Pāli sacred canon, being one of the works in the *Khuddaka Nikāya* of the *Sutta Piṭaka*. Even before the rise of Buddhism, "the belief in the existence of departed ancestors," as Sir Charles Eliot points out,<sup>2</sup> "and the presentation of offerings to them have always formed a part of Hindu domestic religion. To gratify this persistent belief, Buddhism recognised the world of petas, i. e. ghosts or spirits."

---

1. R. C. Childers' Pāli Dictionary, p. 378.

2. Sir Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. I, p. 338.



In Brāhmanical literature we come across a class of beings called Pitris, the spirits of the dead, who drink from the moon the sweet *amrita* during the dark half of the month.<sup>1</sup> There are various kinds of Pitris: the Fathers of individual families, those of tribes, and the Fathers of the race. The Pitris are said to have adorned the black horse with pearls (to light the stars in the sky), and to have placed darkness in the night and light in the day, or to have spread out heaven and earth in concert with Soma. They are called "Warders of the Sun." The Fathers are soma-lovers and soma-drinkers and have a general invitation to come and partake of it at sacrifices with the gods. Special offerings are reserved for them at their own particular commemorative festivals-the Śrāddhas-principally a kind of wheat cake or dumpling called '*Piṇḍa*'.<sup>2</sup>

The belief that spirits require offerings from men for their sustenance is also found in Buddhist works. For example, the Amritāyur-dhyāna Sutra, a text of the northern Buddhists, states that there are a good many hungry petas and petalokas in Jambudvīpa<sup>3</sup>. The Aṅguttara Nikāya says that the petas enjoy happiness in consequence of their good deeds

---

1. Ragozin, *Vedic India*, p. 177

2. *Ibid.* p. 336.

3. *Buddhist Mahāyāna Sūtras*, S. B. E., Vol. XLIX, p. 165.



done in previous lives.<sup>1</sup> The same Nikāya further states that those who are pious and charitable are of service both to their living relatives and to the departed ones who have become petas.<sup>2</sup> It is recorded in the same Nikāya that the petas live on food which they get in the petaloka or what is given to them there by friends, officers, relatives and blood relations.<sup>3</sup> The Aṅguttara Nikāya mentions five kinds of balis (offerings) which are given to the petas.<sup>4</sup> If a peta to whom the offering is made, does not come to enjoy it, then another peta who is expecting offering from his relatives, comes to enjoy it. If there is no peta to receive it, the giver himself surely enjoys the benefit of his offerings.<sup>5</sup> Parents desire to have sons in the expectation that they will make offerings to them when they become petas.<sup>6</sup> In this connection we may mention *pubbapetabali*, which is one of the balis, meaning, offering to the relatives who are dead and have become petas.<sup>7</sup> It is stated in the Nimi Jātaka that some kings, viz : Sāgara, Mucalinda, Bhagīrasa and others had

---

1. Vol. I, pp. 155-156.

2. Vol. III, p. 78, cf. Vol. IV, p. 244.

3. Vol. V, p. 269 fol.

4. Vol. II, p. 68.

5. *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, Vol. V, p. 269 fol.

6. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 43.

7. *Ibid.* Vol II, p 68 ; Vol. III. p. 45.



to go to the petaloka on account of their sins, though they were noted for their charity. (Fausboll, *Jātaka*, VI., pp. 99-101) In the *Vessantara Jātaka*, we read of the petas as a class of beings suffering in the petaloka on account of their sins.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the *Jātaka* relates that some sages, viz, Yāmahanu, Somayāga, Manojava, Samudda, Bharata and others passed beyond the petabhavana by practising Brahmachariya.<sup>2</sup>

Mrs. S. Stevenson has shown that in the Hindu conception of a *preta*, it has a throat as narrow as the eye of a needle, so it can neither drink water nor breathe, and its shape is such that it can never stand or sit but it is for ever flying in the wind.<sup>3</sup> A man who commits suicide becomes either a *peta* or a *bhūta*, a *peta*'s time is spent in unrelieved misery.<sup>4</sup> A sacrifice (*Prāyaścitta koma*) is performed for the purification of the *peta* from any of the thirty-two ritual sins that the dead man may have committed whilst dying, such as accidentally touching an unclean thing at the time of death, dying on a bedstead not being shaved, or not being bathed before death.<sup>5</sup> The priest recites two different mantras that the dead

1. Fausboll, *Jātaka*, Vol. VI. p. 595.

2. Fausboll, *Jātaka*, Vol. VI, p. 99.

3. Mrs. S. Stevenson, *The Rites of the Twice-born*, p. 191.

4. *Ibid*, p. 199.

5. *Ibid*, p. 168.



man's preta may be delivered from its disembodied state.<sup>1</sup>

Spence Hardy basing his account on the legends current among the southern Buddhists, says that "the inhabitants of the *Lokāntarika naraka* are pretas, their bodies are 12 miles high, and they have very large nails. On the top of the head there is a mouth about the size of a needle's eye." "In the world of men there is a preta birth called *Nijhāmātanhā*. The bodies of these pretas always burn. They continually wander about, never remaining in any one place a longer period than the snapping of a finger. They live thus an entire kalpa. They never receive food or water and weep without intermission."<sup>2</sup> Besides, there are other kinds of pretas known as *Khuppipāsa* ( the petas having heads 144 miles in size, tongues eighty miles long, with the body thin and extremely tall ); there are the *Kālakañjakas* or petas who continually chase and maim each other with fire and shining weapons.<sup>3</sup> Subhūti says that there is a class of petas called *Utūpajīvī*.<sup>4</sup> In the *Dhammapadatthakathā*, we find that Mahāmoggallāna, accompanied by the Thera Lakkhana, while coming down from the Gijjhakūṭa, saw a peta called Ajagara by his divine eyes, with fire burn-

---

1. *The Rites of the Twice-born*, p 174

2. Spence Hardy, *Manual of Buddhism*, pp. 59-60.

3. Spence Hardy, *Manual of Buddhism*, p. 60.

4. Childers, *Pāli Dictionary*, p. 379.



ing from head to tail and tail to head and on both sides of his body. As soon as he saw the peta, he laughed and Lakkhana asked him why he was laughing. Moggallāna asked him to put the question in the presence of the Buddha. When the question was put before the Buddha, he said that he saw the peta from the foot of the Bo-tree. During the time of Kassapa Buddha, a banker named Sumraṅgala built a golden vihāra for the Buddha. One day while going to attend on the Buddha there early in the morning, he saw a peta lying down in the rest-house well covered and with mud on his feet. The banker said that he might be a thief who had wandered the whole night and was sleeping now. This enraged the thief who wanted to take revenge. He had the banker's paddy-field and house burnt seven times and he cut off the legs of his cows seven times. Yet he was not satisfied. He picked up friendship with a servant of the banker and asked him as to which of his possessions was the most highly prized by him. Knowing that it was the golden vihāra to which he was most fondly attached, he set fire to it. For these misdeeds he became a peta of the above description after death.<sup>1</sup> The same commentary speaks of a peta whose head was like that of a sūkara (pig) having boils on the cheek from which worms were coming out while

---

1. *Dhammapaṭi Commentary*, Vol. III, pp. 60-64.



his body was like that of a human being. During the time of Kassapa Buddha, there lived two bhikkhus who were fast friends in a vihāra. One day a bhikkhu who was a preacher of the Buddha's words, came to the vihāra as their guest. The monk who came there as a guest, thought that the place was very comfortable and alms were easily obtainable. He further thought that if these bhikkhus could be driven out of the vihāra, he would enjoy it alone. He tried to bring about a rupture between the two bhikkhus who were his hosts. He said to the senior bhikkhu thus, "the junior bhikkhu is telling me that you are not a good man, and you do not observe the precepts and he asks me to deal with you carefully." He then went to the junior monk and said, "the senior monk is telling me that you are not a good man, and you do not observe the precepts and he asks me to be careful in my dealings with you." Thus the preacher monk succeeded in breaking off their friendship and each of them gave up his claim to the vihāra, and left it to be enjoyed by the new-comer without any partner. The two bhikkhus afterwards met each other and the junior monk begged pardon of the senior for his conduct and the senior too asked him to forget everything and be friends again. They at last found out the cause of the disagreement and held the preacher monk liable for it. For these misdeeds, the preacher monk was

reborn as a peta of the above description. In the *Āṭānāṭiya Suttanta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*,<sup>1</sup> mention is made of the Kumbhaṇḍa petas who had a lord named Virūḷha in the quarter of the south and he had many sons. We are told by the same Suttanta that the petas were backbiters and murderous brigands, crafty-minded rogues, thieves and cheats.

It is stated in the *Petaratthu* that the petas when they come to their former home, stand outside the wall, at the corner of the house, at the corner of the street, and at the threshold. ( p. 4. )

In the *petaloka*, 'the dolorous realm of the petas,' there is no cultivation, no cow-keeping nor any trade or industry by which the petas can live.<sup>2</sup> Therefore the people who are kind to their departed relatives, thinking that they might live there happily, offer excellent food, drink, cloth, and other necessaries to the Saṃgha and offer the merit to the petas who enjoy the benefit of the offering by approving the meritorious act.

In the *Mahāniddeśa* there is the sentence, '*petamaṃ kātakataṃ na passati.*' The Niddeśa tells us that when a beloved one dies and becomes a

1. *Dīgha Nikāya* ( P. T. S. ), Vol. III, pp 197-198.

2. *Petaratthu* ( P. T. S. ), p. 5.



peta, he can not be seen<sup>1</sup> and makes the further observation that only the name of a person survives on earth when he is dead and has become a peta.<sup>2</sup> We thus find here and there in the Buddhist works references to petas, their appearances and their doings.

---

---

1. *Niddesa* ( P. T. S. ) Vol. I. p. 126.

2. *Ibid.* p. 127.

## CHAPTER II

### **Spirits in the *Petavatthu* and its**

### **Commentary**

To have a thorough understanding of the Buddhist conception of petas and their character, we have to turn to the *Petavatthu*, a work devoted entirely to the petas or the spirits of the deceased. The *atthakathā* or the commentary written on this work by Dhammapāla of Kāncīpura in southern India gives details of stories only hinted at in the canonical text itself. Dhammapāla must have compiled his stories from Buddhist tradition that was handed down not only orally but also recorded in the ancient *atthakathas* preserved in the great monasteries of Ceylon. Buddhaghosa in the early years of the fifth century A. C. translated the *atthakathas* on some of the most important works in the Tripitaka from Sinhalese into Pāli; and about the last quarter of the same century, many among the rest of the *atthakathās* were rendered into Pāli by Dhammapāla, and the *Petavatthu* commentary is one of them.

The stories preserved in this commentary are



not the product of Dhammapāla's own imagination but must have been handed down in Buddhist tradition from very ancient times. Three of them bear a close resemblance to the versions given in the Dhammapada commentary which is attributed to Buddhaghosa ; this shows that both of them drew from the same great source, namely, the Ceylonese atthakathās.<sup>1</sup>

Dhammapāla's atthakathā is a great storehouse of information about the petas, and an examination of these stories will enable us to form an idea of the Buddhist conception of spirits and the spirit world. With this object in view we shall attempt to give in brief a history of some of the individual petas as contained in the Petavatthu commentary by Dhammapāla. This work has been published by the Pāli Text Society but it has not yet been translated into any modern language.

*Khettūpamā peta.*

The commentary tells us that this peta was the disembodied spirit of a setthi-putta, the son of a very wealthy merchant of Rājagaha which was the ancient Magadhan capital at the time the Buddha lived. He was the only son of his parents who thought that if he spent even a

1. Mr. E. W. Burlingame in his *Buddhist Legends* (p. 37) thinks that Dhammapāla derived the stories from the Dhammapada Atthakathā. But it is more likely that both the writers derived them from the same source.

thousand coins every day he would not be able to exhaust the immense wealth stored up in their treasury. With this thought in their mind they did not care to teach him any art (*sippa*), and when he came of age, they married him to a damsel who was a desirable companion for him on account of her good family and lovely beauty, but she had no *dhamma* or faith in the Buddha and his teachings. Enjoying life with her, he spent his days and when his parents were dead, he surrounded himself with rogues that cheated him of his money. He spent his whole wealth in enjoyment and merry-making, giving away liberally to musicians, actors and others of the same class without performing any righteous deeds. At last he became so poor that he could not make both ends meet and lived as a beggar in the public alms-house (*anāthasālā*) in the same city. One day a band of robbers met and advised him to take to robbery and theft along with them. He joined their gang and was caught in the very first expedition with them before he could steal anything. The king ordered his head to be cut off. While he was being taken to the scaffold, a beauty of the town named Sulasā was moved at this wretched plight of the once rich and liberal young man and entreated the officers to wait a moment as she wanted to give him some sweets to eat and water to drink. At that time Mahāmoggallāna thought of going there to afford



an opportunity to the setthi's son of acquiring merit at the last moment of his earthly life by making some meritorious gifts. He accordingly went there with his alms-bowl. The banker's son offered him sweets and the drink brought by the handsome damsel, thinking that he at this last moment of his life was not in need of them. After this his head was cut off. By virtue of the great merit acquired by his gift to such a noble thera as Mahāmoggallāna, he deserved to be born in the great *devaloka*, the blissful abode of the gods ; but at the last moment, at the thought that he was indebted to Sulasā for this timely opportunity of making a gift, his heart was filled up with affection towards her, with the result that he was born on a much lower plane, as a tree-spirit residing on a banyan tree. Owing to this attachment, he stole away Sulasā while she was in the garden where the deity resided, by producing darkness and storm by means of his miraculous power. The deity kept her with him on the tree for a week, after the expiry of which she was left at the corner of the assembly in the Veluvana-vibāra where the Buddha was preaching. [Paramatthadīpanī on the Petavatthu, P. T. S., pp 1-9.]

*Sūkaramukhapeta*

During the time of the Buddha Kassapa, a bhikkhu who practised restraint so far as his

body was concerned but was unrestrained in speech, used to scold and abuse his fellow bhikkhus. After death, he was reborn in hell, but in the time of the Buddha Gautama, he was born again in the Gijjhakūṭa near Rājagaha, and on account of the *kamma* that still remained to fructify, he was suffering from hunger and thirst. His body was of a golden hue but the face was like that of a swine. The venerable Nārada who lived on the Gijjhakūṭa hill met him once early in the morning when he was going out on his alms-begging excursion, and enquired, "The whole of your body is brilliant like gold, it casts an effulgence all round, but your head bears resemblance to that of a pig. What act did you do in the past?" The peta replied, "I was restrained in body but unrestrained in speech. Therefore I am of such dazzling brilliance as you see. I tell you, Nārada, that as you have seen me in this wretched plight, don't commit sin by speech, let not your face become like that of a pig." This story is also given in the Jātakas.

### *Pūtimukhapeta*

During the time of Buddha Kassapa, two young men of good family who became devoted and pious bhikkhus, used to dwell in a village

---

1 P. D. on the *Petavatthu*, pp. 9-12.

cf. *Dhammapada commentary* (P. T. 8), Vol III, pp. 410-417.



hermitage. They were fast friends. A bhikkhu with evil intent, came to their hermitage and finding the place very comfortable and food and drink easily obtainable, wanted to have the vihāra to himself alone, after driving out the former occupants. He was successful in bringing about ill-feeling between them and both of them left the hermitage. The bhikkhu who was of evil motive, died soon, suffering under the burden of his sins and was cast into the hell called Avīci. The other two theras met each other in the course of their travel and after a mutual explanation, discovered how it was entirely the doing of that mischievous bhikkhu, and they again became good friends. They came back to live in their own vihāra again and eventually became Arahats.

The envious bhikkhu after residing in hell for the period between two Buddhas, came out when Gautama Buddha was living on earth, and to work out the residue of his sin by sufferings on earth, became a peta and dwelt near Rājagaha under the name Pūtimukha. The venerable Nārada met him while coming down from the Gijjhakūṭa hill and asked him thus, "Your appearance is beautiful, you live in the sky but a very dirty smell comes out of your mouth and vermin are moving in it. What did you do in the past to deserve this?" The peta replied, "I was a wicked monk unrestrained in speech ; good appearance has been acquired

by me by having outwardly kept up the semblance of an ascetic but the stench in my mouth is the outcome of my malicious words.”<sup>1</sup>

### *Pitthadhitalikapeta*

At Sāvattihî the nurse of Anāthapiṇḍika's grand-daughter gave her a doll. The grand-daughter played with it and called it her daughter. One day while she was engaged in sport, her doll fell down and was broken. The girl began to cry that her daughter was no more ; no body could console her and the nurse took her to Anāthapiṇḍika who sat by the side of the Buddha and the bhikkhus. Anāthapiṇḍika consoled her by saying that she should make offerings to her departed daughter. The Buddha was invited to a dinner next day. The Master uttered some stanzas expressing approval of the offer made by Anāthapiṇḍika, the purport of which is that for whomsoever the offering is made, whether for departed relatives or for the household deity or other gods, the donor himself acquires merit and the donee is also served ; sorrow, lamentation and weeping are of no use to the petas, these only bring suffering to the living relatives. •

### *Tirokuddapetas*

Long ago, ninety-two kalpas ago, there was a town called Kāsipurî of which Jayasena was

1. Paramatthadīpani on the Petavatthu ( P. T. S. ) pp 12-16.

2. Paramatthadīpani on the Petavatthu pp 16-19.



the king, and his queen was Sirimā. Of her was born the Bodhisatta Phussa who reached Buddhahood by acquiring *sammāsambodhi* or perfect knowledge of the truth.

He was very affectionate to his son and he used to say thus, "The Buddha, the Dhamma, the Samgha are mine. I shall allow nobody else to offer the four paccayas (the four necessities of a bhikkhu, clothing, food, bedding and medicine) to them." The other sons of the king got no opportunity of making offerings to the Buddha and thought out a plan to get the king's permission. They instigated the frontier people to rise in rebellion against the king and they themselves were sent to suppress the outbreak. When they returned successful, the king wanted to grant them a favour and they would ask for no boon except permission to offer the four paccayas to the Buddha and his disciples. The king very unwillingly gave them permission for three months only. After making the necessary arrangements, they took the Buddha to the newly built vihāra and made offerings to him. Some amongst them, however, became dissatisfied as owing to shortness of time they got no opportunity of making any offerings on their own account. The dissatisfied people put many obstacles in the way of the brothers. Sometimes they ate up the offerings and sometimes they spoiled them. They went so far as to set fire to the

alms-house ; these dissatisfied people were reborn in hell for their misdeeds and at the time of Kassapa Buddha, they were reborn as petas. As they did not obtain any offering from their relatives, they went to Kassapa Buddha and asked the reason of it. They were told in reply that they would get offerings at the time of Gautama Buddha during the reign of king Bimbisāra who was their former relative. When King Bimbisāra offered the Veluvana vihāra to the Buddha and his disciples, the petas hoped that they would get a share of the merit acquired by Bimbisāra but in vain. Consequently they made a horrible noise in the palace. Next morning, Bimbisāra frightened by the din made overnight, went to the Buddha and asked him about the cause of the trouble. Buddha told him that some of his relatives in a former birth were now petas and hoped to be relieved of their sufferings by sharing the merit acquired by him (Bimbisāra), but as he did not offer anything to them, they were sorely disappointed and hence made noise. King Bimbisāra thus instructed by the Buddha, gave a sumptuous dinner to the whole Saṅgha and made over to the petas the merit acquired by this act of goodness. In approving this meritorious act of the king, the Buddha preached the Tirokuddasuttam, the sum and substance of which is that people make offerings to their departed relatives, remembering the



previous kindness they had received from them.<sup>1</sup>

*Pañcaputtakhāḍakapeta*

Not far from Sāvattthī lived a householder who had a barren wife. His friends and relatives told him that he should marry again as he was childless but this he would not do owing to the great affection that he entertained for the wife. On hearing this his wife persuaded him herself to get another wife so that his familyline might not come to an end. Urged by her, the householder took another girl as wife and brought her to his house. Shortly afterwards, the second wife became pregnant. The first wife now grew jealous and thinking that if any child were born of the second wife, the latter would be the mistress of the house, she caused miscarriage with the help of a paribbājaka whom she had pleased with food and drink. The parents of the second wife coming to know of the miscarriage, charged the first wife with the offence but she denied the charge, swearing that if she were guilty of it, she might be driven by hunger and thirst to eat up five sons both morning and evening and further suffer various other troubles. The woman was reborn not far from that village as a petī or a female spirit of evil look (*dubbaṇṇārūpapetī*)

---

1. Petavatthu Commentary (P. T. S.) pp. 19-31.

on account of the sin committed by her. She could not get any food or drink. She used to beat five sons in the morning and five in the evening and had to eat up their flesh and yet could not satisfy her hunger. No cloth did she get to wear. Her body emitted an unbearable stench and was full of flies and vermin. Once eight theras when going to the Master at Sāvathī, saw her in this plight and asked her what was the cause of her misery. She told them what had happened.<sup>1</sup> The theras moved by pity, entered the house of the householder, her former husband, who offered them food and drink and they persuaded him to transfer the merit of this act of charity to his former wife who was thus freed from her miserable condition.

#### *Sattaputtakhādakapeta*

A Buddhist householder ( *Upāsaka* ) had by his wife two sons who were good in every way. The latter proud of these boys, used to disregard her husband who being offended, married again ; when the second wife became pregnant, the first wife caused her to take some drug which brought about miscarriage ; the other details of the story are the same as we find in the account of *Pañcaputtakhādakapeta*.<sup>2</sup>

---

1. Paramatthadīpanī on the *Petaratthu* ( P. T. S ), pp. 31-35.

2. Paramatthadīpanī on the *Petaratthu*, pp. 36—37.



*Gonapeta*

A householder at Sāvattḥī breathed his last. His son was overwhelmed with grief and used to go about hither and thither, asking anybody and everybody about his father and could not by any means be consoled. The Buddha seeing his miserable condition went to his house when the man put to him the question whether he knew where his father was gone. The Buddha in reply asked whether he wanted to know of his father in this birth or in those he had in the past. In this way he pacified his troubled soul. Afterwards when the bhikkhus were discussing among themselves the miraculous character of this deed, the Master told them that this was not the first occasion that he had soothed his aching heart but in the past also he had done the same. Then he narrated the following story :—In the past, the father of a householder in Benares went the way of the world. The man was inconsolable. His son, Sujāta, was a very clever young man and thinking of some means to bring consolation to his father who was sorely afflicted, he went outside the city and found there a dead bullock in a field ; he then went to the carcass of the bullock with hay, grass and water and repeatedly asked the bullock to eat and drink. The passers-by seeing this wanted to know the

reason of such a strange behaviour. The son did not answer and they went to his father and told him that his son Sujāta had gone mad. The father on hearing this at once ran to the spot and enquired why he was behaving like a mad man. The son replied, "I am not quite sure who is mad, you or I? I am giving food and drink to a bullock whose head and legs are here, in fact, the whole of whose body is before me, but nothing of the respected grandfather can be seen, neither his feet nor hands, nor his head, nor any other part of his body; weeping for him of whom there is nothing left behind, it is rather you that are beside your senses." The father hearing this, got back his senses and thanked the boy Sujāta. 'The Lord was Sujāta at the time.'

### *Mahāpesakārapeta*

Twelve bhikkhus took *kammaṭṭhāna* from the Buddha and went out in search of a suitable residence where clothes might be had. Gradually they found a beautiful forest tract and in the neighbourhood, a village where, it so turned out, lived eleven families of pesakāras or weavers. The Pesakāras coming to learn that the bhikkhus were looking for a suitable residence to practise *kammaṭṭhāna* without any hindrance, invited them to live there and built cottages for them in the wood and the

---

1. Paramatthadīpaṇi on the Petavatthu, pp. 35-42.

headman among them took upon himself the charge of supplying the necessities of two of the bhikkhus, while the rest were allotted among the remaining ten, one to each. The wife of the headman had no respect for the bhikkhus and did not serve the bhikkhus properly. Her husband, therefore, brought her young sister and made her the mistress of the house. She was respectful and served the bhikkhus with due reverence and attention. When the period of the rainy-weather-residence ended, the pesakāras gave a cloth to each of the bhikkhus. The irritated wife of the headman ridiculed her husband thus : “May the food and drink that you have presented to the sākyaputta ascetics be in the next world turned for you into ordure, urine and pus, and may the clothes be changed into sheets of burning iron.”

In course of time the headman was born as a powerful tree-god in the Vindhyaṭavī and his malicious wife, too, after her death came to live close by as a petī. Naked and ugly, oppressed by hunger and thirst, she came to the above tree-spirit and prayed for food and drink and a cloth to wear. He procured for her a heavenly cloth, food and drink ; but no sooner did she take them than they were converted in her hands into ordure, urine and pus and the cloth as soon as worn turned into a burning sheet of iron. Suffering from anguish and extreme pain, she



wandered about filling the place with her loud cries.

A bhikkhu after rainy-season-sojourn, was going on a visit to the Master with a caravan of merchants through the Vindhyaṅgavī. The merchants travelled by night and in the day time they rested in a shady retreat in the forest. One day the bhikkhu fell asleep and was left behind by the caravan. He wandered up and down and reached the tree where resided that virtuous spirit who seeing him appeared before him in human form and showed his reverence to him. At that time, the petī, his former wife, came and prayed for food and drink and clothes, and these the moment they were supplied by him underwent a change as described before. The bhikkhu asked for the reason and the tree-spirit narrated to him the whole thing and asked him whether there was any means of relief from that dreadful suffering. The bhikkhu answered that if food and drink and clothes were offered to a bhikkhu on her behalf and she at the same time heartily approved of it, then there might be a means of escape from the evil. The tree-spirit did as desired and presented two beautiful cloths to the Master through that bhikkhu, and thus the miserable woman was released from her wretched lot.<sup>1</sup>

---

1. P. D. on the Fetavattbu pp. 42-46.

*Khalātya-peta*<sup>1</sup>

Once at Benares, there was a charming woman of the town, possessing an exquisitely fine feature and complexion and a very beautiful head of hair, dark and long, reaching down to the *mekhalā*, which she wore round the hips. Many young men were attracted by the beauty of her hair. Some women, jealous of her hair, bribed her maid to apply some drugs that would destroy it. The maid mixed them with her bathing powder and gave it to her when she went to bathe in the Ganges. As soon as she plunged in waters, her hair fell off by the roots; thus deprived of her hair, she looked ugly, and being ashamed to go to town, lived outside the city and made a living by dealing in oil and wine. Once she invited some people to drink wine as much as possible and when they were overdrunk, she took away their clothings. One day, seeing an Arahāt going round for alms, she invited him to her house and served him with a choice dish prepared with oil. The Arahāt, out of compassion for her, partook of the food thus offered, while she stood holding an umbrella over his head, which he approved. She at the same time prayed for beautiful hair. As a result of her good and evil deeds, she in her next life

---

1. In the Petavatthu (P. T. S., p. 9) this peta is named as Khalātya peta whereas in its commentary, this peta is called khalātiyapeta. (P. D. on the Petavatthu p. 53)

found herself seated alone in a golden *vimāna* ( a celestial mansion ) on the ocean ; she got back the beautiful hair as prayed for, but on account of her having stolen the clothings, she was naked. Thus being born again in that *vimāna*, she passed a long period, covering the interval between two Buddhas. When the present Buddha was on this earth, a hundred merchants of Sāvattihī saw her *vimāna* on the wide ocean, while on a voyage to Suvarṇabhūmi ; their ship was being driven hither and thither by contrary winds. The chief of the merchants gazing with wonder on the golden mansion, entreated the occupant to come out. She replied that as she was naked, she was ashamed of appearing before the merchants. He offered her upper garments ( *uttariya* ) wherewith she might robe herself and appear before him. She replied that anything given her with hands would not reach her, and requested him to make a gift of the cloth to a pious and faithful Upāsaka who was on board the ship and let the effect of this meritorious deed be transferred to her. As soon as this was done and the merit accruing therefrom was given her, she came out of her mansion with a sweet smile on her face, draped in the finest garments. Struck with wonder at such a quick effect of meritorious work, the merchants enquired about her past *karmas* and these, both good and bad, she detailed to them, gave them food and drink and



requested them to take some presents to the Buddha at Sāvattihī where they went and worshipped the Buddha in her name. The Lord approved of this merit and the *peti* was reborn in a golden palace in the *Tāvatisa* heaven.

### *Nāgapeta*

Samkicca, a seven year old boy, became an arahat, while shaving his head. Becoming a *sāmaṇera* or novice, he was dwelling in a forest-hermitage with thirty bhikkhus whom he saved from the hands of five hundred robbers.

He instructed the robbers in the teachings of the Master and ordained them as *sāmaṇeras*. He took them all to the Buddha, and after listening to the teachings of the Master, they became *Arahats* and Samkicca got full ordination from the Master and came to Isipatana with five hundred bhikkhus. There was a pious and faithful *Upāsaka* ( lay believer ) at Benares who used to instruct people to give alms to the bhikkhus.

At that time, a Brahmin had two sons and one daughter. The eldest son was a friend of the *Upāsaka*. One day the *Upāsaka* came to Samkicca accompanied by the eldest son. The latter acquired some amount of faith in the Buddha. The *Upāsaka* advised him to offer alms daily to a bhikkhu ; but his friend, the Brahmin boy, refused by saying that this was

---

1. Paramattha—Dīpanī on the Petavatthu, ( P. T. S. ) pp. 46-53.

not the custom with the Brahmins. The *Upāsaka*, however, persuaded the Brahmin boy to give alms to himself and he would offer it to the bhikkhus. He consented. By and by the younger brother and the sister also acquired some amount of faith in the Buddha. All these three were engaged in making offerings to the *Samaṇas* and the *Brāhmaṇas*, but their parents were false believers and did not offer alms to any body. Their daughter was selected as bride of her maternal uncle's son, but the son became a *sāmaṇera* or novice under Saṃkicca. But he used to take his meal at his mother's house. His mother always pressed him to marry the girl she had selected. He became excited and asked permission from Saṃkicca to give up the *brahmacariya* life, but his teacher, seeing that he would soon become an *Arahat*, asked him to wait a month. After a month he was asked to wait a fortnight and again a week more. In the mean time, the house of his bride's parents fell down, causing death to the Brāhmaṇa and Brāhmaṇī with two sons and daughter. The Brāhmaṇa and the Brāhmaṇī became spirits (*petā and petī*) and the two sons and daughter became *deratās* living on earth. The *petā* and *petī* used to beat each other with iron clubs and as the result of beating, boils appeared and burst out and the pair used to suck blood and pus from each other's boils. The *sāmaṇera* asked his teacher's permission to go home after the

lapse of the fixed period. The teacher asked him to come after sunset while the *Catuddasitithi* of the dark fortnight continued. In the mean time, the teacher went behind the Isipatana vihāra and waited there ; at that time, the two brothers with their sister were passing by the side of the vihāra on their way to an assembly of the Yakkhas and their parents were following them in the most wretched plight, striking each other with iron clubs. Saṃkicca pointed this out to the *sāmaṇera* who at his bidding asked them about the past deeds ( *kammas* ) that had caused their present condition and he was told that on account of misdeeds in past life, the Brahmin pair were put to miseries, and their children, on account of their good deeds and acts of charity, were enjoying happiness among gods. The *sāmaṇera* afterwards became very much averse to worldly life and at last became an *Arahat*.<sup>1</sup>

### *Uragapeta*

At Sāvattī, there was an *Upāsaka* who had a son but the son died. He became mad with grief and did not pay attention to household duties ; nor did he go out, as was his practice before. The Buddha, knowing this, went to the

---

1. P. D. on the Petavatthu pp. 53-54.



house of the *Upāsaka* and in order to remove his grief, related to him the *Uruga Jātaka* which runs thus :—

At Benares, there was once a Brahmin family named *Dhammapāla* and all the members of the family used to meditate upon death and if any one went out of the house, he instructed others not to lament. One day, the Brahmin went to cultivate the field accompanied by his son who set fire to the dry grass, weeds, etc., and a black snake bit him, frightened by the fire. The Brahmin asked a passer-by to tell his wife to come to the field with rice sufficient for one man and garlands and other sweet scented things, after she had herself bathed and put on pure garments. The passer-by went to the Brahmin's house and delivered the message. The members of the family acted according to the instruction given by the Brahmin. The Brahmin after taking bath and meal, adorned himself with garlands, etc., surrounded by the members of the family, put the dead body of his son on a pyre, and they all sat on one side, as if nothing had happened. The Brahmin's son was himself reborn as *Sakka* in heaven and he was the *Bodhisatta*. Moved with pity, he came down in the guise of a Brahmin and asked the Brahmin, "Are you burning a deer? If so, please let me have some meat." The Brahmin replied, "No, my young son who was endowed with all good qualities, is being burnt." The disguised

Brahmin told him thus, "If you are burning your son, it is strange that you are not in the least moved." The Brahmin replied, "Just as an *uruga* ( a snake ) goes away leaving behind its old skin, so a human being leaves the body without having any attachment for it. On the other hand, the body cannot conceive that it is being burnt or that the relatives are mourning for it, therefore, I do not grieve for my son who has gone where his own work ( *karma* ) has led him." Then *Sakka* in the guise of a Brahmin went to the *Brāhmaṇī* and asked her, "Though the father may be hard, the mother who has brought up the son with so much trouble, must have a softer heart, why is she not grieved for her lost child?" The *Brāhmaṇī* replied, "He came uncalled for and has gone away without asking permission. He is not conscious of his body being burnt by us nor of the lamentations of his relatives, therefore, I do not cry or lament; he is bound by his own *karma*." The disguised Brahmin went to his sister and asked her, "Why are you not sorrowful, as we know that sisters feel very great affection for brothers." The sister replied, "If I were to make myself lean and thin by crying, it would be of no avail; if I spoil my health by crying, the relatives would be sorry, therefore, I do not mourn for him, he has followed the path which was his own." The disguised Brahmin then went to the wife of the deceased and said, "A wife

has great attachment towards her husband, and if the husband dies, the wife becomes a helpless widow. But you do not show any such grief nor make any lamentation for your deceased husband." The wife replied, "Crying for a departed husband is like a child's cry for catching the moon." *Sakka* then went to the dead man's maid-servant and said, "As you were ill-treated by your deceased master, now you are free from him and it is for this reason that you are not crying." She replied, "No. Although he was my master's son, yet I loved him as my own child." The Brahmin in disguise asked why then she was not crying and in reply she said, "As an earthen pot cannot be repaired when broken, so a dead body cannot be brought to life again; it is needless to cry." *Sakka* then introduced himself to the Brahmin and other members of the family, gave them great wealth to enjoy and then left them.

The Master narrating this story to the *upāsaka* at *Sāvattihī*, freed him from his grief and revealed to him many truths.<sup>1</sup>

### *Mattakundalipeta*

*Mattakundali-peta* was the son of a miserly Brahmin at *Sāvattihī*. On account of the miserliness of his father, the boy could not perform any meritorious deed, except saluting

---

1. P. D. on the *Petaravattu*, pp. 61-60.



the Lord with great reverence and respect. For this merit, he was born as a god ; his father was mourning his death in the cemetery. In order to remove his father's grief, he went to the cemetery in the guise of a *peta* and began to cry for the sun and the moon. The father said, "Why are you crying for the sun and the moon which cannot be got ? Are you a fool ?" The *peta* answered, "The sun and the moon for which I am crying are visible, but your dead son for whom you are crying, cannot even be seen. Then, please judge for yourself, who is the greater fool." The father's sorrow abated, and the father enquired, "Who are you ?" The *peta* introduced himself to him, and manifested himself in full celestial splendour.'

*Satthikūṭasahasapeta*

There lived in Benares a cripple who could pierce anything with a stone. One of his pupils learnt the art from him and in order to test his skill in the art, shot a stone which broke the head of a *paccekabuddha*, named Sunetta, who sat on the banks of the Ganges. The *paccekabuddha* obtained *parinibbāṇa* then and there. The people finding the saint dead,

---

1. P. D. on the Petavatthu, p. 92, cf. Dhammapada Commentary, vol. 1. p. 28.

killed the pupil who suffered many years in the *Arīci* hell and was reborn as a *peta* near Rājagaha to work out the remaining sin. As a consequence of his misdeeds, sixty thousand iron arrows appeared on his head three times a day, and he fell down on the ground with broken head and when they disappeared, he regained his former normal state of health. One day, the venerable *Mahāmoggallāna*, when coming down from the *Gijjhakūṭa* hill, saw the *peta* and had a talk with the spirit, the sum and substance of which is the same as narrated above ( P. D. on the *Petavatthu*, pp. 252-256, cf. D. commentary, Vol. II. pp. 65-73)

#### *Setthiputtapeta*

The king of Kosala, Pasenadi, heard four terrible sounds at dead of night, *Du-sā-nā-so*. Next morning, he sent for his chaplain, told him that he had heard such a sound and asked him what would be its effect. The *Purohita*, thinking that there was a very good opportunity for enriching the Brahmins, replied, "In consequence of this, there will be danger to your life, kingdom or wealth ; but by performing a *Sabbacatukka Yajña* you will be saved." The king then asked his officers to make arrangements. Hearing this, the queen Mallikādevī dissuaded the king from performing the sacrifice entailing the slaughter of many animals and she advised him

to go to the all-knowing Buddha and take his instruction. Accordingly he went to the Master who told him that nothing would happen to the king, that those cries came from four petas who were suffering in the *Lohakumbhi* hell, and that those four sinners had been sons of *setthis* at Rājagaha in their previous birth. They were habitual adulterers. Sometimes they committed adultery by paying money to the girl, sometimes by fraud and sometimes by enticement. In consequence of their misdeeds, they were now in hell. It took them thirty thousand years to go to the bottom of the hell and the same period they took to come up to the top therefrom. Thus they came to the topmost part of the hell; they tried their utmost to give vent to their terrible sufferings in hell and each uttered a stanza which was not heard fully, but only the first letter was audible. The Buddha repeated these stanzas fully to the king, the purport of which is as follows:—“It is now sixty thousand years that we have been suffering in hell, when will our sufferings end? The sins committed by us are endless. We have spent our life in misdeeds. We had plenty of wealth and we misused it, if we go from this place and become human beings, we shall accumulate much merit by charity and observance of the precepts. (*Paramatthadīpanī* on the *Petavatthu*, pp. 279-282, cf. *Dhammapada* commentary, Vol. II. p. 10; Fausholl's *Jātaka*, Vol. III, pp. 44-48).



*Bhogasamharapeta*

When the Buddha was at Veluvana, four women used to earn money as hawkers by selling things and cheating people by using false weights etc. They were reborn as *petis*, residing on the wall encircling Rājagaha. Being overwhelmed with great pain, they used to cry loudly at night, saying, "we have accumulated wealth by fair and foul means ; others are enjoying the wealth, we are the partakers of misery only." The people hearing this became terrified and asked the Buddha, after making offerings to him, as to the cause of this. The Buddha said, "The sound will not put you to any inconvenience, the four *petis* are crying on account of pain." (P. D. on the *Petavatthu*, pp. 278-79).

*Akkharakkhapeta*

When the Buddha was at Sāvattihī, an upāsaka who was a resident of Sāvattihī, went to Videha with cartloads of merchandise. After selling his wares there and taking things from Videha, he started for Sāvattihī. In a forest tract, one pole of his cart broke down. A man was then passing through that forest with an axe to cut down trees. Seeing the merchant in a helpless condition, he took pity on him and after cutting down a tree, he prepared a pole out of the trunk of the tree for him, and repaired his cart. The wood-cutter, after death, became a god

living on earth, who remembering his deeds, uttered a stanza in front of the house of the Upāsaka, the purport of which is as follows :—  
“Charity not only gives reward in the next world but also in this world ; by practising charity, both the donor and the donee are saved. Awake, don’t be indolent.”<sup>1</sup>

*Ambapeta*

When the Buddha was at Sāvattihī, a householder was reduced to poverty and his wife died, leaving a daughter only. After leaving his daughter in a friend’s house, he went to trade, taking a loan of 100 *kahāpanas*. He soon recovered his capital together with a profit of five hundred *kahāpanas* and while he was returning home with the money, a number of bandits seized him on the way. He threw the money in a bush and hid himself near it. The bandits took his life. After death, the trader lived there as a *peta* on account of his avarice. The trader’s daughter heard the news of her father’s death, became sorrowful and wept bitterly, Her father’s friend in whose house she had been residing so long, consoled her and promised to bring her up like her father. She knowing her own poor condition, served the man well and wanting to perform the obsequies of her father, prepared delicious rice-gruel and collected good mangoes. With these

---

1. P. D. on the Petavatthu ( P. T. S. ) pp. 277-278.

things she fed the Buddha and Saṃgha and at last prayed that the merit of this deed might be enjoyed by her father. The Master approved of this prayer and her departed father got a good house with a beautiful mango-garden having a *kalpa* tree and a nice pond and also many more excellent heavenly things. Sometime after, the merchants were going that way and stayed for a night at the place where they had been before. The *peta* appeared with a *vimāna* in the garden before some merchants of Sāvattihī, who were passing that way and who asked the *peta* thus : “How have you got this beautiful pond with nice bathing ghats, and this mango-garden giving fruits in all seasons, and where did you get this *vimāna* ?” The *peta* replied, “My daughter offered rice-gruel with mangoes to the Buddha and as a consequence of this act, I have obtained these nice things.” The *peta* offered half the money that he had been guarding so long, to the merchants and asked them to hand over the other half to his daughter, to pay off his debt and to enjoy the rest for her own benefit. (P. D. on the *Petavatthu*, pp. 273-276).

### *Pāṭaliputtapeta*

Some merchants of Sāvattihī and Pāṭaliputta went to *Suvarṇabhūmi* in a ship. Now an *upāsaka* who was much attached to a woman, died of an illness and though he had done good deeds, yet



after death was reborn as a *vimānapeta* on the sea on account of his attachment to this woman. Thus he was there on the sea with his heart fixed on the girl he loved, and it so happened that she also was on board the ship of the merchants. In order to meet the woman whom he loved, the *peta* stopped by his miraculous powers the further progress of the ship. Wondering about it, the merchants came to know that it was the work of the *peta* and to save themselves, they put her on a bamboo raft and let it go with her. As soon as she left, the ship began to run fast towards Suvannabhūmi. The *peta* took her to his own residence and lived with her in happiness ; but after a year, she became anxious to leave this place and entreated him thus : “My dear, I am unable here to do anything that will benefit me in the next world, do kindly, therefore, take me to Pāṭaliputta.” In reply the *peta* said, “You have seen hells and the animal world and beings of many sorts such as *petas*, *asuras*, men and gods, and you have seen with your own eyes the results of good and bad deeds (*kamma*) ; as requested I shall carry you unharmed to Pāṭaliputta, and do you perform meritorious deeds there.” The woman replied, “You are my well-wisher, I shall perform meritorious deeds according to your instruction. I have indeed seen for myself the things you speak of.” Then the *peta* went through the sky with the woman and left her in the centre of

Pāṭaliputta where she was received with joy by her friends and relatives as she had been given up as lost in the sea. (P. D. on the Peta-vatthu, pp. 271-73).

### *Gonapeta*

At Sāvattihī, there were a number of people who banded together into a gaṇa or guild and were unbelievers, unfaithful, misers and doers of deeds according to their sweet will. After their death, they were all born in the peta-world and resided in groups near Sāvattihī. One day, the venerable Mahāmoggallāna, while going to Sāvattihī for alms, saw them on the way and asked, "What is the cause of your being naked, ugly and lean ? Why are you reduced to mere skeleton ?" "It is the effect of our own sinful deeds which have led us to our misery," answered the petas. "But what evils did you do with your body, mind and speech ? Of what work is this the retribution ?" Thus asked, they replied, "If we go to a river to drink water, it becomes dried up and if when it is hot we sit in a cool shady place, the place becomes unbearable, the wind blows hot upon us ; oppressed by hunger we travel long distances but in vain, we fall down on the ground unable to get our hunger appeased ; for want of good deeds, we are suffering here and if we become human beings on earth, we would accumulate much merit.

Moggallāna went to the Buddha and spoke to him about it. (P. D. on the Petavatthu, pp. 269-271)

*Gūthakhāḍakapeta*

In a village not far from Sāvattī, a man of property built a *vihāra* for a bhikkhu who was much associated with his family. Many bhikkhus used to gather there from different quarters and the people of the village being very much pleased, used to give them food and drink. The family bhikkhu could not bear it and became very envious, and speaking against the bhikkhus who came there, induced the householder to abuse them. The family bhikkhu was reborn as a *peta* residing in the *vaccakuṭi* (the privy) of the *vihāra*, on account of this sin. The householder died and was reborn as a *peta* dwelling on the upper part of the privy of the *vihāra*. Mahāmoggallāna saw the householder *peta* and asked him as to the cause of his residing in such a dirty place. The householder *peta* replied, “My family priest is envious of other bhikkhus and he does not like that others should come to me, his *dāyaka* (supporter). Being induced by him, I abused the other bhikkhus. On account of this sin committed by me, I am reborn here as a *peta*.” The venerable Moggallāna further asked him, “What has become of your family priest?” The householder *peta* replied, “He is reborn as a *peta* on

the lower part of the privy and he serves me. We live here eating dirt, I partake of the leavings of other people's food and he lives upon mine." Having heard this, Mahāmoggallāna went away and informed the Buddha ( P. D. on the *Petavatthu*, pp. 266-269 ).

### *Sānurāsipeta*

In the past, there lived at Benares a king named *Kitava*. His son went to sport in the garden and while returning saw a *pacceka-buddha* named Sunetta going out of a house to seek for alms. The prince being puffed up on account of his princely power, thought, "How is it that the shaven-headed monk passes on without saluting me ?" Hence he became angry, and got down from the elephant. He asked the *Pacceka-buddha* whether he had got any alms, forcibly snatched away the bowl from him and threw it on the ground, and it was broken to pieces. Finding that he was unmoved even after such treatment and was looking on with kindness, joy and serenity of mind, the prince felt offended and said, "Knowest thou not that I am the son of King Kitava, what can you do by thus looking at me ;" and thus ridiculing him he went his way. But even on his way he was overtaken by a terrible burning sensation like that of hell-fire as a result of which he died and was reborn in the *Avīci Hell*. After suffering from the hellish tortures for thousands of years



during the time of Gotama Buddha, he was re-born in a village of *Kevattas* or fishermen near Kuṇḍinagara ; but on him dawned the knowledge of his previous birth. Remembering the sufferings in his previous births, he did not accompany the other fishermen who were his relatives, on fishing excursions ; but, on the other hand, when they left him, he used to tear their nets and throw the living fish into the tank. After seeing all such acts done by him, his relatives expelled him from the house but one of his brothers was very kind to him. At that time the venerable Ānanda reached Kuṇḍinagara and was staying on the *Sānuvāsi* hill. The young *Kevatta* driven away by his relatives, wandered up and down and reached the place where the *thera* was, at dinner time. Knowing him to be hungry Ānanda offered him food and then learning the history of his past life, instructed him and finally conferred the *pabbajjā* (ordination) on him and took him to the Buddha who was very gracious to him and as he had not done much good work, the Master entrusted to him the task of filling the water-jars of the *bhikkhus*. Seeing this, the *Upāsakas* made a regular supply of food for him. Afterwards he became a famous monk and the leader of a congregation of twelve thousand *bhikkhus*, and took his abode on the *Sānuvāsipabbata*. His relatives numbering five hundred who were killers of fish and who had acquired no merit by good deeds, became *petas* after death. His parents

who were now *petas*, were ashamed to invite him personally, as they had driven him from home and so they sent to him his brother who had been kind to him before. This brother, now a *peta*, went to his saintly brother, informed him of the suffering of his parents and asked his help. The saintly *Thera* offered alms collected by him and his disciples, fed the *Saṅgha* with it to the merit of his parents and relatives who were *petas*, saying, "Let my relatives enjoy the fruit of this merit and let them be happy." Shortly afterwards the *petas* obtained good food and drink but no clothing. The *thera* was again requested by the *petas* to give them clothes. He after collecting rags and making clothes out of them, offered them to the *Saṅgha* to their merit and at last they got clothes to wear. They then wanted a dwelling place and the *thera* built a hut of leaves and offered it to the *Saṅgha* to their merit and the *petas* got good houses. The *petas* afterwards got good conveyances. All the *petas* then came nicely dressed to worship the *thera*. (P. D. on the *Petavatthu*, pp. 177-186).

The same account of the son of a king named *Kitava* is also repeated in the *Rājaputtapetakathā*, where the *Rājaputta* is no other than the prince whose history is given in the *Sānuvāsi-petakathā*. (P. D. on the *Petavatthu*, pp. 263-266)

#### *Kumārapeta*

Two sons of a king of Kosala were very

handsome in their youth and being proud of youth and beauty, they committed adultery and were reborn as *petas* residing on the moat surrounding Kosala. They used to keep up a terrible noise at night and the people who heard their cries, got frightened. In order to avert the evil effects of their cries, they made plentiful offerings to the *Saṅgha* headed by the Buddha. Then they informed the Buddha of the object of their offerings, the Blessed One assured them that these cries would do no harm to them. The Buddha related the above story to them and asked them to transfer the merit of the offerings to the *petas* ( P. D. on the *Petavatthu*, pp. 261-263 ).

### *Dhātuvivannaṅgapa*

After the *parinibbāna* of the Lord, in the forest of the *Mallas*, between the twin *sālu* trees, when his relics were divided, Ajātaśatru, King of Magadha, got a share and enshrined it with great respect and honour and then instituted a worship of the same on a very grand scale. Thousands of people worshipped the relics. At that time some believers in false doctrines became dissatisfied and were eventually reborn as *petas*. At Rājagaha lived a wealthy householder whose wife, daughter and daughter-in-law who were staunch believers in the Buddha, set out to worship the relics, taking with them sweet-scented flowers and perfumes, etc. The wealthy householder asked them not to go to worship the

relics which were mere bones and spoke in derogatory terms of their worship. But they did not pay attention to his words and went to perform their task and returning home shortly afterwards, fell ill and passed away ; after death they were reborn in the *Devaloka*, ( world of the gods) and soon after the householder also, burning with rage, died and was reborn as a *peta*. One day *Thera Kassapa* out of compassion for people, caused them for their instruction to see the *peta* and the *devatās*. Seated in the quadrangle of the *Caitya* (monastery) Mahākassapa asked the *peta* who had spoken ill of the relics, "You are standing in the sky, a stench is coming out of your body and your mouth is full of vermin. Tell me what you did to deserve all this." The *peta* related his past history and repenting, said, "Born as a human being again, I will certainly worship the *stūpa* containing the relics of the Buddha over and over again." Mahākassapa made this the text of a sermon to the congregated people.<sup>1</sup>

### *Ucchupeta*

When the Buddha was at Veluvana, a certain person took up a bundle of sugar-cane on his shoulders and walked on chewing a cane. A pious and honest *upāsaka* was following him along with a little boy who began to cry for a piece of sugar-cane. The father of the boy

---

1. P. D. on the *Petaratthu* ( P. T. S ), pp. 212-215.



approached him and asked for a piece of sugar-cane for his son. The man with the sugar-cane sticks became angry and threw a piece of sugar-cane at him. The punishment of the man was proportionate to his deed. After death he was reborn as a *peta* and he got a sugar-cane field measuring eight *karisas*, full of very big, green, nice and juicy sugar-canes as thick as clubs; wishing to partake of the sugar-cane, he went to the field, but as soon as he was there, the canes came down on his back and he was struck so severely that he fell down senseless. This was his lot whenever he made similar attempts. Once the venerable Mahāmoggallāna saw him on his way to Rājagaha and asked the *peta* about the cause of his suffering and the latter related to him the evil deeds done by him in his past life and the retribution that had overtaken him then. The *thera* advised him to take a bundle of sugar-cane on his back, and go to Veluvana and offer it to the Buddha. He took a huge bundle to Veluvana and the Master with the *bhikkhu-saṅgha* enjoyed the canes and thus he got rid of his sufferings and as a result of this offering, he was reborn in the *Tāvātimsa heaven* ( P. D. on *Petavatthu*, pp. 257-260 ).

### *Nandikāpeta*

Two hundred years after the *parinibbāna* of the Lord, in the kingdom of Suratt̥ha there was

a king named Piṅgala. Piṅgala's commander-in-chief was Nandaka who was a believer in false doctrines. He did not believe in happiness resulting from good deeds nor in the punishment caused by sins. Nandaka's daughter *Uttarā* was given in marriage to one of a family of equal position. After his death, Nandaka was reborn as a *peta* and resided on a *Nigrodha* (banyan) tree in the *Vindhyātavī* skirting the Vindhyā hills. His daughter, *Uttarā*, offered to a saintly *thera* cool and perfumed drink as well as excellent cake and sweets to the benefit of her departed father, and prayed that the fruit of the merit might be reaped by him. As a result of this meritorious deed, Nandaka got plenty of cake and sweet drink, etc. Nandaka was much impressed seeing that this act of vicarious charity conferred upon him such excellent things although he had never practised charity. He further recollected that king Piṅgala whose eyes had not yet opened to the true faith, had gone to a conference with king Dhammāsoka and would be soon coming back. Nandaka thought that as soon as he would see the king returning, he would speak to him and try to remove his sceptical views. Shortly afterwards the king made his appearance and the *peta* Nandaka in order to take him to his abode, led him to a wrong path which ultimately brought him to his abode. The *peta* offered the king excellent cake and good drink and fed him and his whole retinue. The king then asked him whether he

was a *Devatā* or a *Gandhabba*. In reply, he related to him the whole of his past history and told him thus, “Buddha is the foremost of all in the world of gods and men. You take refuge in *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and *Saṅgha* with your wife and children. Give up killing, stealing, drinking spirituous liquors and similar other sinful habits, and be attached to your own wife.” The king promised to act up to his instruction. It is to be noticed that this story has been added to the *Petavatthu* at the *Third Buddhist Convocation*. ( P. D. on the *Petavatthu*, pp. 244-257 ).

### *Ambasakkharapeta*

When the Buddha was at Jetavana, a *Licchavi Rājā* named *Ambasakkhara* lived at *Vaiśālī*. At *Vaiśālī*, in front of a merchant's shop, there was a pit full of mud and water. The people suffered much, as they had to jump over the pit. Sometimes it happened that many fell into the pit and became covered with mud and thereby suffered considerably. The merchant, in order that people might have no more trouble on this account filled up the pit with bones of cattle. He was naturally pious, free from anger and endowed with many other good qualities. One day, out of sport, without any evil intent, he concealed the garments of his associate with whom he had gone to bathe, but immediately returned the clothing to him. The merchant's nephew, however.

stole some articles from others' houses and concealed them in the shop of his uncle. The uncle and the nephew were arrested on the charge of theft. The uncle was sentenced to death and the nephew was placed on a *sūla* or a pointed dart. The merchant died and was reborn as a god living on earth and he got a good horse as a result of his good deed of putting the bones in the pit, and, for his other virtues, his body emitted a sweet-scent. But, on account of his having concealed the garments, he had to go about naked. He used to go and see his nephew on horse-back and bless him with the cryptic saying, "Live long, life is better." At this time the king of Vaiśālī named Ambasakkhara desired to win a beautiful damsel whom he had seen in a house in the city, while going about. Coming to know that she was the wife of another person, he engaged her husband as one of his officers in order to win the love of his wife. The husband was entrusted with the difficult task of bringing muds of red colour and a red lotus from a tank which was situated at a distance of three *yojanas* from Vaiśālī and the condition was that if he could not return to the city in the course of the day, he would be put to death. The husband quickly went to the tank and with the help of the spirit living in that tank, got his desired objects and reached Vaiśālī before sunset and before the gate was closed, but the gate-keeper, acting under the secret



instructions of the king, did not allow him to go in. When on the next day, Ambasakkhara wanted to take away his life, he pleaded that he had actually come in time, and cited the merchant living as a god outside the city as a witness. The *Rājā* came to the spot where the naked god was and asked him why he was naked. The god related his story and there was a long discourse between the *Rājā* and the god who exhorted him to avoid evil and do good, as every deed was sure to bring its inevitable result. The *Rājā* at last impressed by his exhortations, released the nephew of the god and he offered garments to the great *thera* Kappitaka and to the other *bhikkhus*, in order that the naked god might obtain clothes to wear. Then the king gave up improper thoughts and deeds and took refuge in the three gems, *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and *Samgha* ( P. D. on the *Petavatthu* pp. 215 foll ).

### *Kūṭavinicchayakapeta*

When the Teacher was at *Veluvana*, King Bimbisāra used to observe six *uposatha* days ( days of religious observance, fasting and abstinence from sensual pleasures ) in the month. Many persons following him also did the same. The king used to enquire of anybody and everybody who approached him whether he had observed the *uposatha*. One of his judicial officers used to speak malicious words and cheat

people. He was also in the habit of taking bribes. One day the king asked him whether he had observed the *uposatha* and he answered in the affirmative, though really he had not done so. After he left the king, he was asked why he had spoken a lie to the king. He replied that he had done so through fear. He was advised to observe the *uposatha* during the night, that he might acquire half the merit. He did so and soon after passed away from the world and as a result of his having kept the *uposatha* for a single night, he was reborn as a *devatā* with great splendour, having ten thousand damsels and obtained many heavenly things. But, on account of his using malicious words in the past life, he had to eat the flesh taken from his own body with his own hands. One day the venerable Nārada saw him when coming down the *Gijjhakūṭa* and asked him the reason of his being in such a wretched state. His past history was then related, as described above ( P. D. on the *Petavatthu*, pp. 209-211 ).

### *Dutiyabuddapeta*

When the Teacher was at Veluvana, a hunter of Rājagaha used to hunt animals day and night. He was a wealthy man. A friend of his who was an *upāsaka*, advised him to desist from taking lives of beings, at least at night, but he did not listen to this admonition. The

upāsaka, thereupon, requested a *thera* to go to the house of his friend and teach him the ‘*dhamma*’ that he might be inclined to refrain from killing animals. The sage, one day, while wandering for alms, went to his house where he was received with great honour and respect by the man fond of hunting. Moved by his teachings the hunter gave up hunting at night. After death, he met with the same fate as *Migaluddapeta* whose story is given below. (Paramatthadīpanī on the Petavatthu, pp. 207-209.)

### *Migaluddapeta*

Migaluddapeta was a vimāna peta. During the day, he used to suffer much but at night he enjoyed happiness. Seeing this, the venerable Nārada wanted to know what he had done in his past life that he had such an unequal distribution of pleasure and pain. The peta answered that in his past life he was a hunter at Giribbaja, and he always used to hunt deer. One of his friends, who was a pious *upāsaka*, unable to make him desist entirely from the slaughter of animals, at last succeeded in persuading him to abstain from it at least at night. It was this work of his that was fructifying now : in the day-time dogs were biting off his flesh as a result of his cruelty by day, while his abstinence at night made him happy after sunset. (P. D. on the Petavatthu, pp. 204-207).

*Serinipeta*

In the kingdom of the *Kurūs*, at *Hatthinipura*, there lived a woman of the town named *Serini*. In *Hatthinipura*, many *bhikkhus* came from different quarters to observe the *uposatha*. There people used to serve them with various articles of food and other things. The woman who had no faith in the Buddha, and who was stingy, refused to approve the meritorious deeds done by the people and used to say that it was no good making gifts to the *Samaṇas* with shaven heads. After death, she was reborn as a *petī*, and dwelt close by a moat surrounding a city on the borders of the country. An *upāsaka* of *Hatthinipura* went to the city for trade and very early in the morning before darkness had completely vanished, he went near to the moat. Having recognised him, the *Petī* made herself visible, horrible to look at, naked, reduced to a skeleton ; on seeing her, he wanted to know the reason of her deplorable condition. The *petī* related to her the past history and requested him to convey the news to her mother that she was suffering in *petaloka* ( the world of spirits ) and that there was a large sum of money below the bedstead which she used while she was in the human world. Her mother was requested to take out the money which would enable her to get a living and she further requested her to make gifts on her behalf in order to bring about her



release from that miserable plight. The *upāsaka* informed her mother and she complied with her request and the *petī* was at last freed from the *petaloka* ; she became happy and beautiful to look at and appearing before her mother, recounted to her the whole history. ( P. D. on the Petavatthu, pp. 201-204 ).

### *Kumārapeta*

At Sāvattihī, many *upāsakas* joined together for a religious purpose and erected a very big pandal and decorated it beautifully. They then invited the Buddha and the *bhikkhus* to come and take their seats under the canopy and after worshipping and honouring them, offered many things to the Master and the *bhikkhus*. An envious and stingy person, after seeing the worship of the Buddha, said that these things should not be given to the bald-headed ascetics, rather they should be thrown into the rubbish heap. The *upāsakas* hearing this, said that the envious person had committed a great sin by giving vent to such feelings and induced his mother to obtain pardon for the offence. She admonished her son and at last succeeded in taking the son to the Buddha and she asked for pardon. They worshipped the Buddha and the *bhikkhus* by offering *yāgu* ( rice-gruel ) for a week. The son after death went into the womb of a prostitute on account of his misdeeds. As soon as he was born, he was thrown by the

prostitute into a cemetery, but the child, owing to its former merit, was not hurt and it was quietly sleeping there. The Buddha by his divine eye saw the child and went to the place. Many people assembled, seeing the Buddha go there. The Blessed one expounded the good and bad deeds of the child in its previous birth and predicted that the child would be prosperous in the present life, although it was now in the cemetery. A wealthy householder came to the spot and took away the child in the presence of the Master. After the death of the householder, he became the sole master of the household and used to perform meritorious deeds such as acts of charity. In the religious congregation, all the *bhikkhus* assembled, discussed this matter and the Buddha said that his present good fortune was not all but that he would be born in the *Tāvātimsa* heaven after death. ( P. D. on the *Petavatthu*, pp. 194-201 ).

### *Bhūsapeta*

In a village near *Sāvattī*, a merchant used to carry on his trade by cheating people with false weights, etc. He increased the weight of the red rice he sold by mixing up red earth with it. His son, again, was no less a sinner; he struck his mother with a whip, saying that she had not shown proper regard for his friends who came to the house. The son's wife ate up the meat kept for other members of the house.

When asked about the meat, she flatly denied that she had taken it and swore that if she had eaten it, she would be devouring the flesh on her back from birth to birth. The merchant's wife, also, when anybody asked for anything from her, refused to give it, on the plea that it was not her house, and swore that if she had told a lie, she would eat dirt and excreta from birth to birth. The merchant, his wife, son and daughter-in-law were reborn after death as *petas*, *petīs* in the Vindhya forest. The merchant as *peta* suffered much from burning chaff on his head and his son used to strike his head with iron clubs. The son's wife, on account of her misdeed, used to tear pieces of flesh from her back with her big and sharp-pointed nails and eat them up, and thus suffered endless misery. The merchant's wife prepared sweet-smelling and excellent *sāli* rice as her food, but as soon as it was touched by her, it turned into dirty excreta full of vermin and stench and she had to eat it with both her hands. Once the venerable Mahāmoggallāna saw them thus suffering and asked them the reason. The merchant's wife told him the past history of all of them as described above and now asserted that inevitable was the consequence of every deed. ( P. D. on the Petavatthu, pp. 191-194 ).

### *Rathakāripeta*

At the time of Kassapa Buddha, a woman  
h

who was very pious, used to perform many meritorious deeds. She built a very beautiful house for the *Bhikkhu-Saṅgha* ( the congregation of the faithful ) and Buddha together with the *Bhikkhus* were invited there. After feeding them there, she offered the house to the *Saṅgha*. She was reborn as a *Ṭimānapetī* near *Rathakāra lake* in the Himalaya on account of some of her misdeeds. In consequence of the merit acquired by offering a house to the *Saṅgha* in her past life, the petī got a splendid palace with a very nice tank and beautiful garden. Her complexion was that of gold and she was exquisitely beautiful. She lived there in the midst of celestial splendour, but her long nights passed without the company of the other sex. Thinking of some means to get a mate, she threw into the river a good ripe mango, hoping that the man who would pick it up, might feel inclined to seek for its source. ( P. D. on the *Petavatthu* pp. 186,191 ). The other details of the story are the same as in the *Kaṇṇamūlapetaratthu* which is described below.

During the time of *Kassapa Buddha*, in the city of *Kimbila*, there lived a certain *upāsaka* who had reached the state of *Sotāpatti*, the first grade of sanctification. In the company of five hundred other *upāsakas* of equal faith, he used to perform many good deeds such as the building of hermitages and bridges and collected wealth for the poor and the needy and they erected a *vihāra* and made it over to the *saṅgha*. From



time to time they used to go to the *vihāra*. Their wives also followed them in their good deeds, paid visits to the *vihāra* and rested sometimes in beautiful gardens. Once some wicked persons seeing that the wives of the *upāsakas* were taking rest in the garden, became enamoured of their beauty; but knowing of their virtues and good conduct, discussed among themselves whether any one of them could lead any of them astray. One of the rogues agreed to do this on condition that his associates would give him 1,000 coins in case he was successful in his attempt but that in the event of his failure he would have to pay the above-mentioned sum to them. Lured by avarice, he composed songs and to the accompaniment of a seven-stringed harp, began to sing in a very sweet voice and thereby attracted the attention of one *upāsikā* whom he at last succeeded in seducing. He thus won the wager of a thousand coins from his fellows. The other rogues thus losing the money informed the husband of the woman. When her husband asked her whether she was guilty, she flatly denied the charge and took an oath pointing to a dog standing close by, that if she were guilty, a black and earless dog like the one there, might eat up her flesh from birth to birth. The other women also were asked about it but they, though fully aware of the misdeed of the fallen woman, replied that if they had known anything about it, they would become

servant-girls from birth to birth. The unchaste woman died, tortured with the thoughts of her misdeed, and was reborn as a *vimānapeti* residing on the shore of the *Kaṇṇamunda* lake. All round her house, there were beautiful gardens with nice tanks and after death the five hundred women, her associates, were reborn as her maid-servants. The woman used to enjoy happiness during the day but at mid-night, she used to go to a tank and a terrible black and earless dog used to bite her and throw her into the tank. As soon as she came out of the tank, she regained her beautiful appearance. Thus she stayed there for a very long time with her five hundred women attendants. All the women, however, became restless, as there had no male companions. They at last came to a river which flowed into the Ganges through a mountain fissure from the *Kaṇṇamunda* lake. There was a miraculous mango tree near their house and the women threw some mangoes into the river, hoping that some men would pick up the fruits and come to them. One of the mangoes reached Benares, having been carried down the stream. The King of Benares got it, cut out a slice, gave it to a thief in the prison to taste it. The man reported that it was of extraordinarily sweet taste; the king then gave him another slice which removed the signs of age from his body and restored his youth. The king ate up the rest of the mango and feeling a

change in his body, he sent one of his forest-rangers in search of the mangoes. The man received directions from three ascetics whom he met on the way and came to the spot where the women were, but as he had done no deed which might qualify him to enjoy the pleasures provided at the place, he became terrified and returned to Benares and informed the king of the wonderful things he had seen. The king's curiosity being roused, he at once went out with a forest-guide and reached the spot. The women sported with the king who became very handsome on taking the mango. The king stayed with them for a long time and one midnight saw the *Vimānapeti* going to the tank and being bit by a dog as described above. The king killed the dog with an arrow and the woman regained her beautiful appearance after a bath in the tank. Then the king asked her the reason of it and was informed of her past history (P. D. on the *Petavatthu*, pp. 150 foll). The king being disgusted wanted to go back to his own country, notwithstanding the strongest remonstrance from the *peti* but she was at last persuaded to convey him to Benares. She left the king with lamentations and wailings and the king moved with emotion, did many acts of charity and acquired great merit.

*Abhijjamānapeta*

There was a hunter in a certain village

on the banks of the Ganges opposite to Benares. He used to kill deer and after roasting and eating the better part of the flesh, brought the rest to his house, tied up with leaves. When he returned to the village with the venison, the boys seeing *meat* in his hands used to ask for it and to get small bits. One day, getting no deer to hunt in the forest, he took some *uddālaka* flowers to the village and when, as usual, the boys asked for *meat* he gave a bunch of flowers to each. The hunter, after death, was reborn as a *peta* naked and fierce in appearance and never saw any food or drink. Dressed with garlands of *uddālaka* flowers, he walked on foot in the river against the current of the Ganges, hoping that he would get something to eat from his relations in his village. At that time, a high officer of King Bimbisāra of Magadha named Koliya, after suppressing a rebellion in the frontier provinces, was going down the Ganges in a boat after sending away his army on the land route. He saw the *peta* and asked him, "Where are you going thus dressed? You are walking on foot in the midst of the Ganges. Where is your dwelling house?" The *peta* replied, "Oppressed with hunger, I am going to my village near Benares." The high minister stopped his boat, gave to an *upasākā* who was a barber some articles of food and a pair of yellow clothes, on behalf of the *peta* who was, as a result of that, clothed and fed. He



reached Benares before sun-rise. The Blessed one was at that time on the banks of the Ganges and the minister invited him to his house. A fully decorated canopy was prepared for the Buddha who sat under it. The high minister worshipped the Master and spoke to him about the *petā*. The Buddha desired the presence of the *Bhikkhusaṅgha* and many *bhikkhus* came there. The high minister satisfied the Buddha and the *bhikkhus* with good food and drink. After taking food and drink, the Buddha desired the presence of the inhabitants of the outskirts of Benares and many *petas* were brought to the spot and made visible by his miraculous power. Among the *petas*, some were seen naked, some dressed in torn rags, some were seen hiding their naked body with hair, some were oppressed with hunger and thirst and some were mere bones covered with skin. The horrible condition of the *petas* was seen by the people present there. Under the influence of the Buddha's miraculous power, the *petas* themselves described their former misdeeds and their sufferings resulting therefrom. Thus when the results of good and bad deeds had been unfolded before the people, the Master out of his infinite compassion delivered a long discourse expounding the *dharma* to the people. (P. D. on the *Petavatthu*, pp. 168-177).

*Ubbarīpetā*

At Sāvattihī, an *upāsikā* lost her husband

and overwhelmed with grief, she went to the cemetery and wept bitterly. The Buddha noticing the sign of her having acquired the fruition of the first stage of sanctification, went to her house, feeling pity for her. The *upāsikā* worshipped him with great devotion and then sat on one side. The Buddha asked her about the cause of her misery and she admitted that she was mourning the loss of her beloved husband. In order to remove her sorrow, the Master related a story of the past which runs as follows :—

In the kingdom of *Pañcāla*, in the town of *Kapila*, there was a king who went by the name of *Cūlanī Brahmadaṭṭa*, who was very pious and impartial. He used to perform ten kinds of kingly duties. One day, in order to see how his subjects were doing and to know how they would speak of him, he assumed the guise of a tailor, went out of town alone and wandered from village to village and from province to province. Finding his whole kingdom free from troubles and diseases and the subjects living in safety and happiness, he set out for his capital. While returning, he went to the house of a poor and distressed widow in one of the villages, who enquired of his whereabouts. He introduced himself as a tailor working for wages, and said, "If you have any cloth to be sewn and agree to give me food and wages, I shall show you my skill." She had no work for him. After staying

there for a short time, he saw that her daughter was very handsome and had all the auspicious signs. Learning that the girl was yet unmarried, he sought her hand, and with the permission of the mother, married the damsel and lived there for a few days. Then that king in the guise of a tailor, gave them a thousand *kahāpanas* and asked them not to be anxious, as he would soon return. Shortly afterwards, the king brought the daughter of the widow to the palace with great pomp and splendour and made her his chief queen, giving her the name of *Ubbarī*. They lived in great conjugal felicity for a long time. The king died and the queen was overwhelmed with grief. The funeral ceremony of the king was performed with great pomp. The queen *Ubbarī*, however, was inconsolable. She went to the burning-ground and for many days offered flowers and perfumes, to her deceased husband, recited his many virtues and went round the cemetery, crying and weeping bitterly like one gone mad.

At that time, the Master, who was then a *Bodhisatta*, resided in a forest near the *Himālayas* and saw her thus plunged in sorrow, and coming to the cemetery, enquired why she was weeping and crying, taking the name of *Brahmadatta* and he was told that it was for the deceased king *Brahmadatta* that his queen *Ubbarī* was crying. Moved by compassion, the *Bodhisatta*, in order to remove her sorrow,

addressed her thus :—“Knowest thou that eighty-six thousand persons bearing the name of *Brahmadatta* were burnt here. Which of them are you lamenting for ?” She replied that she was mourning for her husband, the king of *Pañcāla*, named *Cūlaniputta*. The *Bodhisatta* assured her thus :—“All the *Brahmadattas*, burnt here were of the same name and designation and had been kings of *Pañcāla* and thou hadst been the Chief Queen of them all. Why art thou lamenting for the latest *Brahmadatta* leaving the earlier ones ?” Thus by a discourse on *kamma* and on the many births and deaths that beings have to go through in this world and also by expounding to her the *dhamma*, he consoled her lacerated soul. The Queen realised the worthlessness of the household life and receiving ordination from the *Bodhisatta*, embraced the homeless condition and wandered from village to village until she reached *Uruvelā* where she laid down her life and reached the *Brahmaloka*. The *upāsikā* got rid of her grief, listening to this discourse of the Master who also expounded to her the four great truths. ( P. D. on the *Petavatthu*, pp. 160-168).

### *Suttapela*

Long before the appearance of the Buddha, near *Sāvattihī*, there was a *Pacceka Buddha*, and a boy used to attend upon him. When the boy



grew up, his mother brought a beautiful girl for him from a family of equal rank and position. On the day of marriage, the boy went to bathe with his associates, was bitten by a snake and died. Although he had accumulated much merit by serving the *Paccekabuddha*, yet he was reborn as a *vimānapeta* on account of his attachment to that girl. But the *peta* possessed great wealth and power and thought of some means of bringing the girl to his abode. If the girl could be made to offer something to the *Paccekabuddha*, his mission would be fulfilled. The *peta* went to the *Paccekabuddha* and seeing that he was in need of some thread to mend his garment, he assumed the guise of a human being, and requested him to go to the girl for thread, if he was in need of it. When the *Paccekabuddha* came to her abode, the girl learning that he wanted some thread, offered him a reel. Then the *peta* bestowed enormous wealth on the mother of the girl and after residing in her house for some time, brought her to his abode. After the Buddha had appeared on the earth, the girl was anxious to come down to the human world to perform righteous deeds and accumulate more merit. The *peta* replied, "You have been here for seven hundred years, if you now go to the human world, you will be very old, all your relatives are dead and gone." Saying this, the *peta* brought the girl to the human world. Old and decrepit as she was, she on reaching

her village, did many acts of charity and after seven days she passed away from this world and was reborn in the *Tāvatisa* heaven ( P. D. on the *Petavatthu*, pp. 144-150).

### *Uttaramūtupeta*

After the passing away of the Master and when the first great Council was over, Mahākaccāyana lived near *Kosāmbi* in a forest-hermitage with twelve *bhikkhus*. At this time, an officer of King Udena, who was in charge of the construction of buildings, died. After his death, his son named Uttara was offered the same post which he accepted. Once Uttara desired to repair the city and went to a forest with carpenters to cut down trees for timber. There he saw Mahākaccāyana and being pleased with him, approached him to listen to his teachings. He took shelter in the three refuges and invited Mahākaccāyana with the *bhikkhus* to his house. He made offerings to the *thera* and the *bhikkhus* and requested them to take food everyday at his house. He also induced his relatives to follow him in this act and built a *vihāra*. But his mother who was stingy and a believer in false doctrines, cursed him by saying, "Let all these offerings which you are making to the ascetics against my wish, be turned into blood in the next world." She, however, appro-

ved the act of offering a fan of peacock-feathers on the day of a great ceremony at the *vihāra*. After death, the mother became a *petī*. In consequence of her approval of the fan of peacock-feathers, her hair was blue, smooth, fine and long, and in consequence of her misdeeds, whenever she went down to drink the water of the Ganges, it was at once turned into blood. She suffered for fifty-five years and finding at last a *thera* named *Kankhārevata* seated on the bank of the Ganges at day time, she prayed to him for some drink and explained to him her past misdeeds and present wretched plight. Moved by pity, the *Thera Revata* offered drink to the *Bhikkhu-saṃgha*, fed them and gave them clothes for salvation of the *petī* and she was soon relieved of her distress. (P. D. on the *Petavatthu*, pp. 140-144),

### *Samsāramocakapeta*

In the past, many heretics of the *samsāramocaka* caste used to live in two villages of Magadha. A woman born in a family of the *Samsāramocaka* caste in the village of *Itthakāvati* in Magadha used to kill many insects and flies. As a result of her sin, she was reborn as a *petī* who suffered much for five hundred years. In the time of the Buddha Gautama, she was born again in another family of the *samsāramocaka* caste in the same village. When she was eight years old, she went to play

with other girls in the street. At that time, the venerable Sāriputta accompanied by some *bhikkhus*, was going to beg alms along that street. All the girls except the *samsāramocaka* girl referred to above, saluted the *thera* and the *bhikkhus*. The latter knew that the irreverent girl was a false believer, had suffered much in previous births, and would also suffer in hell in future. He took pity on her and thinking that if she saluted the *bhikkhus*, she would not get into hell but would become a *petī* and would have some chance of salvation hereafter, said to the other girls, "You are saluting me but she is standing stock-still." The other girls forcibly made her salute the *thera*. Afterwards, she was given in marriage to a young man of another *samsāramocaka* family and when she was with child, she died and was reborn as a *petī*, naked, ugly in appearance, moving about impelled by hunger and thirst. Once the *petī* appeared before Sāriputta with a fearful look. The *thera* enquired of her former misdeeds and the *petī* informed him that she had nobody in her family to be induced to perform meritorious deeds for her and to offer alms to *Samaṇas* and *Brāhmaṇas* on her behalf. She then related her past history and prayed to him for her salvation. The *thera* gave in charity food, drink and a bit of cloth to other *bhikkhus* for her sake and in consequence of this, she was freed from the *petaloka* and became a *devatā*. Once she appeared



before Sāriputta in her celestial grandeur. She was asked how she had acquired it and she said that in consequence of his offering food and drink on her behalf, she got all those celestial things. She further told him that in consequence of his offering that small piece of cloth, she was getting plenty of garments, garments more plentiful than all those that *Nandarājā* got by his conquests. She added that she was happy and had come to salute him ( P. D. on the Petavatthu, pp. 67-72 ).

*Sāriputtatherassa Mātupeti*

This *peti* was Sāriputta's mother in the fifth birth before the last one when he met the Buddha. Once Mahāmoggallāna, Sāriputta and others used to live in a forest-hermitage near Rājagaha. At this time, there lived a very wealthy Brahmin at Benares, who used to make unstinted and plentiful offerings to the *Samaṇas* and *Brāhmaṇas* and to the poor and the needy and treated them with all respect and honour. Once he had to go to another place, and before leaving Benares he admonished his wife to continue in his absence all acts of charity just in the same way as he did himself. His wife readily consented to do so. But as soon as he turned his back on Benares, his wife stopped giving offerings to the *bhikkhus* and when travellers came to seek for habitation, she pointed out to them a

broken and dilapidated house and if any such person came there for food and drink, she abused them, saying, "Eat dirt and excreta, drink urine and blood and so on." In consequence of her misdeeds, she became a *peti* after death, and had to suffer miseries in consequence of her harsh words. She remembered that she had some connection with Sāriputta in her previous birth. Thinking that she might get some relief with Sāriputta's help, she went to the gate of the monastery in the forest but was not allowed to enter the establishment. It was only when she introduced herself as the mother of Sāriputta in a previous birth that she was allowed to get into the *vihāra*. She appeared before Sāriputta and related to him her suffering in the following words :-- "I was your mother in the fifth birth from the present, now I have become a *peti*. When I am hungry and thirsty, I eat and drink many dirty things. My son, give something in charity on my behalf and relieve me of my sufferings." Sāriputta accompanied by Moggallāna and others, went to King Bimbisāra for alms. The king enquired of their mission and Moggallāna intimated to him the objects of their visit. The king sent for his minister and asked him to build four hermitages in a shady forest with good water to drink, and also four hermitages with three rooms in each. All these hermitages were fully furnished and there was abundance of food, drink,

clothes, etc, in them. The king offered these hermitages to Sāriputta, and the latter offered them in favour of the *peti* to the *Bhikkhusaṃgha* headed by the Buddha. The *peti* approved of this charity and was reborn in the *Devaloka* (P. D. on the *Petavatthu*, pp. 78-82). She afterwards made her appearance before Mahāmoggallāna and showed him what a great change her son's gifts had brought about as regards her comfort and happiness.

### *Mattāpeti*

At Sāvattihī, there was a householder who had faith in the Buddha but his wife named Mattā who was barren, had no faith in the Master and his *Samgha*. The householder married another girl named Tissā, lest his family-line should be extinct. Tissā had great faith in the Buddha and became the favourite of her husband. She bore a son named *Bhuta*. Being the mistress of the household, she used to make offerings to four *bhikkhus* daily. The barren wife was jealous of her. One day, while both of them were standing together after a bath, the husband being fond of Tissā, began to talk with her and Mattā, out of jealousy, heaped together the sweepings and threw them on the head of her rival. After death, the wicked woman was reborn as a *peti* who suffered in many ways as a result of her misdeeds. One day, when Tissā was bathing in the back part of her house, the *peti* appeared before her and

introduced herself to Tissā as her former rival in the affections of the householder and related to her how she suffered for her past misdeeds. Tissā asked Mattā why she had so many impurities on her head and Mattā replied that this was the punishment due to her having thrown impurities on the head of Tissā in her previous life. Tissā further asked Mattā why she was scratching the whole body with a piece of the shrub Kacchu. Mattā replied that once both of them went to bring medicines from the forest; she added, "you brought medicines and I brought Kapikacchu which I spread over your bed. It is for this reason I have now to suffer, as you see." Being further told why she was asked, Mattā replied that once Tissā was invited to a relative's house. She went there with her husband and in her absence she (Mattā) stole her cloth and it was for this reason she was walking naked. Tissā asked Mattā why from her body emitted such an intolerable smell and she replied, "Your garlands, perfumes, unguents, etc. were thrown by me into the dung heap and you see the result." Mattā added that as she had acquired no merit by any act of charity, she was so much distressed. Tissā said that when her husband would return home, she would request him to offer her (Mattā) something. The *peti* requested Tissā not to bring her husband in her presence, as she was naked. Tissā asked what she could do for her. The *peti* requested



Tissā to invite eight *bhikkhus* and offer them food, etc., on her account. This Tissā did and Mattā was released from the *petaloka* and after her release she appeared before Tissā in splendid attire and showed her what a miracle her gifts had worked and left her with a blessing (P. D. on the *Petavatthu*, pp. 82-89).

### *Nandāpeta*

In a certain village near Sāvattihī, there lived a householder named Nandasena. His wife was Nandā who had no faith in the Buddha. She was very stingy and hot-tempered and used to abuse her husband, father-in-law and mother-in-law. After death, she was reborn as a *peti* near that village. One day, while her husband was coming out of the village, she appeared before him. Her husband asked her the cause of her being a *peti*. She gave him an account of her past misdeeds. The husband said, "Take this upper garment of mine, and clothing yourself with it, come to my house where you will get food and drink and clothes, and you will behold your own dear son." She replied that she was unable to receive anything directly from his hands; if he made gifts for her sake to the *bhikkhus*, then she would be benefited. He did so and she was released from her miseries. (P. D. on the *Petavatthu*, pp. 89-92).

*Dhanapālapeta.*

Before the appearance of the Buddha, there lived, in the town of *Erakaccha* in the country of *Dasaṇṇa*, a merchant who was miserly and a sceptic, having no faith in the Buddha. After death, he was reborn as a *peta* residing in a desert region. He was ugly, rough and fierce, tall as a palm tree. For fifty-five years, he could get neither a drop of water to drink nor a particle of grain to eat. Driven by hunger and thirst, he had to run from place to place when Gautama Buddha had started the *Dharmacakra*. Some merchants of *Sāvattihī* went to the northern regions (*Uttarāpatha*), taking with them five hundred cart-loads of merchandise. While returning, they stopped their carts in the evening under a tree and resolved to spend the night there. The *peta* came to the same spot, parched with thirst: and unable to get water to drink, began to cry bitterly and fell down on the ground like a palm tree uprooted by storm. Seeing him, the merchants enquired about his miserable condition. He answered, "I was a merchant called *Dhanapāla*. Of gold I had eighty cart-loads and of other precious minerals, stones and pearls, I possessed an immense quantity. But master of this immense treasure as I was, I liked not to spend anything on charity. I ate my food with closed doors and drove away everyone who begged anything of me, with harsh and abusive

words. Even when I saw men making gifts, I forbade them. As a result of these and similar other misdeeds, I have accumulated sins without measure, while of meritorious deeds I have none standing to my account. Now all my deeds have brought me to this stage of misery and wretchedness." The merchants moved with compassion for the *peta*, tried to pour water into his mouth but the water could not get beyond his throat on account of his sins. The merchants made enquiries as to the means of releasing him and he told them that if they could make offerings on his account to the Buddha or his disciples, then he would be freed from the *Petaloka*. They did so and he was saved from suffering. ( P. D. on the *Petavatthu*, pp. 99-105).

### *Cūlasetṭhipeta*

There was a householder at Benares who had no faith in the Buddha and was very stingy. He did not like to perform good and virtuous deeds. After death, he was reborn as a *peta* whose body was without flesh and blood, and was a mere skeleton. His head was hairless and he was naked. The *peta's* daughter named *Anulā* was in her husband's house at *Andhaka-vinda* and she desired to feed Brahmins for her father's merit. The *peta* coming to know of it wished to go to his daughter, went through the

sky and reached Rājagaha. At that time, Ajātasatru being instigated by Devadatta, killed his father. But he soon repented and dreaming a horrible dream, he woke up from sleep during the night and going up to the terrace of the palace, saw the *peta*. He asked the latter, "where are you going, lean and thin, naked creature ? You seem to be a monk. Tell me what do you want ? I shall try, so far as I can, to fulfil your desire." The *peta* related his past history and intimated to the king that he was going to his daughter who was going to feed Brāhmaṇas and make gifts on behalf of himself and the forefathers. Ajātasatru asked the *peta* to go to his daughter and see him on his way back. The *peta* went to his daughter and when going back, saw Ajātasatru. He informed him that the Brahmins to whom gifts were made were unworthy of them, and requested the king to make offerings on his account to the Buddha and his disciples. This was done and the *peta* was relieved of his suffering and by virtue of the merit accruing therefrom, he became a very powerful *Yakkha*. (P. D. on the *Petavatthu*, pp. 105-111)

### *Revatipeta*

At Benares lived a householder's son named *Nandiya* who had faith in the Buddha and was very charitable. Offerings were made to the congregation of monks daily in his house.

From his infancy, he was in the habit of making offerings with his own hands. When he grew up, his parents asked him to marry Revatī, the daughter of another householder who used to live near his house. He refused to do so on the ground that Revatī had no faith in the Buddha and was uncharitable. The parents of Revatī asked her to give some evidence of her faith in the Buddha and of her charitable nature just to win over Nandiya. She did so for sometime and Nandiya married her. She followed Nandiya in his meritorious deeds. After sometime, Nandiya went abroad, asking his wife to continue all the meritorious deeds. After her husband's departure, Revatī performed the meritorious deeds for some days. She then not only stopped giving offerings but went so far as to abuse the *bhikkhus* who had come for alms and insulted them. Afterwards Nandiya returned home and found that all his acts of charity had been discontinued. After death, Revatī became a *petī* and Nandiya, a *devatā* residing in heaven. Nandiya saw with his divine eyes that Revatī had become a *petī* and he went to her and reminded her of the consequences of her sinful acts done in the previous existence. He then asked her to approve of the meritorious acts done by him. As soon as she did it, she became a *devatā* and resided with Nandiya in heaven (See *Vimānavatthu* commentary and also *Suttasamgaha*.)



*Aṅkurapeta*

Ten sons and a daughter were born to the king of *Uttaramadhurā* and Aṅkura was the youngest of them. The ten princes conquered the whole country beginning from their father's capital called *Asitañjana* up to *Drārāratī* and divided it among themselves into ten portions. At the time of partition, they forgot Añjanadevī, their sister, but, afterwards, when they saw that they had left no share for her, Aṅkura gave away his own portion and said that he would live upon some money contributed by all the brothers. Aṅkura not only engaged himself in trade but also made large gifts always. One of his slaves, however, who was his steward, was a greedy fellow. Aṅkura, out of kindness, got him married to a girl of good family, but he died when his wife was with child. When the child was born, Aṅkura paid him the salary that he used to pay to his father and when the boy grew up, the question arose whether he was a slave or not. Añjanadevī argued that since the mother was free, her child also must be free and he was freed from slavery. The boy went to the city of *Bheruca* and marrying a tailor's daughter, became a tailor himself. In that city, there lived a very rich and generous merchant named *Asaṅha* who was very charitable to the *śramaṇas*, *brāhmaṇas* and others. The young tailor could not himself practise charity but he

used to point out with his right hand, the house of Asayha to those who did not know it. After death, this posthumous son was reborn as a god living on a *Nigrodha* tree in a desert. His right hand could give anything he liked. In that city of *Bheruva*, there was a man who prevented the banker Asayha from making gifts and who was, moreover, a false believer and miser. After death, he was reborn as a *peta*, not far from the residence of the above *devaputra*. In the meantime, the great banker, Asayha, was reborn in the *Tāvatiṃsa heaven*, as a friend of *Sakka*. Once Aṅkura and also a Brāhmaṇa merchant were passing through a desert, each with five hundred cart-loads of merchandise. Having lost their way, they wandered about here and there for many days in that arid region. All their stock of food, drink and fodder became exhausted and Aṅkura sent servants in all directions to look out for water. The deity of the *Nigrodha* tree recollecting the good deeds done by Aṅkura in his past life, came to help him and requested him to come under the *Nigrodha* tree. The *Nigrodha* tree spread its branches far and wide and Aṅkura fixed his tent there. The *Yakkha* stretching his right hand, supplied the whole caravan, first of all, with drink and then gave everything that any one of them might desire to have. Now, when all of them were fully fed and pleased, the Brahmin thought within himself, "What should I gain by going to *Kamboja* for

money : I shall capture this *Yakkha* somehow or other and placing him in my carriage, I shall take him to our city and communicate his thoughts to Aṅkura." The latter, however, grew indignant at this proposal and told him, "You wish to cut down the branches of the tree that cast shadow over you." The Brahmin retorted that he was ready to cut down the tree itself or to uproot it, if that was sufficiently paying. Aṅkura, by discoursing upon the evil consequences of such conduct, silenced the Brahmin. The deity himself listening to their discussion, told the Brahmin that he was a *Yakkha* of great power and that he was not to be offended with impunity even by the gods, that it would be impossible for the Brāhmaṇa to carry out his desire of taking him to his house. Aṅkura then asked the deity how he had acquired the power. The latter then related how, by merely pointing out to beggars the house of a great donor, his hands acquired the miraculous power. Aṅkura was thoroughly convinced of the virtue of making gifts and promised that on reaching his own city of *Dvārakā*, he would be more liberal than ever and practise charity on a large scale. The *Yakkha* induced him further to stick to his noble resolve of making gifts and promised that he would help him in carrying it out. He would have punished the Brāhmaṇa merchant for his iniquity but Aṅkura made the Brāhmaṇa obtain his pardon by

submission. Leaving the *Yakkha*, not far from the spot, Aṅkura met a *peta* who was ugly in appearance, his face was awry and his fingers were crooked. On being asked, he said that he was in charge of the charities of Asayha and that whenever he saw any one ask for anything, he made face at him and this was the result. The sight of this *peta* convinced Aṅkura that a man should make gifts with his own hands, because the man charged with the work might not do it in the right spirit. On reaching *Dvārakā*, he made gifts on a vast scale and sought to remove the wants of every person he met. His *charge d' affaires* Sindhuka, a man versed in matters of finance, tried to restrain him from making such gifts without restraint, but Aṅkura was not to be dissuaded. Then a large number of persons began to live upon his charities and lead idle lives, leaving their own works and the kings could not get revenue. The kings told Aṅkura that if things went this way, their treasuries would be depleted. Aṅkura thereupon went to the southern country ( *Dakkhiṇāpatha* ) in the country of Damila and there practised charity and at last when he left this world, he was reborn in the *Tāvatiṃsa* heaven. Now, during the time that Gotama Buddha was here, a man named Indaka gave only one spoonful of rice to the venerable *thera* Anuruddha, and by virtue of that single act of

merit, he, after death, reached the *Tāvatiṃsa* heaven and was given a very superior position to that of Aṅkura. When the Buddha went to the *Tāvatiṃsa* heaven, all the residents there flocked round the Master, Aṅkura had his seat twelve yojanas farther than Indaka and he learnt then that gifts are to be given to proper persons in order that good results may be produced, just as seeds, if sown on fertile soil, produce crops. ( P. D. on the *Petavatthu*, pp. III foll. )



## Concluding Remarks

A perusal of the above stories which are abridgments of the commentary on the *Petavatthu*, presents many problems to the mind of every reader. In the first place, it will be observed that there is no idea of spirit-worship manifest anywhere among the stories; nor is there any semblance of ancestor-worship. In fact, in the southern Buddhist faith as we observe it in the Pāli canonical literature, there is hardly any trace anywhere of worship of a personal being, whether an ancestor, a spirit or a deity. This is corroborated by the early Buddhist sculptures where we find nothing of the worship of even the personal Buddha. It is only the symbols of the Bodhi-tree or of the first turning of the wheel of law (*Dhammacakkavattana*)-the commencement of the propagation of the true faith-that attract worshippers.

Though there is no worship of ancestors in our stories, yet they manifest an anxiety, in some cases, for the welfare and happiness of the deceased forefathers. But even that is not the main lesson of the stories. We meet with references here and there to a devout daughter or a son who offers gifts on behalf of her or his parents, and the latter are relieved of their sufferings by such action. But this duty of the

child is nowhere insisted upon. Nor does it appear that it is only the child who can afford such relief, but every one can do so. The stories are addressed to Buddhist lay devotees, to upāsakas and upāsikās, exhorting them to perform meritorious deeds, while on earth, in order to save themselves from personal miseries hereafter. The lesson inculcated is a natural concomitant of the law of karma, which is the central idea of the whole Buddhistic faith. It is pointed out again and again that the result of karma, whether good or bad, cannot be obviated—it is a force which must produce its own consequence. This is sought to be impressed upon the minds of followers of the faith.

The audience that the author of the Paramatthadīpanī has in his mind is not the seeker after nirvāna by prajñā, dhyāna and samādhi, nor the intellectual seekers after eternal verities or fundamental realities, but the ordinary, everyday people, the seekers after good things of the earth, those who eat, drink and multiply here below, and wish for plenty of similar enjoyments in the life to follow after death. One great doctrine is dinned into their ears and that is, that charity here upon earth, charity with a sincere heart while alive, is the only means of commanding the objects of pleasure after death. If one gives away plenty of food and drink, while possessed of the earthly corporeal frame, he will be entitled to enjoy them here-

after, and the converse is none the less true. In this respect the needs of the *petas* and the *petis* of the Paramatthadīpanī are identical with those of human beings in flesh and blood; they are oppressed with hunger and thirst. Even the passion of love and desire for companions of the other sex does not leave them, and the strangest thing in this connection is that a lover in the spirit form, whether of the male or of the female sex, enjoys fully the company of a comrade of the other sex who is still in the world of the living. In several stories we hear of a damsel whom a spirit had loved in his former life upon earth, being spirited away and released after a number of years; and the opposite side is illustrated when we find the King of Benares being enticed into the garden of the 500 *petis* who enjoyed his company. It appears rather strange that the incongruity\* of this sexual relation between the spirit and the human world did not strike the author or authors of these stories.

As regards, however, the other worldly comforts, food, drink and clothing, it is clearly reiterated many times that a *peta* could not directly take any of them from here, by force or guile, or even when voluntarily offered; a hand to hand interchange of these things between a *peta* and a man was impossible. It was only when the gifts were made to a human being and the merits thereof transferred to the spirit,

that these comforts could reach the *peta* and supply his needs. This is the fundamental idea not only of the Buddhist conception of the method of removing the disabilities and miseries of the departed spirits, but this is also the basis of the Hindu conception of *śrāddha*. In fact, this is one of the established ideas of the Indian mind even from the Vedic days. According to Hindu ideas, gifts are to be made to a *Brāhmaṇa* in person or even to a substitute for a *Brāhmaṇa*, and merit depends upon the number of people fed and clothed on behalf of the spirit. The fruit of the deeds is transferred to the spirit. In the Hindu *śrāddha*, some articles of food and clothing are of course offered directly to the spirit, but they must be given away to a deserving man in order that the desired results may be produced.

As regards the object of charity, the author of the *Paramatthadīpanī* is not without some sectarian narrowness. It is the gifts to the *bhikkhus* and the Buddhist *saṅgha* that are productive of the best merit, and he invariably speaks of gifts made to them only as having the power to soothe and alleviate the wretched condition of the *petas* and *petis*. In a few rare cases, he speaks of gifts being made to *Samāṇa-Brāhmaṇas*, to *Śramaṇas* and *Brāhmaṇas*, but these are ordinary gifts made by bounteous men in the course of their usual charities, not charities for the relief of the *peta*. For that purpose

the gift has to be made invariably to a Buddhist ascetic—a bhikkhu, or at least an *upāsaka*, a buddhist lay devotee. Even as regards ordinary daily charities, though he does not dismiss as entirely unremunerative the gifts to ordinary human beings not of the Buddhist faith, yet he shows us clearly, as in the story of prince Ankura, that even gifts without measure of untold wealth to ordinary denizens of the earth, can never produce the same effect as the gift of a small thing to a venerable follower of the Buddhistic persuasion.

The external appearance of the petas also closely resembles that of human beings; in rare cases, we are told, a peta was of extraordinary height or had some limbs of a particular extra-human form on account of the deeds done here upon earth. But the general frame of the peta is an exact replica of the human figure, as his needs are the counter-parts of the wordly comforts of man in his gross form.

The character of the petas appears generally to have undergone a change for the better in their spirit-life. Their hunger and thirst, their miseries and sufferings, the bitter experiences for past misconduct, seem to have rubbed off their angularities, softened their temper, chastened their mind and made them realise the truth that charity is the door to enjoyment of comforts in the other world. We hardly find them doing ill to others, they are too much



pressed down with the burden of their own miseries to think of or to get any opportunity for doing mischief to others. They are suffering rather than malevolent spirits.

There are various grades among these departed spirits. A broad distinction is made between two classes, the Devas and the Petas. The Devas generally have a preponderance of good and meritorious deeds in their favour, though they are tainted, at least in the lower ranks, with some stain of evil which they have got to work out. The highest among them who have made, like setthi Asayha or prince Aṅkura, gifts, while on earth, on an immense scale, are born in the Tāvatiṃsa heaven, but even here there are innumerable grades. Some of the lower grades among the Devas are the Rukkhadevas, the tree-spirits, and the Bhūmidevas, the spirits of the earth, perhaps those whose bonds of attachment to the earth have not yet been sundered. Vimānadevas are also mentioned, that is, devas residing in vimānas or palaces in the sky. Between these last, and the Vimānapetas, there is hardly any line of cleavage and if any, a very thin one. Vimānapetas are the more fortunate ones among the petas, those who have some good to their account but not unmixed with some evil which subjects them to suffering and torture. Below them is the great mass of petas and petis that suffer intolerable miseries; one gets quite sick when reading the shocking and often

revolting accounts of the punishments to which they are subjected. The most loathsome things are narrated of them and when the release comes at last, resulting from a simple act of charity in their favour, the contrast is often very great. It remains for us to say something about the place where the fallen spirits suffer. In many cases, it is related, when the offence was very serious, the sinner suffered for thousands of years in hells and then they came up to work out the remnants of their sin as *petas*. Descriptions of these hells have not been given in any detail, and of the hellish tortures only some vague references have been vouchsafed to us. From the hells they come up to the upper regions and go through a purgatory, as it were, in their *peta*-life, until some kind human being frees them from it by transferring the merit of some charity to their account. Many of the *petas* are described as having been transformed into the *peta* being, directly they died, without going into hell.

Such are the ideas of the spirits and of the spirit world in the *Peta-vatthu* and its commentary. The stories, though some among them may seem puerile and even absurd, have served to restrain the believer in the words of the great Master, from straying away from the path of virtue, in his body or his word or his deed, and made him practise charity and *ahimsā* towards all living creatures.

## INDEX

- Abhijjamānapeta 61  
Ajagara 5  
Ajātasatru 45, 78  
Akkharukkhapeta 36  
Ambapeta 37  
Ambasakkhara 49, 50  
Amritāyurdhyāna Sūtra 2  
Ānanda 8  
Anāthapiṇḍika 16  
Anāthasālā 12  
Aṅkura 81, 82, 90  
Aṅkurapeta 80  
Asayha 80, 81, 83, 90  
Benares 21, 25, 42, 62, 63,  
78, 79  
Bhagirasa 3  
Bheruva 80, 81  
Bhogasamharapeta 36  
Bhūmideva 90  
Bhusapeta 56  
Bhuta 73  
Bimbisāra 18, 51, 62, 72  
Brahmadatta 65, 66  
Buddhaghosa 10, 11  
Cūlariputta 66  
Culasetṭhipeta 77  
Dakkhiṇāpatha 83  
Damiḷa 83,  
Dhammapāla 10, 11, 30  
Dhammāsoka 48  
Dhanapālapeta 76  
Dhātuvivaṇṇapeta 45  
Du-sā-nā-so 34  
Dvārakā 82, 83  
Dvārāvati 80  
Gijjhakūṭa 5, 13, 15, 34  
Giribbaja 53  
Goṇapeta 21, 40  
Guthakhādakapeta 41  
Hatthinipura 54  
Himalayas 65  
Jambudīpa 2  
Jātaka, Nimi 3  
Jayasena 16  
Kahāpaṇa 65  
Kālakaṅjakas 5  
Kāñcipura 10  
Kankhārevata 69  
Kannamuṇḍa 60  
Kapila 64  
Kappitaka 51  
Kāsi-puri 16  
Kassapa 46  
Kassapa, Buddha 6, 7, 18,  
57, 58  
Kevaṭṭas 43  
Khalātiyapeta 25  
Khattupamāpeta 11  
Khuppipāsa 5  
Kimbila 58

- Kitava 42  
 Koliya 62  
 Kosala 45  
 Kosāmbi 68  
 Kumbhaṇḍaka petas 8  
 Kuṇḍiṇagara 4  
 Lohakumbhi 35  
 Lokantarika Naraka 5  
 Lakkhaṇa, Thera 5  
 Magadha 45, 62, 69  
 Mahākaccāyana 68  
 Mahākassapa 46  
 Mahāmoggallāna 5, 12,  
     13, 34, 40, 47, 57, 71, 73  
 Mahāniddeśa 8  
 Mahāpesakāra peta 22  
 Mallas 45  
 Mattā 74  
 Mattakuṇḍali peta 32  
 Mattāpetî 73  
 Migaluddapeta 53  
 Moggallāna 6, 41  
 Mucalinda 3  
 Nāgapeta 27  
 Nandaka 48  
 Nandapeta 75  
 Nandikapeta 47  
 Nandiya 79  
 Nijjhāmatanā 5  
 Paccekabuddha 42, 66, 67  
 Pāli Text Society 11  
 Pañcāla 64, 66  
 Pañcaputtakhādakapeta 19  
 Pāṭaliputta 39  
 Pāṭaliputtapeta 38  
 Petaloka 4, 8  
 Phussa 17  
 Piṅgala 48  
 Piṭṭhadhitalikapeta 16  
 Pubbapetabali 2  
 Putimukha 15  
 Prāyaścitta 4  
 Rājagaha 11, 14, 15, 36,  
     45, 52, 78  
 Rathakāra, lake 58  
 Revata 69  
 Revatî 79  
 Revatîpeta 78  
 Rukkhadevas 90  
 Sabbacatukka yajña 34  
 Sagara 3  
 Sāmaṇera 27, 28  
 Saṅkicca 27, 29  
 Samudda 4  
 Saṃsāramocaka 69, 70  
 Sānuvāsipabbata 43  
 Sānuvāsipeta 4?  
 Sāriputta 70, 71, 72, 73  
 Sāriputtatherassa  
     mātupetî 71  
 Sattaputtakhādakapeta 20  
 Saṭṭhikuṭasahassapeta 33  
 Sāvattḥî 20, 21, 27, 29, 32,  
     36, 38, 40, 41, 55, 63,  
     66, 73, 75, 76  
 Serinî 54  
 Setṭhiputtapeta 34  
 Sindhuka 83  
 Soma 2  
 Somayāga 4

- Śrāddhas 2  
Sujāta 21, 22  
Sukaramukhapeta 13  
Sulasā 13  
Sumaṅgala 6  
Suratṭha 47  
Suvarṇabhūmi 38  
Tāvatisa heaven 47, 56,  
68, 81  
Tirokuḍḍapeta 16  
Tissā 73, 74  
Ubbarî 65  
Ubbarîpeta 63  
Ucçhupeta 46  
Udena 68  
Uragapeta 29  
Uttarā 48  
Uttaramadhurā 80  
Uttarapatha 76  
Utūpajîvi 5  
Vaiśālî 49, 50  
Veluvana 36, 47, 51, 52  
Veluvana Vihāra 18  
Vindhya forest 57  
Vindhyaṭavi 48  
Viruḷha 8  
Yāmahanu 4



