BUDDHIST GHOST STORIES

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IN THE experience of most men, it appears that the impressions formed during childhood are ineffaceable and cannot be eradicated. Through a change in a person's environment, these incidents may be manifestly forgotten, while in reality they are only dormant. Under favorable circumstances and with the proper stimulus these notions are awakened and correlated with other phenomena and new experiences. In making these statements we are not theorizing but speaking from personal contact with a rural generation that has now almost passed out of existence in that region of eastern Pennsylvania where we made our observations. When people live close to the soil, they are brought in touch with the unseen forces of nature; for them the change of seasons and the consequent variation in the farmer's activities, the real or fancied influence of the moon on crops and weather, and the mysterious meaning of the signs of the zodiac give room for dreams and occasion for speculation as well as for reflection and generalization. In our idle moments we may envy the unlettered swain who is unspoiled by the world's materialism, the unsympathetic grind of industrialism, and the peril of a civilization that has no spiritual culture as its foundation. For the untutored husbandman, there is a breath in nature, a soul in the activities of the universe, a hidden power in the natural phenomena, which he contemplates with amazement, but accepts merely as a matter of course. For him the presence of malignant spirits is not a matter of superstition, but a grim fact borne out by his own unpleasant experiences as well as those of his forefathers and contemporaries.

If the people of that stage of culture did not find their amusements in a mad rush after pleasure, they took more time to dream about the invisible and consequently had a receptive state of mind to behold occasional appearances of departed spirits. Such was an ideal condition for seeing apparitions, and only under such an en-
environment could ghost stories be composed as we find them in the Peta-Vatthu. In a poetic mood, we who have been born in the present generation, when we can no longer have a first-hand acquaintance with goblins, might wish to be transported to the long ago when men contemplated the mysterious with awe and devotion. The faculty of seeing kobolds in fence corners and lime-kilns and at the same time remaining a respected member of society belongs to a past generation.

As a boy, I was on intimate relations with many old men who told me their personal reminiscences and ghost stories until my hair almost stood on end and the chills went down my back; in fact, many a time I was almost afraid to go home in the dark. One story will stand repetition on account of its similarity to some of the tales in the Peta-Vatthu. Farmers always asserted that it is a heinous sin for a man to remove a boundary stone, and many anecdotes are narrated to show how the malefactor could not escape the retribution for such an offense. A man once maliciously pulled out a corner stone and after death had to walk on the boundary with the stone upon his back. To every one he saw, he said, “Where shall I put it, where shall I put it?” Everybody fled from him in terror, but one evening he put the same question to a straggler who was badly intoxicated. The inebriate rather impudently replied, “Put it where you got it, you ox.” “That is what I have longed to hear for many years,” remarked the ghost, who was freed from his anguish and never seen again. Many a time as a boy, I was told not to leave a distressed spirit in similar circumstances to his fate; it was considered a meritorious deed to release the unfortunate one by pronouncing a few simple words, “Put it where you got it.”

But the men who entertained me with these stories have passed away. I came under the influence of a different environment, and the stories of the gnomes were hidden away in the recesses of my mind until the study of Pāli, and the subsequent acquaintance with the Peta-Vatthu brought them back once more very vividly. In fact, the resemblance of the stories of the Peta-Vatthu to those told in Eastern Pennsylvania, especially in the motif of retribution, struck me as interesting and induced me to translate the entire Peta-Vatthu into English.1

The Peta-Vatthu, the work which forms the basis of this paper, is one of the Buddhistic works written in Pāli, a language closely

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akin to Sanskrit. The Buddhist Scriptures known as the Tipiṭaka consist of three parts, the Vinaya-ṭīṭaka, the Sutta-ṭīṭaka, and the Abbhiddammapiṭaka. The second group, the Sutta-ṭīṭaka, consists of five books, one of which is called the Khudakaṇṇikāya, which in turn is subdivided into fifteen sections. The Peta-Vatthu constitutes one of these last divisions.

The name Peta-Vatthu (Sanskrit: pṛta-vastu) means the story of the departed or the spirits of the dead. The Pāli peta is equivalent to the Sanskrit pṛta, which is derived from the root i “to go” with the suffix pra; the word signifies, therefore, “having gone forward,” or in other words, “having passed from this world to the next”; hence, “the departed” or “the spirits of the dead.” Both in Sanskrit and in Pāli the word is specialized to refer only to the spirits in torment or in purgatory.

The petas live in the paraloka or the spirit world. We must not, however, identify the punishment of the petas with the torment in hell, which was considered a far greater affliction than existence in the peta world. It is a well-known fact that there are five gatis or states of existence into which a being may be reborn at death; they are hell, animals, the peta world, men, and the devas or gods.

In order to understand the punishment of the petas let us cast a cursory glance at what is meant by transmigration. Life is evil, say the Hindus, but death does not bring release from it. Death is not the cessation of existence; it is only passing from one existence into another. Men are punished, not because they have incurred the wrath of any angry personal deity, but because they have transgressed, or come into conflict with, the cosmic power or force of abstract right or justice, which rules the world and is, in fact, a natural law. It operates of itself just as much as the law of gravitation does; it is therefore wholly dispassionate, neither vindictive nor merciful. One cannot escape the law of reward or retribution; the state of each individual is absolutely conditioned by that person’s morality in the previous existence. A man is what he has made himself. For abstract contemplation, is this not a wonderful scheme of cosmic justice? The final state is not that of being a deva or god; the devas also die and are reborn. One has reached the goal only when he has freed himself from the last links of the chain binding him to existence and attained Nirvāṇa, which is non-existence, or generally speaking, the cessation of conscious individual existence. Theoretically, there is no definite limit to the number of years one has to spend in the samstava or cycle of rebirths; still it may be interesting to note the calculation of one peta (P. V., IV, 3, 32-33):
“After having passed through the cycle of transmigration for eighty-four hundred thousand great kalpas, both the foolish and the wise make an end of their misery. He who is victorious understands all.” Now each mahākāpo (mahākalpa) is subdivided into four asankheyyakāpas called samvatīa, samvatīṣṭhāṭā, vivattā, and vivattāṣṭhāṭā; each asankheyyakāpa contains twenty antarākāpas, an antarākāpa being the interval that elapses while the age of man increases from ten years to asankheyya and then decreases again to ten years. Finally an asankheyya is equal to 10,000,000 raised to the twentieth power or 1 followed by 140 ciphers. From these data we can compute the peta’s estimate of the number of years that one has to spend in the samaēra. Of course, it must be borne in mind that various conditions determine the length of time that one has to spend in the cycle, and so the period of transmigration may take a much longer time or conversely a less number of years.

The operation of the law of reward and retribution is succinctly expressed in P.-V., III, 1, 20:

sukham akatapuññanam idha natthi parattha ca
sukhaṁ ca katapuññanam idha c'eva parattha ca:

“For those who have not done good deeds, there is joy neither in this world nor in the next; but for those who have performed meritorious works, there is happiness both in this world and in the next.”

The nature of the stories told in the Peta-Vatthu does not assist us in definitely dating this work. Buddhism was a popular religion, and in order to make its tenets clear to the people, the teachers used tales and legends that had originally no religious significance. Many of these stories are as old as the human race, but the Buddhist preachers in giving them a religious veneer, could thus address the common folk in a language that they understood. We generally have a conversation between an elder or one of the Buddha’s eminent disciples as Nārada or Moggallāna and a ghost. The monk asks the peta why he appears in such a condition. The latter narrates his story which is carried by the disciple to the Buddha, who in turn makes the incident his theme in preaching to the multitude. For this reason the commentator Dhammapāla, in his introduction, asserts that the whole Peta-Vatthu owes its origin to the fact that all of it was spoken by the Teacher. We must, however, not take him too seriously at this point, because in the frame-story to IV, 3, he mentions King Pingalaka of Surat, who in the words of Dhammapāla lived two hundred years after the Buddha. In other words the Peta-
Vatthu in its final form was composed at a date posterior to 280 B.C. In this connection we may raise the question of its canonicity. Everybody is agreed that only the verses can be regarded canonical; the prose or frame-story is the commentary. It is apparent that the language of the latter is later than that of the verses. This, however, does not necessarily imply that the contents of the frame-story are recent; the man who recited the verses might expound them with language improvised at the moment as he narrated an accepted tradition. The third ecumenical council was held in the time of King Asoka; the monk Tissa Moggaliputta (236 years after the Buddha) called an assembly of one thousand monks at Pataliputra to form a canon. A pupil of Tissa named Mahinda, a younger brother of Asoka, took Buddhism and the Buddhist texts to Ceylon where they were orally transmitted until recorded by the Singhalese king, Vattagamani, in the first century, B.C. According to the Buddhists of Ceylon, the canon which was established at the third council is the same as that brought by Mahinda to Ceylon and our present Pali canon, the Tipitaka. Now it is evident that in the time of Asoka there was a canon, at least as far as the Suttapiṭaka is concerned, which was not unlike ours. It is, however, believed by scholars, and no doubt correctly so, that much material crept in from the third to the first century, B.C.

In the fifth book of the Avadānasataka, we have in Sanskrit a short collection of preta stories. Since that work was translated into Chinese as early as the third century, A.D., we must take into account the time that necessarily elapsed between the composition of the Avadānasataka and its gaining so great authority that the need of a Chinese translation was felt. Speyer, therefore, reasonably assumes the date of the Avadānasataka as 'circa' 100, A.D. Both the Peta-Vatthu and the Avadānasataka are Hinayāna works, but we cannot prove that either was influenced by the other. They have some material in common, but then it is possible that both drew from stories that were floating around in India and known to many people in various parts of the country. There is, however, a difference in telling the story in the two works under consideration. In the Avadānasataka, when the elder asks a ghost why he has to suffer such a dreadful torment, the spirit replies: "When the sun is risen, one does not need a light. Ask the Blessed One, he will tell you why." On the other hand, in the Peta-Vatthu the ghost in simple fashion tells his case to the monk, who then informs the Buddha, but this difference of presentation does not prove anything definite as to the date of composition. It may be that in this simple style
the Peta-Vatthu is merely imitating an older tradition. Perhaps we may assume that the Peta-Vatthu is at least as old as the Avadānasataka; at any rate it obtained such popularity that a commentary on the book was written by Dhammapāla, who lived not much later than Buddhaghosa in a monastery in southern India.

It is true beyond a doubt that it is late in composition and perhaps only through popular use found a dubious entrance into the Pāli canon. The Buddhists of Ceylon, however, regard it canonical, but it is noteworthy that it is not included in the King of Siam’s edition of the Tipiṭaka, Bangkok, 1894. Its subject matter reveals its late origin, but the date is not all that must be considered in connection with its canonicity. The contents of the book are decidedly against its being placed in the same category with the more important books of Buddhism. Most of the stories of the Peta-Vatthu are not attractive, and as regards the religious message of the book, one or two tales could have taught all that the Peta-Vatthu has for spiritual enlightenment. We are very apparently dealing with a low type of Buddhism. The transfer of merit whereby a sympathetic man or woman could release a ghost from the torments of the peta existence certainly makes it easy to escape the retribution that is one’s due according to the law of Kamma. The constant stress on liberality makes us feel that a mercenary spirit or attitude pervades the Peta-Vatthu. The subject matter reveals its late origin, and this with the base type of religion found in the book evidently directed the Siamese theologians in their decision.

First, let us consider the time and place that men saw petas. We note that the spirits made their appearance both day and night in various places. Generally speaking, in folklore ghosts haunt the places where they lived or had their activities. This primitive element is found in I, 5, the Peta Story of “Outside the Wall”:

“They stand outside the walls and at the street corners and at the crossroads; they are standing at the doorposts, having arrived at their own house.”

The terrors of a haunted place are depicted in IV, 6. While the Teacher was living at Jetavana, he told this story about two petas. It is said that the king of Kosala at Sāvatthi had two amiable sons who were in the prime of youth. In the excitement of youthful passion, they committed adultery, and after death were reborn as petas who were being crushed in a trench. During the night they used to lament with a dreadful noise; when the people heard it, they were terrified. Since this was the case, they gave a great donation to the Chapter of priests presided over by the Buddha, saying,
"This ill omen shall cease." They told that tidings to the Blessed one who said, "Disciples, you will not have any end of hearing that noise." He told them the cause of it and in the following stanzas preached them a sermon:

1. "There is a city called Sāvatthi at the flank of the Himalayas; in that place were two princes, the sons of a king; so I heard.

2. "They indulged in sensuality and found delight in the enjoyment of love. They were greedy for the present pleasures, but they did not consider the future.

3. "They left their human state and passed from this world to the next. Although one does not see them, they proclaim the wickedness which they committed in their former existence.

4. "Saying: 'Many people forsooth are served with presents. We cannot provide for ourselves a blessing which brings protection and happiness.

5. "'What wicked deed then might it have been on account of which we were expelled from our royal family and reborn in the realm of the pretas, afflicted with hunger and thirst?'

6. "They who are lords here will not be lords over there; they wander about tortured with hunger and thirst; the lofty are humbled.

7. "After knowing that this bad consequence has its origin in the presumption of a ruler, a man should renounce the arrogance of lordship and thus go to heaven. After the dissolution of the body the wise man is reborn in heaven."

The pretas have retained their human form and features and frequently are nude and are tormented by hunger and thirst. In the Avadānasataka we meet a general description that is more or less standard; the preta has a face like the summit of a mountain, a belly like a mountain or the ocean, a mouth like the eye of a needle; he is nude, but covered entirely with his hair and completely aglow with flames so that he forms, as it were, a single flame. In this condition he utters cries of distress and awakens the sympathy of his fellowmen.

The pretas come to earth and seek alleviation from their sufferings, but they do not profit by direct gifts. In their request for aid, they suggest that the donor give in their name a present to some needy individual, in most cases a monk. It was very important that the giver transfer to the preta the credit of the gift. We have alluded to the justice of working out one's salvation through the Buddhist rebirths, but we note here that a spirit could be released from the preta existence or purgatory by the donations of friends and the concomitant transfer of merit. Here is where the justice of the sys-
tem seems to break down. A peta may through supercerogation be born in the highest heaven. The only defense we can make for this doctrine of the Peta-Vatthu (or should we not rather call it an apology?) is that existence in heaven is not permanent and by no means does it imply the end of the rebirths. We must admit that it is a serious blemish in the working out of the law of cause and effect, and we grant that the Siamese theologians had a valid reason for excluding the Peta-Vatthu from the canon.

In most instances the punishment bears a similarity to the offense committed in thought, word, or deed. Wicked acts are punished, and a person who performs partially good deeds, receives both joy and grief, i.e., a partial reward and punishment in his peta existence.

The following selections will give a general idea of the appearance of the petas, the nature of their misery, and the cause of their sufferings. In I, 2, we have this dialogue. Nārada meets a ghost and says: “Your body, golden all over, illuminates all the regions; but your mouth is simply that of a boar. What deed have you done in your previous existence?” The peta replies: “My body I subdued; my speech I did not restrain. Therefore, I have such an appearance as you see, Nārada.” In I, 3, we have another conversation between Nārada and a ghost. The disciple says: “You have a beautiful, celestial complexion; in the air you are standing, yea in heaven. Yet worms are devouring your mouth which has a putrid odour; what act did you commit in your previous existence?” The peta answers: “A monk I was, wicked and of harsh speech; though in the form of a mendicant, I was unrestrained with my mouth; I obtained, to be sure, with austerity my complexion, but also a putrid mouth on account of my slander.”

A lie with a false oath brings dire consequences upon a person in the next world. In I, 6, this is brought out by a conversation between a monk and a peti (a female ghost). The holy man begins:

1. “You are naked and ugly in form; an ill-smelling and putrid odour your breathe forth; you are all covered with flies, as it were. Now who are you that exist in this condition?”

The peti replies:

2. “I, venerable sir, am a peti, a wretched denizen of Yama’s world. Since I had done a wicked deed, I went from here to the world of the petas.

3. “At daybreak I give birth to five sons, in the evening again to five others, all of whom I devour; even these are not enough for me.
4. "My head is scorched and smokes with hunger; I do not receive any water to drink. Behold the misfortune which has come upon me."

Then says the monk:

5. "Now what sin has been committed by your body, speech, and mind? In retribution of what deed do you devour the flesh of children?"

The peti replies:

6. "The other wife of my husband was pregnant, and I devised evil against her; I myself with a corrupt spirit caused the fall of her foetus.

7. "Her foetus, two months old, was simply blood and trickled from her. Then her mother in anger brought her relatives to me. And she both administered an oath to me and had me reviled.

8. "I for my part took the terrible oath falsely: 'May I eat the flesh of children, if it was done by me.'

9. "In consequence of both the deed and the perjury, I eat the flesh of children, since I am stained with the blood of my former existence."

Buddhism encourages the monastic life, which of course necessitates liberality on the part of the friar's friends and fellow-countrymen. In the Peta-Vatthu we see that many a man and woman had to pay the penalty for niggardliness or abuse of the monks. In fact, the book lays so much stress upon this phase of religious life that it becomes tiresome and we gain the impression that there was a mercenary motive in writing this collection of tales. From the numerous examples let us quote one story, I, 11, where we have a dialogue between the monk Samkicca and a peta family. The monk opens the conversation:

1. "Leading the way, forsooth, one goes on a white elephant, but in the middle, one is in a car drawn by she-mules; and at the very end a young woman who entirely illuminates the ten regions, is carried in a litter.

2. "But you people with mallets in your hands, having sad faces and split and broken bodies, you human beings, what evil have you done? On account of what do you drink each other's blood?"

The petas say:

3. "He who goes at the very head on the white elephant, the four-footed beast, was our son; he was the eldest child. Because he gave gifts, he now rejoices happily."
4. "He who is in the middle on the wagon drawn by the she-mules, in the swift car yoked to four, was our second child. As an unselfish and noble giver he shines.

5. "She who is carried in a litter, a lady, wise, having the sluggish eye of the doe, was our daughter; she was the youngest child. Happy with half her portion, she rejoices.

6. "And these with tranquil minds in their previous existence gave gifts to the ascetics and the brāhmans. But we were niggardly and abused the ascetics and the brāhmans. Since they gave gifts, they roam about, while we waste away like a reed cut down."

Then the monk interposes:

7. "What kind of food do you have? what kind of a bed? How do you maintain yourselves, you great sinners, who, while food is abundant and plenty, have lost happiness and today have obtained sorrow?"

Thereupon the ghosts reply:

8. "We strike each other and drink pus and blood. Although we have drunk much, we are not satiated, our thirst is not appeased.

9. "Just so lament unbestowing mortals, who after death are in the abode of Yama; having discerned and attained food, they neither enjoy it nor do good with it.

10. "Suffering hunger and thirst in another world, the departed spirits for a long time lament, since they are in torment. Because they have done deeds of grievous consequence, they receive sorrow as their bitter fruits.

11. "For momentary are wealth and property; fleeting is the life here on earth; gaining a knowledge of transitoriness from the transient, let the wise man prepare a resting place.

12. "All men who are acquainted with the moral law and have this knowledge, do not neglect gifts after they have heard the words of the saints."

In I, 9, a man gave gifts to the mendicants, but his wife reviled and censured him, saying: "Excrement, urine, blood, and pus, filth you shall eat for all time. Let that be your lot in the other world, and your clothes shall be like metal plates." When she died, she became a peti, whose clothes were metal plates, and she had to live upon the filth that she had wished upon her husband. In many instances we find that the ghosts had to eat loathsome refuse and dung.

The author of the Peta-Vatthu, however, does not limit his conception of punishment to hunger, thirst, and nauseating rations. Thus a crowd of petas narrate their affliction (IV, 10): "In fear we approach the river; it becomes empty. We go up to the shade on
the hot days; it is turned into sunlight. A flaming and burning wind blows over us. Reverend sir, we deserve this affliction and more besides. Famished and craving for food, we travel for *yojanas*. We return without having gotten anything at all; alas, we have been wicked. Hungry and faint, we are smitten to the earth. We are scattered and lie flat on our backs; we fall down, curled in heaps. We in this condition drop down to that very spot and are afflicted upon the earth. We beat our chests and heads. Alas, we have been wicked. Reverend sir, we deserve this affliction and more besides. We have not provided for ourselves a refuge by means of good gifts.”

One motif that frequently occurs is that the punishment in the *peta* world was suggested by an act committed in thought, in word, or in deed. Whatever ill you do another person in this world, will return to you in the next; whatever misfortune you wish upon another, will surely be visited upon you in the future. Mattā and Tissā were both the wives of one man (II, 3). After the death of the former she appeared as a peti and narrated her misfortunes. Once Tissā had washed her head and dressed herself in clean clothes; Mattā became jealous and so strewed dirt on her co-wife. Consequently she was covered with sand in the next world. On another occasion she put the rough nuts of the *kapikacchu* in Tissā’s bed; as a result of that she was devoured with the itch in her *peta* existence. She even threw her rival’s perfume, garland, and new ointment into the cesspool; for that she paid by giving out an odor of excrement.

Here we have a story of a man who led a partially good life (III, 7). The venerable Nārada thus addresses a *peta*:

1. “You are a youth attended by men and women; at night with the pleasures of your senses you are brilliant; during the day you suffer from some cause. What did you do in your previous existence?”

The *peta* thus described his past life:

2. “I, in beautiful Rājagaha, in delightful Giribajja, formerly was a huntsman, a cruel destroyer of life.

3. “With my broad and strong hands acting a consistent part, I had a wicked disposition; I walked about, always exceedingly grim, delighting in slaying others, and unrestrained.

4. “Though of such a nature, I had a friendly companion, a pious layman of the faith; and he having compassion on me, restrained me again and again, saying:
5. "Do not perform an evil deed, lest, my dear sir, you come to distress. If you desire happiness after death, put an end to your taking of life, your lack of self-restraint."

6. "Although I heard the advice of this man who loved happiness and pitied his friend, I did not obey completely his admonition, since for a long time I had found delight in wickedness and was not wise.

7. "Again this very wise man tenderly introduced me to self-restraint with the words: 'If you slay animals during the day, then let them alone during the night.'

8. "So I killed the animals by daytime and with self-control abstained at nights. Now I walk around by night, but during the day I am consumed in misery.

9. "In consequence of that meritorious act I enjoy a celestial night; during the daytime the dogs that had just been driven back run up on all sides to eat me up."

The following story (IV,5) we shall give together with its commentary. This is a peta-story that even children would enjoy.

Now comes the story of the sugar cane. What was its origin? While the Blessed One was living at Veluvana, a certain man put a bundle of sugar cane on his shoulder and was chewing a stalk as he walked along. Then some pious disciple who led a righteous life came along behind him with a small boy. When the child saw the sugar cane, he began to cry, saying, "Give me some." When the layman saw that his little one was in tears, he stopped the man and tried to start a conversation with him. But the man answered him never a word and out of pure meanness refused to give even a bit of sugar cane to the lad. Then the disciple showed him his child and said: "This boy cries bitterly; give him a piece of sugar cane." When the man heard this, he could not stand it any longer and with a contemptuous and disrespectful air, he threw one piece of sugar cane behind himself. Subsequently he died, and on account of the covetousness which he had long cherished, he was reborn among the petas. His reward, of course, was in accordance with his deeds. A large sugar cane forest, black as collyrium, sprang up in which the closely planted stalks had the size of clubs and sticks, and the thicket extended over an area of eight karissas. As he approached with a desire to eat and thought, "I will take some sugar cane," the stalks struck him. Exhausted by this affliction, he fell down. Then one day, while the venerable Mahâmoggallâna was going to Râjagaha for alms, he saw the peta on the road.
These stanzas set forth the conversation which took place between the two:

*Peta:*

1. "Here a great forest of sugar cane springs up before me; it is extensive and bears a good crop. But now it does not offer me anything to eat. Tell me, reverend sir, of what is this the result?"
2. "I am afflicted and am being eaten up; I struggle. I am trying to get something to eat. I am well nigh dead, and in my misery I lament. Of what deed is this the result?"
3. "I am overcome, and I am falling down to the earth. I roll around in the heat like a fish, and as I weep, the tears are dripping from me. Tell me, reverend sir, of what is this the result?"
4. "I am hungry, thirsty, and exhausted. I am terrified and get no pleasure nor happiness. Venerable sir, I am asking you the cause of this. How now might I get some sugar cane as food?"

*Mahómgollána:*

5. "In your previous existence, i. e., when you were a human being in a former birth, you performed some (wicked) deed. Now I will tell you the reason for your state, and when you hear, take this matter to heart.
6. "You were eating sugar cane as you were walking along, and a man was coming up behind you. He told you that he longed for some, and you replied him never a word.
7. "Although you refused to speak, he begged you and said to you, 'My lord, give me sugar cane.' Then you gave him some from behind. In consequence of that deed you have this result.
8. "Look here! (I'll help you; listen to what I say): You may take some sugar cane from behind; take it and eat to your heart's content. Through this very act you will be pleased, delighted, joyful, and happy.'"

9. He went and took it from behind. When he had it in his hands, he ate to his heart's content. By that means alone he became pleased, delighted, joyful, and happy.

The commentary adds that the *peta* gathered a bundle of the sugar cane and gave it to the elder who brought it to the Buddha at Veluvana. The Blessed One together with the priests of the Chapter partook of it and gave thanks. From that time on the *peta* could eat sugar cane in comfort. In the course of time he passed out of the *peta*-existence and was reborn among the Távatimasa dévas.

One story (IV, 3) reads almost like a fairy tale on account of the mysterious manner in which a highway disappears. We shall quote a portion of it:
1. A king named Pingalaka was lord of the people of Surat. He had gone on a service to the Moriyas and again was on his way back to Surat.

2. In the heat of the noonday the king came upon some mud; he beheld a delightful road, a beautiful path, that of the petas.

3. The king addressed his driver: "This is an exquisite highway; it is peaceful, safe, and auspicious. Follow this course, charioteer."

4. From this point the king of Surat with his army of four hosts proceeded upon it at the head of the men from Surat.

5. With a flurried look a man thus addressed the ruler of Surat: "We are going upon a terrible road; it is frightful and causes one's hair to stand up. In front a way is seen, but behind it is invisible.

6. "We are traveling on a dangerous path with Yama's men. A demonic odour is emitted; a dreadful noise is heard."

7. In agitation the king of Surat spoke thus to his charioteer: "We are going upon a terrible road; it is frightful and causes one's hair to stand on end. In front a way is seen, but behind us it is invisible.

8. "We are traveling on a dangerous path with Yama's men. A demonic odour is emitted; a dreadful noise is heard."

9. He mounted upon the back of an elephant, and looking toward the four directions, he saw a banyan with its abundant shade; the tree resembled a dark blue thunder-cloud in color, and its top had the hue of the mist.

10. The king asked his driver: "What is that big object which we see, resembling a dark blue thunder-cloud, and its top has the hue of the mist?" Then replied the charioteer:

11. "Great king, that is a banyan with abundant shade; it is a tree that looks like the dark blue thunder-cloud in color, and its top has the hue of mist."

12. The king of Surat set out in the direction in which was seen that large tree, which in color had the likeness of a dark blue thunder-cloud and whose top had the hue of mist.

13. Having descended from the back of the elephant, the king approached the tree, and with his ministers and attendants he sat down on a root of the banyan. He noticed various cakes and a water-jar filled with a beverage.

14. Then a man who had the appearance of a deva and was bedecked with all kinds of ornaments, came up and thus addressed the king of Surat:
15. "Welcome! great king; you had a rather easy course hither. Lord, drink the water, and eat the cakes, O conqueror."

16. The king with his ministers and attendants quaffed the beverage and ate the cakes. After the repast the ruler of Surat spoke as follows:

17. "Now pray, are you a deva, or a gandharva, or Sakka Purindada? Since we have no acquaintance with you, we ask. How could we know you?" The stranger spoke:

18. "I am not a deva, nor a gandharva, nor even Sakka Purindada. I am a peta, O great king, you who have come hither from Surat." Then the peta proceeds to narrate that he had been a wicked man in the past and advised the king to profit by his misfortune. The words of the ghost made such an impression on the king that he became a good Buddhist.

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