

THE PALIVERSE PROJECT

The Universe of Buddha's Wisdom

The Triple Canon (Tipiṭaka)

The Canon of Discourses (Sutta Piṭaka)

5. The Collection of Minor Texts (5. Khuddaka Nikāya)

07. The Book of Stories about Ghosts (07. Petavatthupāḷi)

1. The Chapter on the Snake (1. Uragavaggo)

[Pv 1-12, PTS 1-13]



PaliVerse

5. The Collection of Minor Texts

07. The Book of Stories about Ghosts

Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One

In the Minor Collection

The Book of Stories about Ghosts

1. The Chapter on the Snake

1. The Story of the Ghost Likened to a Field

1. "Worthy Ones are like a field, donors are like farmers;
The gift is like a seed, from this the fruit arises.
2. "This seed, ploughing, and field, are for the ghosts and for the donor;
The ghosts consume that, the giver grows through merit.
3. "Having done wholesome right here, and having honoured the ghosts;
And having done good action, one goes to the heavenly state."

The Story of the Ghost Likened to a Field is first.

2. The Story of the Pig-Faced Ghost

4. "Your body is entirely golden, it illuminates all directions;
But your face is like a pig's, what action did you do before?"
5. "I was restrained by body, but unrestrained by speech;
By that is such beauty mine, as you see, Nārada.
6. "Therefore I tell you, Nārada, this has been seen by you yourself;
Do not do evil with the mouth, lest you become pig-faced."

The Story of the Pig-Faced Ghost is second.

3. The Story of the Putrid-Mouthed Ghost

7. "You bear a divine, beautiful colour, you stand in the sky in mid-air;
But worms eat your foul-smelling mouth, what action did you do before?"
8. "I was an evil ascetic with corrupt speech, having the appearance of an
austere ascetic, unrestrained with my mouth;
And my colour element was obtained through austerity, but my mouth is
rotten through slander.
9. "This has been seen by you yourself, Nārada,

What the compassionate, the skilful would say;
'Do not speak slander nor falsehood,
You will become a demon who possesses sensual pleasures as desired.'"

The Story of the Putrid-Mouthed Ghost is third.

4. The Story of the Flour-Doll Ghost

10. "Having made whatever as an object, one without stinginess should give a gift;
Referring to deceased ancestors, or else to site deities.
11. "And the four great kings, the glorious guardians of the world;
Kuvera and Dhātaraṭṭha, Virūpakkha and Virūḷhaka;
They are venerated, and the donors are not without fruit.
12. For neither weeping nor sorrow, nor any other lamentation;
Is for the benefit of the departed, thus do relatives remain.
13. "And this offering given, well established in the monastic community;
For a long time for his welfare, with reason it is beneficial."

The Story of the Flour-Doll Ghost is fourth.

5. The Story of the Ghost Outside the Walls

14. They stand outside the walls, and at junctions and crossroads;
They stand by the door-posts, having come to their own home.
15. When food and drink are abundant, when solid food and edibles are at hand;
No one remembers those beings, because of their kamma.
16. Thus they give to relatives, those who are compassionate;
Pure, superior, in proper time, allowable drink and food;
"May this be for your relatives, may the relatives be happy."
17. And they, having come together there, the deceased relatives assembled;
When food and drink are abundant, they give thanks attentively.
18. "May our relatives live long, because of whom we receive;
And veneration has been made to us, and the donors are not without fruit."
19. For there is no farming there, cow-keeping is not found;
There is no such trade, buying and selling with gold;
By what is given from here they sustain themselves, the deceased ghosts there.
20. "Just as water rained upon high ground flows down to the low ground;
Just so what is given from here is beneficial to the ghosts."
21. "Just as full water-carriers fill the ocean;
Just so what is given from here is beneficial to the ghosts."

- 22.** "He gave to me, he did for me, relatives, friends and companions to me";
One should give offerings to the departed, recollecting what was done before.
- 23.** For neither weeping nor sorrow, nor any other lamentation;
Is for the benefit of the departed, thus do relatives remain.
- 24.** "And this offering given, well established in the monastic community;
For a long time for his welfare, with reason it is beneficial."
- 25.** "This duty to relatives has been pointed out, and lofty veneration has been
made to the ghosts;
And strength has been given to the monks, much merit has been produced by
you."

The Story of the Ghost Outside the Walls is fifth.

6. The Story of the Female Ghost Who Devoured Five Sons

- 26.** "You are naked, of ugly appearance, foul-smelling, you emit a putrid odour;
Surrounded by flies, who are you standing here?"
- 27.** "I, venerable sir, am a female ghost, ill-fated, belonging to Yama's world;
Having done evil deeds, I have gone from here to the realm of ghosts.
- 28.** "In the morning five children, in the evening five more again;
Having given birth I eat them, yet they are not enough for me.
- 29.** "My heart is burnt and smokes from hunger;
I cannot get drinking water to drink, see me gone to disaster."
- 30.** "What wrong-doing was done by body, by speech, by mind?
By the result of what action do you eat the flesh of your sons?"
- 31.** "My co-wife was pregnant, towards her I conceived evil;
I, with corrupted mind, caused an abortion.
- 32.** "Her embryo was two months old, it flowed forth as just blood;
Then her mother, angry, brought together my relatives;
And she made me take an oath, and she caused me to be reviled.
- 33.** "I spoke a terrible oath, a lie;
'May I eat the flesh of my sons, if that was done by me.'
- 34.** "By the result of that action, and of lying, both;
I eat the flesh of my sons, smeared with pus and blood."

The Story of the Female Ghost Who Devoured Five Sons is sixth.

7. The Story of the Female Ghost Who Devoured Seven Sons

- 35.** "You are naked, of ugly appearance, foul-smelling, you emit a putrid odour;
Surrounded by flies, who are you standing here?"

- 36.** "I, venerable sir, am a female ghost, ill-fated, belonging to Yama's world;
Having done evil deeds, I have gone from here to the realm of ghosts.
- 37.** "In the morning seven children, in the evening seven more again;
Having given birth I eat them, yet they are not enough for me.
- 38.** "My heart is burnt and smokes from hunger;
I do not attain peace, like one burnt by fire in the sun's heat."
- 39.** "What wrong-doing was done by body, by speech, by mind?
By the result of what action do you eat the flesh of your sons?"
- 40.** "I had two sons, both having attained youth;
I, endowed with the power of sons, despised my husband.
- 41.** "Then my husband, angry, brought a co-wife for me;
She conceived an embryo, towards her I conceived evil.
- 42.** "I, with corrupted mind, caused an abortion;
Her embryo was three months old, it fell as pus and blood.
- 43.** "Then her mother, angry, brought together my relatives;
And she made me take an oath, and she caused me to be reviled.
- 44.** "I spoke a terrible oath, a lie;
'May I eat the flesh of my sons, if that was done by me.'
- 45.** "By the result of that action, and of lying, both;
I eat the flesh of my sons, smeared with pus and blood."

The Story of the Female Ghost Who Devoured Seven Sons is seventh.

8. The Story of the Ox Ghost

- 46.** "Why, as if mad, having mowed green grass,
Do you prattle 'Eat, eat!' to an old bull whose life has departed?
- 47.** "For indeed not by food or drink, will a dead bull rise up;
You are a fool and imprudent, just as that other fool."
- 48.** "These feet, this head, this body with its tail;
The eyes remain just so, this bull should rise up.
- 49.** "The grandfather's hands and feet, body and head are not seen;
Crying at a clay stupa, are you not yourself the fool?"
- 50.** "Indeed, as I was blazing, like a fire sprinkled with ghee;
Pouring down as if with water, he extinguished all my anguish.
- 51.** "He has indeed drawn out my dart, the sorrow lodged in my heart;
He who, for me overcome with sorrow, dispelled my sorrow for my father.

- 52.** "I have had the dart pulled out, I have become cool, quenched;
I do not grieve, I do not weep, having heard you, young man."
- 53.** Thus do the wise act, those who are compassionate;
They turn one away from sorrow, as Sujāta did his father.

The Story of the Ox Ghost is eighth.

9. The Story of the Great Weaver Female Ghost

- 54.** "Faeces and urine and blood and pus, she consumes - of what is this the result?
What action did this woman do, she who always feeds on blood and pus?"
- 55.** "New garments, beautiful indeed, soft, pure, and hairy;
When given, they become mixed, like thorns, what action did this woman do?"
- 56.** "She was my wife, venerable sir, not a giver, stingy, miserly;
She reviles and abuses me when I am giving to ascetics and brahmins.
- 57.** "'Faeces and urine and blood and pus, consume you this impurity at all times;
May this be yours in the world beyond, and may your garments become like thorns';
Having practised such misconduct, having come here, she eats for a long time."

The Story of the Great Weaver Female Ghost is ninth.

10. The Story of the Bald-Headed Female Ghost

- 58.** "Who are you standing inside the mansion, not coming out?
Come out, good lady, let us see you standing outside."
- 59.** "I am troubled, I am ashamed, to go out naked;
I am covered by my hair, little merit was done by me."
- 60.** "Come, I give you my cloak, put on this cloth;
Having put on this cloth, come, go out, beautiful one;
Come out, good lady, let us see you standing outside."
- 61.** "What is given by your hand to my hand, does not benefit me;
Here is a lay follower with faith, a disciple of the Perfectly Enlightened One.
- 62.** "Having clothed him with this, dedicate the offering to me;
Thus I shall be happy, endowed with all sensual pleasures."
- 63.** Having bathed him and having anointed him, the merchants;
Having clothed him with garments, dedicated the offering to her.
- 64.** Immediately after the offering was dedicated, the result arose;
Food, clothing, and drink - this is the fruit of the offering.

- 65.** Then pure, with clean clothing, wearing the finest Kāsi cloth;
Laughing, she came out from the mansion, "This is the fruit of the offering."
- 66.** "Your mansion, beautifully variegated and pleasant, shines;
O deity, being asked, explain, of what action is this the fruit?"
- 67.** "To a monk walking for almsfood, a trough-scraper I
Gave to one upright, with a clear mind.
- 68.** "Of that wholesome action, the result for a long interval;
I experience in the mansion, but that now is small.
- 69.** "After four months, death will occur;
I will fall into hell, extremely painful and terrible.
- 70.** "Rectangular, with four doors, divided into sections, measured;
Surrounded by an iron wall, covered over with iron.
- 71.** "Its floor is made of iron, blazing, endowed with heat;
Having pervaded a hundred yojanas all around, it stands always.
- 72.** "There I shall experience painful feeling for a long duration;
The fruit of evil action, therefore I grieve exceedingly."

The Story of the Bald-Headed Female Ghost is tenth.

11. The Story of the Elephant Ghost

- 73.** "In front he goes with a white elephant, in the middle with a mule-drawn chariot;
And behind a maiden is carried in a palanquin, illuminating the ten directions all around.
- 74.** "But you, with clubs in your hands, with tearful faces, with bodies cut and broken;
When you were human beings, what evil did you do, that you drink each other's blood?"
- 75.** "He who goes in front with an elephant, a white serpent with four legs;
He was our eldest son, having given gifts, happy he rejoices.
- 76.** "He who in the middle with a mule-drawn chariot, yoked with four, well-moving;
He was our middle son, without stinginess, a giver, he shines.
- 77.** "And she who behind is carried in a palanquin, a wise woman with doe-like eyes;
She was our youngest daughter, by giving half of her share, happy she rejoices.
- 78.** "These gave gifts formerly, with confident minds, to ascetics and brahmins;

But we were stingy, abusive to ascetics and brahmins;
These, having given, enjoy themselves, while we wither like a cut reed."

- 79.** "What is your food, what is your bed, and how do you sustain yourselves, you of very evil nature?
When there were abundant possessions, not few, having failed to attain happiness, you have now reached suffering."
- 80.** "Having killed each other, we drink pus and blood;
Having drunk much, we are not satisfied, we do not find pleasure.
- 81.** "Thus indeed mortals lament, non-givers, after death standing in Yama's realm;
Those who, having obtained and acquired wealth, neither enjoy it nor make merit.
- 82.** "They, overcome by hunger and thirst in the hereafter, afterwards for a long time burn, being consumed;
Having done actions with painful consequences, they experience suffering with bitter fruits.
- 83.** "For wealth and grain are brief, brief is life here;
Having known the brief as brief, the wise one should make an island.
- 84.** "Those men who thus understand, skilled in the Teaching;
They are not negligent in giving, having heard the word of the Worthy Ones."

The Story of the Elephant Ghost is eleventh.

12. The Story of the Snake Ghost

- 85.** "Just as a snake goes, leaving behind its worn-out skin;
So too when the body is useless, when the departed one has died.
- 86.** "The one burning does not know the lamentation of relatives;
Therefore I do not weep for this, he has gone to whatever destination is his."
- 87.** "Uninvited he came from there, not permitted he went from here;
As he came, so he went, what lamentation is there for that?
- 88.** "The one burning does not know the lamentation of relatives;
Therefore I do not weep for this, he has gone to whatever destination is his."
- 89.** "If I were to weep, I would become emaciated, what fruit would there be for me in that;
For relatives, friends and companions, there would only be more discontent.
- 90.** "The one burning does not know the lamentation of relatives;
Therefore I do not weep for this, he has gone to whatever destination is his."
- 91.** "Just as a child cries for the moon as it goes;

Such is this, whoever bewails the departed.

92. "The one burning does not know the lamentation of relatives;
Therefore I do not weep for this, he has gone to whatever destination is his."

93. "Just as, Brahmin, a water-pot, broken, cannot be joined together again;
Such is this, whoever bewails the departed.

94. "The one burning does not know the lamentation of relatives;
Therefore I do not weep for this, he has gone to whatever destination is his."

The Story of the Snake Ghost is twelfth.

The Chapter on the Snake is concluded as first.

Its summary:

The field and the pig, the rotten, the flour and also through the wall;
The five and also the seven sons, the bull and the weaver;
Likewise the baldness, the elephant, the twelfth is the snake.



ABOUT THIS TRANSLATION

This translation is part of the PaliVerse Project - the first complete, unified English translation of the Pāli Canon together with its Commentaries (Aṭṭhakathā) and Subcommentaries (Tīkā), accompanied by interactive study tools. PaliVerse is an ongoing project. The AI translations are continuously improved through experts' revisions and feedback. This text is the latest translation as of the date of download.

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