Pv 6 — Pañcaputtakhādaka Sutta: Eater of Five Sons

English translation by Mahamevnawa Buddhist Monastery (Sutta Friends).

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Text

Upon seeing a ghost, a monk asks,

Monk:

You are naked and very ugly. Your body is very smelly. You are surrounded by flies. You, standing there, who are you?

Ghost:

I am a ghost, sir. I am suffering in the world of Yama. I have done an evil deed as a human and have been reborn in the world of ghosts. Every morning, I give birth to five sons and in the evening another five are born. I eat them all that night. But I will still be hungry. My heart is burning with hunger so much that it is smoking. I get no water to drink. See the disaster that has happened to me.

Monk:

Now what evil deed have you done by body, speech, or mind? What have you done so that you have to eat your own sons?

Ghost:

My husband’s other wife was about to give birth. I was extremely jealous of her. With that evil mind, I gave her some medicine that would kill the unborn baby. The two month old embryo flowed out just like blood. The baby’s grandmother became very angry with me

and called her relatives. She frightened me and made me swear an oath. I told a terrible lie by saying, “If I was the one who killed the baby, I will eat my own sons!”

As a result of that evil deed and the lie I told, I have to eat my sons and be covered by their blood.