Pv 20 — Cullaseṭṭhi Sutta: The Ghost Chullaseṭṭi

English translation by Mahamevnawa Buddhist Monastery (Sutta Friends).

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Text

King Ajātasattu sees a ghost and questions him,

King:

You there who is naked and thin, where are you going in the middle of the night and why? Tell me and I will be able to give you some food and clothes.

Chullaseṭṭi (ghost):

I was a very rich and famous man living in Benares, but I was evil. I wanted to enjoy my wealth alone so I did not give anything to others. Through this evil, I was reborn in the world of ghosts.

I am very hungry. I feel like I am being pierced by needles. I go to my relatives to receive the merits they share and get some food. But unfortunately they do not give alms and do not believe that there is any good result from giving to be experienced in the next world.

Luckily my daughter always says, “I will give alms and dedicate the merit to my father and grandfathers.” Now she is going to offer alms to Brahmins and I am going to the city of Andhakavinda to receive the merit and eat something.

King:

After you have gone there to eat, come back here because I also want to help you. I believe what you say.

The ghost departed. Only Brahmins came to that alms giving. There were no noble disciples of the Supreme Buddha. Therefore the result of the merit was not powerful. The ghost came back to the city of Rājagaha and appeared in front of the king.

King:

Tell me what you need, I will give you anything that will make you happy for a long time.

Ghost:

Please offer food, drink, and robes to the Supreme Buddha and the monks who follow him, then dedicate the merit to me. That way I will live happily for a long time.

The king left the palace to meet the Buddha and offered alms. He told the story of the ghost to the Buddha and shared the merits with the ghost.

Having received the merit, the ghost became bright and very beautiful. He appeared in front of the king.

Ghost:

I am now very happy and possess many luxuries. Even humans do not have this kind of happiness. Look at the power of that merit you shared with me by giving alms to the Buddha and his disciples. Great King, you have been very helpful to me. Now I can always live happily.