

## THE FOURTH PRECEPT



**Introduction** – As laypersons, we are to observe five precepts to live a virtuous life. Earlier I wrote the third and the fifth precepts and readers get excited about their concerns on living clean true to the five precepts by words and deeds. Now, I like to present here the fourth precept and cited the related Dhammapada verse.

*Blind are the people of this world;  
only a few in this world see clearly  
(with Insight). Just as only a few birds  
escape from the net, so also,  
only a few get to the world of the devas,  
(and Nibbana).*

**Dhammapada Verse #174**

On the fourth precept, we can separate act of lie into two:

- a. Any statement – lie – made – with the sole intention of causing harm or distract to some one is the one that is within the bound of the fourth precept.
- b. Any statement made to arbitrate or minimize a heated debate and as a result will cause no harm or distract to none, is not within the bound of the fourth precept.  
**Mhu Tar Ma Par Linga Ma Chaw** – causing no harm to none..

To repeat the five precepts here, as a reminder, the fifth precept comes last for all lay devotees to observe, as a daily routine:

- <sup>1</sup> I pledge to observe the precept of abstaining from killing any living beings.
- <sup>2</sup> I pledge to observe the precept of abstaining from taking what is not given to me by the owner.
- <sup>3</sup> I pledge to observe the precept of abstaining from committing sexual misconduct
- <sup>4</sup> **I pledge to observe the precept of abstaining from telling lies**
- <sup>5</sup> I pledge to observe the precept of abstaining from taking any intoxicant (liquor) or drug that causes forgetfulness.

Here – Sundari tells lie for payment and to cause damage to Buddha’s image; and the ascetics lied to diminish the Buddha image. Both will suffer in hell as punishment.

In verse 308 shows Bhikkhus lie to the villagers' thus left very little food for their own subsistence. Bhikkhus lied that caused distract to the villagers.

We can see now, breaking the fourth precept could end up in hell, and the duration in hell will depends on the magnitude of the damage caused. Thus, living a virtuous life is so important, if we are striving for an escape from this Samsara. Any one of the five precepts carries equal weigh.

The Appendix includes our daily prayer to the Three jewels. It is a reminder to us what we are praying, daily. When we were young, it was our daily routine, never occur to us the necessity to understand its meaning – a mixed of Burmese and Pali put together.

## **Verse 306**

### **The Story of Sundari the Wandering Female Ascetic**

**While residing at the Jetavana monastery, the Buddha uttered Verse (306) of this book, with reference to Sundari, a wandering female ascetic.**

**As the number of people revering the Buddha increased, the non-Buddhist ascetics found that the number of their following was dwindling. Therefore, they became very jealous of the Buddha; they were also afraid that things would get worse if they did not do something to damage the reputation of the Buddha. So, they sent for Sundari and said to her, "Sundari, you are a very beautiful and clever young lady. We want you to put Samana Gotama to shame, by making it appear to others that you are having sexual dealings with him. By so doing, his image will be impaired, his following will decrease and many would come to us. Make the best use of your looks and be crafty."**

**Sundari understood what was expected of her. Thus, late in the evening, she went in the direction of the Jetavana monastery. When she was asked where she was going, she answered, "I am going to visit Samana Gotama; I live with him in the Perfumed Chamber of the Jetavana monastery." After saying this, she proceeded to the place of the non-Buddhist ascetics. Early in the morning the next day, she returned home, if anyone asked her from where she had come she would reply, "I have come from the Perfumed Chamber after staying the night with Samana Gotama." She carried on like this for two more days. At the**

end of three days, those ascetics hired some drunkards to kill Sundari and put her body in a rubbish heap near the Jetavana monastery.

'The next day, the ascetics spread the news about the disappearance of Paribbajika Sundari. They went to the king to report the matter and their suspicion. The king gave them permission to search where they wished. Finding the body near the Jetavana monastery, they carried it to the palace. Then they said to the king, "O king, the followers of Gotama have killed this Paribbajika and have thrown away her body in the rubbish heap near the Jetavana monastery to cover up the misdeed of their teacher." To them the king replied, "In that case, you may go round the town and proclaim the fact." So they went round the town carrying the dead body of Sundari, shouting, "Look! What the followers of Gotama have done; see how they have tried to cover up the misdeed of Gotama!" The procession then returned to the palace. The bhikkhus living in the Jetavana monastery told the Buddha what those ascetics were (doing to damage his reputation and impair his image. But the Buddha only said, "My sons, you just tell them this," and then spoke in verse as follows:

**Verse 306.** One who tells lies (about others) goes to niraya; one who has done evil and says "I did not do it" also goes to niraya. Both of them being evil-doers, suffer alike (in niraya) in their next existence.

The king next ordered his men to further investigate the murder of Sundari. On investigation, they found out that Sundari had died at the hands of some drunkards. So they were brought to the king. When questioned, the drunkards disclosed that they were hired by the ascetics to kill Sundari and put her body near the Jetavana monastery. The king then sent for the non-Buddhist ascetics, and they finally confessed their role in the murder of Sundari. The king then ordered them to go round the town and confess their guilt to the people. So they went round the town saying, "We are the ones who killed Sundari. We have falsely accused the disciples of Gotama just to bring disgrace on Gotama. The disciples of Gotama are innocent, only we are guilty of the crime." As a result of this episode, the power, the glory and the fortune of the Buddha were very much enhanced.

## Verse 307

### The Story of Those Who Suffered for Their Evil Deeds

While residing at the Veluvana monastery, the Buddha uttered Verse (307) of this book, with reference to some petas.

Once, the Venerable Maha Moggallana was coming down the Gijjhakuta hill with Thera Lakkhana when he saw some petas. When they were back at the monastery, Thera Maha Moggallana told Thera Lakkhana, in the presence of the Buddha, that he had seen a peta who was just a skeleton. Then he added that he had also seen five bhikkhus with their body burning in flames. On hearing the statement about those bhikkhus, the Buddha said, "During the time of Kassapa Buddha, those bhikkhus had done much evil. For those evil deeds they had suffered in niraya and now they are serving out the remaining term of suffering as petas."

Then the Buddha spoke in verse as follows:

**Verse 307.** Many men wearing the yellow robe up to their necks who have an evil disposition and are unrestrained in thought, word and deed are reborn in niraya on account of their evil deeds.

## Verse 308

### The Bhikkhus Who Lived on the Bank of the Vaggumuda River

While residing at the Mahavana forest near Vesali, the Buddha uttered Verse (308) of this book, with reference to the bhikkhus who spent the vassa on the bank of the Vaggumuda River.

At that time, there was a famine in the country of the Vajjis. So, to enable them to have enough food, those bhikkhus made it appear to the people that they had attained Magga and Phala although they had not done so. **The people from the village, believing them and respecting them, offered much food to them leaving very little for themselves.**

At the end of the vassa, as was customary, bhikkhus from all parts of the country came to pay homage to the Buddha. The bhikkhus from the bank of the river Vaggumuda also came. They looked hale and hearty while the other bhikkhus looked pale and worn out. The Buddha talked to all the bhikkhus and enquired how they fared during the vassa. To the bhikkhus from Vaggumuda River the Buddha specifically

asked whether they had any difficulty in getting alms-food on account of the famine. They answered that they had no difficulty at all in getting alms-food.

The Buddha knew how those bhikkhus had managed to get enough alms-food. But he wanted to teach them on this point, so he asked, "How did you manage so well in getting alms-food throughout the vassa ?" Then the bhikkhus told him how they discussed among themselves and decided that they should address one another in such a way that the villagers would think that they had really attained jhana, Magga and Phala. Then the Buddha asked them whether they had really attained jhana, Magga and Phala. When they answered in the negative, the Buddha reprimanded them.

Then the Buddha spoke in verse as follows:

**Verse 308.** It is better for one to eat a red-hot lump of iron burning like a flame than to eat alms-food offered by the people, if one is without morality (sila) and unrestrained in thought, word and deed.

Appendix – A

# Paying Homage

to

## The Three Jewels



*The traditional way of paying homage to the three jewels must be carried out in three ways – physically, verbally and mentally. The words that we recite are –(Verbally)*

1. I pay homage to the Buddha - *Buddham Pujemi*
2. I pay homage to the Dhamma.- *Dhammam Pujemi*
3. I pay homage to the Samgha - *Samgham Pujemi*



### *Physical Positioning to pay homage*

Verbally, the standard recitation that we are taught to say is –

*Okasa, Okasa, Okasa*

(Request for Permission, Request for Permission, Request for Permission,)

“ I pay obeisance to thee! So, that I may be free from all my offences and any misdeeds so far committed (intentionally or unintentionally) - physically, verbally and mentally. I am paying homage to the Three Gems: the **Buddha**, the **Dhamma** and the **Samgha**, once, twice, thrice with my palms together on my forehead humbly bow to you respectfully. On the merits of this deed, may I also be free from the **four Apayas**; the **three kappas**; the **eight Atthakkhanas**, the **five Veras**, the **four Vipattis**, the **five Byasanas** and may I ultimately attain **Magga, Phala** and **Nibbana!** ”

It is important for a Buddhist to understand complete and distinctly of this recitation to accrue greater merits and benefits. Understand all these pali words - four *Apayas*, three *kappas*, eight *Atthakkhanas*, five *Veras*, four *Vipattis*, five *Byasananas*, and *Nibbana!*.

### What are the Four Apayas?

In the 31 planes of existence, the four lower planes of existence below the human's are called the *Apayas*. Those are the realms (Bhumi) lack of happiness and continuously packed with sufferings. The beings in these four realms coexist along with the human, us. To name them separately are: -

1. The Realm of intense continuous suffering (*Niraya*);
2. The Realm of animals (*Tiracchana*)
3. The Realm of ever hungry beings (*Peta*)
4. The Realm of petas who live miserably in secluded places (*Asurakaya*).

We firmly believed that outside our human world, there are beings that we can see and beings that we cannot see, yet, they exist. In general, there are – **terrestrial** and **celestial** beings that coexist with us. People who practice **Samatha** (Absorption) could see them.

### What are the three kappas ?

The three kappas in Burmese is called – (*Kutgyi thone par*) the natural phenomenon and artificial disasters that occur to destroy the world human beings.

1. The disaster by **famine** (*Dubbhikkhantara Kappa*).
2. The disaster by **war** (*Satthantara*). Disaster by the use of weapons – of war.
3. The disaster by **pestilence** (*Rogantara Kappa*). A disaster caused by diseases.

We have in recent time, have witnessed the famine in Ethiopia and Africa; we also have witnessed the disaster by the use of weapons (war) in *Korea* and *Afghanistan*; and again the pestilence like Ebola virus, *AID* epidemic and Dengis Virus (*Twe lun Tokekwe*) in Asia.

### What are the Eight Unfortunate Times (*Atthakkhanas*)?

1. Born in the *Niraya*
2. Born as **Animals**
3. Born as **Petas**
4. Born as *Asaannatta-brahmas* and *Arupa-brahmas* as they have no faculty to hear the Dhamma, they cannot listen to the Noble Dhamma.)
5. Born, as a human in the **remote part of the country** (*Paccantarika*)
6. Born, as a human having the **wrong view** during Buddha dispensation.

7. Born, as a human with **no intelligence** to understand the teachings of the Buddha.
8. Born, as a human **outside the time of Buddha dispensation**.

The inopportune time are those period when one is born with so much deficiencies that one cannot learn to understand the right views of Buddha teaching and is outside the Buddha Dispensation (sasana). Gotama Buddha sasana as he predicted, his teaching to liberate sentient beings, will last for 5,000 years and we have passed the halfway mark at the present time.

### The Five Kinds of Enemy (*Panca Verani*)

1. **Floods**
2. **Inferno**
3. **Bad Rulers**
4. **Thieves and robbers, and**
5. **Having unworthy heirs - sons and daughters**

These five, the five kinds of enemy that can cause harm and disaster, some are natural phenomena and some are manmade. The 9/11 incidence at World Trade Tower, Typhoon, hurricane, fires etc. Are some examples,

### What are the Four Deficiencies (*Vipatti*)?

Human being, having fallen into the most deficient state or condition. The four deficiencies is the most undesirable state to be born in for anyone.

1. Born at the time of **bad rulers** (*Kalavipatti*)
2. Born in **four miserable existences** (*Gativipatti*)
3. Born with **physical deformities and disfigurements** (*Upadhivipatti*)
4. Born **lazy** (*Payogavipatti*)

A person can be born at the time of bad ruler and one instant will be born in a state where one has to struggle for existence everyday of his life. Cambodia (at the time of **Khmer Rouge** – killing field)

### What are the Five Kinds of Losses (*Byasana*)

There are five states of ruin, **Byasana** or misfortune.

1. Loss of **relatives** (*Nati-byasana*)
2. Loss of **wealth** (*Bhoga-byasana*)
3. Loss of **health** due to illness (*Roga-byasana*)
4. Loss of **right view** (*Ditthi-byasana*)
5. Loss of **morality** (*Sila-byasana*)

Any of the five states of misfortune is the worse event that could happen to a family. Due to our past bad kamma one can be fallen into misfortune that ruin one's wealth, relative, health, morality and or right view that cause one to be away from learning the teaching of Buddha.

**What are the paths (Magga) leading to Nibbana. ?**

1. The Path of **Stream-winner** (*Sotapatti-magga*)
2. The Path of **Once-returner** (*Sakadagami-magga*)
3. The Path of **Non-returner** (*Anagami-magga*)
4. The Path of **Arahat** (*Arahatta-magga*)

**What are the Four Fruitions (Phala ) ?**

When one is on the path leading to Magga, then the fruition will follow establishing the completion of a successful path, With four paths that one can strive for, there would be the completion of the respective fruition.

1. The fruition of **Stream-winner** (*Sotapatti-phala*)
2. The fruition of **once-returner** (*Sakadagami-phala*)
3. The fruition of **Non-returner** (*Anagami-phala*)
4. The fruition of **Arahat** (*Arahatta-phala*)

The cessation of the vicious cycle of birth and rebirth through the Samsara is called Nibbana. Buddha has shown us the way to Nibbana through his teaching of – **Eightfold Noble Path (Maggin Shit Par)**.

**Recitation in Burmese**  
**(Romanized Burmese)**

**Okasa, Okasa, Okasa**

1. **Kayakan, Wezikan, Manawkan,**  
**thaba dawtha khatheinthaw apyit dogo pyaukpa zaychin achoe nga**
  
2. **Pa htama dootiya tatiya,**  
**tachein, hnichein, thonchein myauk aung**  
**Phaya Yadana, Taya Yadana, Thagan Yadana,**  
**Yadana myat thone par dogo**  
**ayo athay alay amyat let oak moe ywe shi hko puzaw**  
**hpu hmyaw hman lyaw kadaw bar ei ashin Phaya.**
  
3. **Ei tho kadaw yathaw acho wa chaungt**
  
4. **Apair lay par, Kat thone par, Yapyit shipar, Yanthu myo ngapar,**  
**Weikpathi taya lay par,**  
**Byat tana taya ngar bar do hma akha khat thein kin lut nyein thee**  
**hpyit ywe**
  
5. **Met taya, Pho taya, Neikban taya daw myat go yaba lo ei Ashin**  
**Phaya.**

## APAYA BHUMI

(A pair lay par)

As Buddhist, we accept the teaching of Buddha that said there are beings outside the human world, some can be seen with our naked eyes; and some we cannot see with our naked eye. All in all, we have terrestrial beings that coexist with us here on earth; and the celestial beings we called Deva (Devi) and Brahmas., outside of our human world. The celestial beings like Brahmas are also known as Gods and Goddesses in other religion like Hindu. We have heard much about the good things that the Devas and Brahmas enjoy; but we seldom heard about the beings in the misery states – **Apaya**. It is important that we learn about them, because they coexist with us on earth. There are four different levels in the **Apaya Bhumi** – the realm where evil doers exit to pay for their evil deeds and punishment for their past misdeeds.

1. The Hell **Niraya**
2. The realm of animals **Tiracchanayoni**
3. The realm of the hungry ghosts **Petayoni** and
4. The realm of the Titans **Asurayoni** .

### 1. NIRAYA - HELL

**This** is the plane of existence as defined in the Paramatthajotika-a commentary on the Abhidhammatthasangaha -as a state completely devoid of happiness. It is one of the four realms of misery where evildoers are reborn after death according to their evil kamma. The beings in Niraya will never have even a single moment of happy feeling; they have to suffer the painful results of their evil kamma from the beginning to the end of their lives in that realm. There is no set time limit for one who is born in hell. Some may have to suffer there for a short period of time and some for countless years. This depends on the degree and intensity of his or her evil kamma done by each individual.

**When** the retribution, payback, has come to an end, the time he or she has completely exhausted the full strength of his evil kamma, he (she) will then be free from this realm. As an example, **Bhikkhu Devadatta** because of his ill will and misdeeds directed towards the Buddha and the Order or Sangha, he have been born, after death, in the lowest hell called **Avici**. It was prophesied by the Buddha that Devadatta, upon the exhaustion of his evil kamma after the lapse of a long period of time, would, as a result of his previous meritorious actions, become in the future a **Pacceka-Buddha** named **Atthissara**.’ This hell, we called hell is located under the human realm as described in Paramatthajorika, eight great hells or Mahaniraya.

The eight hells are:

### 1. Saiijiva:

**In** this hell, the guardians of the hell (**niraya-pala**) **chop and cut the hell creatures** with glowing weapons. But as long as their evil deeds remain unexhausted, they regain their lives after the punishment is over.

Hence, this hell is called Sanjiva or ‘the reviver’.

### 2. Kalasutta:

**In** this hell, beings are placed **on a floor of heated iron**, marked with a black thread, and made red-hot. The guardians of hell then plane them with adzes along the markings and hence the name Kalasutta, ‘the black thread’.

### 3. Sanghata:

**In** this hell, beings are **crushed into dust** by glowing mountains. We can imagine the lava coming out of the volcano crushing on to the beings.

### 4. Roruva or Dhumaroruva:

**In** this hell, beings are all the time crying with a loud noise, or because they have **noxious gases blown** into their bodies and painfully cry with a loud noise and hence the name Dhumaroruva.’

### 5. Maharoruva or Jalaroruva:

**In** this hell is called Maharoruva because the beings born here are crying louder than the beings born in the roruva hell, or it is called Jalaroruva because the

beings born here have **hellish flames blown into their bodies** and they cry loudly.

## 6. Tavana or Culatavana:

**In this hell, red-hot stakes pierce beings and they remain transfixed, motionless as long as the results of their evil deeds last and hence the name.**

## 7. Mahatavana :

**In hell, beings are heated with more suffering than in the Culatavana is called Mahatavana. The niraya-pala (hell-guardians) of this purgatory **force the hell creatures to climb up a burning iron mountain** and then they are slipped down by strong winds, falling to the red-hot stakes below. There at they experience feelings that are painful, sharp, severe, until they have exhausted their evil kamma.**

## 8. Avici:

**In this one is the lowest and the most terrible of all. The chief suffering endured in this hell is that of heat. There is no space between the beings and the flames; and there is no gap of suffering, experienced in this hell and hence it is called **Avici**.**

**This is designed especially for those who had committed very grievous crimes, such as the five great sins, etc. In the Pali scriptures, many names are mentioned as to those who had to suffer the fruition of their evil deeds done in their human life.**

**Among them are, for instance, Nanda, who raped his cousin, the Theri (nun) **Upalavanna**; **Devadatta**, who tried to assassinate the Buddha and caused a schism in the Order; **Cunda**, the pork butcher; **Suppabuddha** who insulted the Buddha; etc.**

**It is said that when Devadatta entered the great hell Avici, his body became one hundred leagues (yojana) in height; his head, as far as the outer ear, entered into the glowing iron ceiling and his feet entered into a glowing iron floor up to the ankles; and an iron stake as big as the trunk of a Palmyra tree coming from the west wall pierced him from the back through his breast entering the east wall.**

**Other similar stakes coming from the right wall pierced through his body entering the left wall and from the ceiling pierced his head penetrating through the whole body and entering the red-hot iron ground below. Both of his hands were fixed with red-hot iron stakes. **He is thus standing motionless amidst the hellish flames until his evil kamma is exhausted in the future.****"

**These great hells are said to be located farther downwards respectively from the human world, in the order of the lower (Sanjiva ) to the lowest Avici . The hell**

creatures will exist to suffer the severest punishment, until they exhausted their evil kamma.

Apart from the eight great hells, the Paramatthajotika mentions there are also five small hells called **Ussada-niraya**. The Pali term Ussada literally means 'plenty' or 'abundance'. It is explained that suffering is abundant in these small hells. They are therefore called Susana's The Ussada-niraya surround each great hell in four directions.

The Devaduta Sutta describes the great hell as being square in shape encircled by an iron wall and covered by an iron roof; the floor is made of glowing iron of a hundred leagues square; there are four big gates in four directions. Next to each gate in each direction are situated in respective order the five small hells or Ussada-niraya.

**The five small purgatories are:**

- a. Gutha or the filth hell,
- b. Kukkula or the ember hell
- c. Simpalivana or the silk-cotton tree hell,
- d. Asipattavana or the sword-leafed forest hell, and
- e. Vettarani or the river of caustic water hell.

Thus, one great hell is surrounded in four directions by twenty small hells. Counted together the total number of hells becomes 168, i.e. eight great hells and 160 small hells. But since each great hell is surrounded by five varieties of small hells, the same kinds of hells in the four directions may be counted as one and thus one great hell has only five surrounding small hells. In this way, the total number is 48 - eight great hells and 40 small hells.

The ruler of the great hell is called Yama or Yamaraja. But there is not only one Yamaraja for one Mahaniraya; there are actually four Yamaraja who are in charge of the four gates. Thus for eight great hells there are altogether thirty-two Yamaraja. Apart from these Yamaraja there are a number of hell-guardians called Niraya-pala.

**The duty of the Yamaraja is to consider the case of each hell creature and give orders for punishment; the Niraya-pala's duty is to inflict the penalties typical of each hell on the hell-creatures. Yamaraja and Niraya-pala are actually not hell beings but belong to the heaven of Catummaharajika.**

They are described as Vemanikapeta, the beings that sometimes enjoy the fruitions of their meritorious kamma in heaven and sometimes suffer the results of their evil deeds in hell. By particular kinds of kamma they are sent to perform their duties in this realm of misery by inflicting penalties on the hell creatures.

**\*\* It is said in the Devaduta Sutta that the Niraya-pala seize the person who has just passed away from the human world - and present him to Yamaraja, saying: “This man, sire, has no respect for his mother, no respect for his father; he does not honor recluses; he does not honor Brahmins; he does not pay due respect to the elders of the family.\*\***

Let your majesty decree a punishment for him.” Then the Yamaraja cross-questions him, asking about the five divine messengers (Devaduta). The five divine messengers are:

- a. a newly born baby,
- b. an aged man or woman,
- c. a sick person,
- d. a person subjected to various punishments, and
- e. a dead man or woman.

The Yamaraja questions him about these five divine messengers one by one respectively. In asking about the fifth messenger, for instance, he says: “My good man, did you see the fifth divine messenger who appeared among men.”

He replies: “I did not see him revered sir.”

Yamaraja speaks to him thus: “My good man, did you not see among men a woman or a man dead for one, two or three days, swollen, discolored, decomposing? “

He replies: “I saw this, revered sir.” Then Yamaraja says: “My good man, although you are sensible and grown up, did it not occur to you that you too were liable to death, that you had not outstripped death and that you should do what is lovely in body, speech and thought?” He speaks thus: “I was not able, revered sir. I was indolent, revered sir.”

Yamaraja then speaks to him: “If it was because of indolence, my good man, that you did not do what is lovely in body, speech and thought, they will undoubtedly react unto you, my good man, in accordance with that indolence. For this deed that is evil is yours; it was neither done by your mother, nor by your father, nor by your brother, nor by your sister, nor by your friends and acquaintances, nor by kith and kin, nor by recluses and brahmins, nor by gods.

This evil deed was done by you; it is you yourself that will experience its ripening.” Yamaraja, having thus spoken, remains silent. The guardians of the hell then subject him to what is called the fivefold pinion. They drive a red-hot iron stake through each hand and each foot and a red-hot iron stake through the middle of his breast. Thereat he experiences feelings that are painful, sharp and severe. But his term does not expire until an end is made of his evil kamma.

Then the guardians of the hell lay him down and plane him with adzes. Thereat...

**Then the guardians of the hell place him feet up and head down and plane him with razors. Thereat...**

**Then the guardians of the hell bind him to a chariot and drive him up and down over ground that is burning, aflame, ablaze. Thereat....**

**Then the guardians of the hell push him up and down a great mountain slope of glowing cinders, burning, aflame, ablaze. Thereat....**

**Then the guardians of the hell take him feet up and head down, and plunge him into a glowing brazen cauldron, burning, aflame, ablaze. There he is boiled and rises to the surface with the scum. Boiling there and rising to the surface with the scum, he once comes up and once goes down and once he goes across.**

**Thereat he experiences feelings that are painful, sharp and severe. But his term does not expire until an end is made of his evil kamma. Then the guardians of the hell toss him into the great hell. The Devaduta Sutta describes the penalties inflicted on the hell creatures in the great hell or Mahaniraya as follows:**

**The flames that leap up by the eastern wall of this great hell are hurled against the western wall; the flames that leap up by the western wall are hurled against the eastern wall; the flames that leap up by the northern wall are hurled against the southern wall; the flames that leap up by the southern wall are hurled against the northern wall; the flames that leap up from below are hurled above, the flames that leap up from above are hurled below.**

**Thereat he experiences feelings that are painful, sharp, and severe. But he does not expire his term until he makes an end of his evil kamma.**

**There comes a time once in a very long while when the eastern gateway of this great hell is opened. That being rushes there swiftly and speedily; while he is rushing swiftly and speedily his skin burns and his hide burns and his flesh burns and his tendons burn and his eyes are filled with smoke - such is his plight. But just when his organs are razed, they immediately become normal.**

**And though he has attained much, the gateway is nevertheless closed against him. Thereat he experiences feelings that are painful, sharp, and severe. But he does not expire his term until he makes an end of his evil kamma.**

**There comes a time once in a very long while when the western gateway... the northern gateway... the southern gateway of this great hell is opened. He rushes there swiftly and speedily; while he is rushing swiftly and speedily his skin burns... the gateway is nevertheless closed against him. Thereat he experiences feelings that are painful, sharp, and severe. But he does not expire his term until he makes an end of his evil kamma.**

There comes a time once in a very long while when the eastern gateway of this great hell is opened. He rushes there swiftly and speedily... such is his plight. He issues forth by this gateway. But surrounding this great hell is the Filth Hell (Gutha-niraya). He falls into it. And in the Filth Hell needle-mouthed creatures cut away his skin; having cut away his skin they cut away his hide...his flesh... his tendons... his bones; having cut away his bones, they devour the marrow of the bones.

Thereat he experiences feelings that are painful, sharp, and severe. But he does not expire his term until he makes an end of his evil kamma. And surrounding this Filth Hell is the Ember Hell (Kukkula-niraya). He falls into it. Thereat he experiences feelings that are painful, sharp, and severe.

But he does not expire his term until he makes an end of his evil kamma. And surrounding this Ember Hell is the Silk-Cotton Tree (Simpalivana-niraya) towering a league (yojana) high with prickles of sixteen fingerbreadths long, burning, aflame, ablaze. The hell guardians make him climb up and down. Thereat he experiences feelings that are painful, sharp, and severe. But he does not expire his term until he makes an end of his evil kamma.

And adjacent to that forest of Silk-Cotton Trees is the great Sword-Leafed Forest (Asipattana-niraya). He enters it. Its leaves, stirred by the wind, cut off his hands and cut off his feet and cut off his hands and feet... ears... nose, and cut off his ears and nose.'

Thereat he experiences feelings that are painful, sharp, and severe. But he does not expire his term until he makes an end of his evil kamma. An adjacent to that Sword-Leafed Forest is the great River of Caustic Water (Vettarani-niraya). He falls into it. There he is carried with the stream, against the stream and with and against the stream.

Thereat he experiences feelings that are painful, sharp, and severe. But he does not expire his term until he makes an end of his evil kamma. The guardians of the hell haul him out with a fish-hook, set him on dry ground and speak thus to him: "My good man, what do you want?"

He replies: "I am hungry, revered sirs." The guardians of the hell, opening his mouth with a glowing iron spike, burning, aflame, ablaze, then push into his mouth a glowing copper pellet, burning, aflame, ablaze. It burns his lips, his mouth, his throat, his chest and it passes out below taking with it his bowels and intestines.

Thereat he experiences feelings... But he does not expire his term until he makes an end of his evil kamma. Then, the guardians of the hell ask him: "My good man, what do you want?"

He speaks thus: "I am thirsty, revered sirs." The guardians of the hell, opening his mouth... pour glowing copper liquid into his mouth... Thereat he experiences feeling

... But he does not expire his term until he makes an end of his evil kamma. Then, the guardians of the hell toss him back again into the great hell.

The great hell as described in the Devaduta Sutta is probably the [Avici-mahaniraya](#) since the chief suffering endured in this hell is that of heat. But the Avici-mahaniraya seems to consist of more than one great hell and five small hells as appears in the Devaduta Sutta.

The Venerable Saddhammajotika in his Paramatthajotika quoting the commentary on Sarityutta-Nikaya and Atiguttara-Nikaya says that there are twelve various hells under the common name Avici:

- i. [Pahasa](#),
- ii. [Aparajita](#),
- iii. [Ambuda](#),
- iv. [Nirabbuda](#),
- v. [Ababa](#),
- vi. [Ahaha](#),
- vii. [Atata](#),
- viii. [Kumuda](#),
- ix. [Sogandhika](#),
- x. [Uppala](#),
- xi. [Pundarika](#),
- xii. [Mahapaduma or paduma](#).

The last one or Paduma-niraya is known as where Bhikkhu Kokalika, a close friend of Devadatta, who falsely accused the Venerable Sariputta and Moggallana of having a wicked thought, was born after his human life. In the small hell or Ussada-niraya, apart from suffering caused by the nature of punishment particular to each hell, the hell creatures are said to suffer also from the [attack of four kinds of hell beasts: giant vultures, giant crows, giant hawks and giant dogs](#).

These animals are said to be very fierce and will furiously attack the hell creatures at first sight. Among four realms of Apaya-bhumi or the plane of misery, Niraya appears, as we have seen, to be the most horrible of all. [The birth of the being in hell is of spontaneous birth](#) or opapatika and this is purely brought about by evil kamma.

The body of the hell being may be completely destroyed by hellish punishment, but as long as his evil deeds have not been recompensed, it will always be created anew. It is said that when the power of evil kamma becomes weaker he will be free from the great hell, but he still continues to suffer in the small hell or Ussada-niraya.

During this period, if his meritorious kamma performed in the past is very powerful, he may immediately move from hell and assume rebirth in heaven or in

**the realm of human beings. If, on the other hand, his evil kamma still remains, but not strong enough for his suffering in hell, he may move from there and take rebirth in the realm of the hungry ghost (Peta) or as an animal, whatever will suit the case.**

## 2. Realm of Animal - TIRACCHANAYONI

Buddhism regards animal existence as a state of life belonging to the plane of misery or *Apaya-bhumi*. It maintains that there is no certainty in the state of being, a man may be reborn as an animal, and vice versa or an animal may attain the state of divine being in heaven and the divine being may be degraded and be reborn as an animal. This depends on ‘the kamma performed by each individual in his previous and present life.

Whatever action, that has been done by him, he himself is to receive its consequences. As the Buddha said,

“Owners of their own kamma are living beings, heirs to their kamma, have kamma as the wombs from which they spring, have kamma as their kinsmen, have kamma as their refuges. Whatsoever kamma they do, be it wholesome or unwholesome, of that thing they are the receivers.”

Now, what type of person will attain, after death, animal birth? To this question, we find the answer in the *Anguttara-Nikaya* where the Buddha is reported to have said:

“Some person in this world, bhikkhus, takes life, he is a hunter, bloody-handed, given over to killing and slaying, void of compassion for all living creatures... takes what is not given... commits adultery... is a liar, a slanderer, of harsh speech, of idle babble... covetous... of harmful thoughts... of wrong view....

He goes crookedly in body, crookedly in speech, crookedly in mind. His physical action is crooked, verbal action is crooked and mental action is crooked; crooked in his bourn and crooked in his rebirth. I declare, bhikkhus, any one of the two bourns, viz., a woeful state of hell or birth as an animal that creeps crookedly along, for him whose bourn is crooked and whose rebirth is crooked.

Of what sort, bhikkhus, is that animal birth, one that creeps crookedly along. It is of a snake, a scorpion, a centipede, a mongoose, a cat, a mouse, an owl or whatsoever other animal, **one that goes stealthily on seeing human beings.**” In the *Jataka* we are told that the Buddha himself had been born as an animal in many of his previous births. Thus, for ordinary men like us it is no doubt that in the course of our wandering in *Samsara* we might have been born as an animal, since there is no one, who is still in bondage, has never performed evil deeds in the past.

From the Buddhist point of view, the interchange of beings between the plane of misery and the plane of happiness is a common phenomenon in the world of *Samsara*. Buddhism maintains that only one who has attained the holy stages ranging from the *Stream-Enterer* or *Sotapanna* to the *Non-Returner* or *Anagami* will never be reborn as an animal.

**There is nothing to be said about one who has attained the stage of Arahant-ship, as the root-cause of his rebirth has been totally uprooted. But for the worldly man or puthujana like us, rebirth in the plane of misery, e.g. as an animal, as a hell being, etc., is as possible as rebirth in the plane of happiness.**

**The animal kingdom, unlike other realms, is in the same world as human beings. It is not difficult to see the reason why Buddhism regards animal birth as a state of life included in the plane of misery.**

**First of all, there is no morality in the animal kingdom; animals live according to the wild law of nature. Among animals, the strongest is the survivor; the bigger eats the smaller. Danger to life is the crucial problem for them; it may come at any moment from animals themselves as well as from human beings. They have to struggle hard for their survival, especially for food, which is not always certain.**

**Sometimes they have enough to eat but sometimes they have to starve for many days. Moreover, they have to bear nakedly the hot and cold, the wet and dry seasons of the year without proper protection. With all these difficulties, animal life, although it is not as much suffering as that of the beings in hell, is rationally included as one of the miserable existences.**

**Another reason why Buddhism includes animal birth in the Apaya-bhumi is that whosoever, because of his evil kamma; attains the birth of animal is naturally obstructed from realizing the ultimate truth, from following the path of virtue which leads to emancipation. This is because animal existence is the negation of such realization and practice. Lacking the capacity for realizing the ultimate truth is considered critical since such realization is the prime aim of life that we struggle for.**

### 3.THE REALM OF THE UNHAPPY GHOSTS PETTIVISAYA

The realm of the Peta or unhappy ghosts, Pettivisaya .is a realm included in the plane of misery according to Buddhism. It is said that there is **no particular place for the Peta to live; they live in the same world as human beings**, such as in forests, on mountains, on islands, in cemeteries, etc.

But since they belong to a different realm of existence, they are, therefore, invisible to human eyes. They may be seen only when they want themselves to be seen by human beings. Another means of seeing the Peta is by clairvoyance or **dibbacakkhu developed by meditation**. The Paramatthajotika quotes the commentary on Petavatthu and mentions four kinds of Peta, namely,

- i. **Paradattupajivika-peta,**
- ii. **Khuppipasika-peta,**
- iii. **Nijjhamatanhika-peta, and**
- iv. **Kalakancika-peta.**

**The Paradattupajivika-peta, is an unhappy ghost who lives on the dakkhina or sacrificial gifts of others. It is because of this type of Peta that Buddhism encourages its followers to perform a dakkhina or merit-making by offering food, clothing, shelter, etc., to virtuous persons, such as a bhikkhu or a group of bhikkhus, and then to dedicate the merit acquired there from to deceased relatives.**

This is done on the basis of the belief that if the deceased. relatives have attained the life of the Paradattupajivika-peta, their suffering, on the appreciation of the sacrifice done and dedicated to them, will be abolished and they will thereby attain to the plane of happiness. This belief is affirmed by many stories of the Peta, which appear in the Petavatthu of the Pali Canon.

In one story, for instance, it is said that the Venerable Sariputta came across a female Peta appearing as an ugly, bony-thin and naked woman. The Elder questioned her and she replied that she was a Peta born in the Peta-world of suffering.

She reported that when she was a human being neither her father, mother nor relatives persuaded her to perform any good kamma like giving alms, observing precepts, etc. Because of lacking such meritorious deeds she was, after her human existence, consequently born as an unhappy Peta tortured by hunger and thirst for five hundred years.

**She at last begged for help from the Venerable Sariputta. The Elder accepted her request and later offered a certain amount of food, a small piece of cloth, and water to one bhikkhu. He particularly dedicated that dakkhina to that Peta.**

**On appreciating the dakkhina specially consecrated to her, she immediately acquired food, clothes and other properties and became released from suffering. Having attained the state of a celestial being, she came and appeared before the Venerable Sariputta. Being unable to recognize her, the Elder asked her who she was. The devadhita (goddess) informed him and said that she had come to pay her homage to him.**

**The Peta in the above story was obviously a Paradattupajlvika-peta. It should be noted here that according to Buddhism only the Peta of this sort are able to enjoy the outcome of dakkhina dedicated by their relatives. The Peta of other sorts are not affected by such a dedication.**

**The dakkhina will become fruitful to the Peta, however, only when three conditions are met. The three conditions are:**

- i. The dakkhina or sacrifice is given to a virtuous person,**
- ii. The performer of the dakkhina dedicates it particularly to his deceased relative, and**
- iii. His deceased relative has been born as a Paradattupajivika-peta and that Peta knows and appreciates that dakkhina particularly consecrated to him.**

**If any of these three conditions is lacking, the deceased relative will not be able to enjoy the outcome of the dakkhina. But whatever the case may be, the performer of the dakkhina will never be without the result of his meritorious action.**

**The Khuppipasika-peta.** This sort of Peta suffers from hunger and thirst. The dakkhina dedicated by relatives in the human world cannot bear fruit to one born as this kind of Peta. He will suffer in the Peta-realm as long as his evil kamma lasts.

**The Nijjhamatanhika-peta.** The suffering of this sort of Peta is caused by his own craving or tanha. It is said that fire burns in his mouth all the time and this results in his burning desire, which can never be fulfilled. He will continue to suffer in the Peta-world unless and until his evil kamma performed in the past becomes exhausted.

**The Kalakancika-peta.** This sort of Peta has a body three leagues (yojana) tall. But his body appears to be like a dry leaf with only skin covering the skeleton; his eyes protrude like those of the crab and his mouth is extremely small. He suffers from hunger and thirst like the other types of Peta.

**The Paramatthajotika also mentions many other types of Peta, but after careful consideration, we may conclude that the differences between the beings in the Peta-**

world are characteristically dependent on the particular nature of the evil kamma formerly performed by each Peta.

One Peta is always different from the others in the way and manner of suffering and this difference is solely determined by one's particular evil kamma. Another type of Peta, which should also be mentioned here is the Vemanika-peta.

**Vemanika-peta** - According to the Buddhist texts, at night this Peta appears as a god of the lower grade, enjoying the fruition of his previous good kamma in a celestial palace called vimana. But during the day his previous evil kamma forces him to leave his happy vimana and suffer its unhealthy result at a certain place until the end of the day when he then returns to his celestial residence. This is a peta in Burmese called – **Thaik Saunk**.

His cycle of life will continue in this way unless and until his previous evil kamma has been recompensed. Since one half of his life is spent in happiness in the vimana and the other half in the painful experience of the Peta, hence he is called Vemanika-peta. We are told further that there is no certain limit or duration to existence in the realm of the Peta. We have seen many of this petas living near pagodas and took the area as their abode hoping that they may accrue merits from those who share merits with them on such occasion as doing charities to virtuous persons.

One may suffer in this miserable world for a very long period of time and another may exist there only for a number of days. This is because existence in the Peta-world is solely determined, by evil kamma previously performed by each individual. In the human world, one may pass away due to the expiration of life, but in the Peta-world the end of life occurs only with the exhaustion of evil kamma. This realm is included in the plane of suffering or duggati because life there is dominated entirely by the sufferance of pain and torture.

#### 4. THE BIRTH OF THE TITANS ASURAYONI

The last sort of birth included in the plane of misery is birth as a Titan or **Asura**. The being called Asura here is to be distinguished from Deva-asura, Peta-asura and Niraya-asura, since not all of them are regarded as existing in the plane of misery.

**Deva-asura** is a class of god belonging to the same realm of Tavatimsa heaven. Vepacitti is said to be the king of this sort of Asura. Deva-asura is definitely not included in the type of being in the plane of misery. **Only Peta-asura and Niraya-asura are accounted as beings of the Apaya-bhumi.**

**Asura or Asurakaya** - The Paramatthajotika says that the being, which is called Asura or Asurakaya of the Apaya-bhumi, is but the Kalakanci-peta, one of the four sorts of Peta we have already considered. **These Kalakanci-peta have, like other sorts of Peta, no particular place of their own; they live in the human world, i.e., in forests, in the sea, on islands, in valleys, etc.**

**The Niraya-asura** is described as a type of hell creature. They have a particular realm of their own called **Lokantarika-niraya**. This Niraya is said to be situated, **between the three worlds - the human world, the ordinary hell world and the heaven world.**

In between these three worlds, there is a dark sea of acid water surrounded by rocky mountains. This sea is covered with eternal darkness; no ray of light can reach this place. The creatures of the Lokantarika-niraya hang themselves on cliffs like bats. They are tortured by hunger and thirst as there is no food for them.

While moving along the cliff they sometimes come across each other. Thinking that they have come across food, they jump upon each other and start fighting. As soon as they start fighting, they let loose their grip on the cliff and as a result they fall into the sea below and their bodies melt away just like salt melting away in water.

It is explained that the creatures of Lokantarika-niraya are called 'Asura' because their lives are contrary to the gods in the Tavatimsa heaven who are called 'sura', i.e., life in Lokantarika-niraya is entirely unpleasant while that of the Tavatimsa gods is entirely pleasant. The reason why the Asura or Asurakaya is spoken of separately as another sort of being in the plane of misery is probably because **this type of creature possesses special characteristics unlike other beings of the Peta world.**

Now we have seen that in the Apaya-bhumi or the plane of misery there are four principal births: birth as a **hell creature**, as an **animal**, as a **Peta** or hungry ghost, and as an **Asura** or Titan. Among these four sorts of beings, the three principal births, namely, **the birth of the hell creature, the Peta and the Asura, belong to what is called opapatika or spontaneous uprising.**

The birth of animals varies from one type to another according to its kind, i.e., some kinds belong to the **andaja** -born from eggs, some belong to the **jalabuja** - born from a womb, and some belong to **sansedaja** born from moisture. All these four principal births are brought about entirely by evil kamma and hence they are regarded as miserable existences.

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