THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BUDDHISM AND INDIGENOUS BELIEFS AND PEOPLE AS REFLECTED IN THE NAMES OF LOKAPĀLAS IN EARLY BUDDHIST LITERATURE¹

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้มุ่งศึกษาวิเคราะห์ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างพุทธศาสนากับความเชื่อดั้งเดิมและชนพื้นเมืองดั้งเดิม ที่สะท้อนผ่านชื่อของโลกบาลในวรรณคดีพุทธศาสนา โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งท้าวเวสสุทฐ ท้าววิรูปหก และท้าววิรูปักษ์ ผลการศึกษาพบว่า พุทธศาสนามีความพยายามในการรวมความเชื่อดั้งเดิมหรือชนพื้นเมืองดั้งเดิมซึ่งปรากฏมาแล้วตั้งแต่ก่อนหรือร่วมสมัยกับพุทธกาลให้เข้ามาอยู่ภายใต้พุทธศาสนาดังจะเห็นจากรายนามของโลกบาลที่อาจสะท้อนร่องรอยของความเชื่อดั้งเดิมและชนพื้นเมืองดั้งเดิมที่ได้เปลี่ยนฐานะให้

¹ ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างพุทธศาสนากับความเชื่อดั้งเดิมและชนพื้นเมืองดั้งเดิมที่สะท้อนผ่านรายนามของโลกบาลในวรรณคดีพุทธศาสนายุคต้น

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กลายเป็นเทวดาในความเชื่อทางพุทธศาสนา และการกำหนดให้โลกบาลดังกล่าวเป็นหัวหน้าของเหล่าคนธรรพ์ กุมภัณฑ์ นาค เพื่อแสดงการยอมรับความเชื่อดั้งเดิมในการนับถือเทวดา ความเชื่อเรื่องวิญญาณบรรพบุรุษ ความเชื่อเกี่ยวกับความตายและการกลับฟื้นคืนชีพ ความเชื่อดั้งเดิมของชาวอารยันหรือกลุ่มชนพื้นเมืองดั้งเดิมที่เป็นเผ่าวานก

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to analyze aspects of the relationship between Buddhism, indigenous beliefs and people through the names of lokapālas in early Buddhist literature, and especially the names of the three great kings, Dhātaraṭṭha, Virūḷha (or Virūḷhaka), and Virūpakka. The study revealed that the name of the three great kings, Dhātaraṭṭha, Virūḷha (or Virūḷhaka), and Virūpakka, may reflect traces of earlier or contemporaneous indigenous beliefs and people who had cultural encounters with Buddhism. The indigenous beliefs consist of the nāga cult, belief in spirits, early practice of urn-burials and belief in the soul or spirit of the dead rising from the grave, primitive beliefs of Aryan people and, nāga as a tribe. Buddhism shows an attempt to incorporate these beliefs and people into the Buddhist cosmology by elevating some local gods, indigenous beliefs and tribal people to divine status, such as lokapālas, who become chieftains of the gandhabbas, the

nāgas, and the kumbhaṇḍas, in order to show acceptance of earlier or contemporaneous indigenous beliefs and tribes. These findings may help to improve understanding more of the sociology of early Buddhism.

1. Introduction

Scholars disagree about the nature of the lokapālas in early Buddhist literature. According to T.W. Rhys Davids and William Stede (1921-5: 568-569), the Four Great Kings are classified in a smaller, autocratic state, a chieftain, prince, ruler, usually (collectively) as a group; in addition, G.P. Malalasekera ([1938], Reprint. 2007: 958) states that the assembly between the Four Regent Devas with their followers and Sakka in the Sudhammā-sabhā are similar to the assembly of the tribal community, especially the Kosala-clan. M.M.J. Marasinghe (1974: 71) suggests that the tribal leader is already quite similar to the tribal god. The norms of conduct required for elevation to celestial status in early tribal societies would naturally have helped in the deification of the tribal leaders themselves. The transition from human to divine status would hardly have been difficult or distinct, as in these early tribal stages the line of demarcation between tribal leader and tribal god would not have been very distinct. According to various scholars, the names of the Four Great Kings may reflect indigenous beliefs and social groups in early Buddhism since the names of these gods, except Kuvera, are not found in Sanskrit literature, but are found particularly in early Pali and Buddhist Sanskrit scriptures.

2. The Buddhist Lokapālas: an Overview

The “lokapālas” (Guardians of the World) or “Mahārājas” (Great Kings) of Buddhist mythology are four in number: **Dhataratṭha** (Skt. **Dhṛtarāṣṭra**), **Virūḥa** or **Virūḥaka** (Skt. **Virūdhaka**), **Virūpakṣa** (Skt. **Virūpākṣa**), and **Kuvera** or **Vessavaṇa** (Skt. **Kubera** or **Vāiśravaṇa**). The four kings feature frequently in the early texts, particularly in the Dīgha-nikāya, but seem to recede into the distance in the later canonical literature. They are individually, and anthropomorphically, described with some frequency in several suttas of the Dīgha-nikāya. The Āṭānāṭiya Sutta (D. III, pp. 203 f.) and the Mahāsamaya Sutta (D. II, pp. 257 f.), for instance, give vivid accounts of each of them, the former giving a commentary on the four. Both these suttas depict them as non-human beings (amanussa), paying homage to the Buddha Gotama. They give the classes of non-human beings over whom the four hold sway: Dhataratṭha, ruler of the east, is lord (adhipati) of the gandhabbas; Virūḥa, ruler of the south, where they whom men call peta-folk reside, is lord of the kumbhaṇḍas; Virūpakṣa, ruler of the west, is lord of the nāgas and Kuvera, whose identity with Vessavaṇa is established in the Āṭānāṭiya Sutta (D. III, p. 201), is ruler of the north and lord of the yakkhas. The Āṭānāṭiya Sutta, which along with the other suttas mentioned, states that the four Great Kings were devotees of Gotama and of the seven Buddhas, also has a very curious and interesting passage, in which the four Great Kings are described as great yakkhas who are protectors of the followers of the Buddha

from fear of the yakkhas. (Bandula Jayawardhana, 1971: 707) They rule over four horizontal direction of the world as viewed from Meru mount at the center. Their habitation is Cātummahārājikā, the heavenly realm of the Four Great Kings, classified in the world of sense-desire (Kāmahūmi). Consequently, the hosts of these Great Kings who also dwell in this realm are called cātummahārājikā deva, or devas of the Cātummahārājika.

3. Traces of Indigenous Beliefs and Social Groups as Reflected in the Names of Lokapālas: *Virūpakka*, *Dhatarattha* and *Virūlhaka*

J.P. Vogel ([1926], Reprint. 1972: 9) surmised that the idea of four or six dragons guarding the corners of the world is more primitive than that of the anthropomorphic lokapālas. Quite possibly both the system of the guardian-gods and that of the elephants of the quarters (diṇ-nāga) are ultimately derived from the notion of the dragons of the sky which must have still been alive in the early period when the hymns of the *Atharva-veda* were composed. This idea can be applied to concepts of lokapālas in Buddhist literature because not only are mighty deities mentioned as lord (adhipati) of the directions, but poisonous serpents are also mentioned as warders or guardians in the Vedic period as seen in the *Black Yajurveda* or *Tāittirīya Saṃhitā* (TS. 5.5.10.1-2) and *Atharva-veda* (AV. 3.27.1-6)

In a hymn of the *Black Yajurveda* (TS. 5.5.10.1-2), paying homage to the gods of

the quarters, for each of the divine regents, another supernatural being is invoked as the warder or protector of the region.

samīcī nāmāsi prācī diktasyāste'
gniradhipatirasito rakṣitā
 yaścādhipatiryaśca goptā tābhyāṃ
 namastāu no mṛdayatām te yaṃ
 dviṣmo yaśca no dveṣti taṃ vāṃ
 jambhe dadhāmi
 ojasvinī nāmāsi dakṣiṇā
 diktasyāsta **indró** 'dhipatiḥ
prḍākuḥ
 prācī nāmāsi prācī diktasyāste
somo 'dhipatiḥ **svajo**'
 vasthāvā nāmāsyudīcī diktasyāste
varuṇo 'dhipatis **tiraścirājir**
 adhipatnī nāmāsi brhātī diktasyāste
brhaspatiradhipatiḥ **śvītro**
 vaśinī nāmāsi yaṃ diktasyāste **yamo**'
 dhipatiḥ **kalmāṣagrīvo** rakṣitā
 yaścādhipatiryaśca goptā tābhyāṃ
 namastāu no mṛdayatām te yaṃ
 dviṣmo yaśca no dveṣti taṃ vāṃ
 jambhe dadhāmi ||1-2||

Thou art the eastern quarter,
 the favorable by name; of
 thee as such **Agni** is the
 overlord, **the black (snake)**
 the guardian; the overlord
 and the guardian, to them
 homage; may they be gentle
 to us; him whom we hate
 and who hate us I place
 within the jaws of you two.
 Thou art the southern
 quarter, the mighty by
 name; of thee as such **Indra**
 is the overlord, **the**
scorpion the guardian; the
 overlord and the guardian,

to them homage; may they be gentle to us; him whom we hate and who hate us I place within the jaws of you two.

Thou art the western quarter, the forward by name; of thee as such **Soma** is the overlord, **the viper** the guardian; the overlord and the guardian, to them homage; may they be gentle to us; him whom we hate and who hate us I place within the jaws of you two.

Thou art the northern quarter, the stable by name; of thee as such **Varuṇa** is overlord, **the striped snake** the guardian; the overlord and the guardian, to them homage; may they be gentle to us; him whom we hate and who hate us I place within the jaws of you two.

Thou art the great quarter, the lady paramount by name; of thee as such **Brhaspati** is overlord, **the white** the guardian; the overlord and the guardian, to them homage; may they be gentle to us; him whom we hate and who hate us I place within the jaws of you two.

Thou art this quarter, the powerful by name; of thee as such **Yama** is the overlord, **the spotted necked** (snake) the guardian; the overlord and the guardian, to them homage; may they be gentle

to us; him whom we hate and who hate us I place within the jaws of you two.
(A. B. Keith, 1914)

In this connection we may also quote the *Atharva-veda* hymns (AV. 3.27.1-6), a charm consigning an enemy to the serpents for punishment, in which likewise the six regions are associated with six divine regents and with an equal number of dragons, the names of which are identical with those of *Tāittirīya Saṃhitā*

prācī dig **agnir** adhipatir **asito**
rakṣitādityā iṣavaḥ |
tebhyo namo 'dhipatibhyo namo
rakṣitṛbhyo nama iṣubhyo nama
ebhyo astu |

yo 'smān dveṣṭi yaṃ vayaṃ
dviṣmas taṃ vo jambhe dadhmaḥ
||1||

dakṣiṇā dig **indro** 'dhipatis
tiraścīrāji rakṣitā pitara iṣavaḥ |
tebhyo namo 'dhipatibhyo namo
rakṣitṛbhyo nama iṣubhyo nama
ebhyo astu |

yo 'smān dveṣṭi yaṃ vayaṃ
dviṣmas taṃ vo jambhe dadhmaḥ
||2||

pratīcī dig **varuṇo** 'dhipatiḥ
pṛdākū rakṣitānnam iṣavaḥ |
tebhyo namo 'dhipatibhyo namo
rakṣitṛbhyo nama iṣubhyo nama
ebhyo astu |

yo 'smān dveṣṭi yaṃ vayaṃ
dviṣmas taṃ vo jambhe dadhmaḥ
||3||

udīcī dik **somo** 'dhipatiḥ **svajo**
rakṣitāsanir iṣavaḥ |
tebhyo namo 'dhipatibhyo namo
rakṣitṛbhyo nama iṣubhyo nama

ebhyo astu |
yo 'smān dveṣṭi yaṃ vayaṃ
dviṣmas taṃ vo jambhe dadhmaḥ
||4||
dhruvā dig **viṣṇur** adhipatiḥ
kalmāṣagrīvo rakṣitā vīrudha
iṣavaḥ |
tebhyo namo 'dhipatibhyo namo
rakṣitrbhyo nama iṣubhyo nama
ebhyo astu |
yo 'smān dveṣṭi yaṃ vayaṃ
dviṣmas taṃ vo jambhe dadhmaḥ
||5||
ūrdhvā dig **bṛhaspatir** adhipatiḥ
śvitro rakṣitā varṣam iṣavaḥ |
tebhyo namo 'dhipatibhyo namo
rakṣitrbhyo nama iṣubhyo nama
ebhyo astu |
yo 'smān dveṣṭi yaṃ vayaṃ
dviṣmas taṃ vo jambhe dadhmaḥ
||6||

Agni is regent of the East, its warder is **Asita**, the Ādityas are the arrows. Worship to these the regents, these the warders, and to the arrows, yea, to these be worship! Within your jaws we lay the one who hates us and whom we hate.

Indra is regent of the South, its warder **Tiraścīrāji**, and the shafts the Fathers. Worship to these the regents, these the warders, and to the arrows, yea, to these be worship! Within your jaws we lay the one who hates us and whom we hate.

Of the West region **Varuṇa** is ruler, **Prdāku** warder, Nourishment the arrows. Worship to these the regents, these the warders, and

to the arrows, yea, to these be worship! Within your jaws we lay the one who hates us and whom we hate.

Soma is ruler of the Northern region, **Svaja** the warder, lightning's flash the arrows. Worship to these the regents, these the warders, and to the arrows, yea, to these be worship! Within your jaws we lay the one who hates us and whom we hate.

Viṣṇus is ruler of the firm-set region, **Kalmāṣagrīva** warder, Plants the arrows. Worship to these the regents, these the warders, and to the arrows, yea, to these be worship! Within your jaws we lay the one who hates us and whom we hate.

Bṛhaspati controls the topmost region, **Śvitra** is warder, and the Rain the arrows. Worship to these the regents, these the warders, and to the arrows, yea, to these be worship! Within your jaws we lay the one who hates us and whom we hate.

Direction	<i>Tāittirīya Saṃhitā</i> (TS. 5.5.10.1-2)		<i>Atharva-veda</i> (AV. 3.27.1-6)	
	serpents	gods	serpents	gods
East	the black snake (Asita)	Agni	Asita	Agni
South	the scorpion (Pṛdāku)*	Indra	Tiraścīrāji	Indra
West	the viper (Svaja) **	Soma	Pṛdāku	Varuṇa
North	the striped snake (Tiraścīrāji)***	Varuṇa	Svaja	Soma
Upward Quarter	the white (Śvitra)	Bṛhaspati	Śvitra	Bṛhaspati
Fixed Quarter	the spotted necked snake (Kalmāṣagrīva)†	Yama	Kalmāṣagrīva	Viṣṇu

The order in which they are given differs slightly, and Viṣṇu as regent of the “fixed” quarter has been replaced by Yama, the King of the Dead. There are only three quarters including eastern, upward and fixed quarter that have the same warders while the others are different in the position of the quarter’s protectors but there are similarities in the names of serpents. J.P. Vogel ([1926],

Repr. 1972: 9-10) suggests that the various quarters of the sky mentioned in the *Tāittirīya Saṃhitā* are denoted as the abodes of certain classes of spirits which bear obscure names similar to those used in the *Atharva-veda*. They indicate the tribes of serpents, of which the dragons of the sky are the overlords.

Although the above charm does not indicate the guardians of directions as divine serpents, they are evident from their names, which to some extent agree with that group of four serpents met with in various passages of the *Atharva-veda*, such as AV.6.56.1-3, which mention the word ‘**ahi**’ meaning “a snake, the serpent of the sky, the demon” (M. Monier William, [1872], Reprint. 2002: 125)

* an adder, viper, snake (M. Monier William, [1872], Reprint. 2002: 647)

** the brown svaja (Maurice Bloomfield, 1897: 647); a viper; a snake that has heads at both ends (M. Monier William, [1872], Reprint. 2002: 1275)

*** striped across (Maurice Bloomfield, 1897: 647); striped across (a serpent) (M. Monier William, [1872], Reprint. 2002: 447)

† having a variegated neck (M. Monier William, [1872], Reprint. 2002: 263)

mā no devā
ahirvadhītsatokāntasahapuruṣān |
samyataṃ na vi śparadvyāttaṃ na saṃ
yamaṃ namo devajanebhyah ||1||
namo’ stvasitāya namas tiraścīrājaye |

svajāya babhrave namo namo
devajanebhyaḥ ||2||
saṃ te hanmi datā dataḥ samu te
hanvā hanū |
saṃ te jihvayā jihvām samvāsnāha
āsyam ||3||

“Let not the snake, O
gods, slay us with our
offspring, with our men ;
what is shut together may
it not uncloze; what is
open may it not shut
together; homage to the
god-people.

Homage be to **Asita**,
homage to **Tiraśchirāji**,
homage to **Svaja** (and)
Babhru, homage to the
god-people.

I smite thy teeth together
with tooth, thy (two) jaws
together with jaw, thy
tongue together with
tongue, thy mouth, O
snake, with mouth.” (J.P.
Vogel, [1926], Reprint.
1972: 8)

The four terms Asita (“black”), Tiraśchirāji
 (“cross-lined”), Svaja (“adder”), and Babhru
 (“brown”) mentioned in the hymns are
commonly explained as denoting certain
extant species of snakes. In the *Atharva-
veda* such a group of four is often invoked,
although under different names. In AV.
7.56.1, we read of four serpents called
Tiraśchirāji, Asita, Prīdāku, and
Kaṅkaparvan³, In AV. 5.13.5-6, we have

³ AV. 7.56.1

tiraścirājer asitāt prīdākoḥ pari
saṃbhr̥tam |

first the names Kairāta, Prīṣṇa, Upatṛiṇya,
and Babhru, and subsequently Asita,
Taimāta, Babhru, and Apodaka⁴. AV.
10.4.13, gives four similar names,
Tiraśchirāji, Prīdāku, Śvitra, and Asita⁵, but
here they are used in the plural. The four
terms Vāsuki, Takṣaka, Śaṅkha and Jatin
also appear in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. (B.C. Sinha,
1978: 46) Thus, the four serpents mentioned
under somewhat varying names in the verses
quoted were apparently associated with the
four quarters of the sky as concluded from
the hymns, AV. 3.27.1-6. We can clearly see
that the names of beings mentioned in
magical spells are snakes. It is especially in
the *Atharva-veda* -where numerous
interesting references to snakes occur.

J.P. Vogel ([1926], Reprint. 1972: 9) finds
the well-known conception of a group of
divinities, here six in number, which are
regarded as Dikpālas or guardians of the
quarters of the universe. But it will be noted
that these Dikpālas have not yet been

tat kaṅkaparvaṇo viṣam iyaṃ
vīrud anīnaśat ||1||

⁴ AV. 5.13.5-6

kāirāta prīṣṇa upatṛiṇya babhra
ā me śṛṇutāsītā alīkāḥ |
mā me sakhyuḥ stāmānam api
ṣṭhātāśrāvayanto ni viṣe
ramadhvam ||5||
asitasya taimātasya
babhrorapodakasya ca |
sātrāsāhasyāhaṃ manyorava
jyāmiva dhanvano vi muñcāmi
rathāmiva ||6||

⁵ AV. 10.4.13

hatās tiraścirājayo nipiṣṭāsah
prīdākavaḥ |
darviṃ karikratam śvitram
darbheṣv asitam jahi ||13||

stereotyped into the fixed group of four or eight lokapālas of later Hindu mythology. It can be assumed that animals, especially serpents, have been used as protectors of directions since the Vedic period, while gods are the lords of directions. This is evident from the word “rakṣitā” meaning “*guarded, protected, saved, preserved, maintained*” (M. Monier William, [1872], Reprint. 2002: 125). Serpents also have correlative functions together with gods in “protecting” the devotees and “destroying” the one who does not pay homage to the gods and the warders or the enemy of Brahmin as seen in most of the magical spells in the *Atharva-veda*. Several of them are charms resorted to in order to avert the danger of snakes. The method followed is twofold. On the one hand, the object is to propitiate the snake-demons and to solicit their protection against their own tribe. On the other hand, charms are wielded against the snakes in order to counteract their magical power, and, if possible, to destroy them. (J.P. Vogel, [1926], Reprint. 1972: 8)

In Buddhist literature, we meet with a snake-charm or paritta called Khandaparitta or a Ahirājasutta of a very early date. When the lord Buddha knew that a monk bitten by a snake had passed away, he said that this monk would not have died, even if bitten by a snake, if he had been suffused with loving-kindness of mind for the four tribes of serpent-kings (ahirāja-kulāni) as follows: *Virūpakkhehi me mettāṃ, mettāṃ Erāpathehi me, Chabyāputtehi me mettāṃ, mettāṃ Kaṇhāgotamakehi ca*, “My friendly should be unto the Virūpakkhas, the Erāpathas, Chabyāputtas, and the Kaṇhāgotamakas.” (Cullavagga, V, 6; A. ii. 72; Jd. ii. 144-7). There is another story of

Mucalinda, the Nāga king, who sheltered Buddha for seven days against rain and winds by spreading his hood over the Master’s head. Many nāgas came from four quarters and helped to shelter the newly awakened Buddha as mentioned in **Lalitavistara** (B.C. Sinha, 1979: 30). Thus, it can be assumed that the personal names of snake-demons are associated with the four quarters of the sky.

Another interesting parallel is afforded by two later Buddhist texts, the **Lalitavistara** (LV. 282-284) and the **Mahāvastu** (Mvu. 3.306-309), both composed in Buddhist Sanskrit. The twenty-fourth chapter of the former work is devoted to the meeting of the Buddha with the two merchants, Trapuṣa and Bhallika, who offer him his first meal after the enlightenment. The chapter concludes with a benedictory hymn, in which the protection of the four quarters is invoked upon travelling traders. Each quarter is represented by a group of seven nakṣatras, by one of the Buddhist lokapālas side by side with one of the following four Brahmanical lokapālas: Sūrya, Yama, Varuṇa, and Maṇibhadra, as we can see in the following table:

Mahāvastu	Lalitavistara
jayanā vijayanā ca siddhārthā aparājita teṣāṃ adhipatī rājā dhṛtarāṣṭro ti nāmataḥ gaṇḍharvādhipatī rājā devehi sa ca rakṣitaḥ so pi vo abhipāletu bhūmīye bhavanena ca Mvu. 3.306	teṣāṃ cādhipatī rājā dhṛtarāṣṭreti viśrutaḥ sa sarvagandharvapatīḥ sūryeṇa saha rakṣatu LV. 282
tāsāṃ adhipatī rājā virūḍhako ti nāmataḥ kumbhāṇḍādhipatī rājā yamena saha rakṣatu Mvu. 3.307	teṣāṃ cādhipatī rājā virūḍhaka iti smṛtaḥ sarvakumbhāṇḍādhipatī yamena saha rakṣatu LV. 283
tāsāṃ adhipatī rājā virūpākṣo ti nāmataḥ sa vo nāgādhipo rājā varuṇena saha rakṣatu Mvu. 3.308	teṣāṃ cādhipatī rājā virūpākṣeti taṃ viduḥ sa sarvanāgādhipatir varuṇena saha rakṣatu LV. 283
tāsāṃ adhipatī rājā kuvera iti nāmataḥ sarvayakṣādhipo rājā rākṣasīhi saha rakṣatu Mvu. 3.309	teṣāṃ cādhipatī rājā kubero naravāhanaḥ sarvayakṣāṇām adhipatir māṇibhadreṇa saha rakṣatu LV. 284

J.P. Vogel ([1926], Reprint. 1972: 10) states that the most remarkable point certainly is that the ancient dragons of the quarters have been replaced by the four Mahārājas. Two of the latter, moreover, are designated by names which were originally borne by serpent-kings, as appears in the ancient paritta preserved in the Pali Canon as “*Virūpakkha and Erāpatha are not only the names of two Nāgarājas, but in Buddhist mythology they figure also as the lokapālas of the Western and Eastern region respectively.*”

Virūpakkha is the Cātummahārājikadeva who rules the western quarter and becomes the lord of the Nāgas, and as such he is waited on by the Nāgas regularly and any question of dispute arising among them is referred to him for solution. In the assembly of the devas he sits facing east. Goddess Kālakaṇṇī is his daughter. (J.R. Haldar,

1977: 81) In terms of its etymology, **Virūpakkha** in Pali consists of two words: virūpa (< vi-rūpa) meaning “*deformed, unsightly, ugly*” (T.W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, 1921-5: 635) and akkha means “*having eyes*” (T.W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, 1921-5: 2). As a compound word it means “*having deformed eyes*”, while **Virūpākṣa** in Sanskrit consists of two words: virūpa (< vi-rūpa), meaning “*many coloured, variegated, multiform, manifold various; deformed, misshapen, ugly, unnatural*” (M. Monier William, [1872], Reprint. 2002: 984), and akṣa, meaning “*the eyes*” (M. Monier William, [1872], Reprint. 2002: 3). So, Virūpākṣa means “*diverse eyes; having deformed eyes*” (M. Monier William, [1872], Reprint. 2002: 984). According to “*Lokapaññatti*” composed by Pra Saddhammaghosa, a Burmese monk around the 11th century CE, Virūpakkha Nāgarāja is the lord of serpents and is called “*diṭṭhaviṣa*” which means

releasing poison from vision or eyes. It means that when Virūpakṣha stares at someone, the poison of the serpent can cause the being's death. Making friends with serpents mentioned in Khandaparitta or Ahirājasutta is the process of making friends with the serpent worshippers or Nāga tribes of ancient India. In order to propagate the Buddha's Dharma, the monk needs friendship with local people and should not look down on local beliefs. We can assume that there are various Indian ophiologies among people in the four quarters suggested by the four names of serpents. Therefore, the name of the western lokapāla may represent prior or contemporary indigenous belief in serpent worship or serpent worshippers or Nāga tribes. Greg Bailey and Ian Mabbett (2003: 147) suggest that *"the connection between the wandering monk and the ambiguous powers of the forest remains integral to the image and style of the holy man's career."*

Virūpakṣha is not only mentioned in Buddhist literature as the name of the western lokapāla or tribe of serpent-kings, it is also commonly known in Sanskrit literature and a number of narratives as a name of Lord Śiva (Virūpākṣa cf. Virūpacakṣus) (M. Monier William, [1872], Reprint. 2002: 984); the elephants of the eastern quarters (dīn-nāga) in the Rāmāyaṇa (Ralph T. H. Griffith, 1870: 52); a Rākṣasa who fought on the side of Rāvana against Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa; the Dānavas born to Prajāpati Kaśyapa by his wife Danu; an asura who was the follower of Narakāśura; a Rākṣasa who was the friend of Ghaṭotkaca; a giant who was the friend of a stork called Rājadharmā; and one of the eleven Rudra (Vettam Mani, 1998: 862-863).

Dhataratṭha is the regent who rules the eastern quarter with his followers, the Gandhabhas. His sons are numerous and are called Inda. He has a daughter named Sirī. (J.R. Haldar, 1977: 81). In terms of its etymology, **Dhataratṭha** in Pali consists of two words: dhata (cf. Skt dhṛta) which is the past participle form of dharati meaning *"firm, prepared, ready, resolved"* (T.W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, 1921-5: 335) and ratṭha (cf. Skt rāṣṭra) meaning *"reign, kingdom, empire; country, realm"* (T.W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, 1921-5: 562). **Dhṛtarāṣṭra** in Sanskrit consists of two words: dhṛta meaning *"held, borne, maintained, supported kept, possessed"* (M. Monier William, [1872], Reprint. 2002: 519) and rāṣṭra. Therefore, Dhataratṭha or Dhṛtarāṣṭra means *"whose empire is firm, a powerful king"* (M. Monier William, [1872], Reprint. 2002: 519).

J.P. Vogel ([1926], Reprint. 1972: 9) surmised that the name Dhataratṭha or Dhṛtarāṣṭra has been considered the same as Elāpattra, a tribe of serpent-kings mentioned in paritta, because Elāpattra is known by the name of Dhṛtarāṣṭra Airāvata. In a hymn of the Atharva-veda (AV. 8.10.29), Dhṛtarāṣṭra Airāvata are mentioned together with Takṣaka Vaiṣāleya side by side as the chief representatives of the serpent race. The name Elāpattra has been recognized as a Prakrit form of the Sanskrit Airāvata (B.C. Sinha, 1979: 47). Hence, it is clearly possible that Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Airāvata, or Elāpattra, are the same serpents, or that Dhṛtarāṣṭra descends from the Nāga's progenitor named Airāvata.

It is worthy of note that "Dhṛtarāṣṭra Airāvata" never takes any active part in the

numerous Nāga stories collected in the Mahābhārata. His name does occur in the Great Epic but he seems to be regarded as a remote ancestor of the Nāga race. B.C. Sinha (1979: 47) assumes that the compilers of the Mahābhārata were not aware of the identity of the two names since Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Airāvata, or Elāpattra, are mentioned as a separate Nāga in the list born to the serpent mother Kadrū. Dhṛtarāṣṭra mentioned in the Mahābhārata is a serpent born to Kaśyapa Prajāpati by his wife Kadrū. Dhṛtarāṣṭra is also the name of one of the famous sons of Vāsuki and the keeper of jewels Mṛtasañjīvinī (Vettam Mani, 1998: 862-863), while Elāpattra figures here as the most wise Nāga, who knows what will happen in the future after the serpent mother Kadrū has pronounced her curse. It is an interesting point to observe that Elāpattra does not play a prominent part in the Brāhmanical tradition but he has a remarkable career in the Buddhist tradition. It is said that Elāpattra had been born as a Nāga because in a previous birth he had destroyed an elā tree. The legend further relates that Elāpattra came from Taxilā to the Deer Park to pay respects to the Buddha according to the Mahāvastu (B.C. Sinha, 1979: 102-104). The Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang mentions Elāpattra among the three great Nāga kings who obtained a share of the Buddha's relics. On his way to Taxilā he saw that place which was supposed to be the abode of the Nāga. Alexander Cunningham identified the sacred lands of Elāpattra as a small reservoir of clear water not far from Hasan-Abdāl, about ten miles to the north-west of Shah Dheri. Although no longer associated with the Nāga king, the tank is still held in reverence by Sikhs and Muslims. From Xuanzang we learn that

Elāpattra was worshipped as a regent of the water and as the giver of rain. From his account it is clear that the tank of the Nāga Elāpattra was situated at some distance to the north-west of Taxilā (B.C. Sinha, (1979: 47-48). Dhataratṭha is also mentioned as the Nāga king in the *Mahāsamaya sutta*. It can be assumed that this name is the name of a significant serpent. If we agree with J.P. Vogel, there is some relationship between Dhataratṭha Nāgarāja and Erāpatha (or Elāpattra) as the same serpent family which are elevated to be the eastern lokapāla, so the name of the eastern lokapāla may represent serpent worshippers or Nāga tribes in early Buddhism.

J.P. Vogel ([1926], Reprint. 1972: 10) states that the most remarkable point certainly is that here the ancient dragons of the quarters have been replaced by the four Mahārājas. Two of the latter, Virūpakka and Dhataratṭha, moreover, are designated by names which were originally borne by serpent-kings, Virūpakka and Erāpatha, as appears from the ancient paritta preserved in the Pali Canon. I agree with Vogel's idea in part but there are some specific arguments to be taken in to account. Firstly, the serpents mentioned in the paritta are not specified clearly as serpents of the directions; nonetheless, serpents have played an important role as protectors of the directions since the Vedic period. The ancient dragons of the quarters have been replaced by popular gods worshipped by Aryan people as we can see in early magical spells in which serpents were mentioned with lords of direction as protectors. This expresses an Aryan acceptance of indigenous beliefs but later gods were mentioned independently as

Digadhipati which shows indigenous beliefs had already been integrated.

However, Bandula Jayawardhana (1979-1989: 566) states that Dhatarat̥tha of the cātummahārājika is not to be confused with the king of that name who was ruler of the Nāga world. In the Mahāsamaya sutta this is made clear by the latter's separate arrival at the great concourse. That nāga king arrives much later, in the company of the nāgas of Yamunā. If the eastern lokapāla has its origin in serpent worship or the Nāga tribes, there is some question as to why Dhatarat̥tha is the lord of the gandhabbas.

According to O. H. de A. Wijesekera (1994: 191-192), Dhatarat̥tha (D, II.257), is a name which undoubtedly echoes Varuṇa's accredited rulership over the gandharvas in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (ŚBr. 13.4.3.7-8)⁶. The gandharvas are said

to have Varuṇa (Āditya) as their ruler and Soma becomes the ruling deity over the apsarās. The Mahābhārata represents Varuṇa as a deva-gandharva. This is not surprising as Varuṇa is given the overlordship of the waters in the Ṛgveda (RV. 7. 64. 2)⁷ itself, and as the *Atharva-veda* (AV. 11.7.27, 9.16; 14.2.9)⁸ clearly shows, the gandharvas and the apsarās are only the male and female aspects of a single concept that relates to water. Dhṛta-vrata occurring in the Ṛgveda half a dozen times as an epithet of Varuṇa can easily be the antecedent of the Pali Dhatarat̥tha (Dhṛtarāṣṭra), Varuṇa being in the Ṛgveda described as 'universal monarch' (samrāj) with the attribute of sovereign (kṣatra) preeminently bestowed on him. Both "rāṣṭra" and "samrāj" are derived from √raj meaning 'rule,' which may semantically approximate to vrata, law or ordinance (O. H. de A. Wijesekera 1994: 208). I agree with O. H. de A. Wijesekera that Varuṇa has some connection with Gandhabbas, but the name "Dhatarat̥tha"

⁶ ŚBr. 13.4.3.7-8

atha tṛtīye'han
evamevaitāsvisṭiṣu
samsthitāsveṣaivāvṛdadhvaryā
viti havai
hotarityevādhvaryurvaruṇa
ādityo rājetyāha tasya
gandharvā viśasta ima āsata iti
yuvānaḥ śobhanā upasametā
bhavanti
tānupadīsatyatharvāṇo vedaḥ
so'yamityatharvaṇāmekam
parva vyācakṣāṇa
ivānudravedevamevādhvaryuḥ
sampsreṣyati na
prakramānjuhōti
atha caturthe'han
evamevaitāsvisṭiṣu
samsthitāsveṣaivāvṛdadhvaryā
viti havai
hotarityevādhvaryuḥ somo

vaiṣṇavo rājetyāha
tasyāpsaraso viśastā imā āsata
iti
yuvatayaḥ śobhanāḥ upasametā
bhavanti tā upadīsatyaṅgirasō
vedaḥ so
yamityaṅgirasāmekam parva
vyācakṣāṇa ivānudra

⁷ RV. 7. 64. 2

ā rājānā maha ṛtasya gopā
sindhupatī kṣatriyā yātam
arvāk |
ilām no mitrāvaruṇota vṛṣṭim
ava diva invataṃ jīradānū ||

⁸ AV. 11.7.27

devāḥ pitaro manuṣyā
gandharvāpsarasaś ca ye |
ucchiṣṭāj jajñire sarve divi
devā diviśritaḥ ||27||

being derived from an epithet of Varuṇa is unreliable because “Dhṛta-vrata meaning “*maintaining law or order*” has a different meaning from the Pali Dhataratṭha (Dhṛtarāṣṭra). Another possible theory is that Dhataratṭha and Indra, or Sakka, in Buddhist literature may be the same person. In the Vidhurapaṇḍita Jātaka (J.V. p. 260), Sakka is referred to as Gandhabba-rāja, king of Gandhabba; moreover, the relationship between Indra and the gandhabbas such as Mātali, or Pañcasikha is often mentioned in Buddhist texts.

Dhataratṭha is not only mentioned as the name of the eastern lokapāla or tribe of serpent-kings in Buddhist literature, this name has also been commonly recognized in Sanskrit literature as the name of a deva gandharva (Semi-god) who was the son of the hermit Kaśyapa and Muni, took part in the birth-celebration of Arjuna and went to the presence of King Marutta as a messenger of Indra. This Gandarva was born as Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the father of Duryodhana; a king who was the son of Janamejaya and the grandson of Kuru, a king of the Lunar dynasty (Vettam Mani, 1998: 237); a son of the Daitya Bali; a king of kāśī (M. Monier William, [1872], Reprint. 2002: 519).

As we can see, Dhṛtarāṣṭra has been mentioned in Sanskrit literature since the Vedic period and appeared more frequently in the Itihāsa-Purāṇa. It has also been recognized in Buddhist literature. Both literary works use this name for people, animals, and places. Buddhism adopts this earlier well-known name as the name of the lord of the eastern direction particularly. This may show an acceptance of indigenous beliefs, by using an earlier name which

connects with the indigenous belief of serpent worship, the name of gods, gandhabba and the characters in the Mahābhārata as the name of the ruler of the eastern quarter and the King of Gandhabbas in Buddhist literature.

Virūḷha, or **Virūḷhaka**, is one of the Regents who rules the southern quarter, and, in the assembly of the devas, sits facing north. His followers are the Kumbhaṇḍas. (J.R. Halder, 1977: 80-81) This name appears particularly in Buddhist literature. According to M. Monier-William ([1872], Reprint. 2002: 984), Virūḍhaka means “*grain that has begun to sprout; a prince of the kumbhaṇḍas; a lokapala in Buddhist literature; a son of Prasenajit*”. All given meanings were found only in Buddhist contexts and not in mainstream Sanskrit literature. In terms of etymology, viruh (vi-√ruh) means “*to grow out, shoot forth, sprout sprouted*” and virūḍha means “*sprouted, come forth, born, arisen*” (M. Monier-William, [1872], Reprint. 2002: 984) while virūḷha in Pali is the past participle form of the virūḷhati meaning “*having grown, growing*” (S. ii.65; T.W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, 1921-5: 635).

Kumbhaṇḍas are the retinue of Virūḷhaka, for which both Pāli and Sanskrit sources offer an inadequate explanation of the derivation. It is quite possible that this term “Kumbhaṇḍa” was borrowed from either the Dravidian or the Munḍa languages, as these were the two other major linguistic groups besides the Indo-Aryan group that could have been known to the Gangetic peoples. M.M.J. Marasinghe (1974: 235) states that although in the Dravidian languages the

word is not found in its present form, the components of the word in most Dravidian languages seem to suggest some associations with the origins of spirit belief itself.

“Kumbu in Kannada is, ‘decay (of dry trees or bamboos)’; in Koḍagu, Kumbī, is, ‘dry rot’; ‘rust’; in Tulu, Kumbu, ‘rottenness, rotten, decayed,’; and in Tamil, Kumbu is, ‘charred, burnt’, etc.’ Anḍā in Tamil is used to denote, “a big pot, large vessel, etc.” (In Urdu also anḍā is a pot). The two words when combined would stand as Kumbu+anḍā and by ordinary elision it would become, Kumbanḍā. The occlusive changing into an aspirate is of common occurrence in loan words from the Dravidian to the Indo-Aryan as well as the Middle-Indo Aryan languages, as for example in the case of the Tamil word, potti, becoming potthaka, in Pāli. On the other hand, within languages of the Dravidian family of languages itself, the occlusive and the aspirate seem to interchange without affecting the meaning of the word at all, as for example in the case of Kannada, where Kumbagāra, Kumbāra, as well as Kumbhakāra, are found in use to denote the potter. If such a

composition of the word is not too fanciful a suggestion, it could have meant at an early stage of its usage, ‘rotten in the pot, decayed in the pot, etc.’ The word Kumbu-nāṭṭam is explained by the Madras Tamil Lexicon as ‘the smell of the decayed’, thus showing the associations of the word in this sense” (M.M.J. Marasinghe, 1974: 235).

In a non-advanced cultural atmosphere, where urn-burials were quite common, with the idea of rebirth, such an idea of the spirit of the dead person rising out of the urn in which his/her last remains had been deposited is not impossible. Fairly recent archaeological excavations demonstrate that urn-burials were common in most parts of India, at one stage or the other in their cultural histories. Of special interest to us are the megalithic findings in the Deccan, and Orissan regions, and more particularly the evidence collected by Davids Roy on the megalithic monuments among the Khāsīs almost in the very heart of the area which received Buddhist influence (M.M.J. Marasinghe, 1974: 237).

Thus, it is possible that the meaning of the name Virūḷha, or Virūḷhaka, “to grow out, shoot forth, sprout, sprouted,” may be a trace of earlier or contemporaneous indigenous beliefs, as seen in the word kumbhaṇḍa which might stem from the ancient practice of urn-burial and the belief that the soul or spirit of the dead could rise from its grave (in this case the urn). The

word Kumbhaṇḍa originally used to describe the dead person could have come to be used for the spirit of the dead in course of time (M.M.J. Marasinghe, 1974: 237). Moreover, the concept of death also connects with the southern quarter of which Virūḷha is the lord according to Buddhist literature, and Yama is the lord in Sanskrit literature. Thus, the name of the Southern lokapāla may reflect the Buddhist acceptance of indigenous beliefs, as well.

4. Conclusion

The study suggests that the names of three of the Great Kings - Dhataratṭha, Virūḷha or Virūḷhaka, and Virūpakka - may be relics or indications of earlier or contemporaneous indigenous beliefs and peoples who had cultural encounters with Buddhism. The indigenous beliefs and social groups consist of the nāga cult, belief in spirits, the early practice of urn-burials, and belief in the soul or spirit of the dead rising out of the grave, and nāga as a tribal people. Buddhism tried to incorporate these beliefs from some of these social groups into its cosmology by elevating some local gods, indigenous beliefs and tribal peoples to divine status, such as the lokapālas, who become chieftains of the gandhabbas, the nāgas and the kumbhaṇḍas in order to exploit earlier or contemporaneous indigenous beliefs.

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