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## *Mahā- and Cūḷa-Vaggas and Suttas in the Majjhima-Nikāya*

THE Majjhima-Nikāya<sup>1</sup> is usually regarded as the second 'book' or Collection of Discourses in the Suttapiṭaka. It contains 152 Discourses (*sutta*) and is divided into three Sections (*paṇṇāsa*) of 50 Discourses each, the last Section however containing 52. These Sections are further sub-divided into Divisions (*vagga*) of ten Discourses each, the penultimate Division including the extra two Discourses.<sup>2</sup> There are 15 Divisions, five in each Section.

An interesting feature of the *M.*, and one that is peculiar to it, is its possession of two *vaggas* or Divisions both called Yamaka, pair, twin, double, couple (*Vaggas* IV, V). These are distinguished one from the other by prefixing Mahā- (Great or Greater) in the first case, and Cūḷa- (Small or Lesser) in the second to the otherwise identical title of Yamakavagga. In the *Dhammapada* there is a Yamakavagga where the verses are arranged by pairs; and Yamakavagga is also the title of one Chapter in the *Saṃyutta* (S. iv. 6-15) and of two in the *Aṅguttara* (A. iv. 314-335, v. 113-131).

The *M.* carries the idea of *yamaka*, but not the name, further than its Mahāyamakavagga and Cūḷayamakavagga. As these form a pair, so, out of the total of 152 Suttas, there are 17 pairs. In each of these one Sutta is called Mahā- and the other Cūḷa- so as to distinguish an otherwise identical title that they share in common.

Except for a concentration of five such pairs in the Mahāyamakavagga, the remaining pairs occur here and there throughout the *M.* This *Vagga* is well named since it is the only one of the 15 Divisions to contain nothing but pairs of Suttas. The Cūḷayamakavagga had, one may suppose, to stand in some close relation to the Mahāyamakavagga and, with its two pairs, follows it. But these two pairs are not placed at the beginning of the *Vagga* as though they were continuing from the Mahāyamakavagga, but are its Suttas Nos. 3-6.

1. Referred to throughout this article as *M.* All references are to the Pali Text Society's editions.

2. Perhaps the Bhaddekaratta should be regarded as one Discourse, and the Ānanda-, Mahākaccāna- and the Lomasakangiya-bhaddekaratta Discourses as together forming one Discourse instead of three.

Immediately before the Mahāyamakavagga comes the Tatiya (Third) Vagga, unique among *M. Vaggas* in apparently having no specific name. It contains two pairs, and as they are its last four Discourses they lead straight on to the five sets of pairs in the Mahāyamakavagga. It might therefore have been appropriately named the Cūlayamakavagga had there not been another consideration, a cross-division as it were. For the two pairs that conclude this Vagga, as well as its first two Discourses, are further distinguished by the inclusion of the word *upama* in their title. As this is so, and as there are only two other *upama*-Discourses in the *M.* (Nos. 7, 66), it seems strange that this Division was not called by a title so nicely to hand: Opammavagga.<sup>3</sup> But at least this assemblage of six *upama*-Discourses in the Third Division provides a good and acceptable reason for *not* calling it Cūlayamakavagga. It is difficult to know why Suttas 7 and 66 were not included in this Vagga.

There is no such problem with the title of the Second Division, with its two sets of pairs placed at the beginning of the Division, for, in naming it the Sihanāda-vagga the not uncommon practice was being followed of naming a Vagga after its first Sutta, chapter or section as the case might be, a plan also adopted in the first, eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth Vaggas of the *M.* The name may also have been determined by the recognition that in the *M.* the technical term *sihanāda*, the lion's roar, is I believe found only in the Cūla- and Mahā-sihanāda Suttas. Therefore, once the idea of grouping Suttas in pairs had arisen, such a focussing of attention on a rare but important word, and all that it implied, would provide not only a suitable title for a pair, but also one from which a Division might well take its name. When we call to mind Rhys Davids' intimation that all Sihanāda Suttas are discourses on asceticism<sup>4</sup> together with Chalmers' emphasis on this subject,<sup>5</sup> we can see that the Buddhist teaching would not wish to ignore a subject that was uppermost in some of the contemporary and rival teachings, but would have wanted to put forward its own interpretation of false and true asceticism. Moreover in neither of the *M.* Sihanāda Suttas could either the persons addressed or the places where the utterances were pronounced provide a sufficiently distinctive title: monks, Sāvathī, Sāriputta and Vesālī all appear too frequently.

A few points about the pairs of Discourses in the *M.* may now be briefly summarised, a full discussion of this complicated question being impossible here.

(1) The method of beginning a pair with its Mahā- or Cūla- member is reversible. In fact the Cūla- member precedes its Mahā- nine times, the Mahā- thus preceding its Cūla- member eight times.

3. Cf. Opamma Saṃyutta (*S.* ii, 262 ff.), so called because it is rich in parables and similes. The name of Opamma-vagga has been suggested for the Tatiya Vagga by E. K. Neumann and Chalmers in their translations of the *M.*

4. *Dialogues*, i, 208.

5. *Further Dialogues*, i, Introduction.

(2) With the exception of the Mahā- and Cūla-puṇṇamā Suttas (Nos. 109, 110) which are named after a *time*, all the other sixteen pairs are called either after the main topic treated; or after a proper name, that of a place or a person; or after some simile or parable that they contain.

(3) There are no pairs in Vaggas I, VI, IX, X or XII, and only one member of a pair in Vagga XV.

(4) Pairs occur with greater frequency in the Vaggas placed earlier in the *M.* They culminate in the Mahāyamakavagga and, dwindling again through the Cūlayamakavagga, appear more sporadically afterwards while displaying, to all seeming, a few interesting diversities not found among the pairs placed more at the beginning. Thus:

(5) Where a Discourse has no pair of the type under discussion, it is invariably the Cūla- member that is lacking. Thus, in the sequence of the three Vacchagotta Suttas, one is called Mahā- (No. 73) but neither of the other two (Nos. 71, 72) is called Cūla-Vacchagottasutta. There is a Mahācattārisaka Sutta (No. 117) and a Mahāsaḷāyatanika (No. 149), but in neither case is there a corresponding Cūla- member, although there is a Saḷāyatanavibhaṅga Sutta (No. 137).

(6) Occasionally the members of a pair are divided by one or more intervening Suttas. The Mahā- and Cūla Sakuludāyi-suttas (Nos. 77, 79) in Vagga VIII have one other Discourse between them; but of the three Rāhulovāda Suttas, although the Mahā- (No. 62 in Vagga VII) follows immediately after the Ambalaṭṭhikā-Rāhulovāda, the Cūla-Rāhulovāda is placed as far on as Sutta No. 147 in Vagga XV (referred to under (3) above). Vaggas VII and XV therefore each contain one member of a pair.

One of the chief problems arising in connection with the *M.* pairs of Suttas is whether these prefixes of *mahā*- and *cūla*- are intended to qualify the title of the discourses or the discourses themselves. In some cases the answer is clear. For example, no discourse could have been addressed to a Mahā-Saccaka or a Cūla-Saccaka, for no such persons are known to have existed—merely Saccaka; again, no discourses could have been given at Cūla-Assapura or at Mahā-Assapura or in a Mahā- or Cūla-Gosiṅga sāl-wood, for there were no such places—only Assapura and Gosiṅga. This is true of all the *M.* pairs of Mahā- and Cūla- Suttas in whose titles the distinguishing word is a proper name. Thus in such Discourses the Mahā- and Cūla- in the titles refer to the Discourse itself, and not to the name of the person or place that is included in the title. Why one Discourse is estimated as Mahā- and the other as Cūla- is a further problem whose solution will probably depend on such considerations as the comparative length of the two Suttas in such a pair, on the relative importance of the subject matter each contains, or even possibly on the one, the Cūla-, being subsequent to or supplementary to its Mahā- partner, or intro-

ductory to it. It is probable that no general rule could be laid down, but that each pair must be investigated separately and taken on its own merits. This would necessitate a long piece of research. Here I propose to do no more than indicate various aspects of the problems of naming in reference to (1) the *Sihanāda Suttas*, which I have already mentioned, and (2) the *Puṇṇamā Suttas*. Both these pairs give good evidence of some of the intricacies of the whole problem.

There is probably little doubt that the *Mahāsihanāda Sutta* may be regarded as the 'Discourse on the Lion's Roar that is Great'—'great' referring to the Lion's Roar. This is 'great' because, in words attributed to Gotama, now at the close of his life (*M.* i, 82), it sets forth the Tathāgata's ten Powers and four Confidences in virtue of which he claims the leader's place, roars a Lion's Roar in assemblies, and sets rolling the Brahma-wheel (*brahmacakka*); great because of his comprehensions of the five bourns (*gati*); great because of his autobiographical reminiscences both of this 'birth' and of 'the far past'. Further, this Discourse itself might also be considered as Great, since it is longer than the *Cūḷa-sihanāda*. This then, as far as length is concerned is Small or Lesser. In addition, since it does no more than urge monks to roar a Lion's Roar, then quitting the topic, the *Cūḷa-sihanāda* might well mean the 'Sutta on the Lion's Roar that is Lesser'—the Lion's Roar here being lesser than the Tathāgata's Lion's Roar in the *Mahāsihanāda* and not nearly so significant.

Coming to the *Mahā-* and *Cūḷa-puṇṇamā Suttas* (Nos. 109, 110), we find they have little in common with one another except that both are recorded to have been given near *Sāvattihī* to a body of monks on the night of an *Uposatha*, Observance day, of a full moon, *puṇṇamā*. These are the only two *M. Suttas* to derive their name from a time; but they are not the only ones said to have been delivered on the night of a full moon. For *Sutta* No. 118, the *Ānāpānasati*, is also recorded to have been given on such an occasion, also in *Sāvattihī* and to monks. So here we have another problem: why—with three Discourses held at a time that was probably rather unusual since the monks, whether they were to be the auditors or the speakers, were likely to have been engaged on purely monastic business—are only two of these Discourses named after the time and the other not? One of the consequences of this anomaly is that, if we went purely by titles, we would not know that this other Discourse had also been given at such a time. And in relation to the time of its delivery the *Ānāpānasati* is all the more remarkable because in it this is further defined. For first it is said that Gotama addressed the monks (briefly) on the night of the full moon after a *Pavāraṇā* ceremony (at the end of the rains), thus identifying the full moon; and then it is said that he gave a Discourse in the same place on the night of another full moon, that in the fourth month, *Komudi*,

6. There are three *Sihanāda Suttantas* in the *Dīgha*, Nos. 8, 25, 26.

on an Observance day. The *Ānāpānasati* therefore mentions two utterances given at the time of two different full moons.

Therefore problems that arise are why the *Ānāpānasatisutta* was not named after the occasion when it was given; and why the two *Puṇṇamā Suttas*, which are divers in subject matter, are united by the name which, if *time* had been the only consideration, might more aptly have been given to the *Ānāpānasati*. That it was not will almost certainly be because of the importance of in- and out-breathing in the applications of mindfulness, the topic of the *Ānāpānasati*. In choosing a title for this Discourse it therefore seems that preference was given to its topic rather than to its occasion, probably because this was held to be of greater significance or more telling for purposes of identification. I do not think it at all likely that the 'editors' had forgotten or were not aware that there were *Suttas* called *Puṇṇamā*. But we do not really know how the names of the Discourses came about, except that now and again Gotama is shown as spontaneously naming the Discourse he is about to give, as in *M. Suttas* 1, 2, 17; or as supplying alternative titles by which they might be remembered. These are usually found at the end of a Discourse, as for example in *M. Suttas* 12 and 115 and in *Dīgha Suttanta* No. 1. *Buddhaghosa* also appears to have known a number of alternative titles. This is another problem, not without some bearing however on that of naming the *M.* pairs.

But we will return for a moment to the *Puṇṇamā Suttas*. The sole topic of the *Cūḷa-puṇṇamā* is *sappurisa* and *asappurisa*. This is likewise the sole topic of the *Sappurisa-sutta* (No. 113). Although these two Discourses approach their subject matter rather differently, it yet forms a strong link between them. There consequently emerges the further question of why there are not two *Sappurisa Suttas*. Was the chronology of naming the *M. Suttas* responsible, or was the subject matter? Some time such questions should be discussed.

The *Mahā-puṇṇamā* is virtually the same as the *Puṇṇamā Sutta* of the *Saṃyutta* (S. iii. 100 ff.). Both deal with the five groups of grasping (*upādānakkhandha*). As this important topic occurs in many of the Discourses recorded in the *Nikāyas*, it can provide no very distinctive title for any particular one, although it is true that there are various *Upādāna Suttas* in the *Saṃyutta* and at least two *Khandha Suttas*, while the *Āṅguttara* also contains two *Khandha Suttas*. Apart from this, the *Mahāpuṇṇamā Sutta* may be regarded as reasonably named if we (1) agree that its topic is weightier than that of the *Cūḷa-puṇṇamā*, (2) recognise its greater length, (3) allow the rightness of stressing in the title of the *Ānāpānasati* the subject matter of the Discourse rather than the time at which it was delivered.

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I have suggested earlier in this article that, in order to assess why the *M.* pairs are distinguished from one another by the introduction of Mahā- and Cūḷa- into their titles, it would be best to examine each pair separately. For only then, if ever, could anything of a general nature be established. For this purpose, it would be convenient in the first place to take the pairs by the categories I have mentioned and in which they may be grouped: subject matter, proper name, and simile, with the addition of time (only the Puṇṇamā Suttas). The subject might profitably be further studied in conjunction with the wider one of the naming of all the Mahā-Suttas, including those in the *Dīgha*, all Cūḷa-Suttas (lacking in the *Dīgha*), and of all Suttas that are comparable in any way to the *Majjhima* ones wherever any of these may be found in the Pali Canon. This article has aimed at no more than giving a brief indication of some of the interesting problems connected with the naming and the titles of the *Majjhima's* pair of Vaggas and its seventeen pairs of Suttas.

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