The Sutta Nipāta: Pucchās of the Pārayana Vagga

§ 1. AJITAMĀNAVAKA-PUCCHĀ

THE Vattu-gāthā and Commentarial literature state that Ajita was a disciple of the brahmin Bāvari, although according to AA. I, 184 he was Bāvari's nephew. Theragāthā (Thā 20) mentions an Elder Ajita who had, in a former birth, offered a kaṭṭhā fruit to the Buddha Vipassi. The Commentary on this stanza (Thā A. I, 78) refers to him as the son of the assessor (agghāpaniya) of the King of Kosala. Apadāna No. 509 (Ap. II, 449) also speaks of a Kapitthaphalāyaka Thera (cp. Thā 20), but there is another Apadāna of Ajita the pupil of Bāvari (No. 397-Ap. I, 335). There is no attempt made in the Commentaries to identify Ajita, the Kapitthaphalāyaka with Ajita of the Pārayana. The subsequent growth of the Bāvari-episode in connection with the Pārayana (U.C.R. VI, 4), the antiquity of the Pārayana itself (ibid.), and the vagueness with which some Commentators refer to it, are additional testimony to the fact that the Ajita of the Pucchā and the Ajita of Thā, 20 (cp. Ap. II, 449) are two different persons. The Vattu-gāthās refer to the sixteen questioners as, sīsā soḷīsa brahmāna. The name Ajita need not necessarily be that of a brahmin (a-ji-ṭa = unconquered); and it suits a kṣatriya equally well. It is significant that these sixteen are spoken of as āyasmā Ajito, āyasmā Puṇṇako etc. in the pucchās. They address the Buddha on equal terms as mārīsa as do all kṣatriyas and the warrior gods of the Hindus (Sakka, etc.). It is only in the titles of the pucchās that they are called māṇavā (the text of the prologue and the epilogue is of no consequence for obvious reasons). The word māṇavā, which often designates a young brahmin is no conclusive proof of these men being brahmins. Some of the names are decidedly kṣatriya; e.g. Ajita, Bhadrāvudha, the names Nanda and Hemaka are doubtful, and Piṅgiya and Mogharāja are most probably nicknames of kṣatriya origin. Neumann (Reden 546) sees in the name Bāvari a representative of the famous Kātyāyana school of the White Yajurveda (Bāḷari). He says that among the māṇavas there are seven other Yajurveda priests of whom four belong to the White Yajurveda. He also mentions a still older Bāḍarī of the Black Yajurveda to whom reference is made in the Baudhāyana-grhyasūtra (I, 7). Even if his suggestion is accepted there are still nine others who have to be proven brahmins. Moreover, a name like Dhotaka, which

1. AA. IV, 35: adhāteyyaḥgāthāsalaparimāṇaḥ Pārayanasuttam (P. Sutta which consists of 250 stanzas); but the entire vagga with its Prologue and Epilogue contains only 174 stanzas, pucchās alone being 92 stanzas. The Pārayana is called a sutta here. Nd2 also refers to some pucchās as suttas and paññas.
Neumann had in mind (his seven Vajurveda priests are not enumerated) is a fitting name for a disciple of the Buddha (Vidhu, dhunati, to shake off, to purge, etc. cp. the concept dhona which is often used as an epithet of the manu in Sn.). Likewise Mettagu, Upasvaya, Ajita and Tissametteyya2 are very suitable names for Buddha's disciples.

The first question asked by Ajita is very far-reaching3. On the one hand it could be interpreted empirically to mean only the external objects of the world, on the other it implies Ajita's premonition of world-sorrow. Buddha in his reply alludes to the First Truth: dukka hassa mahabbhayam. In his next question Ajita goes a step beyond the answer and anticipates further. This clearly shows that Buddha's interlocutor was a person with a considerable previous metaphysical training. The second question is asked in a fashion that makes it possible to illustrate indirectly the Four Noble Truths. Because Ajita himself has some idea of the misery inherent in the world he is eager to know by what means it could be checked. Following the Buddha's reply (Sn. 1035) he shows his desire to know how sati, paññā and the individual nāmarūpa cease to exist. Here the question hints at nirodha (or perhaps uppekkhā as well), and in the reply the very word nirodha is used. That Ajita thinks clearly ahead and anticipates the replies is evident from his question in Sn. 1036.

These questions are far too brilliant to be those of an insignificant disciple of a brahmin from the less-known and least-brahmanised zone of the Dakkhiṇāpathera which even during the time of the compilation of the Baudhāya-nagrhyasūtra was considered unfit for brahmins (Baudh. V, 15). Further, the trend of thought in these questions compares rather closely with the monistic principles of the Upaniṣads. The macrocosmic Brahman, identified with Atman, the world-soul, gives place to the microcosmic Atman which again is identified with the macrocosm. Though no such philosophical subtleties are in evidence here the progress from world-sorrow to nāmarūpa is reminiscent of the Upaniṣads. The picture of Ajita in the puccha is not that of a typical brahmin youth but that of a mendicant initiated into the Upaniṣadic way of thinking. One would not be far wrong to conjecture that since the kṣatriya seers were the custodians of Upaniṣadic lore and as Ajita's mode of thinking resembles their's that he was a kṣatriya belonging to an Upaniṣadic school. The very fact that his name sounds like that of a kṣatriya or of a sage, 'The Unconquered', is no conclusive proof of his kṣatriya origin.

2. There is another Tissametteyya in Atṭhakavagga 7.
3. Ajitapucca is commented at Nettī. pp. 70-72, under Sodhanadhara Nettī. III, 13. It states that Buddha's replies were in the form of sodhanā and not ārambhā (on his own initiative) viz. . . ti pañhe . . ti Bhagavā padam sodheti na ca ārambham. Ajitapucca is again commented at great length at Nettī. 10-21.

THE SUTTA NIPĀTA: PUCCHĀS OF THE PĀRAVAYA VAGGA

§ 2. Linguistic and other Internal Evidence

The sutta generally bears the appearance of an old piece. There is a preponderance of the use of the particle 'su' (or 'ssu') as an emphatic interrogative. This is a general characteristic of many old dialogue-balls in which the interlocutor continually asks questions. Among forms which may be assigned to a dialectical stratum are: jāppā (Sn. 1036) which is not confined to gāthā and mārissa (1037d) found equally well in prose. A double Vedic form with the Māgadhi ending is to be seen at Sn. 1038a, saukhatadhammā (cp. the concept kusumajñāna which is often used as an epithet of the manu in Sn.). This clearly shows that Buddha's interlocutor was a person with a considerable previous metaphysical training. The second question is asked in a fashion that makes it possible to illustrate indirectly the Four Noble Truths. Because Ajita himself has some idea of the misery inherent in the world he is eager to know by what means it could be checked. Following the Buddha's reply (Sn. 1035) he shows his desire to know how sati, paññā and the individual nāmarūpa cease to exist. Here the question hints at nirodha (or perhaps uppekkhā as well), and in the reply the very word nirodha is used. That Ajita thinks clearly ahead and anticipates the replies is evident from his question in Sn. 1036.

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He has completely cut off the desire for name-and-form—individual existence—here, the stream of Kañka which had remained for long). Existence is often spoken of as a stream; e.g. short abl. singulars veiccchā, and pāṇādi (Sn. 1036b), pitūyāvar (1034d, 1035d) of Vedic origin (cp. Geiger § 122) with consonantal hardening.

The term sota (1034, 1035) is used in the sense of defilements such as taññha (SnA. 586). Of similar application is sota at Sn. 355

Acceccchi taññham idha nāmarūpe (ti Bhagavā)
Kañhassad sotaṁ digharañcaññayiṁ.

(He has completely cut off the desire for name-and-form—individual existence—here, the stream of Kañka which had remained for long). Existence is often spoken of as a stream; e.g. bhava sota at Sn. 736b, S. I, 15, IV, 128, etc. It is considered a positive attainment to rid one's self of this sota; e.g. chinnasota at Sn. 715b, and also sotaṁ chinidati M. I, 226. The flux of mind is also a stream, viññānasota D. III, 105, etc. ; and the Noble Eightfold Path is called a stream (sota) at S. V, 347. The terminology of Ajita is allied to Buddhist terminology though at first sight the term appears to be used in a connotation different from that in Buddhism.

Style calls for no attention. The puccha is in Śloka metre. (Anuṣṭubhi.), and metrical irregularities are few viz. an even quarter at 1037a, a short pāda at 1036a, and extra-syllabic pādas at 1033ab.

§ 3. THE OTHER PUCCHĀS

Like Ajita, the other 15 mānasas too have questions to ask the Buddha. Tissametteyya wishes to know of the mukhāpurisa who is unperturbed and perfectly contented. Puṇāka asks the Buddha about the efficacy of sacrifice and the reasons why men offer sacrifices. The Buddha replies that it is all futile and that it would not enable one to overcome birth and decay. Then
he expresses his desire to know of them who have transcended birth and decay. Mettāgā asks the Buddha the reason for the existence of suffering in this world and the method by which the wise cross the stream of birth, decay, sorrow and lamentation. Dhitāraka invites the Buddha to teach him to enable him to train himself for his release and remove all his doubts. Upāsīva requests the Buddha to give him an ārammana (means, object) by which he may cross the Flood (ogha). Nanda asks whether it is knowledge or the mode of living that characterises a muni. He also wishes to find out whether those who profess metaphysical theories have overcome birth and decay. Hemaka tells the Buddha that he took no delight in the theories of the Vitandavādins, and requests him to teach him the dhamma by which he may transcend 'this sinful bent'. Toddyāya asks the Buddha about the nature of the emanicipation of him who has no craving, is free from lust, and has overcome doubt. 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conclusive proof. It has already been emphasised that some of the questions asked, definitely show that most of them have had a philosophical training in some system or other. It is quite probable that they may have belonged to some sects of brahmanas or ājīvakaś which cannot be easily identified on account of the scanty evidence at hand.

The only mention in the Āpadāna, a considerably later work, of the celebrated Bāvāri of the Vatthugātha, with special reference to these mānuvas, is made at Ap. II, 487 (Mogharāja), Ap. II, 342 (Mettagu) and Ap. II, 357 (Todeyya). It was stated earlier that the fact that some of the names are brahmin-names does not necessarily prove that the questioners were brahmins. Dhotaka in praising the Buddha calls him a brahmā and in the same stanza (Todeyya) it was stated earlier that the fact that some of the names are brahmana presents no difficulty when the new significance attached to the word brahmā is taken into account (cp. Dh. Sramāṇas).

Settlement of the differences between the theories of these interlocutors and Buddha’s teaching, for none of them comes to the Buddha as a disputant. All this evidence points to the lateness of the Bāvāri episode as compared with the teaching of the Buddha. This may be overlooked if there was any positive evidence of a connection, though no direct evidence is forthcoming.

§ 6. The Āpadāna and the Sixteen Mānuvas

The only other source in which these mānuvas are mentioned in a manner worth noting is the Āpadāna. Only eleven out of the sixteen are specifically mentioned, viz. Ajita: Ap. No. 397 (I, 335), Tissametteyya: No. 398 (II, 339), Punnaka: No. 399 (II, 341), Mettagu: No. 400 (II, 342), Dhotaka: No. 401 (II, 343), Upasiva: No. 402 (II, 345), Nanda: No. 403 (Ap. II, 350), Hemaka: No. 404 (II, 351), Todeyya: No. 405 (II, 354), Jatukaṇā (ka): No. 406 (II, 357), and Mogharāja: Nos. 35, 537 (I, 87; II, 486). There is no trace whatsoever, in the Āpadāna, of Kappa who should have been mentioned after No. 405, of Posala or of Pūlguya. There is the story of one Udāna occurring in the Āpadāna immediately after Jatukaṇika (i.e. No. 407, Ap. II, 362). Following this comes the Āpadāna of Bhaddāli (No. 408, Ap. II, 362). Although the names appear somewhat similar the stories yield no clue for the identification of Udāna with Udāya and Bhaddāli with Bhadravudha. Moreover, the order in which these two stories occur is the inverse of that of the two corresponding pucchās. Even in the case of the eight Āpadānas in which there is no mention of Bāvāri (i.e. except Todeyya, Mettagu and Mogharāja) the text affords no positive evidence of a connection. Further, Udāna’s Āpadāna is the last number of the 41st (Mettaya) Vagga and Bhaddāli’s opens the next chapter which is known by that name. This may be overlooked if there was any positive evidence of a connection, for Ajita’s Āpadāna ends the 40th (Pilinda) Vagga and therefore precedes the Tissametteyya Āpadāna. The division of the Āpadāna into vaggas being arbitrary and artificial, it is evident that Ap. Nos. 397-405 are meant to correspond to the nine mānuvas from Ajita to Todeyya. The tenth, Kappa is omitted, and the eleventh, Jatukaṇā occurs as No. 406. Then comes Mogharāja the fifteenth mānuva for whom there are two Apādanas. Sn. i177 is quoted at Ap. No. 537, 25; and Sn. i118-i119 at Ap. No. 537, 26-28. Though there are differences in details the two stories are practically the same. The fact that the Mogharāja Āpadāna is so far away from the last story which has a bearing on the mānuvas (Jatukaṇā) hardly sheds any light on Sn. on account of the lateness of Ap.

§ 7. References in other works

From the nature of the questions and answers in the pucchās it is to be inferred that the mānuvas entered the Order. This is stated in the late Epilogue (Sn. i128). Yet it is rather disappointing to see that Thī is silent about most of them. It has already been shown that Ajita at Thī, 20 is not the same as Ajita of Sn. Similarly, Punnā (Thī, 70), Nanda (Thī, 157-158), Posiya (Thī, 34) nor any one of the three Tissas in Thī. (39, 97, 153-154) shows any connection with the men bearing similar names in Sn. It is also highly improbable that Bhaddāja (Thī, 275-277) or Bhadda (Thī, 473-479) and Ugāya (Thī, 689-704) have any connection with Bhadravudha and Udāya. The degree of improbability is less in the case of Kappa of Thī, 567-576, though no direct evidence is forthcoming.

On the other hand, it is quite probable that Mogharāja of Thī, 207-208 is the same as Mogharāja in Sn. Sn. i117 contains two stanzas, one by Mogharāja and the other the Buddha’s reply, which are not found either in Sn. or Thī. It may have been quite probable that the original Mogharāja-puṣṭa was longer than what is now handed down in Sn. It is also probable that the Samyutta quotes from another recension of the Mogharāja-puṣṭa which is now lost. The quotation found at Milp. 412 of a saying by Mogharāja cannot be traced either in Sn. or Thī. It is probable that the source from which it was taken was known to the author of Milp. and was subsequently lost. The nature of these passages does not permit the inference that they belonged to another Mogharāja. This corroborates what has already been noticed in the case of the two Āpadāna stories.

It is not proposed to give an analysis of the linguistic data. The few remarks made earlier show to some extent the antiquity of these poems. All
the evidence from external sources points to the fact that Mogharāja was a prominent member of the community. The evidence from Samyutta and Milp. does not help to establish the anteriority of the poem in Sn. to those respective works. It is quite probable that Sn. preserves only a fragment of a longer dialogue; and that Samyutta and Sn. are complementary to each other in this respect.

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