

*Sutta Nipāta : The Uraga Sutta*¹

I.

IT is now possible to proceed to the analysis of a few individual suttas of the Sutta Nipāta with the aid of the criteria detailed earlier.² The following analysis is restricted to a proportionately small number of suttas and further inferences regarding those that are left out may be drawn on similar lines. Every opportunity will be taken to discuss problems of general application to the whole work under the discussion of these suttas, so that most of the problems connected with the majority of the suttas will be eventually touched upon. An attempt has been made to make the selection as representative as possible. A few suttas from each vagga and from each type in the classification on pp. 83 ff. in U.C.R. VI, 2 are taken up for analysis. Wherever possible the suttas will be discussed in the order in which they occur in Sn., and at the same time those that bear some similarity to one another will be arranged in some order so as to bring out the properties they share in common.

II.

The title Uraga Sutta is undoubtedly derived from the simile, *urago jīṇaṃ iva tacam purāṇaṃ* (as a serpent—discards—its old and worn-out slough) in the refrain that runs through the whole length of the poem. Its ability to cast off its slough, an important characteristic of the *uraga*, has been introduced here to describe the action of the *bhikkhu* who renounces both “Here and the Beyond.” There seems to be some mysterious significance attached to this creature which is described as *ura-ga* (lit. belly-crawler). Some *uragas* are considered to belong to a class of semi-divine beings: they are *kāma-rūpī* (SnA. 13, capable of changing their form at will). The semi-divine characteristics are usually attributed to *nāgas* rather than to *uragas*. There are numerous instances in the Pāli Canon of *nāgas* changing their form or appearing in disguise. The Commentary (SnA.) refers to *Saṅkha-pālanāgarājā* in *Saṅkha-pārajātaka* (JA. V. 161-177). At Vinaya I. 86 a *nāga* is said to have received ordination disguised as a young man. An equally mystic significance is associated with the *uraga*'s casting off of the slough. The Commentary (SnA. 13-14) describes in detail the four ways in which it does so. PvA. 61-62 commenting on Pv. I. 12, 1, *urago va tacam jīṇaṃ hitvā gacchati sam tanuṃ*

1. Extract from *A Critical Analysis of the Pāli Sutta Nipāta Illustrating its Gradual Growth*, Ph.D. thesis, University of London, November, 1947.

2. The Criteria for the Analysis of the Sutta Nipāta, U.C.R. VI, 1, pp. 42 ff.

SUTTA NIPĀTA THE URAGA SUTTA

(he goes abandoning his body—corporeal form—as a serpent discards its worn-out slough) says that a serpent casts it off whenever it wishes to do so, as easily as removing a garment, with no attachment to it whatsoever. Here the simile of the serpent's slough is employed to describe the body at death. The mysterious significance of the *uraga* is more pronounced in a passage occurring at S.I. 69. It describes four young creatures (*daharā*) which should not be despised nor abused viz. a *khattiya*, an *uraga*, *aggi* and a *bhikkhu*. A *khattiya* when he becomes king can inflict heavy punishment on man, woman or child that despises him; an *uraga* can sting them; therefore he who holds his life dear should not despise it. Fire with necessary fuel (*upādāna*) can blaze forth into a huge flame and burn them who despise it. The virtuous *bhikkhu* can burn with his flame-like majesty. The *uraga* is also described as, *uccāvacehi vanñehi urago carati tejasī* (v. 1. *tejasū*) in the *Samyutta*: (In diverse appearances³ the *uraga* roams in its own splendour). It is described here as a mysterious and wonderful creature demanding respect and adoration. The Commentator is silent about the *pāda*, *urago carati tejasī*, and does not confine the quality of *tejas* to *uraga* alone. Fire too possesses the same quality. The *tejas* (splendour or better, power) of the *uraga* is perhaps due to one or more of the following reasons:—

1. Its extraordinary force or strength.
2. Its ability to change at will (*kāmarūpa*).
3. The ease with which it casts off its slough.
4. The fact that it possesses two tongues (*dujivho* cp. J.V. 425 cp. II. 458, and III. 458).
5. Perhaps its ability to live even in fire, like the mythical salamander.⁴

Uraga is almost synonymous with *nāga*, a creature equally gifted with miraculous powers and great strength. Some of them are semi-divine. *Nāga* is often used as an epithet for *arahants* and sometimes of the Buddha. Popular etymology explains *nāga* as “*āguṃ na karoti*” (cp. Sn. 522a); and the origin of the epithet is perhaps based on the great power of the *nāga*. The phrase

3. Cp. Comy. S.A. I, 132, *nānāvidhehi saññānehi*, etc.

4. Here fire and the *uraga* both possess *tejas*. A. K. Coomaraswamy in his “Hinduism and Buddhism” makes out that the Dragon is the sacrificer and the sacrifice, i.e., connected with the smoke coming from the sacrificial altar. Referring to ŚB. I. 6.3.14 ff. he attempts to identify the Dragon with the Projenitor. Some such mystical significance may be among the reasons for ascribing *tejas* to the *uraga*.

At Vin. IV. 108 a *nāga* (Vin. I. 24, *nāgarājā*) is described as *iddhimā*; but in each case he was overcome by the (greater) *tejas* of his opponent (*Sāgata* and the Buddha) cp. J. I. 360. It is also told at AA. I. 324 ff. how *Sāgata* tamed the fierce *nāgarājā*. (Note by Miss I. B. Horner).

UNIVERSITY OF CEYLON REVIEW

hatthi-nāga suggests an equally mystic significance. Yet, it is noteworthy that the word *nāga* is hardly or never used in the Pāli Canon in the same simile of its shedding the slough. Though *sappha*, *ahi*, *āsīvisa* and *bhujaṅgama* are synonyms for *uraga*, they fall short of the connotation of the latter term. There is no real magical power attributed to them, unlike the *uraga* or the *nāga*. The last of the four synonyms *bhujaṅgama*, though not in frequent use in Canonical Pāli seems to be nearer *uraga* than *ahi*. *Sappha* is treated as a mere poisonous snake in similes. It should be avoided; e.g. Sn. 1b, 768b, Th 1. 457, and J.V. 18. *Āsīvisa* is employed in similes to describe *kāma* and similar evil tendencies; e.g. Th 2. 451, J. III. 525, cp. 267 and S. IV. 172-174.⁵ It is called *uggatejas* at S. IV. 172 ff. and is a synonym for the *mahādhātus*.

III.

It has already been remarked that the emphasis on *uraga* in the refrain has been the basis of the title *Uraga Sutta*. There are three other suttas in Sn. named after a simile or metaphor occurring in them; viz. I. 3 (*Khagga-visāṇa*), II. 8 (*Nāvā*) and III. 8 (*Salla*). Over half the number of suttas in Sn. are named after the interlocutors mentioned in them. There are 36 such suttas; viz. Sn. I. 2, 4, 5, 9, 10; II. 5, 11, 12, 14; III. 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11; IV. 7, 8(?), 9, 16; and V. 2-17. To this may be added I. 7 which is called *Aggikabhāradvāja Sutta* in the Commentary. Of the above list *Pasūra Sutta* is rather doubtful, for *Pasūra* may not be a proper name as Neumann (*Reden* p. 528) suggests. He favours the commentarial gloss *paṭi-sūro* and says that it is *pa-sūra* (*pra-sūra*) like *pācariya* at M.I. 509. There are 15 suttas named after the topics or themes discussed in them; viz. Sn. I. 6, 7, 8, 12; II. 1, 2, 4, 7, 13; III. 1, 2, 12; and IV. 1, 6, 11. To this may be added the alternative names given in the Comy. for I. 11 (*Kāyavicchandaniya*), II. 8 (*Dhamma*), II. 12 (*Nigrodhakappa*), II. 13 (*Muni* or *Mahāsamaya*), III. 4 (*Pūraḷāsa*) and III. 11 (*Moneyya*). In addition to the six suttas mentioned in the note at p. 45 U.C.R. VI. 1, as being named after their opening words, Sn. IV. 10 (*Purābheda*) is named after the opening word of the second stanza (i.e. Buddha's reply). The four *Aṭṭhakas* have already been mentioned (U.C.R. VI. 4, p. 226) to contain in their opening lines the words after which they are named. This makes a total of 11 suttas that are named after an opening line. The titles of 9 of these suttas (i.e. except *Purābheda* and *Attadaṇḍa*) have direct bearing on the topics discussed in them. The other four suttas in Sn. viz. Sn. I. 11, IV. 12, 13 and 14 are given descriptive titles. It is significant that all the four suttas named after a simile occurring in them are pure didactic ballads and all the suttas named after persons are dialogue ballads. Those that are

5. Vide Mrs. Rhys Davids; *Similes in the Nikāyas*, J.P.T.S. 1906, pp. 52 ff., 1908 pp. 180 ff.

SUTTA NIPĀTA THE URAGA SUTTA

named after topics discussed in them belong to various types. There are dialogue ballads like Vasala and Brāhmaṇadhammika Suttas, didactic poems such as Muni and Kāma Suttas, narratives like Pabbajjā and Padhāna Suttas and doctrinal dissertations such as Dvayatānupassanā Sutta belonging to this group. All the suttas named after their opening words are didactic poems.

Coming back to the Uruga Sutta, the effectiveness of the simile of the serpent's skin may have been one of the reasons for placing this sutta at the head of the vagga, which in turn derives its name from the former. This is the only vagga in Sn. which is named after a sutta. However, the practice of naming vaggas after suttas is not rare in other parts of the Canon. There are two Yodhājīva Suttas occurring in the Pañcaka Nipāta of the Aṅguttara, viz. A. III 89 ff. and 93 ff., and the vagga in which they occur is called Yodhājīva (A. III. 84-110). Similarly, the second vagga in the Majjhima, Sihanāda, M. I. 63-122 is named after the two opening suttas Cūlasihanāda and Mahāsihanāda (M. Nos. 11 and 12) and the eleventh vagga (Devadaha, M. II. 214-226, III. 1-24) derives its name from the opening Devadaha Sutta (M. No. 101). In such instances as these it need not be the opening sutta that is always responsible for the name of the vagga. In the Udāna, the third vagga, (Nanda, Ud. 21-33) derives its name from the second *udāna* in it, its fifth vagga Soṇathera, Ud. 47-61) from its sixth member, its sixth vagga (Jaccandha, Ud. 62-73) from the simile in the fourth piece in it, and the last vagga (Pāṭaligāma, Ud. 80-93) from the sixth *udāna* in it. The first two vaggas of Pv. are named after their concluding members, Uragepetavatthu and Ubbarīpetavatthu respectively. Of them the Uruga Vagga is of special interest here. The first verse of the vatthu at Pv. 11 (I. 12·1) contains the simile of the serpent's worn-out slough, and this is the only reason for naming the vatthu and the vagga, Uruga. The Comy. associates this vatthu with an *uruga* (serpent) which was responsible for the death of the individual referred to in the story. The illustrative story in the Comy. is the same as that at J. III. 162-168, which also contains the text at Pv. I. 12 in full.

The simile of the snake casting off its slough seems to be rather popular in Pāli verse. The line at Pv. I. 12¹ is also found at Ap. 394, 13. In Mora Jātaka (J. IV. 341) the hunter renounces his career as a hunter even as a serpent discards its old worn-out skin (*tacam va jinṇaṃ urago purāṇaṃ*). Bv. IX. 28 contains the same line. This simile is also employed to describe how Fortune keeps the fool at bay at J. V. 100, and VI. 361.

Sirī jahati dummedhaṃ jinṇaṃ va urago tacam.

IV.

The 17 stanzas of the text describe the *bhikkhu* who overcomes anger, lust, craving, arrogance, hatred, doubts and perplexities and other impediments, has found no essence (*sāra*) in all forms of being, sees everything as void being free from covetousness, passion, malevolence and delusion, has eradicated all evil tendencies with no leanings whatsoever towards them. is free from all such qualities which form the basis for earthly existence, and has destroyed all obstacles. He verily is "the *bhikkhu* who shuns both Here and the Beyond as a serpent its old and worn-out skin."

The tone of the sutta is generally archaic and the language preserves an early stratum of Pāli. The words and forms of interest are:—**Ora***pāraṃ* (Sn. 10-17c), a simple dvandva cpd. meaning "here below -cp. Sk. *avara-* and the beyond," cp. *parovaraṃ* (Sn. 353, etc.). The *ora* and the *pāra* are the limitations (*sīma*) to a true *bhikkhu*. If he wishes to go beyond them (*sīmātigo*, cp. Sn. 795a) he should rid himself of all obstacles and leanings which act as causes (lit. causal antecedents) for his downfall (cp. Sn. 15b). The concept *ora* has already been noted (U.C.R. VI. 4, p. 228 ff.) as being the opposite of *pāra*; but *pāra* in this context is quite different from that of the *Pārāyana* and other places in Sn. Here it merely denotes birth in other existences whereas elsewhere (loc. cit.) it is almost a synonym for *nibbāna*. **Ud***acchidā* (Sn. 2a, 3a) cp. Sk. *ud-a-chid-at*; augmented radical Aor. 3 sg. cp. Vedic. The change -a + ch- > -acch- is due to metrical reasons and for preservation of quantity. This is a pure Gāthā-form not met with in Canonical prose. There are four other such augmented radical Aor. forms in this sutta: viz. *udabbadhī* (Sn. 4a), *ajjhagamā* (Sn. 5a), *accagamā* (Sn. 8b) and *accasārī* (Sn. 8a-13a). This type of Aor. is very frequent in Sn. and other old Gāthā-Pāli.⁶ **Ud***abbadhī* is usually explained as being formed from *ud* + √ *vadh* cp. *udavadhīt*. It is probable that this verb is associated with *ud* + √ *vṛh*, *bṛṇhati*, to tear, cp. A.V. *abarhīt* and Brh. Ār. *avṛkṣat*, P. *udabbahe* (Sn. 583b, opt. 3. sg.) and *abbahi* (Aor. 3 sg.) in the phrase *abbahi vata m: sallaṃ* used frequently in Th 1 and Th 2. The probable development of *udabbadhī* from *ud* + √ *vṛh* is as follows:—Vedic *udabarhīt* *ud-a* + *v/b* (v. in *vṛh*.) > P. *udabb-*: Vedic -h- > P. -dh- cp. Vc. *iha* > P. *idha*. It may be possible that this form is the result of a contamination of the two roots *vadh* and *vṛh*, but either of the two can give this form directly and makes the explanation of a contamination superfluous. **Aj***hagamā* (*adhi-a-gam-at*) and **Acc***agamā* (*ati-a-gam-at*) cp. *abbhidā* (J. I. 247), *āsadā* (Th 1.774), *acchidā* (Sn. 357c) and *udacchidā* (supra). **Acc***asārī* (occurring in both *nāccasārī* and *paccasārī*) *ati-a-sār-it*, from √ *sṛ*, *sarati*. Neumann (Reden, p. 406) suggests *atyasmārī* and *pratyas-*

6. Vide Geiger, *Pāli Literatur und Sprache*, 159 ff.

SUTTA NIPĀTA THE URAGA SUTTA

mārī, but the explanation in the Comy., *na atidhāvi* and *na ohiyi* is preferable. **Samūhatāse** (Sn. 14b) cp. *paccaṃyāse* (Sn. 15b), double Vc. nom. pl. from -āsas > -āso > -āse; -o > -e is a dialectical variation influenced by E. Pkr. (Māgadhī). This double nom. with Māgadhī -e is rather frequent in early Pāli poetry. In Sn. alone it is seen to occur 20 times, 10 of which are in the Aṭṭhaka Vagga. Neumann (Reden, p. 407) says that such forms as *samūhatāse* are not "Māgadhisms" but periphrastic perfects; *samūhata* + *āse*. It would be rather straining to construe a perfect in such contexts as these, and his suggestion, however useful, is not tenable. **Hetukappā**—"which act as a cause" (Sn. 16b). The cpd. appears to be dialectical and nearer the older language, cp. *khaggavisāṇa-kappo* "resembling a rhinoceros" (Sn. 35d-75d).

V.

The Uruga Sutta is written in a **metre** described as "Aupachandasaka" by Helmer Smith (SnA. 463). The regular Aupacchandasika metre differs from the Vaitāliya which consists of two half verses with 30 morae each, in that it has an extra long syllable added to each line of 14 and 16 morae respectively in the Vaitāliya. The metre of these stanzas is rather irregular. The number of morae in the first half-verse varies from 32 to 36, but the average seems to be 33, as in the case of the common second half of all these stanzas. The extra syllables in the longer lines may be explained as anacrusis. Helmer Smith (ibid.) further notes *pādas* Sn. 6b, 7a, 8a-13a and 14b as irregular. Though this metre is similar to Aupacchandasika which became fixed in the Classical period of Sanskrit literature this particular rhythm cannot be considered so late as that, for it may have been in use long before a metre as such came to be fixed.

Another noticeable feature here, as well as in all Pāli poetry is the apparent disregard of metrical rules. This probably may be the result of the composers being guided more by the ear (rhythm) than by such artificial means as fixed metres. Moreover, in all popular poetry metrical rules are not strictly observed. However, the beat and rhythm of these lines resemble those of dance metres which are usually free and easy metres not subject to artificial regulations.

The **style** of this sutta has already been commented upon. It is a ballad in every respect, though it is used for a didactic purpose. The purpose of the refrain in lines cd in each stanza is to lay emphasis on the central theme. There is a refrain in the initial line and the greater part of the second line of stanzas 8-13,

*Yo nāccasārī na paccasārī
sabbam vitatham idaṃ ti vīta—*

There is perfect antithesis in the two halves of all these stanzas. Invariably the stanza begins with *yo* and the second half with *so bhikkhu*. In spite of this and the lucidity of diction there is no poetic extravagance which characterises later compositions. Popular similes are freely used to describe the *bhikkhu* who leads a life in accordance with Buddhist ethics. Neumann (Reden, p. 408) points out a few parallels in Mbh. and other early literature, viz. *jīrṇaṃ tvacam sarpa ivāvamucya* (Mbh. V. 39, 2; cp. XII. 250, 11) and *yathā pādodaras tvacā vinirmucyate* (Prašnopaniṣad, 5, 5; also *viḷe* Brh. Ār. IV. 4.10). Other similes are at Sn. 1b, 2b, 4b, (compared by Neumann with Rgveda I. 32, 8) and 5b.

There is nothing extraordinary in **thought and ideology** in the sutta. The emphasis is on the conduct of the *bhikkhu*. It is noteworthy that there are 80 references to *bhikkhu* in the *gāthās* of Sn. (in addition to over 15 in the prose), 77 to *muni* (24 of which refer to the Buddha) and over 40 to *samaṇa*, at least 17 of which are used without any specific reference to a Buddhist *samaṇa*. The *Saṅgha* is mentioned 8 times in the Ratana Sutta and 4 times elsewhere in both prose and verse. All the references to *bhikkhu*, *muni* and *samaṇa* amply justify Fausböll's statement "we see here a picture not of life in monasteries but the life of hermits in its first stage."⁷ The Uruga Sutta like Tuvaṭaka and Sammāparibbājanīya Suttas is a splendid example of a poem that describes the true *bhikkhu* just as Muni Sutta describes the *muni*.

The few technical expressions used indicate a phase of development in the doctrine. The terms *ora* and *ora-pāraṃ* have already been discussed. The terms *kodha*, *rāga*, *taṇhā*, *māna bhavesu sāra* (cp. *bhavataṇhā*), *koṇa* and *vitakka* (Sn. 1-7) have not undergone the later systematization and arrangement in groups. Usually the three *rāga*, *dosa* and *moha* occur in one group in the more systematised texts and are called the three *akusalamūlāni* (fundamental blemishes of character). At some places *kodha* and *uṇāna* are added to these three, while at others *kilesa* and *kodha* and still others *māna* together with or without *diṭṭhi*. Similarly the occurrence of *paṇāsa*, *vitathā*, *lobha*, *rāga*, *dosa* and *moha* in Sn. 8-13 seems to presuppose a time prior to the scholastic classification of the three *akusalamūlāni* as *rāga/lobha*, *dosa* and *moha*. Besides Sn. 14 seems to associate *mūlā akusalā* with *anusaya*.

On the other hand the technical significance of *daratha* and *vanatha* (Sn. 15 and 16 respectively), the mention of *pañca nīvaraṇa* (Sn. 17), and the emphasis on *imaṃ paṇāsaṃ* (Sn. 8) seem to suggest a development in terminology. These are the only references to them, in the form as they are, in this work, though Sn. 514d mentions the *nīvaraṇāni* and Sn. 66a the *pañcāvaraṇāni*.

7. Fausböll, Translation of Sutta Nipāta, p. xii (S.B.E. vol. X).

SUTTA NIPĀTA THE URAGA SUTTA

This seemingly developed terminology may probably point out that this sutta presupposes a time when some form of systematization and arrangement has just set in. Another interesting word is *itibhavābhavatam* (Sn. 6) which is translated by Fausböll as 'reiterated existence' and by Neumann as 'being and non-being.' The explanation in the Comy. (SnA. 20), *sampattivipattivuddhihāni-sassatuccheda-ṭṭuññāpāpavasena iti anekappaṭākāra bhavābhavatā* does not make it clear at all. It seems to be somewhat different from *bhavābhava* which occurs in 8 other places in Sn.⁸ in the sense of 'reiterated existence' or re-birth. Its meaning in this context is apparently nearer the idea of the fluctuating changes of fortune in the course of re-birth. The term is not strictly technical.

An examination of Uruga Sutta in the various aspects of language, metre, style, doctrine and ideology shows that it is a comparatively old sutta. The lack of linguistic forms that may be classed as late and the presence of old Vedic and dialectical forms suggest that the sutta preserves an old stratum of Pāli. The syntax of the stanzas is also simple. The flexibility of metre also suggests an early date for the sutta. The lucid and simple style which is by no means heavy or laboured is characteristic of old poetry. The doctrinal emphasis too speaks of an early date for the sutta; and the few technical expressions reflect the "germs of a philosophical system which came to be more logically and consistently systematised"⁹ later on. Nothing could be gleaned regarding the social conditions of the time from this sutta; all other available evidence points to an early date.

N. A. JAYAWICKRAMA

8. Sn. 496b, 776d, 786d, 810b, 877d, 901d, 1,060b and 1,068d.

9. B. C. Law, History of Pali Literature, Vol. I, p. 239.