

The Sutta Nipāta: Pucchās of the Pārāyana Vagga

§ 1. AJITAMĀNAVAKA-PUCCHĀ

THE Vatthugāthā and Commentarial literature state that Ajita was a disciple of the brahmin Bāvarī, although according to AA. I, 184 he was Bāvarī's nephew. Theragāthā (ThI, 20) mentions an Elder Ajita who had, in a former birth, offered a *kapittha* fruit to the Buddha Vipassi. The Commentary on this stanza (ThI 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 Kapitthaphaladāyaka Thera (cp. ThI, 20), but there is another Apadāna of Ajita the pupil of Bāvarī (No. 397-Ap. I, 335). There is no attempt made in the Commentaries to identify Ajita, the Kapitthaphaladāyaka with Ajita of the Pārāyana. The subsequent growth of the Bāvarī-episode in connection with the Pārāyana (U.C.R. VI, 4), the antiquity of the Pārāyana itself (*ibid*), and the vagueness with which some Commentators refer to it¹, are additional testimony to the fact that the Ajita of the Pucchā and the Ajita of ThI, 20 (cp. Ap. II, 449) are two different persons. The Vatthu-gāthās refer to the sixteen questioners as, *sissā soḷisa brāhmaṇā*. The name Ajita need not necessarily be that of a brahmin (*a-ji-ta* = 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 *mārisa* 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 Bāvarī a representative of the famous Kātyāyana school of the White Yajurveda (Bālarī). 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 Bādarī 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 Dhataka, which

1. AA. IV, 35: *adḍhateyyagāthāsataparimāṇaṃ Pārāyanasuttaṃ* (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 Pārāyana is called a sutta here. Nd2 also refers to some *pucchās* as suttas and *pañhas*.

Neumann had in mind (his seven Yajurveda priests are not enumerated) is a fitting name for a disciple of the Buddha (\sqrt{dh} u, *dhunāti*, to shake off, to purge, etc. cp. the concept *dhona* which is often used as an epithet of the *muni* in Sn.). Likewise Mettagu, Upasīva, 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: *dukkham assa mahabbhayaṃ*. 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 *upekkhā* 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 Dakkhiṇāpatha which even during the time of the compilation of the Baudhāyana-gr̥hyasūtra 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 Ātman, the world-soul, gives place to the microcosmic Ātman 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 *pucchā* 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 theirs 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 Aṭṭhakavagga 7.

3. Ajitapucchā is commented at Netti, pp. 70-72, under *Sodhanāhāra* Netti, III, 13. It states that Buddha's replies were in the form of *sodhanā* and not *ārambha* (on his own initiative) viz. . . . *ti pañhe . . . ti Bhagavā padaṃ sodheti no ca ārambham*. Ajitapucchā is again commented at great length at Netti, 10-21.

§ 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-ballads in which the interlocutor continually asks questions. Among forms which may be assigned to a dialectical stratum are: *jappā* (Sn. 1033c) which is not confined to *gāthā* and *māṛisa* (1038d) found equally well in prose. A double Vedic form with the Māgadhi ending is to be seen at Sn. 1038a, *saṅkhatadhammāse*. The sandhi *ki'ssa* (1032c) is probably dialectical viz. *k.ṃ assa* > *kī assa* (nasalised *i*) > *kī'ssa* > *ki'ssa* cp. Pv. III, 5, 6. *ki'ssa vatam kiṃ pana brahmacariyam* where *ki* perhaps contains an original nasalised vowel. In both these instances *kī'ssa* cannot be identified with the interrogative pronoun *kissa* in the oft-repeated formula *taṃ kissa hetu*. Also cp. Pv. II, 6, 1, *Utthehi Kaṇhe kī sesī*; the corresponding passage to it at J. IV, 79 reads as *kiṃ sesī*.

The other peculiarities are more of a purely grammatical nature, yet pointing to an old stratum of Pāli; e.g. short abl. singulars *vevichā*, and *pamādā* (Sn. 1033b), *pīthiyyare* (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 *taṇhā* (SnA. 586). Of similar application is *sota* at Sn. 355

Acchechchi taṇham idha nāmarūpe (ti Bhagavā)

Kaṇhassa sotam digharattānusayitam.

(He has completely cut off the desire for name-and-form—individual existence—here, the stream of *Kaṇha* which had remained for long). Existence is often spoken of as a stream; e.g. *bhavasota* 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. *chinna-sota* Sn. 715b, and also *sotam chindati* M. I, 226. The flux of mind is also a stream, *viññāṇasota* 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 *pucchā* is in Śloka metre. (Anuṣṭubh), 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 *mānavās* too have questions to ask the Buddha. Tissametteyya wishes to know of the *mahāpurisa* who is unperturbed and perfectly contented. Puṇṇaka 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. Mettagu 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. Dhotaka invites the Buddha to preach to him to enable him to train himself for his release and remove all his doubts. Upasīva 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. Heṇaka tells the Buddha that he took no delight in the theories of the Viṇḍavādins, and requests him to preach to him the *dhamma* by which he may transcend 'this sinful bent'. Todeyya asks the Buddha about the nature of the emancipation of him who has no craving, is free from lust, and has overcome doubt. Kappa asks him of the island-refuge from the formidable stream confronting the mortal subject to decay and death. Jatukanni requests the Buddha to tell him of the *santiṭṭhā* and to preach to him the *dhamma* to help him to leave behind birth and decay. Bhadrāvudha praises the Buddha and requests him to preach the *dhamma* to all. Udaya wishes the Buddha to declare to him the deliverance by transcendental knowledge and the destruction of ignorance. Posāla asks the Buddha about the state of knowledge of the person whose consciousness of form is extinct, who has cast off corporeal form and perceives internal and external 'nothingness'. Mogharāja asks the Buddha how one should look upon the world so that Māra may not 'see' one. Piṅgiya like Jatukanni asks the Buddha to preach the *dhamma* in order to leave behind birth and decay.

§ 4. A striking feature of many of the *pucchās* is the eagerness of the questioners to listen to the Buddha. Some of them come with special problems that had confronted them. Their earnestness is seen in Sn. 1061, 1097, 1120. Nanda's question gives the Buddha the opportunity of stressing the superiority of a moral life (cp. 1070c). He declares that speculative knowledge leads one nowhere. This is in contrast to contemporary Brahmanism where Upaniṣadic seers begin to emphasise the importance of knowledge (*jñāna*) for the attainment of Brahman. *Vijjā* (knowledge) in Buddhism in some aspects is allied to *jñāna*, yet the Buddha is seen consistently to reject metaphysical speculation (cp. Aṭṭhaka Vagga, etc.).

In reply to Upasīva's request the Buddha gives a short survey of the essence of *vimokkha*. This *pucchā* appears the most abstruse in the whole vagga. The concentrated ideas in it are highly philosophical and bear the tone of the more systematised passages of the Aṅguttara of similar import. It perhaps represents in germinal form the doctrines further dealt with in Aṅguttara and Saṃyutta Nikāyas and carried to a degree of perfection in the later Abhidhamma Piṭaka.

The *ārammana* which Buddha gives Upasīva is based on *ākiṇcañña* (cp. *na kiṇcid anyat*). He has to cross the *ogha* by obtaining the release brought about by *saññāvimokkha* (cp. *saññāvedayitanirodha*). Then only does a *muni* 'go beyond reckoning' and obtain his release from *nāma* (*nāma-kāya*), for *rūpa* is eliminated at the stage of *ākiṇcañña*. Here is a brief reference to the *kāya* theory of the Nikāyas. Poṭṭhapāda Sutta in the Dīgha mentions the various *kāyas* as conceived by the divergent schools of animistic beliefs of the existence of a soul. The term *rūpakāya* occurs at S. III, 59 and *nāma-kāya* is that which corresponds to the entities designated as *nāma* in the division of the fivefold aggregates. Here is also to be seen a distant echo of the *kośa* theory of the Upaniṣads. There is nothing quite close to this in the Nikāyas, but the significant metaphor *asim kosiyaṃ pabbāheyya* (as one would draw the sword from the scabbard D. I, 77) seems to suggest an early connection of the same ideas.

The central ideas of the *pucchās* are discussed in the general remarks on the Pārāyana Vagga (U.C.R. VI, 4). All the concepts in the vagga are doubtless very old. The passages of philosophical import do not show much growth. The occurrence of the terms *viññāna* (1055), 1073, 1110, 1111 and 1037, *nāmarūpa* (1036, 1100), *nāmakāya* (1074) and *nāma and rūpa* (1073), *ākiṇcañña* (1070, 1071, 1072, 1115) has already been touched upon. The terms *kiṇcana* (1098, 1099, 1104) and *akiṇcana* (1059, 1091, 1094) are of no direct philosophical import. *Viññāta* (1086) in the phrase *diṭṭha-suta-muta-viññātesu* is a term common to passages dealing with sense-perception, (U.C.R. VII, 3). The notion of going beyond *saṃkham* (1074), *paṃāṇam* (1076), *kaḥḥam* (1101) agrees with the central theme of 'going beyond'. Like the suttas of the Aṭṭhaka Vagga the *pucchās* denounce disputation (*takka* 1084, *kathamkathā* 1088, 1089) and philosophical (speculative) dogmas (1078-1083, 1098). Many of the *mānavas* use epithets in praise of the Buddha (1043, 1049, 1063, 1069, 1073, 1090, 1101, 1105, 1112, etc.). He is called *samanlacakkhu* at 1063c, 1069c, 1073b, 1090d. The other frequent epithets are *aneja* (1112, 1101, 1043), *vedagu* (1049, 1059), *bhāvitatta* (1049) and *oghātiga* (1096). None of these epithets appears extravagant and all could be ascribed to an early period. The *dhamma* is spoken of as *anītiha* (not based on hearsay—1053). *Santi* is to be experienced in this world itself (1006). The terms *itihitiham* and *itthabhāva* also occur. No attempt is made here to discuss other data from the language of these *pucchās*, for both language and metre show signs of antiquity and agree in the main with the suttas of the Aṭṭhaka Vagga.

§ 5. It is to be observed that only one (Puṇṇaka) out of these sixteen men asks a question about sacrifice, a thing which played a very prominent part in the lives of all the brahmins of the age. This question is the only justification to infer that Puṇṇaka was a brahmin; though in itself it is no

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 *śramaṇas* or *ājīvakas* which cannot be easily identified on account of the scanty evidence at hand.

The only mention in the Apadāna, a considerably late work, of the celebrated Bāvarī of the Vatthugāthā, with special reference to these *māṇavas*, is made at Ap. II, 487 (Mogharāja), Ap. II, 342 (Mettaḡu) 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 brāhmaṇa and in the same stanza addresses him as Sakya (1063). At 1065 he calls him brahme (voc.). This presents no difficulty when the new significance attached to the word brāhmaṇa is taken into account (cp. Dh. Brāhmaṇa Vagga). The main purpose of these questions is to find out a solution to birth and decay and not the 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 Bāvarī episode as compared with the *pucchās* and shows the absence of any justification for the late tradition that these *māṇavas* were brahmin-pupils.

§ 6. The Apadāna and the Sixteen Māṇavas

The only other source in which these *māṇavas* are mentioned in a manner worth noting is the Apadāna. Only eleven out of the sixteen are specifically mentioned, viz. Ajita: Ap. No. 397 (I, 335), Tissametteyya: No. 398 (II, 339), Puṇṇaka: No. 399 (II, 341), Mettaḡu: No. 400 (II, 342), Dhotaka: No. 401 (II, 343), Upasīva: No. 402 (II, 345), Nanda: No. 403 (Ap. II, 350), Hemaka: No. 404 (II, 351), Todeyya: No. 405 (II, 354), Jatukaṇṇi (ka): No. 406 (II, 357), and Mogharāja: Nos. 35, 537 (I, 87; II, 486). There is no trace whatsoever, in the Apadāna, of Kappa who should have been mentioned after No. 405, of Posāla or of Piṅgiya. There is the story of one Udena occurring in the Apadāna immediately after Jatukaṇṇika (i.e. No. 407. Ap. II, 362). Following this comes the Apadāna of Bhaddālī (No. 408. Ap. II, 365). Although the names appear somewhat similar the stories yield no clue for the identification of Udena with Udaya and Bhaddālī with Bhadrāvudha. 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 Apadānas in which there is no mention of Bāvarī (i.e. except Todeyya, Mettaḡu and Mogharāja) the text affords no positive evidence of a connection.

Further, Udena's Apadāna is the last number of the 41st (Metteyya) Vagga and Bhaddālī'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 Apadāna ends the 40th (Pilinda) Vagga and therefore precedes the Tissametteyya Apadāna. The division of the Apadāna into vaggas being arbitrary and artificial, it is evident that Ap. Nos. 397-405 are meant to correspond to the nine *māṇavas* from Ajita to Todeyya. The tenth, Kappa is omitted, and the eleventh, Jatukaṇṇi occurs as No. 406. Then comes Mogharāja the fifteenth *māṇava* for whom there are two Apadānas. Sn. 1117 is quoted at Ap. No. 537, 25; and Sn. 1118-1119 at Ap. No. 537, 26-28. Though there are differences in details the two stories are practically the same. The fact that the Mogharāja Apadāna is so far away from the last story which has a bearing on the *māṇavas* (Jatukaṇṇi) 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 *māṇavas* entered the Order. This is stated in the late Epilogue (Sn. 1128). 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, Puṇṇa (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 Bhaddaji (Thī, 275-277) or Bhadda (Thī, 473-479) and Uḍāyī (Thī, 689-704) have any connection with Bhadrāvudha and Udaya. 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. In fact he is the most frequently mentioned person out of all these sixteen *māṇavas*. It has already been stated that he is mentioned twice in the Apadāna (I, 87, II, 486) and once in the Thera-gāthā (Thī, 207-208). Saṃyutta, I, 23 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-pucchā was longer than what is now handed down in Sn. It is also probable that the Saṃyutta quotes from another recension of the Mogharāja-pucchā 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 Apadāna 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

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the evidence from external sources points to the fact that Mogharāja was a prominent member of the community. The evidence from Saṃyutta 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 Saṃyutta and Sn. are complementary to each other in this respect.

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