

# *Sutta Nipāta: The Pastoral Ballads*<sup>1</sup>

## I

### DHANIYA SUTTA

THE Dhaniya Sutta consists chiefly of a dialogue between the rich herdsman Dhaniya and the Buddha. A third interlocutor (Māra) appears towards the end of the sutta, and the narrator himself interrupts the dialogue by describing the scene at Sn. 30<sup>2</sup>. The recitation of the ballads may have proceeded on a line quite similar to the dialogue in the (later) medieval European Miracle Play. The dramatic element predominates in the sutta and the possibility of different reciters singing the respective stanzas attributed to the various characters has been suggested earlier<sup>3</sup>. It may be said that more definite signs of dramatic representation are seen in the sudden appearance of Māra voicing the popular opinion (Sn. 33, 34). At the same time doubts may be cast on the genuineness of these two stanzas; for, firstly Sn. 32 appears to be a suitable conclusion to the poem when the herdsman and his wife pledge to practise the holy life; secondly, the recurrence of these two stanzas in totally different contexts at S.I., 6 and 107-108<sup>4</sup> suggests that they belonged to a stock of traditional twin-verses, best represented by the Sagāthaka Vagga of Saṃyutta and the Yamaka Vagga of the Dhammapada; and finally, the greater metrical perfection indicating them as distinct from the rest of the stanzas may also point to a difference in the date of composition. Although this is no conclusive proof, it may be surmised with some degree of accuracy that these two stanzas were a subsequent interpolation.

The sutta is mainly a poetical duel between the two chief interlocutors, "the one rejoicing in his worldly security and the other in his religious belief"<sup>5</sup>. In the alternating stanzas which are highly artistic the Buddha invariably uses the very words of the herdsman either to express the exact opposite or to give a new value to them. Sometimes even the same sounds are reproduced with identical metrical value but expressing something totally different, e.g. Sn. 18<sup>a</sup>, 19<sup>a</sup> *pakkodano duddhakhūro : akkodhano vigatakhūlo*. The opposite ideas are expressed in Sn. 18<sup>c</sup>, 19<sup>c</sup> with a different connotation for the words

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1. An extract from A Critical Analysis of the Pāli Sutta Nipāta Illustrating its Gradual Growth.

2. *Vide* SnA. 42.

3. *U.C.R.* VI, 2.

4. In the former instance the stanza is attributed to a *devatā*, and in the latter to Māra.

5. Fausböll: *Translation of the Sutta Nipāta*, S.B.E., Vol. X, p. 3.

repeated *viz. channā kuṭi āhito gini : vivaṭā kuṭi nibbuto gini*.<sup>6</sup> Sometimes the words in the corresponding stanzas differ considerably, though in each case the speaker makes a statement to illustrate his point of view, e.g. Sn. 20, 21. The contrast is shown only in the topics discussed in Sn. 22, 23, i.e. *gopī* and *cittam* respectively. The Buddha is seen playing on the word *bhata* when Dhaniya says that he is self-supporting (Sn. 24, 25). The next stanza of the *Bhagavā* is a mere negation of the herdsman's statement. When Dhaniya speaks of tethering his animals the Buddha declares that he has broken all bonds (*bandhanāni*) and will not seek birth again. Another pair of alternating stanzas concludes the poem when Buddha categorically denies the tempting words of Māra (Sn. 33, 34).

## II

### Language and Syntax.

Proceeding on to an examination of the internal evidence, language calls for attention first. The sutta contains many archaic and poetical forms. There occur several special poetical compounds as *pakkadano*, *dudhakhīro* (Sn. 18<sup>a</sup>), *akkodhano*, *vigatakhīlo* (Sn. 19<sup>a</sup>), and *samānavāso* (Sn. 18<sup>b</sup>, cp. *samāniyā*, Sn. 24<sup>b</sup>). The lengthening in *patthayasī* in the refrain is partly archaic and partly metrical. Besides this there are other archaic verbal forms such as *viḷḷare* (Sn. 20<sup>a</sup>, cp. *haññare*, *bhāsare*, etc. and Vedic *śére* and *śsire* > Pkr. *-ire* > P. *-are*, vide Geiger, 122.2); *sakkhinti* (Sn. 28<sup>c</sup>) historical future from  $\sqrt{\text{śak}}$ , *śak-ṣya-* > \**sakkhya-* > *sakkhi-* with *samprasāraṇa*; and other historical forms as *upessaṃ* (future, Sn. 29<sup>c</sup>), *pāvassi* (Aor., Sn. 30<sup>b</sup>), *abhā-satha* (Sn. 30<sup>d</sup>), *addasāmi* (Sn. 31<sup>b</sup>), *carāmaṣe* (Sn. 32<sup>b</sup>) and *bhavāmaṣe* (Sn. 32<sup>d</sup>) which call for no particular attention. An interesting nominal form is *gini* (Sn. 18<sup>c</sup>, 19<sup>c</sup>) which is dialectical as well as archaic and perhaps poetic. This form probably comes from a dialectical stratum. The initial vowel has dropped off due to loss of accent. (Vedic *agni* > P. *aggi/aggini/gini*, cp. *ātma* > *attā/ātumā/tumā*).<sup>7</sup> Other noteworthy forms are : *samvāsīyā* at Sn. 22<sup>b</sup> (diaeretic, cp. *samāniyā*, Sn. 24<sup>b</sup>), *nibbitṭhena* at Sn. 25<sup>b</sup> (adverbial inst.) and the sandhi *usabho-r-iva* with the introduction of the pseudo-organic -r; Skr. *vṛṣabha-iva* > P. *usabho-iva*, the deleted *visarga* is restored to bridge the hiatus. The word *deva*, in the refrain is used in the popular sense of cloud and the p.p. *nibbuto* (Sn. 19<sup>c</sup>) in its original meaning.

The *syntax* of the poem also shows that its language belongs to an early stratum of Pāli. The free use of the genitive with the verb *suṇāti* (e.g. *tassā na suṇāmi kiñci pāpaṃ*—I hear no evil of her—Sn. 22<sup>c</sup>, cp. Sn. 24<sup>c</sup>, and

6. The Commentary (Sn.A. 31) says that *kuṭi* refers to the body; *kuṭi ti atabhāvo . . . kāyo ti pi, guhā ti pi* (Sn. 772), *deho ti pi, sandeho ti pi* (Thi. 20 Dh. 148) *nāvā ti pi* (Dh. 369), *ratho ti pi* (S. IV. 292), *dhaḷo ti pi, vammiko ti pi* (M.I. 144), *kuṭi ti pi, kuṭikā ti pi* (Thi. 1, etc.) *vuccati*.

7. *Tumā* < Vedic *tman* a by-form of *ātman*.

*sutvā devassa vassato*—hearing it rain—Sn. 30<sup>c</sup>) is an early construction. The predication of a plural subject with *atthi* is a poetic usage (Sn. 26, 27).<sup>8</sup> The syntax of *brahmacariyaṃ Sugate carāmaṣe*. (Let us practise the holy life under the Sugata—Sn. 32<sup>b</sup>) also strikes as belonging to old Pāli. The nominal prefix *anu-* in *anuttīre* (Sn. 18<sup>b</sup>, 19<sup>b</sup>) and the phrase, *tinno pārāgato* expressing the early Buddhist concept of “crossing over to the Beyond” are old.

### Style.

A few remarks on the style of the sutta have already been made in the introduction. The poem stands out as a product of great literary skill and high poetic genius on the part of the composer. With a skilful use of words effecting as little change as possible in the alternating stanzas the author has been successful in illustrating the different points of view of the two interlocutors. The choice of words and expressions is very apt and lends a majestic air to the whole poem. The ballad is no mere versification unlike the artificial poetry of the late Ceylon Chronicles. All the stanzas are very descriptive and the words of the herdsman paint a beautiful picture of a pastoral scene. Of equal merit is the stanza attributed to the narrator (Sn. 30). The refrain (occurring in Sn. 18-29) with the word *deva* for rain-cloud is very effective.

Simile, metaphor, world-play, alliteration and assonance and onomatopoeia are employed to some degree. Both the similes used at Sn. 29 reflect ideas quite familiar to other parts of the Canon (cp. Th1, 1184, Th2, 301. Ap. 60, 10 etc.). Most of Buddha's answers to Dhaniya contain metaphors. E. M. Hare (*Woven Cadences*, pp. 218ff.) has pointed out word-play at Sn. 18<sup>a</sup> = 19<sup>a</sup>, 18<sup>b</sup> = 19<sup>b</sup>, 22<sup>a</sup> = 23<sup>a</sup>, and alliteration and assonance at Sn. 21<sup>a</sup>, 25<sup>abc</sup>, 28<sup>a</sup>, 29<sup>b</sup> and 33<sup>ab</sup> = 34<sup>ab</sup>. An onomatopoeic effect is produced by phrases such as, *sutvā devassa vassato* (Sn. 30<sup>c</sup>), etc. In spite of the poetical devices employed there appear no signs of lateness in the language of the poem and there is much positive evidence to show that the poem is old.

### Metre.

The metre of the poem is not uniform, but it is evident that it follows the pattern of the Vaitāliya and Aupacchandāsika—both metres of popular origin in which the syllabic instants are taken into account. Something definite can be said of only the two concluding stanzas which are in Vaitāliya (14, 16; 14, 16). Of the remaining stanzas the sum-total of morae in a half-stanza ranges from 29 (Sn. 30<sup>cd</sup>) to 37 (Sn. 28<sup>ab</sup>). Some of the pairs of stanzas in the main dialogue agree metrically; viz. Sn. 18, 19 contain 36, 30 morae each in their half stanzas, Sn. 20, 21; 32, 32 and 32, 31 morae respectively, Sn. 26, 27; 31, 32 morae in each; while there is a disparity in varying degrees in the others viz. Sn. 22, 23 in *pāla* c. only (16, 19, 16, 17; 16, 19, 13, 17 res-

8. It is a petrified form even in Canonical prose.

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pectively), Sn. 24, 25 in *pādas* ac. (14, 18, 16, 17; 13, 18, 13, 17 respectively), and Sn. 28, 29 in all *pādas* except the refrain (17, 20, 17, 17; 15, 17, 18, 17 respectively).

In addition to Sn. 33 and 34, Sn. 32 can also be taken as a Vaitāliya stanza with anacrusis in the *pāda* b, as pointed out by Helmer Smith.<sup>9</sup> Sn. 20 consists of the number of syllabic instants required for the Aupacchandāsika metre and the rest of the stanzas contain either more or less morae than required for that metre. Other metrical irregularities already observed by scholars<sup>10</sup> are: anacrusis at Sn. 22<sup>b</sup> = 23<sup>b</sup>, 30<sup>b</sup>, trochaic *pāda* at Sn. 24<sup>a</sup>; and 26<sup>b</sup> = 27<sup>b</sup> containing a mora too short (*godharaṇīyo*) for the Aupacchandāsika metre. (Helmer Smith, *ibid*). The lack of uniformity in the metre of the poem supports the view that the writers of these ballads have been mainly guided by rhythm and not fixed metres. Perhaps these stanzas mark the transition from the purely popular versification to the more fixed Vaitāliya and Aupacchandāsika metres. This too is in agreement with the general antiquity of the poem.

### Doctrinal Developments.

No real developments in doctrine are in evidence in the sutta. The ideology of the poem conforms to that of Buddhism in its earliest phase. The various Buddhist concepts alluded to in the Buddha's replies to Dhaniya belong to early Buddhism, and therefore demand no particular attention. The only term with a technical significance is *upadhi* (substratum of rebirth—Sn. 33, 34) which is known from early Buddhist times, and is met with no less than 19 times in Sn. On doctrinal evidence the sutta appears to be considerably old.

## III

### External Evidence.

An interesting feature of the poem is that very few of its *pādas* in the main dialogue are to be met with in other metrical works, though the refrain occurs at Thī. 51-54, 325. On the other hand, the ideas in the sutta are common to other parts of the Canon as well. The various metaphorical allusions (e.g. to *kuṭi*, *gini*, *bhisi*, etc.) in the Buddha's replies, can be compared with the numerous similes and parables in other parts of the Canon<sup>11</sup>; e.g. the simile of the *kuṭi* at M.I., 190, Thī. 125, etc., *bhisi* cp. the parable of the raft (*kulla*) M.I., 134, etc. The whole of the sixth *vagga* of the *Eka-nipāta* of Thī. (Thī. 51-60) is connected with *kuṭi*. The occurrence of Sn. 33, 34 at S.I. has already been discussed. The fact that the majority of the *pādas* in the main dialogue are not found repeated in other metrical works may suggest that these stanzas

9. SnA. 643.

10. *Ibid*.

11. The Commentator gives an exhaustive list of similar occurrences (SnA. 31 ff.) which Helmer Smith has traced in the foot-notes.

were quite distinct from the rest. Yet in contents they agree. Taking all the internal evidence (specially from language, syntax and metre) into account it may be said that these stanzas may have been anterior to the bulk of the Pāli metrical works.

IV

KASIBHĀRADVĀJA SUTTA

The other "Pastoral Ballad", Kasibhāradvāja Sutta is a regular *ākhyāna* containing narrative prose connecting the *gāthās*. The poem itself is a modified parable in which the Buddha explains the Dhamma to the ploughman by employing the terminology used by him. Though the *gāthās* consist of only a question and an answer to it, they fit into the general scheme of the narrative which is conducted entirely in prose. The prose which is both introductory and explanatory appears to have been used in order to acquaint the reader (or the listener) with the context of the verses, of which Sn. 76-80 form a separate unit (i.e. Buddha as ploughman). Like all prose introductions to ballads, it is quite probable that at some early stage the prose of this sutta was not fixed, and that the singers of the ballads described the situation in their own words. The fact that the version of this sutta found at S.I., 172-173 (Brāhmaṇa-Saṃyutta) contains these *gāthās verbatim*, but shows a divergence in the prose<sup>12</sup> is in agreement with the unsettled nature of the prose. Further, the enhanced version of the conclusion in Sn. may be indicative of the relative lateness of the compilation of Sn. (as an anthology), for decidedly the shorter version in Saṃyutta is the older of the two. The possibility of the existence of two recensions within the same Theravāda School is very remote, and it is quite clear that both versions are based on the same tradition and that the sutta in Sn. is merely an enlargement of the same occurring in Saṃyutta.

The formula-like phrases of the introduction and conclusion which agree word for word with all such passages in suttas dealing with conversions made by the Buddha, and the emphasis laid on miracle as an ingredient to conversion exemplifying the consequence of the *iddhi*-power of the Buddha (Sn. p. 15) rather than the teaching itself, are positive indications of the lateness of the prose of the sutta as contrasted with the *gāthās*. There occur a few irregular verbal forms in the prose, which are of no great value here, as they are used in all periods of Canonical Pāli; viz. *dammi*, an old form used in all periods (vide Geiger. §143) cp. Epic Sk. *dadmi*; *dakkhinti*, future, cp. *sakkhinti* (vide

12. Both introductions are identical. The prose passage after the fifth stanza (Sn. 80) runs: *Bhūñjatu bhavaṃ Gotamo, kassako bhavaṃ Gotamo, yaṃ hi Gotamo amatapphalaṃ pi kasiṃ kasati ti*. The concluding passage in S. begins with, *Evaṃ vutte Kasibhāradvājo brāhmaṇo bhagavantaṃ etad-avoca: Abhikkantaṃ bho Gotama*, etc. (Sn. p. 15, ll. 17 to l. 1, p. 16) and concludes: *upāsakaṃ maṃ bhavaṃ Gotamo dhāretu ajja-t-azge pāṇupetaṃ savaṇaṃ galan ti*.

Geiger §152), but has the appearance of an old (Vedic) injunctive<sup>13</sup>; and *alattha*, S-Aor.—all occurring in Sn. pp. 15-16. One is also struck by the frequent occurrence of imper. 2 sg. forms in *-ssu* (historical) and the wealth of denominatives in the passage describing the miracle.

The stanzas in the sutta are not very remarkable, and fail to reach the perfection of those of the companion poem, Dhaniya Sutta. Syntactically there appears nothing worthy of comment as the verses merely compare in a series of simple sentences, the counterparts in the religious life, to the various implements and actions in ploughing. On the one hand, the absence of exact counterparts for some items in the similes (e.g. Sn. 78ab), and on the other, the mention of two for the same object (e.g. Sn. 77<sup>bd</sup>, *paññā* and *sati*) speak further of the lack of perfection of the poem.

The *language* of the verses is essentially *gāthā*-Pāli. Yet, archaisms are few. The only noteworthy forms are:—*jānemu* (Sn. 76<sup>d</sup>) cp. Pkr. *jānimo* and *jānāmo*, Sk. *-mah* > Pkr. *-mo* > P. *-mu* (vide Pischel §510); and *dhura-dhorayha* (Sn. 79a), a peculiar double nominal form (*dhura* + *dhor-vahya* s.v. P.T.S.). The sandhi in *vuttir esā* (Sn. 81<sup>d</sup>) is historical.

The *metre* of the poem is somewhat regular; Sn. 76-80 are Anuṣṭubh ślokas and Sn. 81-82 are Triṣṭubh. There is *anacrusis* at Sn. 79a and the *caesura* is not reckoned after the seventh syllable at Sn. 82<sup>d</sup>. Metrical lengthening is to be seen at Sn. 77<sup>c</sup> (*hirī*) and 81<sup>d</sup> (*satī*) in addition to instances like *paññāpekha*; (Sn. 82<sup>d</sup>) for rhythm rather than metre. The style of the sutta has been sufficiently commented on earlier.

The *ideology* of the poem does not show any late developments. The emphasis is on the practical aspect and the attainment of deliverance through moral and intellectual discipline. Qualities like *saddhā*, *tapo*, *paññā*, *hiri*, *sati*, *sacca*, *soracca*, *virīya* and the control over mind, body and speech are accepted as virtues by all early Indian schools; yet the training envisaged in the sutta is essentially Buddhistic. There is neither speculation nor metaphysics, and the teaching, however tersely expressed, does not show any departure from what may be expected in the earliest teaching.

There are two terms which demand further attention; viz. *yogakkhema* (Sn. 79b) and *kevalin* (Sn. 82a). The technical significance of the former has come about by a direct semantic development from Vedic. In Vedic it meant "exertion and rest, acquisition and possession" (s.v. P.T.S.), whereas in Classical Sk., "security, secure possession of what has been acquired, or insurance" as at Manu. IX, 219. According to the Petersburg Sk. Dictionary, it is usually explained as "gain and support of a possession" and at Gaut. 28, 46 it means "property destined for religious purposes". But all these ideas are remote from the Pāli meanings. The non-technical meaning of "rest from work" in Pāli, is nearer Vedic, and the idea of "freedom from

13. Vide. Pischel §§525-6, 529, 532.

bondage" is logically connected with the former. The term *kevalin*, which occurs as many as 7 times in Sn. is an epithet for the "perfect one". The idea itself is very familiar to the Canon even in such phrases as *kevalapariṇaṇṇam*, etc., though the concept is seen best developed in Jainism (cp. *kevalin*, the perfect one, an epithet for *tīrthāṅkara*, and *kaivalya*, epithet for *nirvāṇa*). The origin and conception of the idea is definitely pre-Buddhistic, but it need not be through any Jaina influence that its adoption has taken place in Buddhism.

The evidence from all these sources taken singly does not yield any definite data as regards the date of the poem, but taking the collective evidence the stanzas have a claim to comparative antiquity.

## VI

### External Evidence.

It has already been observed above that the sutta is an enlarged version of that found at S.I., 172. The additional prose passage found on p. 15 is seen to occur in the Sundarika Sutta at S.I., 167-168 though Sundarikabhāradvāja Sutta in Sn. (III, 4) contains no corresponding passage. In order to establish the relationship of these two suttas, their common factor Sn. 81-82 = Sn. 480-481, has to be taken into account. These two stanzas are repeated in three suttas in the Brāhmaṇa Saṃyutta; viz. at S.I., 167 (Aggika-), I, 168 (Sundarika-), and I, 173 (Kasi-). This necessitates a comparison of these three suttas with the corresponding ones in Sn.<sup>14</sup>

In all the instances where the two stanzas Sn. 81-82 occur there is apparently sufficient justification for their inclusion, for the introductions state either that the Buddha was on his alms-round or that the brahmin was pre-

14. Aggika Sutta (S.I., 166-167) corresponds to Vasala Sutta (pp. 142-151) which in Sn. bears the alternative title Aggikabhāradvāja Sutta. The only noteworthy similarity of the two suttas lies in their respective introductions, though they differ widely in details. The *niḍāna* (scene of the sutta) in Sn. is Sāvattī whereas it is Rājagaha in S. In both suttas the Brahmin is said to be preparing for a fire-sacrifice though it is stated in different words (Sn. p. 21, *aggipajjalito hoti, āhuti paggaḥitā*; S.I., 166, *sappinā pāyāso sannihito hoti, 'aggim juhissāmi, aggihuttaṃ paricarissāmi' (ti)*). In Sn. the Brahmin abuses the Buddha whereas in S. he offers the *pāyāsa* (in verse) which the Buddha refuses with the stanzas *Gāthābhigītaṃ*, etc. The stanzas in the two poems are entirely different though the phrase, *na jaccā hoti brāhmaṇo* (S.I., 166<sup>32</sup>, Sn. 136<sup>b</sup>, 142<sup>b</sup>) is common to both. The concluding prose is the same.

The introductions to both versions of the sutta recording the conversation between the Buddha and Sundarikabhāradvāja are almost identical, but only 5 of the 10 stanzas in S. have parallels in the 32 stanzas in Sn.; viz. S. v. 1 = Sn. 462, (v. 8), S. v. 2//Sn. 463 (v. 2<sup>ab</sup> = Sn. 463<sup>ab</sup>), S. v. 3//Sn. 459, 479 (v. 3<sup>bc</sup> = Sn. 459<sup>bc</sup>), S. v. 4-5 = Sn. 480-481. The miraculous incident (//Sn. p. 15) is related at S.I., 168-169, following which occurs a set of 5 stanzas, both of which being absent in Sn. The conclusion is identical in both works. (Sufficient has been said of the Kasibhāradvāja Sutta, earlier).

paring an oblation. However, the stories contained in these three suttas show that at some stage or another there has set in a confusion of legend. Although it is not easy to say which sutta portrays the original version of the story, the influence of one on the other two is evident. It is significant that the section ending with Sn. 80, has very little connection with the rest of the sutta, in Kasibhāradvāja Sutta. The discourse ends there, and the line,

*etaṃ kaṣiṃ kaṣitvāna, sabbadukkhā pamuccati,*

affords a fitting climax. Unlike Sundarikabhāradvāja Sutta (both in S. and Sn.) the story is not centred on " what is left of the sacrificial cake " (*havyasesa*), which has a greater mysterious significance than *pāyāsa* (Kasi-), a thing mentioned only at this secondary stage. The difference in metre of Sn. 81-82 from that in the previous stanzas, and the uniformity in this respect, of all the stanzas (including these two) of the Saṃyutta version of Sundarika Sutta (and to some extent the poem in Sn.) tend to emphasise the fact that Sn. 81-82 *did not originally belong here*.<sup>15</sup>

In view of all this evidence, both internal and external, it may be concluded that (a), the sutta consists of two different elements (i) Sn. 76-80 with the prose introduction which at some stage was not in any fixed form, (ii) the two stanzas Sn. 81-82 and the prose on pp. 15-16 which constitute a subsequent addition, (b), the sutta has been greatly influenced by another sutta (probably Sundarika Sutta of S.), the main theme of which was the exemplification of the miraculous powers of the Buddha, (c), the sutta in its present form has been included in Sn. at a date much later than that of the composition of the stanzas, and (d), the sutta probably is later than the Brāhmaṇa Saṃyutta, if it has been influenced by Sundarika Sutta.

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15. The Sundarika Sutta (S.) presents a more coherent narrative of the incident while the parallel version in Sn. is *either* an amalgamation of two suttas, one of which was based on the first 5 stanzas of the sutta in S. *or* an altogether different sutta which has incorporated a greater part of the legend i.e. without the miracle, as well the first five stanzas.