

## Note on some of the Titles used in the Bhabra Edict of Asoka.

IN relating how Soṇa Kūṭikaṇṇa displayed before the Buddha his knowledge of the faith, the MSS. of the Divyāvadāna read that he recited in a clear voice the

“ Śaila-gāthā muni-gāthā arthavadgīyāni ca  
sūtrāni.”

The editors make the correction *arthavaggiyāni*, which is not much better.

Now the Piṭaka accounts of the same episode, preserved in the Vinaya, vol. i. p. 194 foll., and in Udāna, 5, 6, say that he then intoned the *Aṭṭhaka-vaggikāni*, and the Udāna adds the number of them, sixteen. This is the number of the poems that are included in the *Aṭṭhaka-vagga*, Book IV. of the *Sutta Nipāta*. It is so called because each of the poems 2, 3, 4, and 5 of the chapter in question consists of eight verses, and is entitled an *Aṭṭhaka*, an octave. The *vagga* in which they come is thence called the *Aṭṭhaka-vagga* (the Book of the Eights<sup>1</sup>), and the sixteen poems in it are the *Aṭṭhakavaggikāni*, “belonging to the Book of the Eights.”

There can be but little doubt that the correct reading should be the corresponding word in Buddhist Sanskrit, *Aṣṭakavargiyāni*—an expression which could be easily misunderstood and corrupted by authors or reciters or copyists no longer familiar with the Piṭakas.

---

<sup>1</sup> The singular occurs *Samyutta* 3. 12.

The preceding word, *muni gāthā*, is interesting as being the same as the expression used in Asoka's Babhra Edict, in which seven passages from the Piṭakas are especially recommended by Asoka for study by members of the order and laymen alike. This ambiguous compound might be interpreted in two or three ways. The *Munigāthā* naturally remind one of the Muni Sutta, No. 12 of the Sutta Nipāta, but the difference and ambiguity of the two titles, used on the one hand in the Edict, and on the other in the Pāli collection of poems, have prevented the suggestion being accepted as a certainty.

The recurrence of Asoka's expression in this context, where *the next* word undoubtedly refers to a portion of the Sutta Nipāta, would in any case strengthen the case for the proposed identification, first put forward doubtfully by Professor Oldenberg (Vin. I. p. xl.). But when we find that *the preceding word also* refers, not only to the same collection, but to a single poem of it, the case is much strengthened.

Now the previous word is *Śailagāthā*, printed in the edition without a capital, as if it were not a name, and meant merely "stony verses," which scarcely gives a good sense. Can there be any doubt but that the verses said to have been recited in this connection are those of the Sela Sutta in the Sutta Nipāta, which might very naturally be called in Buddhist Sanskrit *Śailagāthā*? *Śaila* would then not mean "stony," but would be simply the Buddhist Sanskrit form of the name of the Brahmin Sela, the hero of the little story after whom the sutta has received its Pāli name of Sela Sutta. The editors in their note admit that the *Śailagāthā* "may possibly be the same as the Pāli Sela Sutta." I would submit that there can really be no such doubt, any more than there can be at *Divyāvādāna*, p. 35, where the name follows after *sthavira-gāthā*, certainly the same as the famous collection called *Thera-gāthā* in the Pāli Piṭakas. Throughout the episode the *Divyāvādāna* gives a recen-

sion more expanded than the Pāli, and in adding titles here the author has mentioned two other poems from the same collection as that mentioned in the Pāli. No other explanation gives any sense at all satisfactory. Burnouf (Introduction, &c., p. 248) was compelled to render Śailagāthā and arthavadgīyāni sūtrāni by “stances relatives aux diverses sciences”<sup>1</sup> and by “Sutras renfermans des sections relatives aux intérêts temporels.” But to accept unreservedly the explanation afforded by the Pāli titles gives a sense perfectly natural and appropriate.

And if Śailagāthā = Sela Sutta, then why not Muni-gāthā = Muni Sutta, in the Edict as it does here?

That Asoka should lay so much stress on this short poem is only in harmony with the tenor of the whole context in the Edict. For he is not referring at all to books. The expression he uses is dhama-paliyāyāni = pariyaṃyā, which Senart renders “morceaux religieux.” As pointed out in my Milinda (vol. i. p. xxxviii), he is selecting seven *passages* only, just as a Christian emperor in a similar edict might have called upon his co-religionists to study and bear in mind the Psalm of the Good Shepherd, and the Sermon on the Mount, and the parable of the Prodigal Son, and other well-known and much-quoted passages.

The only one of Asoka's seven such passages hitherto identified with certainty is the Exhortation to Rāhula, beginning on the subject of falsehood, which is a short sutta called the Ambalaṭṭhika Rāhulovāda Sutta in Pāli, the text of which, first published by M. Senart, is now included in Trenckner's edition for the Pāli Text Society of the first volume of the Majjhima Nikāya. And now Professor Hardy has removed any doubts that may have remained as to the identification of Asoka's Anāgatabhayāni with the passage bearing a similar title in

---

<sup>1</sup> So he derives *śaila* from *śīla*. Can any other instance of this use of the word be quoted?

the *Anguttara* (as Oldenberg suggested *loc. cit.*), by the publication of the text in his edition of vol. iii. of that *Nikāya*.

It is perhaps worthy of notice that the three out of the seven passages thus now identified are taken from three different *Nikāyas* out of the five, so that, whether intentionally or not, the passages selected cover a wide range.

I take this opportunity of congratulating the friends of the Pāli Text Society on the fact that so able a scholar and so rapid a worker as Professor Edward Hardy has undertaken to fill the place left vacant by the deeply lamented death of Dr. Morris. He has been kind enough to send me Buddhaghosa's Commentary on the *Anāgata-bhayāni*, and I add the text of this commentary so that readers may be better able to judge what was the kind of extract from the Scriptures that Asoka specially delighted to honour.

It is sufficient here to state that twenty such *anāgata-bhayāni*, "Disasters to come," are referred to—ten arising from outside and threatening hermits in the woods; ten arising from within the order and threatening all its members.

The former ten are the danger of death from snakes, &c., from disease, from wild animals, from robbers, from wild men; and the danger that old age or disease, or a famine or too great crowds of men, or dissensions in the Order, may interrupt the recluse's progress. All these should be merely a ground for renewed and timely efforts.

The latter ten, on the other hand, should be guarded against and nipped in the bud. They are the danger of corruptions in doctrine and discipline from incompetent and untrained men among members of the Order and among pupils, from misunderstanding of the Scriptures, from a preference for those suttas that have literary charm over those of a deep and religious character, from laziness and luxury, and from striving after fine robes, or delicate food, or luxurious lodgings, or promiscuous company of two kinds.

We thus have four times five sections. And each one of the four is introduced by the phrase Pañc' imāni bhikkhave anagātabhayaṇi. Neither the twenty suttas as a whole, nor any one of them, has any other specific title in Professor Hardy's edition.

The suttas in the Aṅguttara are very short, and have no titles in the work itself. When quoted elsewhere titles are often given them. Thus the first ten of these suttas are in the Sutta Sangaha collectively called the Āraññikānāgatabhaya Sutta (see Oldenberg *loc. cit.*) Judging from the nature of the contents of the two passages identified for certain, it is probable that the other ten are the Anāgata-bhayaṇi referred to by Asoka.

With reference to the suggestion made by Oldenberg and myself in 1881 ("Vinaya Texts," 3. 149)—that the Upatissa-pasina means the passage giving the story of Sāriputta's (that is Upatissa's) question to Assaji which led to his, Upatissa's, conversion—it is perhaps worth now adding:—

1. That the passage is of the right length.
2. That it is likely to have been chosen as containing the celebrated verse, "Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā," &c.<sup>1</sup>
3. That it is likely to have been chosen as being the story of the conversion of two men so famous as Sāriputta and Moggallāna.
4. That the name Upatissa is now known to have been much more familiarly known as the name of Sāriputta than was supposed. It occurs M. 1. 250, Sum. 1. 41, Buddhavaṃsa 26. 18, Thera Gāthā, 998, Peta Vatthu, II. 2. 7.
5. A short passage of this kind even when called a Sutta in one place, can also be called a Pañha in another.

---

<sup>1</sup> But this seems to Dr. Neumann, "Buddha's Reden," 1. p. 152, to be precisely a reason why it should *not* have been chosen, and he may be right. He would identify Asoka's passage with the Ratha-vinīta Sutta of the Majjhima.

So the Māgandiya Sutta of the Sutta Nipāta is referred to at S. 3. 12 as the Magandiya Pañha.

All this is not conclusive ; but it at least makes out a case which is worthy of consideration. Against it may be mentioned, as Hofrath Dr. Bühler pointed out to me, that Bunyiu Nanjio, in his Catalogue No. 1,152, gives the title of a Chinese tract, belonging to the Vinaya, and translated in the fourth century, which title he proposes to translate back into Sanskrit as Sāriputra-Pari-prcchā Sūtra. But Mr. Watters informs me that the original of this Chinese tract, whatever its title was, cannot have been known in Asoka's time, as it refers to the wholesale murders by Pushyamitra. I trust Mr. Watters may be induced to give us a translation of the little book, which also discusses the origin of the eighteen schools of the older Buddhism.