

## *ajaya-*, *ajeya-* and *ajayya-*

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According to the lexicons of Böhrling-Roth (BR), Monier-Williams (MW), V.S. Apte and Deccan College (DC) all the three words mean 'invincible, unconquerable, unsurpassable'. Of the three words *ajaya* occurs both as an adjective and noun, while the other two only as adjectives.<sup>1</sup> As noun, *ajaya* means 'defeated'.

It is necessary to look a little more closely at the adjectival meaning of these words.

1. *ajaya-* : As mentioned above, it functions both as adjective and as noun.

A. *ajaya-* Adjective : i) Meaning 'invincible'. In this meaning *na jayah yasya* or *nāsti parair jayo yasya* (Apte) 'who cannot be defeated' the genitive *yasya* is treated as objective genitive (*karmaṇi śaṣṭhī*).<sup>2</sup> There are many examples of this meaning given in the dictionaries.

ii) Meaning 'who cannot win'. This meaning is given only by the author of *Kāśīkāvṛtti* while commenting on Pāṇini 6.2.157. According to this *sūtra*<sup>3</sup>, if the words ending in the suffix *ac* (*a*) and *ka* (*a*) are preceded by *nañ* and if the meaning intended to be conveyed is incapability (to do something), the end syllable of the compound receives the acute accent. The *Kāśīkā* gives two examples for the affix *-ac*, viz. *apacá* and *ajayá* and explains the former as *yah paktum na śaknoti* 'one who cannot cook'. Obviously, the latter example *ajayá* is to be understood as *yah jetum na saknoti* 'who cannot win'.<sup>4</sup> However, there is no example of the use of *ajayá* in this meaning in any of the dictionaries.

B. *ajaya-* noun : Meaning 'non victory, defeat' (*na jayah*).

There are many examples of this meaning given in the dictionaries.

2. *ajeya*- Adjective : According to BR, MW and DC dictionaries, the meaning of *ajeya* is 'invincible'. They give many examples for this meaning. However, according the Pāṇinean tradition, the meaning of *ajeya* should really be 'one who does not deserve to be conquered, whom it is improper to conquer'. While commenting on the Pāṇinisūtra 6.1.81 (see below under *ajayyá-*), commentators observe that *jeṃya* means 'whom it is proper to conquer, who deserves to be conquered' (*jetumyogyaḥ*). Hence *ajeya* should mean its opposite 'whom it is improper to conquer, who does not deserve to be conquered'. However, the citations given in the dictionaries (especially DC) point to the meaning 'one who cannot be conquered, invincible' (however, see below) i.e. *ajeya* is synonymous with *ajaya* and *ajayya*. The word *ajaya* has received this meaning only on the strength of convention (*rūḍhi*).

The V. S. Apte dictionary and the Śabdakalpadruma, however, assign to *ajaya* the meaning which is in keeping with the grammatical tradition noticed above. Apte gives the meaning 'not fit to be conquered', but does not give any example to support the meaning. The Śabdakalpadruma gives the meaning '*ajayanīya, ajetavya*' and cites in support a part of the stanza from the Skandapūraṇa, Kāśikhaṇḍa 23.60. The citation reads as- *ajayas tvañ ca samigrāme mamāpi bhaviṣyasi*'.<sup>5</sup> But this example does not seem quite appropriate. The stanza in question appears in the praise of Viṣṇu by Śiva. In that context the word *ajaya* is more likely to mean 'one who cannot be conquered' rather than 'one who does not deserve to be conquered'. ("You will be invincible for me in battle").

But it is possible to point to another citation as a suitable example. It is given in the DC dictionary. It occurs in the Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa 1.265 and in the dictionary it is taken to

mean 'invincible, unconquerable'. The passage reads as :

*yato na vā idam etā vigīyante tato nedam brāhmaṇā jīyante |  
atha yarhy etā na vijagur ajeyā na brāhmaṇā āsuh |*

Since the context is of conquering or not conquering the Brāhmaṇas, it does not seem natural to interpret *ajeya* as unconquerable. It should be taken to mean 'one who does not deserve to be conquered, whom it is not proper to conquer'. The passage says that when the Brāhmaṇas sang the *sāmans* pertaining to the three *savanas* properly, they were held in respect, they were deemed as not deserving the humiliation of defeat (*ajeyāḥ*). But now, since the Brāhmaṇas sing them in an improper way (*vigīyante*), they have lost their respectable position and are made to suffer defeat (*jīyante*).

If this interpretation is accepted we have at least one example of *ajaya* in the meaning acceptable to the Pāṇinean tradition. Since the example occurs in a Brāhmaṇa it is likely to be closer to the date of Pāṇini who apparently know the word *ajeya* only in this meaning. The word came to be used in the other meaning 'invincible' sometime after Pāṇini. Its earliest use, according to the DC dictionary, is since the epics.

3. *ajayyá* : Adjective : According to Pāṇinisūtra *kṣayya jayyau śakyārthe* (6.1.81), the word *jáyya* means 'one who can be conquered, whom it is possible to conquer' (*śakyo jetum*). Consequently *ajayyá* would mean 'whom it is not possible to conquer, invincible'.<sup>6</sup> There are many examples of this meaning given in the dictionaries.

Conclusion : According to the grammatical tradition *ajayyá* is the only word which unambiguously means 'invincible'.

The word *ajaya* may mean 'invincible'. But it is ambiguous, since it may also mean 'one who cannot win'.

The word *ajeya* has come to be used in the meaning 'invincible' since the epic times. It has no basis in grammar. The word should really mean 'whom it is not proper to conquer'.

## Footnotes

1. That *ajaya-* and *ajeya-* occur also as proper names is beside the point.
2. But in Śabdakalpadruma, *ajayā* is explained as  
*na jīyate parājīyate asau | ji karmaṇi ac.*
3. *ackāv aśaktau.*
4. This meaning of *ajaya* 'who cannot win' can be had also by interpreting the genitive in '*na jayah yasya*' as subjective genitive.
5. Śabdakalpadruma, by mistake, prints *bhaviṣyati.*
6. BR gives one more meaning for *ajayya-* viz. 'that what it is improper to win (in play)' ('was nicht abgewonnen werden dürfte [im spiele]') and refers to Vopadeva's Mugdhabodha 5.6: *ajayyam jigāya tān.* It is difficult to know that what could be the subject of *ajayya.* What could possibly be which Kṛṣṇa should not have won while playing with the cowherd boys? The whole line runs as - *gopālān anvaśāt kelīms tatrājayyam jigāya tān.* But since Vopadeva also gives the meaning of *jayya* as 'who (or which) can be conquered' under 26.16 (*jetum śahyam*), his meaning of *ajayya* should be its opposite. This meaning is, however, not suitable in the context of the above line. Hence we have to assume that *ajayyam* is a mistake, inadvertently committed, for *ajeyam* (*tatrājeyam jigāya tān*).



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