

ON THE GĀTHĀ 56 OF THE NALINIKĀJĀTAKA

M. A. Mehendale

While demonstrating verbal similarities between the Gāthās of the Nalinikājātaka (526) and the stanzas in the narrative of R̥ṣyaśṛṅga¹ in the *Mahābhārata*, Lüders² compares Gāthā 56 of the Jātaka with the stanzas 1-4 of the Adhyāya 113 of the “*Āraṇyakaparvan*”. The concerned Gāthā runs as—*bhūtāni etāni caranti tāta virūparūpena manussaloke / na tāni sevetha naro sapañño āsajjanam tassati brahmacārī* // The last of corresponding *Mbh.* stanzas (3.113.4) starts with the line—*asajjanenācaritāni putra....*

The meaning of the first three lines of the Gāthā is clear :

“These are evil beings, my child, who, assuming different forms, wander among men. A man of intelligence should not associate with them.”

The fourth line of the Gāthā offers difficulty. Lüders has drawn attention to the verbal similarity between *āsajjanam* of the Gāthā and *asajjanena* of the *Mbh.* stanza. He rightly observes³ that in the Pāli word *āsajjanam* we do not have *āsajja*, but *asajjana*. The next word *tassati*, according to him, is also possibly corrupt since there is a variant *nassati*. Now, the last line of the *Mbh.* stanza 3.113.3 reads *pāpācārās tāpasas tāt na paśyet*⁴. Hence Lüders opines that one would be tempted to read *passati* in place of *tassati*. The whole line, as emended by Lüders, then reads as : *nāsajjanam passati brahmacārī* “one who observes chastity does not see (associate with) a person of bad conduct.”

In this regard, however, one would differ from Lüders. In the first instance, on the basis of *tāt na (paśyet)* of the *Mbh.* stanza, he is required to add *na* at the beginning of the Pāli line and read *nāsajjanam* in place of *āsajjanam*. Next, he is also required to look upon *tassati* as a corrupt form of the original *passati*⁵.

All this can be avoided and one can yet get good meaning out of the line *asajjanam*⁶ *tassati brahmacārī*. Lüders⁷ has pointed out that some words in Pāli having an *-am* ending are not acc. sg. but abl. sg.⁸. In his opinion *-am* was the regular abl.sg. ending in the eastern dialect of the original Buddhist canon. When this original canon in the eastern dialect was translated into western Pāli, some of the features of the dialect of the original canon crept into the Pāli translation⁹. To the examples of abl. sg. in *-am* (like *dukkatam* for *dukkatā* *Dhammapada* 314, etc.) collected by Lüders from Pāli one may now add *asajjanam*. Treating this form as abl. sg. the line can be rendered as : “one who observes chastity recoils from a person of bad conduct.”

Annotations :

1. This is how Lüders spells the word throughout in his article, and not as R̥ṣyaśṛṅga which is found in the critical edition of the *Mahābhārata*.

2. "Die Sage von Ṛṣyaśṛṅga", Gött. Nachr. Phil.-Hist. Kl. 1897, pp. 87-135. Reprinted in *Philologica Indica* (Göttingen, 1940) pp. 1-43. The comparison in question is found on p. 33 of *Phil. Ind.*
 3. *Phil. Ind.* p. 33, footnote 1.
 4. This was how the line read in the text of the *Mahābhārata* then available to Lüders. The reading of the Critical Edition is *pāpācārās tapasas tāny apāpa*. The line is printed in the critical edition with a wavy line below the last three words in order to indicate their doubtful authenticity.
 5. As noted in the above footnote the text in the critical edition does not have *na paśyēt* on the basis of which Lüders emended *tassati* to *passati*.
 6. That is only by reading *asajjanam* in place of *āsajjanam*
 7. *Beobachtungen über die Sprache des buddhistischen Urkanons*, Berlin 1954, §§ 188-195, pp. 138-143. One may specially note the use of abl. sg. with *nivid-* (§194) and *bhī-* (§195) with that of *tas-* (*tras-*).
 8. The normal Pāli abl. sg. endings are *-ā*, *-asmā*, *-ahmā*.
 9. These are known as hidden "Māgadhisms" (*cf. Beob. Budh. Ur. p.7*).
-