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PIERRE ARÈNES
Herméneutique des *tantra*:
étude de quelques usages du «sens caché» 173

GEORGES DREYFUS
The Shuk-den Affair: History and Nature of a Quarrel 227

ROBERT MAYER
The Figure of Maheśvara/Rudra
in the rÑiṅ-ma-pa Tantric Tradition 271

JOHN NEWMAN
Islam in the Kālacakra Tantra 311

MAX NIHOM
Vajravinayā and Vajraśauṇḍa:
A 'Ghost' Goddess and her Syncretic Spouse 373

TILMANN VETTER
Explanations of *dukkha* 383

Index to *JIABS* 11-21, by Toru TOMABECHI 389

English summary of the article by P. Arènes 409

TILMANN VETTER

Explanations of *dukkha*

The present contribution presents some philological observations and a historical assumption concerning the First Noble Truth.

It is well-known to most buddhologists and many Buddhists that the explanations of the First Noble Truth in the First Sermon as found in the *Mahāvagga* of the *Vinayapiṭaka* and in some other places conclude with a remark on the five *upādānakkhandhā*, literally: 'branches of appropriation'. This remark is commonly understood as a summary.

Practically unknown is the fact that in Hermann OLDENBERG's edition of the *Mahāvagga*[1] (= Vin I) this concluding remark contains the particle *pi*, like most of the preceding explanations of *dukkha*. The preceding explanations are: *jāti pi dukkhā, jarā pi dukkhā, vyādhi pi dukkhā, maranaṃ pi dukkhaṃ, appiyehi sampayogo dukkho, piyehi vippayogo dukkho, yaṃ p' icchaṃ na labhati tam*[2] *pi dukkhaṃ* (Vin I 10.26). Wherever *pi* here appears it obviously has the function of coordinating examples of events or processes that cause pain (not: are pain[3]): birth is causing pain, as well as decay, etc.[4]

1. *The Vinaya Piṭakaṃ*. Vol. 1, *The Mahāvagga*. London-Edinburgh 1879.
2. OLDENBERG's edition seems to reflect inconsistency of the manuscripts in sometimes considering combinations of *-ṃ* with the particle *pi* as a real sandhi and writing *-m pi*.
3. *dukkha-* is an adjective here; it follows the gender of the preceding (pro)noun. Not so in the Mūlasarvāstivāda version in *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Saṅghabhedavastu*, ed. by R. Gnoli and T. Venkatacharya, Part 1, Roma 1977, 137: *jātir duḥkhaṃ, jarā duḥkhaṃ, vyādhir duḥkhaṃ, maraṇaṃ duḥkhaṃ, priyaviprayogo duḥkhaṃ, apriyasaṃprayogo duḥkhaṃ, yad apīcchan paryeṣamāno na labhate tad api duḥkham, saṅkṣepataḥ pañca upādānaskandhā duḥkhaṃ*. Here only *yad apīcchan paryeṣamāno na labhate tad api duḥkham* contains *api*.
4. In translating the noun *dukkha* as 'pain' (and correspondingly the adjective as 'causing pain' or 'painful') I follow K. R. NORMAN "The Four Noble Truths", in: *Indogical and Buddhist Studies* (Festschrift J.W. de Jong) ed. A.L. Hercus et. al. Canberra 1982: 377-391, n.3 "without implying that this is necessarily the best translation".

At Vin I 10.29, the concluding remark runs as follows: *saṃkhittena pañc' upādānakkhandhā pi*[5] *dukkhā*. No note on this *pi* is found in OLDENBERG's generally trustworthy apparatus criticus. So we may infer that the manuscripts consulted by OLDENBERG all contained this *pi*.

In the *Dhammakāya* CD-ROM [1.0, 1996], which, with some errors, represents the PTS editions, this *pi* is also found in other places where the concluding remark on *dukkha* appears, namely, DN II 305.5; 307. 17-20; SN V 421.23; Patis I 37.28; II 147.26; Vibh 99.10; 101.15. 20. However in the Nālandā-Devanāgarī-Pāli-Series (=NDP) [1958, etc.] it is missing in all these places (including Vin I 10.29), while it is found in AN I 177.2, where it is lacking in the *Dhammakāya* CD-ROM. In MN I 48.34 and 185.6 it is found neither in the PTS edition [ed. V. Trenckner, 1888] nor in NDP[6]. But TRENCKNER remarks on p.532 with regard to 48.34: "-kkhandhā pi M and all the Burmese authorities known to me, also Vin. l.c. [=Vin I 10.29]." The CD-ROMs BudsirIV of Mahidol University [1994] and Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana from Dhammagiri [1.1, 1997] consistently omit *pi* in these places.

We can therefore state: 1) TRENCKNER, whose edition of MN I normally excells the average PTS editions, has chosen a reading against all Burmese manuscripts; 2) NDP and the CD-ROMs mentioned above, all depending on the Sixth Council, do not accept this *pi*[7]; 3) other editions show there was a manuscript tradition of employing *pi* in the concluding remark in the *Mahāvagga* as well as in *Sutta* and *Abhidhamma* texts.

How should we deal with these observations from a historical point of view? That TRENCKNER has made his choice against nearly all his witnesses is easily explained. On the third page of the Preface of his MN I edition he says: "Buddhaghosa's commentary has been of very great service. Whenever his readings, from his comments upon them, are unmistakable, they must, in my opinion, be adopted in spite of other authorities. His MSS. were at least fifteen centuries older than ours, and in a first edition we certainly cannot aim at anything higher than reproducing his text as far as possible (here he adds a footnote: 'Even if his readings may seem questionable, as [...]')".

5. OLDENBERG writes: *upādānakkhandhāpi*
6. Note that at MN I 48.34 in TRENCKNER's edition the passage *appiyehi sampayogo dukkho, piyehi vippayogo dukkho* of Vin I 10.29 is replaced by *sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā pi*, while in NDP it is preceded by this long compound, and *pi* also appears after *sampayago* and *vippayogo*.
7. The *pi* at NDP AN I 177.2 seems to have escaped attention.

What does the commentary to MN I 48.34 say? It refers to the discussion of the four noble truths in [chapter XVI] of the *Visuddhimagga*. There (§ 57-60 ed. H.C. Warren and Dh. Kosambi, Cambridge Mass., 1950) we read *saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā*, without *pi*. The Sixth Council (perhaps influenced by TRENCKNER's view) may have had a similar motive for leaving out *pi* at all places where the concluding remark on *dukkha* appears, but I have no information about this and can therefore only deal with TRECKNER's statement.

In the main, I am in favour of considering the oldest commentaries as very likely preserving old readings. But such a reading, especially when the commentator himself lives centuries after the composition of a text, cannot be preferred to another, if he employs ideas that cannot be found in the old texts, whereas the other reading can be defended by referring to their contents. This is precisely the case in Buddhaghosa's explanation of the reading without *pi*.

At *Visuddhimagga* XVI § 57-60 we get the impression that Buddhaghosa (or a predecessor) had a text without *pi* before him (readings are not discussed) and made the best of it by explaining *saṅkhittena* as indicating a summary of the preceding statements[8] and declaring that the remark on the five 'branches' of appropriation implies all other statements about pain, because actual pain does not occur without them.[9]

But to my knowledge, there is no single place in the Pāli *Vinaya-* and *Suttapiṭaka* where the often occurring statement that the five *upādānakkhandhā* are *dukkha* is understood in this way, while there are many places where their being *dukkha* is understood as derived from their impermanence, which implies that in this context *dukkha* does not mean 'causing actual pain', but 'eventually disappointing' or 'unsatisfactory'. Moreover, there is, as far as I know, at best one place in the *Vinaya-* and *Suttapiṭaka* where *saṅkhittena* seems to summarize what precedes: at the end of MN no. 38 (I 270.37); and this place is doubtful, because it could be an inadequate copy of what happens in MN no. 37, where *saṅkhittena*

8. He depends on a text that included *sokaparidevadukkhadomassupāyāsā* and *appiyehi sampayogo dukkho piyehi vippayogo dukkho*, not on the *Mahāvagga* passage.

9. The essence of the commentary is given in these verses:
Jātippabhutikaṃ dukkhaṃ yaṃ vuttam idha tādinā
avuttaṃ yañ ca taṃ śabbaṃ vinā ete na vijjati
Yasmā, tasmā upādānakkhandhā saṅkhepato ime
dukkhā ti vuttā dukkhantadesakena Mahesinā.

appears at the start *and* at the end of the *sutta*. In all other cases I have checked, about 300, *saṅkhittena* announces an item that afterwards is, or should be, explained.

Given this state of things it seems unlikely that *pi* in the last remark on *dukkha* is an error of uncontrolled repetition of the *pi* in the preceding sentences, now fortunately removed by TRENCKNER and the Sixth Council. It is much more probable that Buddhaghosa (or a predecessor) had a text where *pi* in the last remark had, accidentally or with some intention, been lost, and that he made the best of it, a nice interpretation that succeeds fairly well in maintaining an unequivocal meaning of *dukkha*, but is not important for the historian of *early* buddhism. For this historical purpose we have to accept the reading with *pi*, and to understand the last remark as another example of the usage of the adjective *dukkha*, though in a slightly different meaning, which points to an addition. *Saṅkhittena* means nothing than: this is a short remark that has to be explained to the neophyte who does not know what the five *upādānakkhandhas* are and/or why they are are called *dukkha*, though they do not always actually cause pain. The translation then is: "Also the five branches of appropriation, briefly said (*saṅkhittena*), are causing pain."

Let us, finally, return to OLDENBERG. In his famous *Buddha, sein Leben, seine Lehre, seine Gemeinde*[10] we find a translation of the concluding remark on *dukkha* that also seems to depend on the *Visuddhimagga*, not on the *Mahāvagga*, the source OLDENBERG mentions in this connection: "kurz die fünferlei Objekte des Ergreifens sind Leiden[11]". Perhaps he was inspired by TRENCKNER. But then one would expect a note referring to the reading established by himself in his edition of Vin I. I found no such note. Instead a note is attached to 'Objekte des Ergreifens' that gives German translations of the names of these five objects as they occur elsewhere, and moreover rejects, without any arguing, an assumption by KOEPPEN[12] said to be given without any

10. The fourth edition (Stuttgart-Berlin 1903) was the earliest available to me; see p. 146 and 293. I also checked the edition supervised by H. VON GLASENAPP (Stuttgart [1959?]) and saw that in this question nothing had changed; see p. 137 and 224 and note p. 426.

11. *dukkhā* is of course not 'Leiden', but 'leidvoll', if one depends on the Pāli sources, as OLDENBERG says he does.

12. Carl Friedrich KOEPPEN, *Die Religion des Buddha und ihre Entstehung*. I, Berlin 1857.

arguing, namely that the concluding remark on *dukkha* might be "ein metaphysischer Zusatz"[13].

Exit KOEPPEN, at least in this question, on the basis of an *ex cathedra* judgement. A questionable tradition of translating this remark in books that pretend to deal with the Buddha's teaching has been established here and is still flourishing. To arrive at his judgement against KOEPPEN, OLDENBERG had to forget (or to ignore) his own edition of the *Mahāvagga*. He showed moreover, that he had not the slightest inkling of the problem that *vedanā*, the second of these 'Objekte des Ergreifens', is often explained as consisting of pleasant, unpleasant and neutral feeling and that pleasant and neutral feeling cannot be characterized as 'Leiden' and only in a slightly different sense as 'leidvoll'.[14]

13. "Köppen (1, S.222, Anm.1) findet in diesen letzten Worten einen 'metaphysischen Zusatz' zum ursprünglichen Text der vier Wahrheiten, ohne allen Grund. So viel metaphysische Terminologie, wie in diesen Worten liegt, hat der Buddhismus von jeher besessen."

14. Already V.GLASENAPP, in his 'Nachwort' to OLDENBERG's *Buddha* [1959: 474] hinted at this problem, by pointing to the *Rahogatasutta* (SN no.36.11), though his approach is quite unhistorical. There, replying to a question, the Buddha admits (SN IV 216.20) he has taught both: there are three kinds of feelings, pleasant, unpleasant and neutral, and: whatever one feels belongs to the unpleasant (*yaṃ kiñci vedayitaṃ taṃ dukkhasmiṃ*). But "the [second] statement has been made by me having in mind that *saṅkhārā* as such are impermanent (*mayā saṅkhārānaṃ yeva aniccataṃ sandhāya bhāsitaṃ*)". See Lambert SCHMITHAUSEN, "Zur buddhistischen Lehre von der dreifachen Leidhaftigkeit", *ZDMG* (Supplement III.2) 1977: 918-931.