

## A Note on *micchāditt̥hi* in Mahāvamsa 25.110

In his pioneering work *The Pali Literature of Ceylon* (1928), Professor G.P. Malalasekera dwells at length on the great Buddhist king Duṭṭhagāmaṇi Abhaya (101–77 B.C.E.) whom he hails as “the hero of the epic Mahāvamsa”. Based on the account of this king in Chapters 24 and 25 of the Mahāvamsa, he details the career of this king, his triumphant victory over the Damiḷa King Eḷāra and his manifold deeds of piety including the beginning of the construction of the Mahāthūpa. Malalasekera draws our attention to the magnanimity of the victorious king Duṭṭhagāmaṇi for his fallen adversary: The king constructed a cetiya over the ashes of his dead enemy, and decreed that “no man, prince or peasant, should pass the spot ... riding in palanquin or litter or with beating of drums.” Malalasekera says further that after his coronation, the “king’s outlook on life had changed, the great and glorious success for which he had lived and dreamed gave him no real joy. He thought of the thousands of human lives on whom suffering had been wrought to encompass this end, and he was filled with poignant grief ... he determined to start a new chapter in his life” (p. 35). He devoted himself to the task of erecting several religious edifices.

What is conspicuously missing in this account is a major narrative from Mahāvamsa, Chapter 25, that tells us about an episode of the king’s deep remorse over the death of a large number of warriors in his victory. This particular incident raises a most problematic issue regarding the way Theravādin Buddhists viewed death on a battlefield. The passage in question, in seven verses, is given below from Geiger’s edition (Mhv) and his translation (assisted by Mabel Bode ).<sup>1</sup>

103. *sayito sirisampattim mahatim api pekkhiya  
kataṃ akkhohiṇāghātaṃ saranta na sukhaṃ labhi.*

---

<sup>1</sup>Geiger 1912.

He, looking back upon his glorious victory, good though it was, knew no joy, remembering that thereby was wrought the destruction of millions [of beings].

104. *Piyaṅgudīpe arahanto ñatvā taṃ tassa takkitam  
pāhesuṃ aṭṭha arahante taṃ assāsetum issaram...*

When the arahants of Piyaṅgudīpa knew his thought, they sent eight arahants to comfort the king....

108. *“kathaṃ nu bhante assāso mama hessatī, yena me  
akkhohiṇimāhāsenāghāto kārāpito?” iti.*

Then the king said to them again “How shall there be any comfort for me, O Venerable Sirs, since by me was caused the slaughter of a great host numbering millions?”

109. *“Saggamaggantarāyo ca natthi te tena kammunā,  
diyaddhamanujā v’ ettha ghātītā manujādhipa,*

“From this deed arises no hindrance in the way to heaven. Only one and a half human beings have been slain here by thee, O Lord of Men.

110. *“saraṇesu ʃhīto eko, pañcasīle pi cāparo,  
micchādīṭṭhī ca dussilā sesā pasusamā matā.*

“The one had come unto the [three] refuges, the other had taken on himself the five precepts. Unbelievers and men of evil life were the rest, not more to be esteemed than beasts.

111. *“jotayissasi c’ eva tvaṃ bahudhā buddhasāsanam,  
manovilekham tasmā tvaṃ vinodaya narissara.”*

“But as for thee, thou wilt bring glory to the doctrine of the Buddha in manifold ways ; therefore cast away care from thy heart, O Ruler of Men.”

112. *iti vutto mahārājā tehi assāsam āgato.*

Thus exhorted by them, the great king took comfort.

The king’s remorse is quite in keeping with the Buddhist teachings. One is reminded of the patricidal king Ajātasattu’s visit to the Buddha as described in the Sāmaññaphalasutta of the Dīgha-nikāya.<sup>2</sup> There the

<sup>2</sup>*taggha tvaṃ mahārāja, accayo accagamā ...yaṃ tvaṃ pitaram ... jīvītā voropesi. yato ca kho tvaṃ ... accayaṃ accayato divvā yathādhammaṃ paṭīkarosi, taṃ te mayaṃ paṭiṅghāma. vuddhi h’ eṣā ariyassa vinaye ... āyatīṃ saṃvaram āpajjatī ti.* Sāmaññaphalasutta, D I 100.

king confesses his guilt over the killing of his father. The Buddha does not *absolve* him of his crime, but accepts his confession saying “Verily O King it was sin that overcame you while acting thus. But in as much as you look upon it as sin, and confess it according to what is right, we accept your confession as to that. For that, O King, is custom in the discipline of the Noble Ones, that whosoever looks upon his fault as a fault, and rightfully confesses it, shall attain to self-restraint in the future.”<sup>3</sup> Another historical case is that of the Mauryan King Aśoka who issued his famous Rock Edict after the subjugation of the people of Kāliṅga: “The Kāliṅga country was conquered by King Piyadasi Devānaṃpiya, when he had been consecrated eight years. One hundred and fifty thousand were carried away as captives and one hundred thousand slain and many times that number died. ... Devānaṃpiya the conqueror of Kāliṅga has remorse now, because of the thought that the conquest is no conquest, for there was killing. ... That is keenly felt with profound sorrow and regret. ... Now even the loss of a hundredth or even a thousandth part of all lives that were killed or died or carried away captives is considered deplorable by Devānaṃpiya.”<sup>4</sup> Aśoka’s inscriptions do not show him seeking either consolation or absolution from any religious establishment, nor does the Mahāvamsa allude to his war in the conquest of Kāliṅga.

What is extraordinary about the account in the Mahāvamsa is the uncommon arrival of eight arahants representing the Buddhist saṅgha to console Duṭṭhagāmaṇi Abhaya and to assure him safe passage to heaven.<sup>5</sup> It is much to the credit of the king that he should anticipate

---

<sup>3</sup>DB, Vol. I, pp. 94–95.

<sup>4</sup>Murit and Aiyangar 1951, Rock Edict XII: *aṭhavasābhisitayā Devānaṃpiyaṣa Piyadasine lājine Kaligya vijitā | diyadhamāte pāṇasataṣahaṣe ye taphā apavudhe, śataṣahaṣa māte tata hate, bahutāvaṃtate vā maṭe | ... .ṣe athi anuṣaye Devānaṃpiyaṣā vijinitu Kaligyāni, avijitam hi vijinamane e tatā vadha vā malane vā apavahe vā janaṣā | ṣe bādha vedaniyamute gulumute cā devānaṃpiyaṣā |*

<sup>5</sup>It may be noted that Dīp XIX, p. 101, is content in merely stating that the king was reborn in the Tusita heaven:

severe obstruction to his rebirth in heaven (*saggamaggantarāyo*) as a consequence of his act of warfare in which so many warriors perished on the battlefield. The response of the arahants is truly astounding. They not only say that there is no obstruction to the king's rebirth in heaven but also seek to legitimize their verdict by observing that out of the "million lives" only one and a half men have been truly slain: one who had taken refuge in the three *saraṇas* (½); and another one who additionally took the five precepts (1). The arahants declare that the remaining dead were *micchādīṭṭhis* and *dussīlas*, and thus equal to animals (*pasusamā*). They add further that the king will (because of this victory) glorify the Buddhist faith and so he should overcome his remorse.

Although Malalasekera saw fit to ignore this episode in his earlier book, in the *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names* (1960), he allows a single sentence: "From now onwards [after his final victory] consoled by the arahants of Piyaṅgudīpa, *who absolved him from blame* (italics added) for the slaughter of his enemies ...". In contrast however, another Sinhalese Buddhist scholar, the late Venerable Walpola Rahula in his *History of Buddhism in Ceylon* (1956), duly notes this particular episode. He reproduces the gist of the Mahāvamsa and notes further that it was the beginning of Buddhist nationalism. In observing the career of King Duṭṭhagāmaṇi Rahula says: "The entire Sinhalese race was united under the banner of the young Gāmaṇi. This was the beginning of nationalism amongst the Sinhalese. It was a new race with healthy young blood organized under the new order of Buddhism. A kind of religio-nationalism, which almost amounted to fanaticism, roused the whole Sinhalese people. A non-Buddhist was not regarded as a human

---

*katapuñño mahāpañño Abhaya Duṭṭhagāmaṇi  
kāyassa bhedā sappañño tusitaṃ kāyaṃ upāgami.*

This suggests the possibility that the authors of the Mahāvamsa introduced the episode of the king's remorse. *The Extended Mahāvamsa* makes further elaboration, as below (n. 17).

being. Evidently, all Sinhalese without exception were Buddhists.”<sup>6</sup>

It would not be wrong to assume that both Malalasekera and Rahula were only following the lead given by the Vamsatthappakāsini, a *ṭikā* on the Mahāvamsa:

*tena kammunā matā* means by the act of your slaying a “million”. The words *diyadḍhamanujā v’ ettha* means amongst these “millions”, only one and a half men have been slain by you. *sesā pasusamā matā* means the remainder were truly not men because they were devoid of the virtues of a human being; they were devoid of proper views, and given to bad conduct. And therefore they said they are *pasusamā*, equal to animals. Taking the refuges and the five precepts are the virtues that make a human being, and therefore the text says that one person had established himself in the refuges and the other had the five precepts. For this reason, [O King,] you are free from any obstruction in the way to heaven, and in the future you will glorify the teaching of the Buddha.<sup>7</sup>

The arahants, it should be noted, only assured (*assāsito*) the king, but the authors of the Mahāvamsa were composing a chronicle of the island and would be expected to glorify the deeds of a great king, even to the extent of trying to “absolve” him of the karmic consequences of a bloody war. But what is truly puzzling is the fact that the Theravādins of Lankā over the centuries should accept the validity of the alleged words of the arahants as understood by the author of the Mahāvamsa-*ṭikā*. This calls for a search of the canonical expositions on *micchādīṭṭhi*, given by the Buddha in the sermons specifically addressing the issues of heaven and warfare. If this term is understood correctly, the words of the arahants would appear to be credible and the statements of the Mahāvamsa to be consistent with the teachings of the Buddha.

<sup>6</sup>Rahula 1956, p. 79.

<sup>7</sup>*tena kammunā ti tena tayā katena akkhohiṇīghātakammena; ... diyadḍhamanujā v’ etthā ti ettha akkhohiṇīsenāya diyadḍh’ eva manussā tayā ghātītā; sesā pasusamā matā ti avasesā dīṭṭhivippanmaṭṭhena ca dussilaṭṭhena ca naradhammavirahitaṭṭhena ca manussā nāma nāhun ti, sabbe pasusamā matā ti avocun ti attho. saraṇasīlāni hi manussakāraḍḍhammāni, tena vuttaṃ saraṇesu ...cāparo ti. manovilekhaṃ tasmā tvaṃ ti yasmā tvaṃ sagga-maggantarāyavirahito va ... iti vuttaṃ hoti. Mhv-ṭ II 491–92.*

Geiger and Bode's translation of *micchādiṭṭhi* as "unbelievers", i.e. non-Buddhists, is permissible since the context does convey that meaning, intended or not, to a casual reader. Rahula's translation as "wrong-believers" is too general; it does not identify a particular wrong belief. *Micchādiṭṭhi* and *sammādiṭṭhi* are two oft-recurring technical terms found in various places in the canon. The Mahācattārisaka-sutta (M III 71–78) and the Apaṇṇaka-sutta (M I 400–13) of the Majjhima-nikāya appear to be most relevant in this context.

In the first the Buddha defines the two *diṭṭhis* in the following words (Lord Chalmers' translation):<sup>8</sup>

What are the wrong views (*micchādiṭṭhi*)? — They are views that — there is no such thing as alms or sacrifice or oblations; that there is no such thing as the fruit and harvest of deeds good and bad; that there are no such things as this world or the next; that there are no such things as either parents or a spontaneous generation elsewhere; that there are no such things as recluses and brahmins who tread the right path and walk aright, who have, of and by themselves, comprehended and realized this and other worlds and make it all known to others.<sup>9</sup>

And what are the right views (*sammādiṭṭhi*)? — they are twofold. On the one hand there are right views which are accompanied by Cankers (*sāsavā*), are mixed up with good works (*puññabhāgiyā*), and lead to attachments. On the other hand there are Right Views which are Noble (*ariyā*), freed from Cankers (*anāsavā*), transcending mundane things and included in the Path.<sup>10</sup>

Those right views which are accompanied by Cankers ... lead to attach-

<sup>8</sup>Chalmers 1927, Vol. II, pp. 194–95.

<sup>9</sup>Mahācattārisakasutta, M III 71f.: *katamā ca bhikkhave micchādiṭṭhi? natthi dinnam, natthi yiṭṭham, natthi hutam, natthi sukatadukkaṭānam, kammānam phalam vipāko, natthi ayam loko, natthi paro loko, natthi mātā, natthi pitā, natthi sattā opapātikā, natthi loke samaṇabrāhmaṇā sammaggatā sammāpaṭipannā, ye imaṇ ca lokaṃ paraṇ ca lokaṃ sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedentī ti.*

<sup>10</sup>M III 72. *katamā ca bhikkhave sammādiṭṭhi? sammādiṭṭhiṃ pāham, bhikkhave, dvayam vadāmi. atthi bhikkhave sammādiṭṭhi sāsavā puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā; atthi bhikkhave ariyā anāsavā lokuttarā maggaṅgā.*

ments, recognize that there are such things as alms and sacrifice and oblations; that there is indeed such a thing as the fruit and harvest of deeds good and bad; that there are really such things as this world and the next; that there are really such things as parents and spontaneous generation elsewhere; and that there are really such things as recluses and brahmins who tread the right path and walk aright, who have, of and by themselves, comprehended and realized this and other worlds and make it all known to others.<sup>11</sup>

In the Aṇṇaka-sutta, as in our Mahāvamsa passage, the words *dussīla* and *micchādiṭṭhi* appear together: *dussīlo purisapuggalo micchādiṭṭhi natthikavādo*. The Aṇṇaka-sutta further elaborates: “The next world (i.e. life after death) truly exists but this person denies it. That constitutes his *micchādiṭṭhi*.”<sup>12</sup> As is well known this is a doctrine

<sup>11</sup>M III 72. By this rather wide definition anyone believing in a life after death (and so forth) can be called a *sammādiṭṭhi*; the term is no longer restricted only to a lay follower of the Buddha. The *aṭṭhakathā* on the *Sammādiṭṭhi-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya* (M I 46–55) anticipates such a possibility and hence makes the following comments:

The *sammādiṭṭhi* is twofold, mundane (*lokiyā*) and supermundane (*lokuttarā*). Of these the former consists of *paññā*, brought about by knowledge of the doctrine of karma, and knowledge that conforms to the Four Noble Truths....

Human beings are also of three kinds: an ordinary person, the disciple, and the nondisciple. Of these the ordinary person is of two kinds: The outsider (*bāhiraka*) and the follower of the Buddha (*sāsanika*). The *bāhiraka* is a *sammādiṭṭhi* by virtue of his view that affirms the doctrine of karma, but he does not have faith in the Four Noble Truths, and he holds the view there is an eternal self (*attadiṭṭhi*), whereas the *sāsanika* is *sammādiṭṭhi* by having the *paññā* of both kinds:

*sā cāyaṃ sammādiṭṭhi duvidhā hoti—lokiyā lokuttarā ti. tattha kammassakatāññāṇaṃ saccānulomikaññāṇaṃ ca lokiya sammādiṭṭhi, sankhepatō vā sabbā pi sāsavā paññā. ariyamaggaphalasampayuttā paññā lokuttarā sammādiṭṭhi. puggalo pana tividho hoti: puthujjano sekkho asekkho ca. tattha puthujjano duvidho hoti: bāhirako sāsaniko ca. tattha bāhirako kammavādī kammassakatādiṭṭhiyā sammādiṭṭhi hoti, no saccānulomikāya attadiṭṭhiparāmāsakattā. sāsaniko dvīhi pi (Ps I 196).*

<sup>12</sup>*santaṃ yeva kho pana paraṃ lokaṃ “natthi paro loko” ti ’ssa diṭṭhi hoti; sāssa hoti micchādiṭṭhi. ... ayaṃ ... purisapuggalo diṭṭhe va dhamme viññānaṃ gārayho: “dussīlo purisapuggalo micchādiṭṭhi natthikavādo” ti....*

of *uccheda* (“annihilation”) originally attributed to a *titthiya* named Ajita Kesakambali in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* of the *Dīgha-nikāya*.<sup>13</sup>

This *micchādiṭṭhi* is truly the antithesis of the (*sāsavā* or the first variety of) *sammādiṭṭhi*. A Buddhist is said to be a *sammādiṭṭhi* because he affirms the existence of the aforementioned ten items that are denied by the “nihilist” (*natthikavādo*) or the “annihilationist”. Evidently such a meaning of *micchādiṭṭhi* is not appropriate to the same word in the passage under discussion. Those who perished in the war were warriors and it would be inconceivable that they would not seek heaven or some such reward for their heroism on the battlefield. Fortunately there is a whole section in the *Samyutta-nikāya*, ironically called the *Gāmaṇi-samyutta*, which gives us a detailed description of the beliefs held by the warriors during the Buddha’s time. It contains a remarkable dialogue between a certain Yodhājīva (Fighting-man) and the Buddha, which provides us with a different concept of *micchādiṭṭhi*, one that is not covered by the earlier usage. This unique dialogue explains both the volitional aspect of the deed of killing (*vadhakacetanā/duppanihitaṃ*) as well as the particular wrong view of the warrior concerning his death and rebirth in heaven (F.L. Woodward’s translation of S IV 308f):<sup>14</sup>

Then Fighting-man (Yodhājīva),<sup>15</sup> the trainer, came to see the Exalted One.... As he sat at one side, Fighting-man, the trainer, said to the Exalted One:

“I have heard, Lord, this traditional saying of teachers of old who were

---

*evaṃ assāyaṃ apaṇṇako dhammo dussamatto samādiṇṇo ekamaṣaṇ pharivā tiṭṭhati, riñcati kusalaṃ thānaṃ* (Apaṇṇakasutta, M I 402–403).

<sup>13</sup>“Thus, Lord, did Ajita of the garment of hair (Kesakambali) ... expound his theory of annihilation.” The translators call this “the view of a typical sophist” (DB I 73, n.1).

<sup>14</sup>KS IV 216–17.

<sup>15</sup>Bhikkhu Bodhi (CD II, p. 1334) translates Yodhājīva Gāmaṇi as “the head-man Yodhājīva the Mercenary” and gives the following note (p. 1449, n. 339): “Spk explains the name as meaning ‘one who earns his living by warfare (*yuddhena jivikaṃ kappento*); this name, too, was assigned by the redactors of the dhamma’. I take the occupation to be that of a mercenary or professional soldier.”



fighting men: ‘A fighting man who in battle exerts himself, puts forth effort, thus exerting himself and putting forth effort, is tortured and put an end to by others. Then, when body breaks up, after death he is reborn in the company of the Devas of Passionate Delight.’ What says the Exalted One of this?’

“Enough, trainer! Let be. Ask me not this question”.... Nevertheless I will expound it to you.

“In the case of a fighting-man who in battle exerts himself, puts forth effort, he must previously have had this low, mean, perverse idea: ‘Let those beings be tortured, be bound, be destroyed, be exterminated, so that they may be thought never to have existed.’ Then, so exerting himself, so putting forth effort, other men torture him and make an end of him. When the body breaks up, after death he is reborn in the Purgatory of Quarrels (a part of the Avīci *niraya*).

“Now if his view was this: ‘A fighting-man who exerts himself, puts forth effort in battle, thus exerting himself, thus putting forth effort, is tormented and made an end of by others. When body breaks up, after death he is reborn in the company of the Devas of Passionate Delight,’ — then I say that view of his is perverted (*micchādīṭṭhi*). Now, trainer, I declare that for one who is guilty of perverted view one of two paths is open, either purgatory or rebirth as an animal (*nirayaṃ vā tiracchānayoṇiṃ vā*).”<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup>*atha kho Yodhājīvo Gāmaṇi ... etad avoca: sutam me bhante, pubbakānaṃ ācariyapācariyānaṃ yodhājīvānaṃ bhāsamānānaṃ, yo so yodhājīvo saṅgāme ussahati vāyamati, tam enam ussahantaṃ vāyamantaṃ pare hananti pariyādāpentī, so kāyassa bhedaṃ paraṃ maraṇā saraṇjītānaṃ devānaṃ sahavyataṃ upapajjati ti. ... idha Bhagavā kiṃ āhā ti?*

*alaṃ Gāmaṇi tiṭṭhat’ etam, mā mam etaṃ pucchī ti... api ca tyāhaṃ vyākarissāmi. yo so gāmaṇi yodhājīvo saṅgāme ussahati vāyamati, tassa taṃ cittaṃ pubbe hīnaṃ duggataṃ duppaṇihītaṃ: ime sattā haññantu vā bajjhantu vā ucchijjantu vā vinassantu vā mā ahesuṃ iti vā ti. taṃ enam ussahantaṃ vāyamantaṃ pare hananti pariyādāpentī, so kāyassa bhedaṃ paraṃ maraṇā saraṇjītā nāma nirayā tath’ upapajjati.*

*sace kho panassa evaṃ dīṭṭhi hoti: yo so yodhājīvo saṅgāme ussahati vāyamati tam enam ussahantaṃ vāyamantaṃ pare hananti pariyādāpentī, so kāyassa bhedaṃ paraṃ maraṇā saraṇjītānaṃ devānaṃ sahavyatam upapajjati ti, sāssa hoti micchādīṭṭhi.*

*micchādīṭṭhikassa kho panāhaṃ Gāmaṇi purisapuggalassa dvinnam gatīnaṃ aññataraṃ gatiṃ vadāmi, nirayaṃ vā tiracchānayoṇiṃ vā ti.*

In view of the Buddha's emphatic words regarding the fate of those who perish on the battlefield while entertaining such a view, there should be no hesitation now in applying this definition of *micchādiṭṭhi* to the same word appearing in Mahāvamsa (25, 110), instead of the traditional canonical meaning of that term as *natthikavāda* or *ucchedavāda*.

The word *pasusamā* ("equal to animals") in the Mahāvamsa is undoubtedly used in a figurative manner. Even so, the declaration in the Yodhājīva-sutta that such beings are destined to be reborn in *niraya* or in the animal world lends support to the possibility that the figurative expression was a kind of a prognostication of their destiny. The *Extended Mahāvamsa* (25, 256) makes it explicitly clear that the king's remorse was caused by a horrible sight of the countless dead Damiḷas: *addakkhi ... asaṃkhiyānaṃ maraṇaṃ Damiḷānaṃ*.<sup>17</sup> While it is clear that the Damiḷas are not Buddhists, the texts do not furnish us with any information on their faith. Since they were coming from South India, they may be considered as followers of some form of Śaivism or Vaiṣṇavism, similar to the one practised probably by the *yodhājīvas* in the passage above. They may be open to the teachings such as given in the Bhagavadgītā II, 37, where Lord Kṛṣṇa promises the warrior Arjuna

---

*evaṃ vutte Yodhājīvi Gāmaṇi parodi, assūni pavattesi. ... nāham ... api cāhaṃ bhante pubbakehi ācariyapācariyehi yodhājīvehi dīgharattaṃ nikato vañcito paluddo ... devānaṃ sahavyatam upapajati ti.*

S IV 308–309

Similar answers are given with regard to the *hatthārohā* and *assārohā*, those fighting while seated on elephants or riding horses (S IV 310–11).

<sup>17</sup>*Extended Mahāvamsa*, 25, 256–59:

*tassa hetuṃ apekkhanto addakkhi manujādhipo  
asaṃkhiyānaṃ maraṇaṃ Damiḷānaṃ tadantare:  
vasuṇḍharāyaṃ katvāna sīsaṃ sabbadisāsu pi  
akkhīni nikkhamitvāna gataṇi uddhamātakā,  
kākaṅkaḡijjhasonasiḡālādīhi khādītā  
hatthapādaṅgapaccaṅgā chavānaṃ chiddamānakaṃ,  
sattehi khādayantehi okiriṃsu visuṃ visuṃ  
saddā nesaṃ sattānaṃ mahantā bheravā ahu.*

that if he is slain in battle he will attain heaven: *hato vā prāpsyasi svargaṃ, jītvā vā bhoksyase mahīm*. The Theravādins of Laṅkā might well have believed that the Daṃḍas who perished in the war did aspire to be reborn in heaven, and were for the most part born in the animal world. Understood in this manner the arahants' words can be said to be consistent with the Buddha's teachings on heaven and warfare as found in the Yodhājīva-sutta.

The above interpretation, admittedly a little farfetched, is supported by a most remarkable corroboration from the Prakrit canonical texts of the ancient *samaṇas* called Nigaṇṭhas (also known as Jains), datable to the same period as the Pāli Saṃyutta-nikāya. As is well known from the Sāmaññaphala-sutta, their teacher, a *titthiya*, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta (Tīrthaṅkara Jñātr̥putra Mahāvīra), was a contemporary of Gautama the Buddha and both flourished in Magadha. While the Buddhist texts state that Ajātasattu, the king of Magadha, embraced Buddhism, the Jains claim that his father Śreṇika Bimbisāra was a devotee of Mahāvīra. Both came from the warrior caste and had witnessed many a battle raging in Magadha. Death on the battlefield was considered honourable and questions were being raised regarding the validity of the claim that such death was rewarded by rebirth in heaven. It is not surprising therefore that the questions asked of the Buddha by Yodhājīva and others find their close parallels in the Jaina canon. The Book VII of the canonical text Viyāhapannatti (Vyākhyā-prajñapti) contains narratives about wars that were waged by the Magadhan King Kūṇiya (Ajātasattu) in his fight against eighteen tribal chiefs (*gaṇa-rāya*), that is to say, the nine Malla and the nine Lecchavi kings of Kāsī and Kosala, in which "millions" are said to have died. The following dialogues between Mahāvīra and his chief mendicant disciple Indabhūi Goyama, in the context of such wars, will further demonstrate how close the two rival Śramaṇa traditions were in their views on the problem of death in battlefield and the karmic consequences following such death.

The first narrative is about a war (*saṃgāma*) called Mahā-

silākaṇṭaka:.<sup>18</sup>

Venerable Sir! How many people ... were killed when the War of the Big Stones took place?

O Goyama! In that war 8,400,000 were killed!

Venerable Sir! Among them there were men wounded in that war, who were devoid of the good conduct (*nissilā*) ... devoid of the holy practice of observing the fasts, angry, malicious ... who had not achieved peace. When they died, what was their destiny, where were they reborn?

O Goyama! A great many of them were born in hells (*naraga*) and as animals (*tirikkha-joṇi*).

As in the Mahāvamśa, here too the dead are counted in tens of millions, an exaggeration that may be ignored. The term *silā* stands for the lay precepts (called *aṇuvratas*) that are similar to the five *sikkhā-padas* of a Buddhist householder.<sup>19</sup> The term *nissilā* thus agrees with the word *dussilā*. The animal births declared here for the vast numbers of the dead should enable us to understand the ambiguous Mahāvamśa expression *pasusamā* also to mean the same.

The next dialogue takes place in the context of another major war initiated by King Ajātasattu and is called the War of the Chariot with the Mace (*raha-musala-saṃgāma*). The monk Goyama asks Mahāvīra the following question:<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup>*mahāsilākaṇṭaye ṇaṃ bhaṃte saṃgāme vaṭṭamāne kai janasayasāhassīo vahiyāo? Goyamā! caurāsīṃ jaṇasayasāhassīo vahiyāo | te ṇaṃ bhaṃte! maṇuyā nissilā jāva nippaccakkhāṇa-posahovavāsā ruṭṭhā parikuviyā samara-vahiyā aṇuvasaṃtā kālamāse kālaṃ kiccā kaḥiṃ gayā kaḥiṃ uvavannā? Goyamā! osannaṃ naraga-tirikkhajoṇiesu uvavannā. Suttāgame VII 9.*

<sup>19</sup>The first four *sikkhāpadas* of a Buddhist *upāsaka* are identical with the first four *aṇuvratas* (called “minor restraints” as against the *mahāvratas* of a mendicant) of a Jaina *upāsaka*. Instead of *surā-meraya-majja-pamādaṭṭhānā-veramaṇī*, the fifth *sikkhāpada*, the Jainas have *parigrahaparimāṇa* (“setting limits to one’s property”). See Jaini 1979, pp. 170–78.

<sup>20</sup>*bahujāṇe ṇaṃ bhante! annamannassa evaṃ āikkhai jāva parūvei: evaṃ khalu bahave maṇussā annayaresu uccāvaesu saṃgāmesu abhimuhā ceva pahayā samāṇā kālamāse kālaṃ kiccā annayaresu devaloesu devattāe uvavattāro bhavanti, se kahaṃ eyaṃ bhante! evaṃ?*

Venerable Sir! Many people say to each other ... and expound thus: “Indeed, men coming face to face in battles, large and small, wounded there and dead, are reborn among the gods in various heavens.” Is this truly so, Sir?

O Goyama! People who said such things to each other ... and expounded, truly have uttered a falsehood (*micchaṃ te āhaṃsu*). As for me, O Goyama! I say ... and expound the following.

The word *micchaṃ* used by Mahāvīra here to characterize the disputed assertion is reminiscent of the term *micchādīṭṭhi* employed by the Buddha in the Yodhājīva-sutta. It is possible that the Jainas did not wish to give the status of a dogma (*dīṭṭhi*) to the “idle talk” of the people, but the term *micchā* is no less emphatic in conveying the falsity of that talk. Indeed, Mahāvīra’s subsequent explanation lays down the correct course of action, missing in the Buddhist literature, for a warrior to attain heaven after death on a battlefield.

The Mahāvamsa figuratively states that only “one and a half” men (*diyadḍhamanujā*) — one with only the *saraṇas* and another with the lay precepts — were truly killed in that war. But there is no narrative, in the Mahāvamsa-ṭīkā, the *Extended Mahāvamsa* or even the later work Rasavāhinī,<sup>21</sup> on these two pious men who were singled out by the arahants out of the “millions” dead in the war. Fortunately, the present Jaina narrative, which by a happy coincidence also speaks of *only two such men*, illustrates the correct way for a layman to lay down his life on the battlefield and be born in heaven or as a human being.

Mahāvīra gives an account of one of his lay disciples, an expert archer named Varuṇa of Vaiśālī. He was a *samaṇa-uvāsaga* and he had taken the precepts of a layman, the first of which is *ahiṃsā*, refraining from killing a human or animal being. At the time of taking his precepts however, he had made an exception that would allow him to participate

---

*Goyamā! jaṇṇaṃ se bahujaṇo annamannassa evaṃ āikkhai jāva uvavattāro bhavanti, je te evaṃ āhaṃsu micchaṃ te evaṃ āhaṃsu, ahaṃ puṇa Goyamā! evaṃ āikkhāmi jāva purūvemi — evaṃ khalu Goyamā!*  
Suttāgame VII 9.

<sup>21</sup>The author of Ras simply quotes Mhv 25 108–11 (p. 277) without comment.

in warfare if ordered by the king. Later when he was drafted by King Ajātasattu to fight in the *raha-musala-saṃgāma*, Varuṇa, armed with bow and arrow, mounted his chariot and entered the war. He made a further vow that he would not be the first one to shoot, and so he called upon his adversary to shoot first. Only after his opponent's arrow was already on its deadly flight did he let fly his own arrow. His enemy was killed instantly, while Varuṇa himself lay mortally wounded. Realizing that his death was imminent, Varuṇa took his chariot off the battlefield, sat down and held his hands in veneration to Mahāvīra, and said,<sup>22</sup>

Salutations to the Venerable Samaṇa Mahāvīra, my teacher of dhamma. I pay my respects to him wherever he may be... Previously I have taken from the Venerable Samaṇa Mahāvīra the lifelong vow of refraining from all forms of gross killing of life ... up to ... excess possessions. Now at this time of my death, making the Venerable Samaṇa Mahāvīra my witness, I undertake the total renunciation of all forms of violence ... and of all my possessions ... until my last breath.

Saying thus he pulled out the arrow and, with his mind at peace, died instantly and was reborn in Saudharma, the first heaven.

The second man, a friend of Varuṇa from childhood, fighting in the

<sup>22</sup>*namo 'tthu ṇaṃ samaṇassa bhagavaṃ Mahāvīrassa ... mama dhammā-yariyassa vaṃdāmi ṇaṃ bhagavaṃ tatthagayaṃ ihagae. pāsau me se bhagavaṃ tatthagae jāva vaṃdai namamsai. evaṃ vayāsī: pubbim pi ṇaṃ mae samaṇassa bhagavaṃ Mahāvīrassa antie thūlae pāṇāvīe paccakkhāe jāvajjivāe evaṃ jāva thūlae pariggahe paccakkhāe jāvajjivāe. iyāṇi pi ṇaṃ tasseva arihaṃtassa bhagavaṃ Mahāvīrassa aṃtiyaṃ savvaṃ pāṇāvīyaṃ ... paccakkhāmi jāvajjivāe ... caramehiṃ ūsāsanīsāsehiṃ vosirāmi tti kaṭṭu ... samāhipadikkante samāhippatte āṇupuvvīe kālagae.*

*tassa ṇaṃ Varuṇassa ege piyabālasaṃvāsaye rahamusale saṃgāme ... gāḍhapahārī kae ...Varuṇaṃ pāsai ... evaṃvayāsī: jāim ṇaṃ ... Varuṇassa silāim vayāim ... veramaṇāim tāim ṇaṃ mamaṃ pi bhavaṃtu tti kaṭṭu ... salluddharanaṃ kareī ... kālagae.*

*Varuṇe ṇaṃ bhaṃte ... kālaṃ kiccā kaḥim gae kaḥim uvavanne? Goyamā! Sohamme kappe devatāe uvavanne ...*

*Varuṇasa piyabālavayaṃsae kālaṃ kiccā kaḥim uvavanne? Goyamā! sukule paccāyāe.*

same battle, was also wounded; but seeing his friend mortally wounded, he helped him to sit comfortably. The text does not give his name or his religion, but as he was helping Varuṇa, he heard Varuṇa's words of renunciation and said, "Whatever vows you have taken, let those be mine too." And so saying he also died and was reborn as a human being in a noble family.<sup>23</sup>

These stories of one person totally renouncing all violence at the time of death, and the other person consenting to his renunciation in a friendly way, and thus both dying a holy death on the battlefield, would surely win the approval of the arahants who pointed to the one and a half (*diyadḍha*) good Buddhists in the story of King Duṭṭhagāmaṇi's remorse.

This remarkable concordance between the two rival Śramaṇa traditions on the problem of heaven and warfare establishes the fact that a study of one tradition sheds light on the other and helps us understand both traditions at a deeper level. On this auspicious occasion of the 125th anniversary of the Pali Text Society, we do well to remember and honour the name of Hermann Jacobi, the editor of the first volume of the Pali Text Society published in 1882. Few now will even know that this volume happened to be not of a Pāli text, but the first book of the Jaina canon, called the Āyāraṅga-sutta. We may recall today the words he used in his introduction to the first volume in the series: "The insertion of a Jaina text in the publication of the Pali Text Society will require no justification in the eyes of European scholars. ... But it is possible that Buddhist subscribers ... might take umbrage at the intrusion, as it were, of an heretical guest into the company of their sacred *Suttas*." We should be grateful to Jacobi for showing us from the beginning of the Pali Text Society that our studies of Pāli and Buddhism should go hand in hand with the studies of Prakrit and Jainism.

Padmanabh S. Jaini  
Berkeley

---

<sup>23</sup>For an abridged version, see Deleu 1996. This story also appears in Jaini 2000.

## ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations for Pāli texts follow *A Critical Pāli Dictionary*.

- CD            Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*.  
Wisdom/PTS, 2000
- DB            T.W. Rhys Davids and C.A.F. Rhys Davids, tr., *Dialogues of the  
Buddha*
- KS            F.L. Woodward, *The Book of the Kindred Sayings*
- Ras            Rasavāhinī. Transcribed from Sinhalese by Sharada Gamdhi.  
Delhi : Parimal Publications, 1988
- Suttāgame    Pupphabhikkhu, ed. *Suttāgame, Viyāhapannatti (Bhagavāi)*, 1952

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Chalmers, Robert 1926–27. *Further Dialogues of the Buddha*
- Deleu, Jozef, 1996. *Viyāhapannatti (Bhagavāi)*, Motilal Banarsidass
- Jaini, P.S., 1979. *The Jaina Path of Purification*, California
- 2000. “Ahiṃsā: A Jaina Way of Spiritual Discipline” in P.S. Jaini,  
*Collected Papers on Jaina Studies*, pp. 14–17, Delhi
- Malalasekera, G.P., 1928. *The Pali Literature of Ceylon*, Colombo (reprinted  
1958)
- Murti, G.S., and A.N.K. Aiyangar, eds., 1951. *Edicts of Aśoka (Priyadarśin) :  
Text and English Translation*. Adyar Library
- Geiger, W., tr. (assisted by Mabel H. Bode), 1912. *The Great Chronicle of  
Ceylon*
- Rahula, Walpola, 1956. *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, Colombo