

## SOME ASPECTS OF PRE-BUDDHISTIC PHILOSOPHY AS REFLECTED IN THE SUTTA-NIPĀTA

(A Preliminary Study)

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§1. The *Sutta-Nipāta* (*Sn.*) is a collection (<*nipāta* <ni+√pat, to fall) of certain discourses (*suttas*) attributed to the Buddha. The work consists of five *vaggas* or Books. They are the *Uraga-vagga*, the *Culla-vagga*, the *Mahā-vagga*, the *Aṭṭhaka-vagga* and the *Pārāyana-vagga*. The five *vaggas* together consist of some 1149 verses and some prose. The text seems to represent the earliest stage of metrical Pali. The language is simple but is not free from poetic embellishments as, for example, seen in verse No. 932 which is but a clear instance of the *arthāntaronyāsa*, a figure of speech drawing a general conclusion from several fore-going particular propositions.<sup>1</sup> The first book consisting of 12 *suttas* is called *Uraga-vagga* probably because it has *Uraga-sutta* as its first sermon. The second book comprising 14 *suttas* is called *Culla-vagga* possibly because the compiler might have considered them as being short (*culla*) discourses. The third book with 12 *suttas* is called *Mahā-vagga* perhaps on account of its having some comparatively long (*mahā*) sermons. The fourth book with 16 *suttas* is called *Aṭṭhaka-vagga* or Book of Octads. But, in fact, there are only four discourses in the form of octad (*aṭṭhaka*). The fifth book derives its name from the word *parāyana* meaning "the way to the other shore". It was used by Pingiya the Brahmin as a collective term referring to the teaching of the Buddha in addressing his former *guru*, *Bāvārin* living on the banks of the river Godhāvārī (*Sn.* 1131). One may thus notice the absence of a unifying structural principle in the compilation of the *Sutta-Nipāta*.<sup>2</sup> The two *vaggas*, the *Aṭṭhaka* and the *Parāyana* seem to represent the original form of the *Sutta-Nipāta*, for they together with the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* of Book One are commented on in the *Mahā-Niddesa* (*Nd1*) and the *Culla-Niddesa* (*Nd 2*). The *Sutta-Nipāta*, especially the two *vaggas*, the *Aṭṭhaka* and the *Pārāyana*, represent some aspects of the earliest form of Buddhism.

1. *sutrā dūṣito bahun vācaṃ—samavānāṃ puthuvacanānaṃ  
pharusena ne na paṭivajjā—na hi santo paṭisenāṃ karonti.*  
"When he is sorely vexed at listening  
Unto recluses' talk or talks of folk,  
Let him not harshly unto them rejoin:  
For men of calm do not retaliate."

2. See N. A. Jayawickrama, *A Critical Analysis of the Sutta-Nipāta*, University of Ceylon Review, Vol. VII, Nos. 1-4. Vol. VIII, Nos. 1-4. Apothecaries' Co., Ltd. 1949-1950.