

## ON MAHĀVĪRA AND HIS PREDECESSORS.

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In the *Indian Antiquary*, vol. VIII, p. 311, a paper on the *Six Tirthakas* by James d'Alwis was reproduced with notes by the editor. One of these heretical teachers, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, has lately become of great interest, as he has been identified with Mahāvīra, the supposed founder of the Jaina sect. The proof of this identity is conclusive. For the Bauddhas and Jainas agree not only in the name of the sect, viz., Pāli,—Nigaṇṭha, Niggaṇṭha, Nigandha; Sanskrit,—Nirgrantha, and Prākṛit,—Niyamṭha Niggamṭha; Sanskrit,—Nirgrantha,—respectively; and in the name of the founder Pāli,—Nātaputta, Nātaputta, Sanskrit,—Jñātiputra, and Prākṛit,—Nātaputta, Nāyaputta; Sanskrit,—Jñātiputra, Jñātiputra respectively; but also on the place of Jñātiputra's death, the town Pāvā; see my edition of the *Kalpasūtra*, pp. 4 sqq. Yet there remain some anomalies in the forms of these names and some obscure points in the

doctrines of the Nigaṇṭhas as defined by the Bauddhas. To account for, and clear up, these is my purpose in the first part of this paper.

The word Nigaṇṭha in Pāli books, and Niyamṭha in Jaina *Sūtras* (e.g. the *Sūtra-kṛitāṅga* and *Bhagavati*) are neither Pāli nor Jaina Prākṛit. For its Sanskrit prototype, Nirgrantha, current with the Jainas and Northern Buddhists, would in both dialects have regularly become Niggamṭha, which form, indeed, is the common one in Jaina Prākṛit, but not so in Pāli. The form Nigaṇṭha was almost certainly adopted by both sects from the Māgadhī dialect; for it occurs in the Aśoka inscription at Dēli, separate edict 1. 5 (*Ind. Ant.* vol. VI. p. 150 note). This hypothesis becomes a certainty for the word Nātaputta. As translated in Sanskrit it is Jñāta or Jñātiputra, the regular Pāli derivative would be Nātaputta with a palatal ñ. The dental in its stead is a Māga-

dhism. For, in the Māgadhi inscriptions of Āśoka, we read *nāti*, *anna*, etc. = Sanskrit *jñāti*, *anya*, etc., which words become *ñāti*, *ānna*, etc. in Pāli and in the dialects of the Āśoka inscriptions at Girnār and Kapurdigiri. The palatal *ñ* appears in Pāli in the first part of the name when used as the name of the Kshattriya clan to which Mahāvīra belonged. For I identify the *ñātika* living near Kotigāma mentioned in the *Mahāvagga Sutta* (Oldenberg's edition p. 232), with the Jñātaka Kshattriyas in Kuṇḍagrāma of the Jaina books. As regards the vowel of the second syllable, the different sources are at variance with each other. The Northern Buddhists spell the word with an *i*,—Jñātiputra in Sanskrit, and *Jo-thi-tseu* in Chinese (*tseu* means 'son'), the Southern ones with an *a*—Nātaputta, as do the Jains, though Jñātiputra is not unfrequent in MSS. The form Nāyaputta proves nothing, for the syllables *ṣ* and *ṣ* are interchangeable in Jaina Prākṛit. M. Eug. Burnouf, commenting on the name in question, says: "J'ignore pourquoi le Pāli supprime l'*i* de *Djñāti*;<sup>1</sup> serait ce que le primitif véritable serait *Djñāti* et que le *Djñāti* en serait un prākṛitism correspondant à celui du Sud *nāta*, comme *djēta* correspond à *djētri*?" That M. Burnouf was perfectly right in his conjecture, can now be proved beyond a doubt. For the occasional spelling of the word with a lingual *ṣ* Nātaputta shows an unmistakable trace of the original *ri*. The Sanskrit for Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta was therefore in all probability Nirgrantha Jñātiputra, that of the Kshattriya clan Jñātrika (Pāli—*Nātika*, Prākṛit—*Nāyaga*). It is perhaps not unworthy of remark that Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta must have made part of the most ancient tradition of the Baudddhas, and cannot have been added to it in later times as both words conform, not to the phonetic laws of the Pāli language, but to those of the early Māgadhi.

We shall now treat of the opinions which the Buddhists ascribe to Nātaputta and to the Nigaṇṭhas in general, in order to show that they are in accordance with Jainism. One of its most characteristic features is the unduly extended idea of the animate world; not only are plants and trees endowed with life, and accordingly are not to be wantonly destroyed, but also particles of earth, water, fire and wind. The same doctrine was,

according to James d'Alwis, held by Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta: "He held that it was sinful to drink cold water: 'cold water,' he said, was imbued with a soul. Little drops of water were small souls, and large drops were large souls." In Buddhaghosa's commentary on the *Dhammapadam* (Fausböll's edition p. 398), the 'better Nigaṇṭhas' who go about naked, say that they cover their almsbowls lest particles of dust or spray, imbued with life, should fall into them. Compare *Kalpasūtra*, Sāmāchāri § 29, where a similar rule is given. These naked Nigaṇṭhas need not have been of the Digambara sect, for according to the *Achārāṅga Sūtra* it was considered a meritorious, not a necessary, penance for an ascetic to wear no clothes.

In the *Mahāvagga Sutta*, vi. 31, 1, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta is said to hold the *kiriyaṁvāda* opposed to the *akiriyaṁvāda* of Gotama Buddha. The *kiriyaṁvāda*, or the belief in the activity of the soul, is one of the cardinal dogmas of the Jains, and is found in their creed in the first chapter of the *Achārāṅga*.

James d'Alwis proceeds after the above quoted passage: "He [Nātaputta] also declared that there were three *daṇḍas* or agents for the commission of sin, and that the acts of the body (*kāya*), of the speech (*vāc*), and of the mind (*mana*) were three separate causes, each acting independently of the other." Compare the subjoined passage from the third *uddesaka* of the *Śthānāṅga*, in which the term *daṇḍa* in its relation to mind, speech and body occurs: *tao daṇḍā pannatta, taṁ jahā: mana-daṇḍe, va-daṇḍe kāya-daṇḍe*. "There are declared three *daṇḍas*, namely, the *daṇḍa* of the mind, the *daṇḍa* of the speech, the *daṇḍa* of the body." Thus far all agrees with Jainism. James d'Alwis's account of Nātaputta's doctrines concludes: "This heretic asserted that crimes and virtues, happiness and misery, were fixed by fate, that as subject to these we cannot avoid them, and that the practice of the doctrine can in no wise assist us. In this notion his heresy consisted." As the Jaina opinions on these points do not materially differ from those of the Hindus in general, and as the doctrines defined above are inconsistent with the *kiriyaṁvāda* and with ascetic practices I do not doubt that the Baudddhas committed an error, perhaps in order to

<sup>1</sup> Preserved however in *ñātika*, if my conjecture about the identity of that word with the first part of Nātaputta be right.

stigmatise the Niganthas as heretics, who in their turn have misstated the Bauddha doctrine of the *nirvāṇa*, saying that according to the Saṅgata's opinion the liberated souls return to the *Saṁsāra* (*punarbhavavātaraṇi*). This misstatement occurs in Śilāṅka's commentary on the *Āchārāṅga Sūtra* (867 A.D.), and can have no reference therefore to the Lamas and Chutuktus of the Northern Buddhist church, as I formerly opined, for they were not yet in existence in Śilāṅka's time.

We pass now to the outline of Nātaputta's system in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*, (Grimblot *Sept Suttas Palis*, p. 126). It may be remarked that, according to Mr. Rhys Davids (*Academy*, September 13th, 1879, p. 197) the passage in question is not commented upon in the Commentary *Sumaṅgala Vildāsini*. Mr. Gogerly translated it thus: "In this world, great king, the Niganthas are well defended in four directions, that is, great king, the Niganthas in the present world by general abstinence (*from evil*) restrain sinful propensities, weaken evil by controlling it, and are ever under self-government. They are thus well defended on all sides, and this is called—being arrived at perfection, being with subjected passions, being established in virtue" (*ibidem*, p. 173). All this might as easily have been translated from a Jaina *Sūtra*, and it would be difficult to tell the difference, but unfortunately this translation cannot be reconciled with our text. M. Burnouf's translation is more literal, but less intelligible; it runs thus: "En ce monde, grand roi, le mendiant Nigantha est retenu par le frein de quatre abstentions réunies. Et comment, grand roi, le mendiant Nigantha est-il retenu par le frein de quatre abstentions réunies? En ce monde, grand roi, le mendiant Nigantha est entièrement retenu par le lien qui enchaîne; il est enveloppé par tous les liens, enlacé par tous les liens, resserré par tous les liens; voilà de quelle manière, grand roi, le mendiant Nigantha est retenu par le frein de quatre abstentions réunies. Et parce qu'il est, ainsi retenu, grand roi, il est nommé Nigantha, c'est-à-dire libre de toute chaîne, pour qui toute chaîne est détruite, qui a secoué toutes les chaînes," (*ibidem*, p. 204). And in a note he adds: "Mais quand la définition dit qu'il est enlacé dans tous les liens, cela signifie qu'il obéit si complètement aux règles d'une rigoureuse abstention, qu'il semble que tous ses mouve-

ments soient enchaînés dans les liens qui le retiennent captif, &c." The general drift of this definition, especially the stress laid on control, savours of Jainism; but luckily we are not confined to such generalities for our deduction. For the phrase *chāturyāma-saṁvara-saṁvuto*, translated by Gogerly "well defended in four directions," and by Burnouf "retenu par le frein de quatre abstentions réunies" contains the distinct Jaina term *chāturyāma*. It is applied to the doctrine of Mahāvīra's predecessor Pārśva, to distinguish it from the reformed creed of Mahāvīra, which is called *pāñchayāma dharma*. The five *yāmas* are the five great vows, *mahāvratāni*, as they are usually named, viz. *ahiṁsā* not killing, *satya* truthful speech, *asteya* not stealing, *brahmacharya* chastity, *aparigraha* renouncing of all illusory objects. In the *chāturyāma dharma* of Mahāvīra *brahmacharya* was included in *aparigraha*. The most important passage is one of the *Bhagavati* (Weber, *Fragment der Bhagavati*, p. 185) where a dispute between Kālāsa Vesīyaputta, a follower of Pārśva (Pārśvachchejja, i. e. Pārśvapatyeya) and some disciples of Mahāvīra is described. It ends with Kālāsa's begging permission: *tujjhaṁ añtīe chātujjāmadā dhammāto pañchamahavaiyaṇa sapaṭikkamaṇaṁ dhammaṁ vvasanipajjitta paṇi vilharittā*: "to stay with you after having changed the Law of the four vows for the Law of the five vows enjoining compulsory confession." In Śilāṅka's Commentary on the *Āchārāṅga* the same distinction is made between the *chāturyāmadharma* of Pārśva's followers and the *pāñchayāma dharma* of Vardhamāna's *tīrtha* (Ed. Cal. p. 331). These particulars about the religion of the Jains previous to the reforms of Mahāvīra are so matter-of-fact like, that it is impossible to deny that they may have been handed down by trustworthy tradition. Hence we must infer that Nirgranthas already existed previous to Mahāvīra,—a result which we shall render more evident in the sequel by collateral proofs. On this supposition we can understand how the Buddhists ascribed to Nātaputta the *chāturyāma dharma*, though he altered just this tenet; for it is probable that the Buddhists ascribed the old Nirgrantha creed to Nātaputta, who then took the lead of the community, and of whose reforms, being indeed only trifling, his opponents were not aware. And though it looks like a logical trick, the testimony of the Bud-

dhist on this point might be brought forward as an argument for the existence of Nirgranthas previous to, and differing in details from, the *tīrtha* of Mahāvīra. But we have not to rely on so dubious arguments as this for our proposition. The arguments that may be adduced from the Jaina *Sūtras* in favour of the theory that Mahāvīra reformed an already existing religion, and did not found a new one, are briefly these. Mahāvīra plays a part wholly different from that of Buddha in the histories of their churches. His attainment to the highest knowledge cannot be compared to that of Buddha. The latter had to reject wrong beliefs and wrong practices before he found out the right belief and the right conduct. He seems to have carved out his own way,—a fact which required much strength of character, and which is easily recognised in all Buddhist writings. But Mahāvīra went through the usual career of an ascetic; he seems never to have changed his opinions nor to have rejected religious practices, formerly adhered to. Only his knowledge increased, as in the progress of his penance the hindrances to the higher degrees of knowledge were destroyed until it became absolute (*kevala*). His doctrines are not spoken of in the *Sūtras* as his discoveries, but as decreta or old established truths, *pannattas*. All this would be next to impossible if he had been like Buddha the original founder of his religion; but it is just what one would expect to be the record of a reformer's life and preaching. The record of the fourteen *pūrvas* points the same way; for these books, which were lost some generations after Mahāvīra's *Nirvāṇa*, are said to have existed since the time of the first Tirthakara Rishabha or Ādinātha; they must therefore be considered as the sacred books of the original Nirgranthas previous to Mahāvīra's reforms. But all these arguments are open to one fatal objection, viz., that they are taken from the Jaina literature which was reduced to writing so late as the fifth century A.D. During the preceding ten centuries, an opponent will say, the Jainas modelled everything in their sacred books on the preconceived theory of the uninterrupted existence of their faith since the beginning of the world. On this supposition the whole of the *sūtras* would be a most wonderful fabric of fraud; for everything is in keeping with the theory in question, and no trace of the contrary

left. I place much confidence therefore in the Jaina *Sūtras*, being of opinion that they are materially the same as they were in the early centuries after Mahāvīra's *Nirvāṇa*, as may be proved to be the case with the *Āchārāṅga*, the present disposition of which is already followed in Bhadrabāhu's *Niryukti*. Yet we must confirm the above suggested opinions by evidence from another quarter, open to no objection. If the sects of the Bauddhas and Jainas were of equal antiquity, as must be assumed on the supposition that Buddha and Mahāvīra were contemporaries and the founder of their sects, we should expect either sect mentioned in the books of their opponents. But this is not the case. The Nirgranthas are frequently mentioned by the Buddhists, even in the oldest parts of the *Piṭakas*. But I have not yet met with a distinct mention of the Bauddhas in any of the old Jaina *Sūtras*, though they contain lengthy legends about Jāmālī, Gosāla and other heterodox teachers. It follows that the Nirgranthas were considered by the Bauddhas an important sect, whilst the Nirgranthas could ignore their adversaries. As this is just the reverse position to that which both sects mutually occupy in all after-times, and as it is inconsistent with our assumption of a contemporaneous origin of both creeds, we are driven to the conclusion that the Nirgranthas were not a newly-founded sect in Buddha's time. This seems to have been the opinion of the authors of the *Piṭakas* too; for we find no indication of the contrary in them. In James d'Alwis' paper on the *Six Tīrthakars*, the "Digambaras" appear to have been regarded as an old order of ascetics, and all of those heretical teachers betray the influence of Jainism in their doctrines or religious practices, as we shall now point out.

Gosāla Makkhaliputta was the slave of a nobleman. His master from whom he ran away, "pursued him and seized him by his garments; but they loosening Gosāla effected his escape naked. In this state he entered a city, and passed for Digambara Jaina or Bauddha, and founded the sect which was named after him." According to the Jainas he was originally a disciple of Mahāvīra, but afterwards set himself up for a Tirthakara. In the *Mahāvīra-charitra* of Hemachandra, he defends the precept of nakedness against the pupils of Pārśva, and "gets beaten, and almost killed by the women

of a village in Magadha, because he is a naked Śramaṇa, or mendicant."—Wilson, *Works*, vol. I. p. 294, note 2.

Purāṇa Kāśyapa declined accepting clothes "thinking that as a Digambara he would be better respected."

Ajita Keśakambala believed trees and shrubs to have a *jīva*, and that "one who cut down a tree, or destroyed a creeper, was guilty as a murderer."

Kakudha Kātyāyana also "declared that cold water was imbued with a soul."

The preceding four Tīrthakas appear all to have adopted some or other doctrines or practices which make part of the Jaina system, probably from the Jainas themselves. More difficult is the case with Sañjaya Belāṭṭhaputta. For the account of his doctrines in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* has been so differently translated by M. Burnouf and by M. Gogerly as to suspend decision. According to the former Sañjaya's doctrine, which is called *anattamaṇa-vācchā*, would coincide with the *syādvāda* of the Jainas; but according to the latter it denotes no more than perfect indifference to all transcendental problems, not the compatibility of one solution with its contrary. All depends on the interpretation of the two words *me no* in the text, about which it is impossible to form a correct opinion without the help of a commentary.

It appears from the preceding remarks that Jaina ideas and practices must have been current at the time of Mahāvira and independently of him. This, combined with the other arguments which we have adduced, leads us to the opinion that the Nirgrāṇṭhas were really in existence long before Mahāvira, who was the reformer of the already existing sect. This granted, it is not difficult to form a tolerably correct idea of the relation between Buddhism and Jainism. The former is not an offshoot of the latter; for Buddha rejected the principal dogmas and practices of the Nirgrāṇṭhas; it is rather a protest against it. All that has been said to maintain that Buddhism stands in a closer connection with Jainism, is to no effect from lack of proof. The proposed identification of Mahāvira's disciple, the Gautama Indrabhūti with the Gautama Śākyamuni, because both belonged to the *gotra* of Gotama, has been refuted by Profs. Wilson, Weber and others. It can only be maintained on the principles of

Fluellen's logic: "There is a river in Macedon; and there is also, moreover, a river in Monmouth. It is called Wye at Monmouth, but it is out of my prains what is the name of the other river. But 'tis all one: it is so like as my fingers to my fingers; and there is salmons in both."

Little better is the second argument, that there were twenty-four Buddhas who immediately preceded Gautama Buddha. These twenty-four Buddhas have been compared with the twenty-four Tīrthakaras of the Jainas, though their names have little in common. As Buddharejected the last Tīrthakara at least as an heretic, he could only have recognised twenty-three. The only inference which can be made from the twenty-four Tīrthakaras and twenty-five Buddhas in texts of recognised authority is that the fiction in question is an old one. Whether there be any foundation for this Buddhistical theory, it is not for me to decide; all authorities on Buddhism have given their verdict to the contrary. But it is different with the Jainas. For, since we know that Jainism was not founded by Mahāvira, it follows that somebody else was the real founder of the sect, and it is possible that many reformers preceded Mahāvira.

It is the opinion of nearly all scholars who have written on this question that Pārśva was the real founder of Jainism. The Rev. Dr. Stevenson says in his Preface to the *Translation of the Kalpasūtra*, p. xii: "From Mahāvira upwards, indeed, to the preceding Tīrthakara Pārśvanāth, we have no list of head teachers, but we have only an interval of 250 years, while the term of Pārśva's sublunary existence is still bounded by the possible number of a hundred years . . . . . The moderation of the Jainas, up to the time of Pārśvanātha, is the more remarkable as after that they far outstrip all their compeers in the race of absurdity, making the lives of their Tīrthankaras extend to thousands of years, and interposing between them countless ages, thus enabling us to trace with some confidence the boundary between the historical and the fabulous." Whatever may be thought of this argument, it is at least favourable to the opinion that Pārśva is an historical person. This is rendered still more credible by the distinct mention of his followers and his doctrines in the Jaina *Sūtras*. That self-same doctrine, the *chāturyāna dharma*, is mentioned by the Buddhists, though ascribed to Nātaputta.

But there is nothing to prove that Parśva was the founder of Jainism. Jaina tradition is unanimous in making Rīshabhā the *first* Tirthakara. Though he is stated to have lived 840,000 great years, and have died something less than 100,000,000 oceans of years before Mahāvira's *Nirvāṇa*, yet there may be something historical in the tradition which makes him the first Tirthakara. For the Brāhmins too have myths in their *Purāṇas* about a Rīshabhā, son of king Nābhi and Meru, who had a hundred sons, Bharata and the rest, and entrusting Bharata with the government of his kingdom, adopted the life of an anchorite.—Wilson, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, vol. II., p. 103 sqq. All these particulars are also related by the Jainas of their Rīshabhā; and from the more detailed account in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* it is evident that the fabulous founder of the Jaina sect must indeed be meant (*ibid.*, p. 104, note 1). But what value belongs

to these myths of the *Purāṇas* about Rīshabhā, whether they are founded on facts, or were merely suggested by the legendary history of the Jāinas, it is wholly impossible to decide.

Of the remaining Tirthakaras I have little to add. Sumati, the fifth Tirthakara, is apparently identical with Bharata's son Sumati, of whom it is said in the *Bhāgavata* that he "will be irreligiously worshipped, by some infidels, as a divinity" (Wilson, *ibid.*).

Arishtanemi, the 22nd Tirthakara, is connected with the Kṛishṇa-myths through his wife Rāgimati, daughter of Ugrasena.

But we must close our researches here, content to have obtained a few glimpses into the prehistorical development of Jainism. The last point which we can perceive is Pārsva; beyond him all is lost in the mist of fable and fiction.

Münster, Westphalia, 18th March 1880.