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Language Theory, Phonology and Etymology in Buddhism and their Relationship to Brahmanism

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The Buddha considered names of things and people to be arbitrary designations, with their meaning created by agreement. The early *sutta*s show clearly that *inter alia,* names, perceptions, feelings, thinking, conceptions and mental proliferations were all conditioned dhammas which, when their nature is misunderstood, led to the creation of a sense of 'I', as well as craving, clinging and afflictions. Although names were potentially afflictive and 'had everything under their power' (*Nāma Sutta*), this did not mean that they were to be ignored or even neglected; words were to be penetrated and thoroughly understood, as an essential instrument for liberation.

One of the problems of transmitting the Buddha's teachings was the large number of disciples who did not speak an Indo-Aryan language as their first language or spoke a dialect different from that of the Teacher. This also led to altered transmission of the *Vinaya* and *Sutta*s by disciples who could not hear certain phonological distinctions not present in their own language or dialect. Hundreds of these anomalies are preserved in the different editions of the canon, testifying to these transmission ambiguities. The passages dealing with this problem provide a valuable insight into the phonological issues that the early *saṅgha* had to deal with to try and preserve the integrity of the *sāsana.*

At the same time the etymological practices of Brahmanism were imported into Buddhism very early, probably from the time of the Buddha himself, to demonstrate the intellectual superiority of the Buddha and his teachings. Despite the Buddha's teachings on the arbitrary nature of language, the commentarial and grammatical traditions developed a sophisticated theoretical framework to analyse, explicate and reinforce some of the key Buddhist doctrinal terms. Also, an elaborate classification system of different types of names (*nāman*) was developed, to show that the language of the Buddha was firmly grounded in *saccikaṭṭha*, the highest truth, and that some terms were spontaneously arisen (*opapātika*), even though such a concept — that words by themselves could arise spontaneously and directly embody ultimate truth — was quite foreign to their Founder.

Keywords: Early Buddhism, language theory, phonology, etymology, *Bhagavā*, Brahmanism, Aggavaṃsa

Introduction

Unlike Brahmanism which held sound to possess ontic ultimacy, for the most part the Buddha treated sounds and the words associated with them as one of the six perceptions which had only conventional validity; that is, they result because of agreement, and often this agreement was flawed, as the word used had no true referent. The most persistent example of this delusion is the common word 'I' (*ahaṃ*) which is merely a sonic label referring to a bunch of rapidly changing processes which are impermanent, unsatisfactory and not under one's own control; that is, not suitable to be called a 'self'. Waking up to this delusion, and seeing reality as it is, disencumbers the individual from his/her attachments and leads to liberation.

The Buddha and his disciples were well aware that the misunderstanding of words led to ignorance (*avijjā*), confusion and delusion (*moha*), both in a practical and an existential sense. So significant attempts were made to safeguard the integrity of the *Buddhadhamma* transmission, especially in terms of its phonology, where meaning-altering mistakes easily occurred; this was at least in part due to the different phonemic structure of the non-Indo-Aryan languages spoken by many who were assimilated to Buddhist beliefs in the fifth century BCE and onwards (Levman 2016).

At the same time Buddhist etymological interpretations for exegetical purposes were quite loose in their analysis of word derivation, following the Brahmanical practice of taking all words back to a root or *dhātu*, often in a very fanciful fashion, based only on sonic association, not on connation. The major difference was not in the practice, but in the theory of whether the basic Vedic roots had any ultimate validity; the brahmans arguing for this position and the Buddhist against. Nevertheless some Buddhist thinkers did maintain that while many linguistic labels of composite entities had no referent beyond their parts and were empty of intrinsic meaning, others did have ultimate reality (like the Abhidhammic categories of mind, mental factors, matter and *nibbāna* in the Theravādin tradition).[1]

The Buddhist attitude towards words and language is ambivalent then, even contradictory. This article will trace some of these attitudes and theories from the *suttas* and commentaries through to the work of the grammarian Aggavaṃsa, in order to elucidate the Buddhists' changing views on phonology, etymology and language in general and its importance for understanding Buddhist thought.

The *Suttas*

Nāma-rūpa *(name and form)*

Name and form are usually considered to be the fourth *nidāna* or link in the chain of dependent arising, the Buddha's teaching that all conditioned phenomena are transient and arise in dependence on other conditioned phenomena; since all phe-

1. In the *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha*, §2 *Tattha vutt'ābhidammatthā/ Catudhā paramatthāto/Cittaṃ cetasikaṃ rūpaṃ/Nibbānam iti sabbathā.* Translated in Narada 2000: 25, 'The things contained in the *Abhidhamma*, spoken of therein, are altogether four-fold from the standpoint of ultimate reality: consciousness, mental factors, matter and Nibbāna.' The middle three aggregates (feeling, perception and mental formations) are included in *cetasikaṃ.*

nomena lack permanence and change continuously, they are also *dukkha*, that is unsatisfactory and dysphoric, and *anattā*, empty of a permanent self or of that which pertains to a self. These three *tilakkhaṇa*s ('three characteristics') are simply different aspects of the unfulfilling nature of our existence in *saṃsāra*, where we mistakenly believe that we are a 'someone' or 'something' that we are not. Form is our physical presence and *nāma* represent the three aggregates of feeling, perception, and mental formations (see S II 3–4); consciousness, the fifth aggregate, both conditions and is conditioned by name and form. In the *Mahānidāna Sutta,* name and form and consciousness are considered to be mutually dependent, with consciousness arising from name and form, then name and form arising from consciousness, hence:

> *Tasmāt ih' Ānanda es' eva hetu etaṃ nidānaṃ esa samudayo esa paccayo viññāṇassa, yadidaṃ nāmarūpaṃ. Ettāvatā kho, Ānanda jāyetha vā jīyetha vā mīyetha vā cavetha vā upapajjetha vā, ettāvatā adhivacana-patho, ettāvatā nirutti-patho, ettāvatā paññatti -patho, ettāvatā paññāvacaraṃ, ettāvatā vaṭṭaṃ vattati itthattaṃ paññāpanāya, yadidaṃ nāma-rūpaṃ saha viññāṇena aññamaññapaccayatā pavattati.* (D II 63[30]–64[2])[2]
>
> Therefore Ānanda, this alone is the cause, the source, the origin, the foundation of consciousness, namely name and form. Just to that extent one may be born, Ānanda, one may age, one may die, one may pass from one state of existence to another and be reborn; just to that extent is there a range of designation, just to that extent a range of language, a range of concepts, just to that extent is there a sphere of wisdom, just to that extent does the round turn, for the purpose of defining this world; that is, name and form accompanied by consciousness, a state of mutual conditioning occurs.

The close connection between names, perception and affliction is developed more explicitly in several other *sutta*s, where thinking and naming, and by extension language, are examined in terms of their potential for affliction. In the *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta*, for example, describing the three kinds of *atta-paṭilābha* ('acquired self') — the gross, mind-made and formless acquired selves — the Buddha says *imā kho Citta, loka-samaññā loka-niruttiyo loka-vohārā loka-paññattiyo yāhi Tathāgato voharati aparāmasan* (D I 202[7-9]), 'These are merely names, expressions, turns of speech, designations in common use in the world, which the Tathāgata uses without misapprehending them' (Walshe 1995, 169); that is they are just labels for composite, changing things, and not for things which exist in any ultimate sense, and the Buddha teaches a doctrine for abandoning and transcending these so-called 'selves' (*atta-paṭilābhassa pahānāya dhammaṃ desemi,* D I 195[30-31] and following).

In his exposition of this passage Buddhaghosa says (*Sumaṅgala-vilāsinī,* Sv 2, 382[20-28]):

> Imā kho Cittā *ti oḷāriko atta-paṭilābho iti ca mano-mayo atta-paṭilābho iti ca arūpo atta-paṭilābho iti ca:* imā kho Citta *loka-samaññā. Loke samaññā-mattakāni samanujānana-mattakāni etāni tathā loke nirutti-mattakāni vacana-patha-mattakāni vohāra-mattakāni nāma-paññati-mattakāni etānī ti. Evaṃ Bhagavā heṭṭhā tayo atta-paṭilābhe kathetvā idāni: Sabbam etaṃ vohāra-mattakan ti, vadati. Kasmā? Yasmā param' atthato satto nāma n' atthi, suñño tuccho esa loko.*

2. All references to the canon are from the Pali Text Society (PTS) editions and use their punctuation. The last four words (*aññamaññ̇a ... pavattati*) are an addition only in the Burmese.

> 'There are, Citta ... [quoting the main text as above]' the gross self-acquisition and the mind-made self-acquisition and the formless self-acquisition — the expression '*imā kho Citta ...*' is a name in the world, merely a designation, which has been agreed on. Likewise these are merely expressions of the world (*loke nirutti-mattakāni*), merely ways of speaking (*vacana-patha-mattakāni*), merely common expressions (*vohāra-mattakāni*), names and designations in common use in the world (*nāma-paññati-mattakāni*). In this way the *Bhagavā*, having explained above the three self-acquisitions, now says that all is merely a common way of speaking. Why? because for truth in the ultimate sense what is called a 'being' does not exist; empty and void is the world.

Buddhaghosa then continues this explication with a description of the Buddha's two ways of speaking conventional (*sammuti-kathā*), and ultimate (*parama-kathā*), which we will discuss in more detail below. This two-fold division was first introduced in the *Milindapañha*,[3] about 300–400 years before the Sv, and became a useful way of reconciling the Buddhist distrust for language with the need to transmit the teachings in a linguistic medium. More on this later.

Papañca *('mental proliferation')*

Mental proliferation is closely related to naming and perception. In *Sutta-nipāta* 874 (*Kalahavivāda Sutta*) the Buddha is quoted as saying 'Name and mental proliferation have their source in perception (*saññānidānā hi papañcasaṃkhā*)',[4] and these three terms occur regularly in the *sutta*s in the compound *papañca-saññā-saṃkhā* ('proliferation-perception-naming'), which has been variously interpreted.[5] In the *Madhupiṇḍaka Sutta,* the eye, form and eye-consciousness lead to contact, feeling, perception, thought and mental proliferation:

> *Cakkhuñ-c'āvuso, paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇaṃ, tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā, yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānāti, yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi, yaṃ vitakketi taṃ papañceti, yaṃ papañceti tatonidānaṃ purisaṃ papañcasaññāsaṅkhā samudācaranti.* (M I 111[35]–112[3])
>
> Dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition there is feeling. What one feels, that one perceives. What one perceives, that one thinks about. What one thinks about that one mentally proliferates. With what one has mentally proliferated as the source, perceptions and notions [born of] mental proliferation beset a man ... (Bodhi and Ñāṇamoli 1995, 203).

In the *Sutta-nipāta*'s *Kalahavivāda Sutta,* sensory contact is dependent on name and form (872; *nāmañ ca rūpañ ca paṭicca phass*ā), according to an abbreviated ver-

3. PTS, page 160: *Sammuti mahārāja esā: ahan-ti, mamāti, na paramattho eso.* Nāgasena talking to King Milinda, 'It is a mere commonly received opinion, O king, that "This is I", or "This is mine", it is not a transcendental truth.' (Rhys Davids 1890, 145).

4. Translated by Norman (2006, 109) as '... for that which is named "diversification" has its origin in perception.'

5. Bodhi and Ñāṇamoli 1995: 202, 'perceptions and notions [born of] mental proliferation; Thanissaro Bhikkhu 2002: 179, 'perceptions and categories of complication'; Tan, 2003: 107, 'proliferation of perception and conception'. *saṃkhā* (< Skt *saṃkhyā*) comes from the verbal root *khyā* which means 'to be named or announced, to make known, promulgate, proclaim, say, declare' *inter alia.* It means name, definition, conception, reasoning, etc.,

sion of the standard dependent origination sequence. In the *Nettippakaraṇa*, the proximate cause of perception is name and form.[6] In the *Nibbedhika Sutta* (AN 6.63), perception comes first and then ripens in expression.[7] In the *Sakkapañha Sutta*, the source of desire (*chando*) is thinking (*vitakka*) which is caused by this perceptual and conceptual proliferation (*papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*). Although the *sutta*s do not always put the causal sequence in the same order, there is an inextricable (apparently mutual) relationship between seeing, naming and the proliferation of thoughts leading to the notion of an 'I', craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*) and views (*diṭṭhi*), which of course always result in affliction.[8] Commenting on the phrase *pathaviṃ pathavito saññatvā* ('having perceived the earth as the earth') from the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* (M 1), Buddhaghosa says,

> *so taṃ pathaviṃ evaṃ viparītasaññāya sañjānitvā, 'Saññānidānā hi papañca-saṅkhā'ti vacanato aparabhāge thāmappattehi taṇhā-māna-diṭṭhi-papañcehi idha maññanā-nāmena vuttehi maññati, kappeti, vikappeti, nānappakārato aññathā gaṇhāti. Tena vuttaṃ:* Pathaviṃ maññatī ti. (Ps 1 25[31-36])
>
> Having known the earth with distorted perception, — as in [*Sutta-nipāta* v. 874], 'Name and mental proliferation have their source in perception' — and following that, with the strong proliferations of craving, conceit and views, spoken here through names and conceivings, one conceives, one creates, one fixes one's mind, and in various ways one grasps falsely. Therefore it is said, 'One conceives earth.'

The commentary then goes on to explain that a person conceives earth with the conceivings, 'I am earth', 'earth is mine', 'another is earth' or 'earth is another's' (*ahaṃ pathavī ti maññati, mama pathavī ti maññati, paro pathavī ti maññati, parassa pathavī ti maññati*). This leads to craving, conceit and views, internally, through misperception of the body parts which he or she becomes attached to and takes pleasure in. Then pride arises and he/she thinks 'I am better, I am the same, I am worse' (*seyyo 'ham asmī ti vā sadiso 'ham asmī ti vā hīno 'ham asmī ti vā*), and he/she becomes even more attached, identifying the body as being or possessed by self, 'This is mine, I am this, this is my self' (*etaṃ mama, eso 'ham asmi, eso me attā*). The process is then repeated externally and he/she generates desire for material goods.[9]

It is the objectification of the 'world' through conceiving, of which naming (*saṃkhyā*)[10] is an integral part, which leads to separation, desire and affliction. A

6. Nett 27: *aniccasaññā dukkhasaññā asamanupassanalakkhaṇā attasaññā, tassā nāmakāyo padaṭṭhānaṃ.* 'Perception of self has the characteristic of not seeing the perception of impermanence and the perception of suffering; its proximate cause is name and form.'

7. AN 3, 413[20-23]: *Katamo ca bhikkhave saññānaṃ vipāko? Vohāravepakkāhaṃ bhikkhave saññā vadāmi; yathā yathā naṃ sañjānāti, tathā tathā voharati 'evaṃ saññī ahosin' ti. Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave saññānaṃ vipāko.* 'I say that perception has a ripening in expression. Just as one perceives something, in that way one expresses it, "Thus I have perceived it"; this is called, monks, the ripening of perception.'

8. In the commentary on the *Paṭhamapaṭisambhidā Sutta* (A 7.38, A IV, 32[16]ff), for example, feelings (and the other aggregates) are grasped because of mental proliferation, perceptions are the source of views and thought the source of the conceit 'I am': *vedanātiādīni papañcamūlavasena gahitāni. ... saññā diṭṭhiyā mūlaṃ ... vitakko mānassa mūlaṃ vitakkavasena asmīti mānuppattito,* Mp 4[6-9].

9. A very brief summary of Ps 1, 26-27 (§59-62).

10. The word is spelled with the *niggahīta -ṃ-* and also with the velar (homorganic) nasal *-ṅ-(saṅkhā)*,

Tathāgata is free of all conceptualization and of all I-making, mine-making, and underlying tendencies to conceit.[11] *Ahiṃ-kāra* or *ahaṃ-kāra* ('I-making') refers not only to the process of generating the sense of an 'I' through illusory thinking and karma, but also to the actual verbal statement, 'I', an Upanisadic manifesto associated with the creation of the universe (*so'ham asmi*, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 13.1.4.1), which the Buddha turns upside down. In Buddhist thought, the I is not coterminous with the universe as in Brahmanism, but an artifical, delusory creation of something which has no ultimate existence. For further discussion see Levman 2014, 434–44.

As a label, 'I' refers only to the five aggregates which together make up the complex, inconstant process we call the individual. When they die, all that is left of any unenlightened individual — though something flows on to another existence, conditioned by karma — is the empty label of their name (Sn 808).[12] This is also why the answer to the well-known conundrum of what happens to the Tathāgata after he dies is, *na upeti*, 'it does not apply'. The Tathāgata is liberated from reckoning in terms of material form or any of the other aggregates (*rūpasaṅkhāvimutto kho Vaccha tathāgato,* M I 487[34]). He is 'profound, immeasurable, difficult to penetrate, like the great ocean' (*gambhīro appameyyo duppariyogāho seyyathā pi mahāsamuddo,* M I 487[35-36]). He is free of *saṅkhā,* naming or reckoning. This of course is one of the goals of Buddhist meditation. The highest meditation level, the cessation of feeling and perception (*saññāvedayitaniroha*), is attained by ceasing to form mental intentions and thoughts; as long as one continues to plan and aspire — which is at least in part, if not wholly a linguistic process [13]– one remains in a conditioned state. So in the *Dhatuvibhaṅga Sutta* (M I 40) cessation is attained through an absence of intentional mental formations or formulations towards either existence or non-existence (*anabhisaṅkharonto anabhisañcetayanto bhavāya vā vibhavāya vā*; M III 244[9]). This leads directly to non-attachment (*na upādiyati*), lack of fear (*na paritassati*) and *nibbāna* (*parinibbāyati*). The 'tides of conceiving' (*maññassavā*; M III 246[9]) are eliminated. There are nine of these *maññita*s (conceivings or illusions): 'I am', 'I am this', 'I will be', 'I will not be', 'I possess form', 'I am formless', 'I am sentient', 'I am not sentient', 'I am neither sentient nor not sentient' (M III 246[11-17]).

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but the meaning is the same; I use the spelling as it appears in the relevant PTS edition I am referring to.

11. M I 486[18-20], *Aggivacchagotta Sutta*: *Tasmā Tathāgato sabbamaññitānaṃ sabbamathitānaṃ sabba-ahiṃkāra-mamiṃkara-mānānusayānaṃ khayā virāgā nirodhā cāgā paṭinissaggā anupādā vimutto ti vadāmīti.* 'Therefore I say: "With the destruction, fading away, cessation, abandonment, renunciation, and letting go of all conceivings, all mental disturbances, all I-making, mine-making and underlying tendencies to conceit, a Tathāgata is free."'

12. *Jarā Sutta* of the *Aṭṭhakavagga,* Sn. verse 808:

    Diṭṭhā pi sutā pi te janā, yesaṃ nāmam idaṃ pavuccati: nāmam evāvasissati akkheyyaṃ petassa jantuno.

    'Those people whose name is called are both seen and heard; when they have passed away, it is just their name which will remain to be expressed.'

13. In the *Cūlavedalla Sutta* (M I 302), for example, one attains to the cessation of perception and feeling by first, the cessation of verbal formations, then of bodily formations, and then of mental formations. The verbal formations are defined in the Sutta (M I 301) as *vitakka-vicāra* ('directed and sustained thought'), the body formations are in and out breathing (*assāsa-passāsā*), the mental formations perception and feeling (*saññā, vedanā*). See Ps II 364.

Phonology

Teaching sāttham savyañjanaṃ, *together with its meaning and its sounds*

Although one of the primary goals of Buddhism was the elimination of mental proliferation caused by illusory perception and conceivings, the Buddha was of course equally aware that his teachings had to be correctly understood in the first place, before liberation could be achieved and conceivings and language transcended. So he enjoined his disciples to learn his technical definitions (*nirutti*) in the way he had taught them, and to make sure they understood what he was saying.[14] 'Beings perceive what can be expressed' the Buddha says in the *Addha Sutta* (*Itivuttaka*, 53^{24}–54^{2}), 'They take their stand on what can be expressed; not understanding what can be expressed, they come under the bondage of death.'[15] The practical problems of maintaining the purity of the *Buddhadhamma* transmission were left to his disciples. In the well-known syncope, the first part of which introduces the *dhammādāsa* ('mirror of Dhamma', D II 93–94), he says:

> *idha mahā-rāja Tathāgato loke uppajjati, arahaṃ sammā-sambuddho vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno sugato loka-vidū anuttaro purisa-damma-sārathi satthā deva-manussānaṃ buddho bhagavā. so imaṃ lokaṃ sadevakaṃ samārakaṃ sabrahmakaṃ sassamaṇa-brāhmaṇiṃ pajaṃ sadeva-manussaṃ sayaṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedeti. so dhammaṃ deseti ādi-kalyāṇaṃ majjhe kalyāṇaṃ pariyosāna-kalyāṇaṃ* sāttham sabyañjanaṃ, *kevala-paripuṇṇaṃ parisuddhaṃ brahmacariyaṃ pakāseti.* (D I $62^{24\text{-}32}$)
>
> Here, great king, a Tathāgata is born in the world, a noble one, fully enlightened, endowed with wisdom and virtue, well-gone, a knower of worlds, an unsurpassed guide of men to be tamed, a teacher of gods and men, an awakened one, a Blessed One. He knows fully this world with its gods, its Māras, its Brahmās, he knows this generation with its recluses and brahmans, with its gods and men, he knows this for himself, he has realized it and declares it. He teaches a dhamma that is good in the beginning, good in the middle and good in the end, *together with its meaning and its sounds,* and he makes known the religious life complete in its entirety, perfectly pure.

In his exposition on the meaning of *sāttham savyañjanaṃ,*[16] Buddhaghosa shows a sophisticated understanding of Indo-Aryan phonology[17] and the dhamma trans-

14. See Levman 2008–2009 for a fresh view of the controversial Vinaya injunction on *sakāya niruttiyā* where the author argues that the Buddha wanted his teachings learned in precisely the way he taught them, without alteration.

15. *Akkheyyasaññino sattā akkheyyasmiṃ patiṭṭhitā| akkheyyaṃ apariññāya yogam-āyanti maccuno||*

16. Ñāṇamoli (1991, 210) translates 'with meaning' and 'with detail'/ 'In spirit and letter' would be another possible rendition; i.e. the overall meaning of the words, plus an in-depth letter by letter, syllable by syllable analysis of how the meaning was derived. In the Sp (Vin-a), commenting on the same pericope from the *Verañjakaṇḍaṃ*, various glosses of this phrase are given, the most relevant of which is:

    saṅkāsanapakāsanavivaraṇavibhajanauttānīkaraṇapaññattiatthapadasamāyo gato sāttham, *akkharapadavyañjanākāraniruttiniddesasampattiyā* sabyañjanaṃ (Sp $127^{14\text{-}16}$),

    'With the meaning = because of the conjunction of the right word which is a designation clarifying, uncovering and making known the (right) explanation; with the sound = because of the attainment of the explanation of its derivation through syllable, word and letter.'

17. The Pāli phrase for 'phonology' was *akkhara-ppabhedo* ('kinds of sounds' or 'analysis of sounds'),

mission issues that resulted from a linguistically heterogenous *saṅgha*, which we will now turn to. The commentary on this section reads:

> sātthaṃ savyañjanan *ti, yassa hi yāgu-bhatta-itthi-purisādi-vaṇṇanā-nissitā desanā hoti, na so sātthaṃ deseti. Bhagavā pana tathārūpaṃ desanaṃ pahāya, catu-satipaṭṭhānādi-nissitaṃ desanaṃ deseti. Tasmā* sātthaṃ *desetī ti vuccati.*
>
> *Yassa pana desanā eka-vyañjanādi-yuttā vā sabba-niroṭṭha-vyañjanā vā sabba-vissaṭṭha-sabba-niggahīta-vyañjanā vā, tassa Damiḷa Kirāta-Savarādi-(var. Yavanādi)-Milakkhunaṃ bhāsā viya, vyañjana-pāripūriyā abhāvato avyañjanā nāma desanā hoti. Bhagavā pana*
>
> *Sithila-dhanitañ ca dīgha-rassaṃ*
> *Lahuka-garukañ ca niggahītaṃ*
> *Sambaddhaṃ vavatthitaṃ vimuttaṃ*
> *Dasadhā vyañjana-buddhiyā ppabhedo.*
>
> *ti evaṃ vuttaṃ dasavidhaṃ vyañjanaṃ amakkhetvā paripuṇṇa-vyañjanam eva katvā dhammaṃ deseti. Tasmā savyañjanaṃ desetīti vuccati.* (Sv 176[20]–177[8])
>
> '(He teaches the dhamma ...) together with the meaning and the sounds.' He does not teach (the dhamma) with the meaning of the teaching grounded in a commentary on rice-gruel, meals, women and men, etc. The *Bhagavā* has abandoned teaching of such a nature[18] and teaches lessons grounded in the four establishings of mindfulness. Therefore it is said, 'He teaches with the meaning.' But the dhamma instruction which is restricted to one sound, etc., or non-labial sounds or all unobstructed sounds or all nasalized sounds, that dhamma instruction is called 'phonetically indistinct' (lit: 'without sounds), because of the absence of a complete consonantal (inventory), like the languages of the non-Aryan foreigners, the Tamils (*Damiḷa*), the junglemen (*Kirāta*) and the aboriginal tribes (*Savara;* var, Yonaka, the Greeks); the *Bhagavā* said,
>
> Non-aspirate and aspirate, long and short, heavy and light, nasals. Connected and separated, non-nasal, in ten parts does the understanding of sounds consist.[19]
>
> Thus said, not having smeared the ten-fold division, and having expressed the sounds perfectly, he teaches the dhamma, therefore it is said, 'He teaches the dhamma together with the sounds.'

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glossed by the commentary as *sikkhā ca nirutti ca* ('phonology and word derivation', Sv 247[25-26]). *Sikkhā* (Skt *śikṣā*) of course has many different meanings, including being one of the six *Vedāṅga*s, which taught proper articulation and pronunciation of Vedic texts, so was not quite equivalent to the linguistic term phonology. Someone who was *vyañjana-kusalo* ('skilled in the consonants'), is glossed as *akkharappabhede cheko* ('skilled in phonology', Mp 300[15]), so *sāvyañjanaṃ* ('with the letters') essentially means 'phonologically correct.'

18. Because, the *ṭīkā* (D-a-ṭ 308[26]) says, it 'lacked the goal of deliverance (*niyyān' atthavirahato*)'.

19. For non-nasal (*vimuttaṃ*) see Sp (Vin-a) 1399[31], *anunāsikaṃ akatvā* ('not having produced a nasal'). Von Hinüber 1987 (2005), 113 (213) translates the *gāthā*'s last line 'this is the ten-fold division of the thinking of the sounds [of language]' on the basis of the *ṭīkā*: *evaṃ sithilādivasena byañjanabuddhiyā akkharuppādakacittassa dasappakārena pabhedo. Sabbāni hi akkharāni cittasamuṭṭhānāni yathādhippetatthabyañjanato byañjanāni ca.* 'Thus on account of aspirates, and the other sound types, one's understanding of sounds, [which is] the thought that gives rise to letters, is ten-fold; for all letters have their origin in thought, and sounds [also have their origin in thought], according to the intended meaning of the sound' (Author's translation which differs somewhat from von Hinüber's).

The commentarial tradition, then, was well aware of the possibility of misunderstanding the meaning of the dhamma because of consonantal confusion and specifically attributes this to the influence of indigenous language groups who learned Indo-Aryan as a second language and who interpreted the sounds they heard in terms of the phonemic structure of their own language. I have discussed this in detail elsewhere (Levman 2016), but here it may be said that Dravidian speakers, for example, had no aspirated stops nor distinction between voiced and unvoiced intervocalic stops in their phonemic inventory, to name only one example; it was therefore natural that in pronouncing IA (Indo-Aryan) words that contained such contrasts, they could be easily mispronounced, and these were prevalent enough to invalidate *kammavācā*s (official acts of the *saṅgha*, as outlined in the *Vinaya*), although they were tolerated in *sutta* recitation. This situation has been covered very thoroughly by von Hinüber 1987 (2005); the specific phonological mistakes that damage a legal proceeding (*kammavācā*) of the *saṅgha* are mixing aspirate and non-aspirates, and confusing nasal with non-nasal sounds.[20] Other indigenous language groups like proto-Munda and proto-Tibetan speakers experienced similar problems, depending on which phonemes were foreign to them, and one must remember that initially at least, the local non-Aryan population far outnumbered the Aryan immigrants, so their influence on the incoming language was pervasive and persistent.

The commentary specifically mentions four groups:

1. The Tamils or Dravidian speakers (Damiḷa);
2. The Kirātas who were known as 'junglemen', presumably one of the native tribes, living in the north of India (*uttarapatha*) and Nepal (Law 1943, 282); the language of modern Kiratis belong to the Tibeto-Burman linguistic group, and this may have been the case in historical times; like proto-Dravidian, proto-Tibetan also lacked phonemic distinction between voiced and unvoiced stops and aspirates vs. non-aspirates.
3. The Savaras, who were originally a mountain tribe in the Deccan and later referred to any 'savage' or 'barbarian' (Law 1943, 172; MW sv); although almost nothing is known about the ancient Savara language, a tribe called the Savara survives in India to this day, and are Munda speakers, *inter alia* lacking aspirate and vowel length phonemic distinction, the *v*-sound and possessing only one post-alveloar sibilant;
4. The Yavanas, or Greek speakers, who would have dated from after Alexander's conquests in the fourth century BCE. In the Greek *koine* prevalent during Alexander's time, voiced stops and aspirates were fricativized and vowel length was also non-phonemic. The Kirātas and the Savaras were perhaps related to the 'foresters' (*aṭavi*) mentioned in the Aśokan edicts (Rock Edict 13, section M) whom Aśoka 'pacifies and converts.'[21]

20. See von Hinüber 1987: 109 (2005, 207–208): *sithile kattabbe dhanitaṃ, dhanite kattabbe sithilaṃ, vimutte kattabbe niggahitaṃ, niggahite kattabbe vimuttan ti.*

21. See Hultzsch 1969, 69, section M: 'And even (the inhabitants of) the forests which are (included) in the dominions of Dēvānāṃpriya, even those he pacifies (and) converts. The Prakrit may be

The D-a-ṭ (*Līnatthavaṇṇanā*) has the following to say about the peculiarities of these language groups:

> Ekabyañjan' ādiyuttā *vā ti sithil' ādibhedesu vyañjanesu ekappakāren' eva vippakāren' eva vā byañjanena yuttā vā Damiḷabhāsā viya. Vivaṭakaraṇatāya oṭṭhe aphusāpetvā uccāretabbato* sabbaniroṭṭhavyañjanā *vā Kirātabhāsā viya. Sabbatth' eva vissajjanīyayuttatāya* sabbavissaṭṭhavyañjanā *vā Savarabhāsā [Yavanabhāsā, var.] viya. Sabbatth' eva sānussāratāya* sabbaniggahitavyañjanā *vā Pārasik' ādimilakkhabhāsā viya. Sabbā p' esā vyañjan' ekadesa -vasen' eva pavattiyā aparipuṇṇavyañjanā ti katvā* avyañjanā *ti vuttā.*
> (D-a-ṭ 308[28]-309[6])

> *Ekabyañjan' ādiyuttā vā ti* '(The dhamma instruction) which is restricted to one sound etc.', = restricted to just one form in regards to the sounds, starting with the non-aspirate ones (*sithilādhibhedesu*) etc., or is restricted to the [one] sound with variation, like the Tamil language. Or, like the Kirāta language with all non-labial sounds, it is to be pronounced without touching the lips which are to be kept open. Or like the Greek [Savara] language with all sounds unobstructed, [it is to be pronounced] with the employment of *visarga* everywhere.[22] Or, like the Persian foreign language, with all the sounds nasals, (it is to be pronounced) with nasalization.[23] Because all these sounds are just a portion (of the whole), because the sounds are defective in their articulation, they are called 'phonetically indistinct.'

It is not always clear exactly what linguistic peculiarities the author is addressing (the Greeks did not have *visarga*, although perhaps their mode of pronunciation had similarities to this phenomenon), and this is the first time we have encountered the Persian language as an adverse influence on Indo-Aryan intelligibility. The Tamil language which is 'restricted to one sound with variation' probably refers to the fact that Tamil contrasts with IA languages in having three coronal consonants (dental, alveolar and retroflex) and no sibilants. In any case, without trying to identify exactly the issues here (which I have discussed in detail elsewhere), it is clear that there were significant diffusionary influences on IA from other coeval languages, which often led to faulty transmission of the *Buddhadhamma.*

Etymology

The scrupulous phonological distinction between consonants was not a feature of Buddhist etymology, which by and large followed the Vedic *nirukta* practice (one of the six *Vedaṅga*s), evidently because of the large number of brahmans in Buddhism, whose previous training included traditional word derivation. In this practice one defined the meaning of a word by tracing it back to its *dhātu* (verbal root) which were considered the basic building blocks of the language (Kahrs 1998, 35–39). In fact, this is the way IA languages are structured, as virtually all nouns are derivable

found on page 67, section M: *ya pi cha aṭavi Devanaṃpriyasa vijite bhoti ta pi anuneti anunijapeti.* The word *aṭavi* is of Dravidian origin (Skt *āṭavikāḥ*, 'woodsmen, foresters')

22. An audible separation between syllables. Skt *visarjanīya*, lit. 'to be sent forth or emitted', 'name of a symbol in grammar (usually marked by two perpendicular dots [:] representing a hard and distinctly audible aspiration.' (MW)

23. Skt *anusvāra*, Pāli *anussāra*, and also *niggahīta*. 'aftersound, the nasal sound which is marked by a dot above the line [or below] and which always belongs to a preceding sound.' (MW).

from verbal roots with various prefixes and suffixes added; but Vedic (and Buddhist) *nirukti/nirutti* was very casual with substitutions and alterations of letters freely allowed, so that one word was often defined in terms of several different roots and meanings which had no cognate relationship; in fact this form of definition was actually encouraged and considered a mark of learning and virtuosity on the part of the commentator, ultimately going back to Yāska's practice in his *Nirukta*, the fifth or sixth century BCE treatise on the etymology and semantics of Sanskrit words.

The Buddha himself — who also may have been trained in the *Veda*s and *Vedaṅga*s — is believed to have practised this form of etymology, as in: his definition of a *brāhmaṇo* as *bāhitapāpo*, 'he whose sins have been removed', in Dhp 388, *bāhita* p.p. < *bahati,* 'keep away, ward off'); or his derivation of the word *rāja* ('king') from the verb *rañj* ('to please'; a king 'pleases people with his righteousness' *dhammena pare rañjeti,* D III 93[14];[24] or his linking *attā*, 'the self' to *atta*, '(views) taken up (by the self)' at Sn 787, 919 (< Skt *ātta*, past participle of the verb *ā + dā* 'to take'.[25] So, this had an honest pedigree in the Buddhist tradition, even if it was primarily a Brahmanical practice. Buddhaghosa of course was a brahman convert, so it is not surprising that he was well acquainted with *nirukti*; although he does not mention Yāska, he does quote Pāṇini in one of his etymological digressions (in his commentary on the *Maṅgala Sutta,* see below). Useful here will be to show Buddhaghosa's *nirutti* on the word '*Bhagavā*' to illustrate how fanciful the derivations can become and to provide some of the theoretical basis of the subject.

The earliest full etymology of the word *Bhagavā* occurs in the *Mahāniddesa*, a commentary on the *Sutta-nipāta,* which was composed no later than the first century BCE (Norman 2006, xxxiii) and perhaps as early as the early third century BCE (Norman 1983, 86), which would mean just over a century following the Buddha's death, for those who believe in the so-called 'short' chronology (which places his death around 400 BCE). Here, the *Niddesa* author — tradition ascribes it to Sāriputta — is commenting on a verse from the *Tissametteyya Sutta* (Sn. 814–23), where the *Bhagavā* is speaking to Metteyya about sexual intercourse, and the commentator composes a long digression on the derivation of the word *Bhagavā*, whose normal etymology is from the Skt *bhaga-vat* ('possessing good fortune, happy, glorious, divine, holy' < Skt verb *bhaj*, 'to distribute, grant, bestow, serve, honour, revere, love'); the nominal form *bhaga*, is simply a *kṛt* suffix *-a* added to the verb stem, which undergoes a (normal) change from a palatal stop to a velar one (*-j- > -g-;* Pischel §234; Whitney §216a). The *Niddesa* author identifies *Bhagavā* with this verb, including various prefixes, and its nominal/adjectival form *bhāgin*, as well as the verb *bhañj*, 'break, shatter, destroy'; the noun *bhava* (< *bhū,* to be), 'existence' and the past caus. participle *bhāvita* ('cultivated'). Of all these the only 'correct' derivation (that is by connation) is the first:

24. This appears to be an anticipatory echo of Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṁśa* 4, 12) *tathaiva so'bhūd-anvartho rājā prakṛti-rañjanāt,* 'It is exactly so in accordance with the true meaning he became king, because of pleasing (*rañjanāt*) his people.' Since Kālidāsa lived many centuries after the Buddha, presumably they both drew from a common *nirukta* stock.

25. The usual (and correct) derivation or *rājan* is from the root *rāj*, 'to rule'. P. *attan,* Skt *ātman* is usually derived from the verb *an,* to breathe or *at,* to move.

Bhagavā = a term of respect. Moreover *Bhagavā* = 'the destruction (*bhagga*)[26] of lust, the destruction of anger, the destruction of confusion, the destruction of conceit, the destruction of views, the destruction of obstacles, the destruction of afflictions.' 'He associated with (*bhajī*), he classified (*vibhajī*), he apportioned (*pavibhajī*) the jewel of the dhamma', thus *Bhagavā*. 'The *Bhagavā* is an end-maker of the states of existence (*bhavānaṃ*); his body, his morality, his mind and his wisdom have been cultivated (*bhāvita*)', thus *Bhagavā*. Or, 'The *Bhagavā* has kept company (*bhajī*) with the forests, woods and wildernesses, remote sleeping places, where there are few words, little shouting, with an atmosphere of remoteness, where men may stay in solitude, suitable for seclusion', thus *Bhagavā*. Or, 'The *Bhagavā* is a receiver of (*bhāgi*), robes, alms, lodgings, support for the sick, medicine, and requisites', thus *Bhagavā*. Or, 'The *Bhagavā* is blessed with (*bhāgī*) the taste of the goal, the taste of the dhamma, the taste of liberation, the taste of the higher morality, the taste of the higher mind, the taste of the higher wisdom', thus *Bhagavā*. Or, 'The *Bhagavā* participates in (*bhāgī*) the four *jhāna*s, the four infinitudes [love, compassion, empathetic joy, disinterestedness], the four formless meditations', thus *Bhagavā*. Or, 'The *Bhagavā* participates (*bhāgī*) in the eight liberations, the eight stations of mastery, the nine gradually ascending stages of meditation', thus *Bhagavā*. Or, 'The *Bhagavā* participates (*bhāgī*) in the ten developments of perception, the *kasiṇa* meditations, the concentration of mindfulness with in and out breathing, the concentration on the unpleasant (*asubha*)', thus *Bhagavā*. Or, 'The *Bhagavā* participates in (*bhāgī*) the four mindfulness establishment practices, the four right efforts, the four bases of psychic power (*iddhipāda*), the five faculties, the five powers, the seven limbs of enlightenment, and the noble eight-fold path', thus *Bhagavā*. Or, 'The *Bhagavā* is endowed with (*bhāgī*) the ten powers of a Tathāgata, the four self-confidences, the four analytical insights, the six super-powers, and the six '*buddha-dhammas*', thus *Bhagavā*. '*Bhagavā*' is not a name created by his mother, nor by his father, nor by his brother, sister, nor by friends and colleagues (*mitta-amacca*), nor by blood relations, nor by recluses or brahmans or gods. It is [a name] reaching to the end of (*anatikam*) liberation, at the root of enlightenment of Buddhas and *Bhagavā*s, a true designation, taken up along with the wisdom of omniscience, that is 'Blessed One' (*Bhagavā*) — so said the Blessed one to Metteyya.[27]

26. The Prakrit word *bhagga* can refer to three Skt words: 1) past participle of *bhañj* (Skt *bhagna*, P. *bhagga*), 'broken, shattered' 2) Skt *bhāgya*, 'fortune, good luck', P. *bhagga*, and 3) Skt *bhaṅga*, 'breaking, shattering, fracture, paralysis, decay, dissolution', P. *bhaṅga,* Amg *bhagga*; Kuiper 1948: 88, believes this word is derived from the Munda word *paṅgu,* meaning 'lame'. See also Mayrhofer 1963, vol. 2, 461; also p. 469 sv *bhanakti*, where he argues for a connection of *bhaṅga* with *bhañj, bhanakti,* whose past participle is *bhagna* (Whitney §957c).

27. Nidd 1, 142[25]–143[24]. *Bhagavā ti gāravādhivacanaṃ; api ca bhaggarāgo ti Bhagavā, bhaggadoso ti Bhagavā, bhaggamoho ti Bhagavā, bhagga-diṭṭhī ti Bhagavā, bhaggakaṇṭako ti Bhagavā, bhagga-kileso ti Bhagavā; bhajī vibhajī paṭibhajī dhammaratanan ti Bhagavā; bhavānaṃ antakaro ti Bhagavā; bhāvitakāyo ti bhāvitasīlo bhāvitacitto bhāvitapañño ti Bhagavā; bhajī vā Bhagavā araññavanapatthāni*[4] *pantāni senāsanāni appasaddāni appanigghosāni vijanavātāni manussarāha-seyyakāni paṭisallānasārūpānī ti Bhagavā; bhāgī vā Bhagavā cīvarapiṇḍapātasenāsanagilānapaccayabhesajja-parikkhārānan ti Bhagavā; bhāgī vā Bhagavā attharasassa dhammarasassa vimuttirasassa adhisīlassa adhicittassa adhipaññāyā ti Bhagavā; bhāgī vā Bhagavā catunnaṃ jhānānaṃ catunnaṃ appamaññānaṃ catunnaṃ arūpasamāpattīnan ti Bhagavā; bhāgī vā Bhagavā aṭṭhannaṃ vimokkhānam aṭṭhannaṃ abhibhāyatanānaṃ navannaṃ anupubbavihārasamāpattīnan ti Bhagavā; bhāgī vā Bhagavā dasannaṃ saññābhāvanānaṃ dasannaṃ kasiṇasamā-pattīnam ānāpānasatisamāpattiyā asubhasamāpattiyā ti Bhagavā; bhāgī vā Bhagavā catunnaṃ satipaṭṭhānānaṃ catunnaṃ sammappadhānānaṃ catunnam iddhippādānaṃ pañcannaṃ indriyānaṃ pañcannaṃ balānaṃ sattannaṃ bojjhaṅgānam ariyassa aṭṭhaṅgikassa maggassā ti Bhagavā; bhāgī vā Bhagavā dasannaṃ tathāgatabalānaṃ catunnaṃ vesārajjānaṃ catunnaṃ*

The theoretical basis for this etymology (*nirutti* or *nirvacana*) is given in some detail in Buddhaghosa's commentary on the *Maṅgala Sutta* of the *Khuddāka Nikāya* at Pj I (*Paramatthajotikā*) 106[27]–109[27]. It also contains an interesting introduction to the Buddhist theory of name origin, which is later developed by the grammarians.

> 'The Blessed One' (Bhagavā), this is a term for one with distinguished qualities, the highest of beings with honour and respect. As it is said,
>
> '*Bhagavā*' is the highest word, '*Bhagavā*' is the ultimate word
>
> He is suitable for respect and reverence, therefore he is called '*Bhagavā*'.
>
> For a name is four-fold: 1) *āvatthikaṃ* (MW: 'being in accordance with or adapted to the circumstances, suitable;' PTS: 'befitting, original, inherent;' CPD: 'denoting a period of life'), 2) *liṅgikaṃ*, ('having a certain characteristic') 3) *nemittikaṃ* ('produced by some particular reason or cause, occasional, special, accidental; based on attributes'), 4) *adhiccasamuppannaṃ*, ('spontaneously arisen, fortuitous, without a cause'). (Pj I 106[27]–107[5])[28]

Buddhaghosa does not appear to be arguing here is for a natural theory of name origin — the theory first presented by Plato in *Cratylus* — for a natural correspondence between sound and meaning (Levman 2000, 185–188). This theory views sound as a form of spontaneous emotional expression encapsulated in the very nature of the sound. The sound does not have meaning; it *is* the meaning of what is expressed, a sort of visceral isomorphism existing between the sound and the expression, like the affective warning or territorial calls of an animal; sound is not symbolic, it is a spontaneous expression inherent in the universe. This was the Brahmanical view, that sound is coeval with the formation of the universe and the goddess Vāc, wife of Prajāpati, is the Progenitrix, mother of the *Veda*s and according to various myths, source of the universe. As we have seen, the Buddha saw vocal sound as arbitrary; but centuries after the Buddha, Buddhist scholasticism developed its own essentialist theories for the origin of the names of things which come very close to Brahmanism. More on this later. This four-fold division of the origin of names is only one of the Buddhist classification schemes; there are several others. And when reading these, we should not forget the Buddha's teaching on names, that they conquer all (*sabbaṃ addhabhavi*), and have everything under their power (*Nāma Sutta*, S I 39). Whether they arise spontaneously (*opapātikena*) or artificially (*kittimena*), no being is free of a name or free of conditioning by a name.[29] There is no

paṭisambhidānaṃ channaṃ abhiññānaṃ channaṃ buddhadhammānan ti Bhagavā; Bhagavā ti n'etaṃ nāmaṃ mātarā kataṃ, na pitarā kataṃ, na bhātarā kataṃ, na bhaginiyā kataṃ, na mittā-maccehi kataṃ, na ñātisālohitehi kataṃ, na samaṇa-brāhmaṇehi kataṃ, na devatāhi kataṃ; vimokkhantikam etaṃ Buddhānaṃ Bhagavātānaṃ bodhiyā mūle saha sabbaññutaññāṇassa paṭilābhā sacchikā paññatti yadidaṃ Bhagavā ti, Metteyyā ti Bhagavā.

28. The following sections from Pj I have also been translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli in *The Illustrator of Ultimate Meaning* (1960, 116–120) and are repeated in his *Visuddimagga* (Vsm, 1975, 205–208). The gist of Ven. Ñāṇamoli's translation and mine are essentially the same, but sometimes the details are quite different, due to issues of diction, word derivation, sentence division, etc. I thank Peter Harvey for pointing out Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli's Pj I translation, of which I had been previously unaware.

29. Spk 1, 95[9-10]: even if one doesn't know the name of a tree or stone, its name is called 'nameless'

consciousness without name and form, there is no perception without names, nor contact, nor feeling. Naming indeed controls our lives, so it is essential we understand what we are dealing with. The commentary on the types of names continues with examples of each type:

1. 'Here a calf, a bullock, an ox yoked to the plough and such like are called āvatthikaṃ.'

The names are appropriate and befitting (*āvatthikaṃ*) because *vaccho,* calf (< Skt *vatsa*, 'yearling') is a calf; *dammo* (< Skt *damya*, 'to be trained') is a bullock; and *balibaddho* (< Skt *balivarda*, 'increasing strength') is an ox. That is, the words which name the entity also describe it in an appropriate manner; there is agreement between the meaning of the word and the meaning of the root from which it is derived; it is in that respect 'inherent' (*āvatthikaṃ).*

2. 'A mendicant, a student, a brahman, an elephant and such-like are called *liṅgikaṃ.*'

A mendicant is 'one who holds a stick' (*daṇḍī*); a student is one who carries his master's sunshade (*chattī*); a brahman has a lock of hair on the top of his head (a top-knot, *śikhā; śikhin*, 'one who has a top-knot'); an elephant is 'one who has a trunk' (*karī*, possessing a *kara*, 'trunk'). Here it is the characteristic which the entity possesses which determines the name.

3. 'One possessing the three superhuman knowledges or one possessing the six superpowers and such like are called *nemittikaṃ.*'

The *tevijjo* possesses the three superhuman knowledges (knowledge of past lives, knowledge of the passing away and the arising of beings; knowledge of the destruction of the afflictions); the *chaḷabhiññ̄o* possesses the six supernatural powers (levitation, the divine ear, knowing others' thoughts, recollecting one's past lives, knowing others' rebirths (divine eye), certainty of liberation). These names are produced by a cause, namely the noble eight-fold path. As a name, *Bhagavā* is *nemittikaṃ*, in that it is based on the Buddha's attributes which were produced by a cause, his commitment to liberation.

4. 'One who augments his glory (Sirivaḍḍhako) and one who augments wealth (Dhanavaḍḍhako) and such-like, paying no attention to the meaning of the word, are called *adhiccasamuppannaṃ.*'

Because they pay no attention to the meaning of the word (*vacana-attham-anapekkhitvā*), these names are a spontaneously originating occurrence. Elsewhere we learn that these are popular names of slaves, and therefore, although the names may be appropriate for their masters' aspirations, they are inappropriate to the slaves' station in life. Later we will look at a 'spontaneously arisen' naming which is closer to the Brahmanical conception of a name capturing the essence of the thing named.

(*Yassa pi hi rukkhassa vā pāsānassa vā 'idaṃ nāma nāmanti na jānanti, anāmako tveva tassa nāmaṃ hoti*).

The first three of the names above are 'truthful' (*sacchikā*) in that the name reflects the qualities of the thing named; the last category is *yad-icchakaṃ,* named according to one's wishes, with no relation to reality; they are conventional, that is *sammuti,* < Skt *sammata*, 'agreed upon' or < Skt *saṃvṛti* ('hidden, concealed'; see Levman 2014, 343–350). In the commentary on the *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta,* Buddhaghosa says that words like 'being, man, god, Brahmā, etc.', are conventional as their referents do not truly exist, while words like 'impermanence, suffering, selflessness, aggregates, elements, spheres, establishment of mindfulness, right exertion' are what is called an ultimate way of speaking.[30] And though the Buddha uses conventional speech which is ultimately false, he does not speak falsely, but according to what people can understand:

> Whoever is able to attain the victorious state of arahatship, with conventional instruction, when 'being' or 'man' or 'god' or 'Brahmā' are spoken, who is able to perceive, to penetrate and to be delivered, the *Bhagavā* speaks to him/her with the words 'being' or 'man' or 'god' or 'Brahmā', etc. Whoever is able to attain the victorious state of arahatship with ultimate discourse, when he/she hears a certain word like 'impermanence' or 'suffering', etc., who is able to perceive, to penetrate, to be released, the *Bhagavā* speaks to that person, starting with the words 'impermanence', 'suffering', etc. Likewise he speaks with conventional truth to a being who is on the way to enlightenment, he does not first speak with ultimate truth; but having woken up to conventional truth, he afterwards speaks with ultimate truth. And he does not first speak with conventional truth to a being who is being enlightened through ultimate truth. But, having become enlightened through ultimate truth, he later speaks conventional truth to him. But ordinarily the discourse of the one speaking ultimate truth first is of coarse form, therefore the Buddhas, after speaking conventional truth first, later speaks ultimate truth. Although they are speaking conventional truth discourses, they speak just truth (*saccam eva*), just reality (*sabhāvaṃ*) just non-falsehoods (*a-musā-eva*). Although speaking ultimate truth discourses, they speak just truth, just reality, just non-falsehoods.
>
> He spoke two truths, the Enlightened one, the most excellent of Teachers
>
> Conventional and ultimate; a third does not exist.
>
> An agreed upon expression is true, because it is an agreement of the world.
>
> An ultimate expression is true, showing the true characteristics of phenomena.[31]

30. Sv 2, 382[30-33]: *Tattha: Satto poso devo Brahmā ti, ādikā* sammuti-kathā *nāma.* Aniccaṃ dukkham anattā khandhā dhātuyo āyatanāni sati-paṭṭhānā sammappadhānā ti, ādikā paramattha-kathā *nāma.*

31. Sv 2, 382[33]–383[24]: *Tattha yo sammuti-desanāya: Satto ti vā poso ti vā devo ti vā Brahmā ti vā, vutte vijānituṃ paṭivijjhituṃ niyyātuṃ arahatta-jaya-ggāhaṃ gahetuṃ sakkoti, tassa Bhagavā ādito va: Satto ti vā poso ti vā devo ti vā Brahmā ti vā, katheti. Yo param' attha-desanāya: Aniccan ti vā dukkhan ti vā ti, ādīsu aññataraṃ sutvā vijānituṃ paṭivijjhituṃ niyyātuṃ arahatta-jaya-ggāhaṃ gahetuṃ sakkoti, tassa: Aniccan ti vā dukkhan ti vā ti, ādīsu aññataram eva katheti. Tathā sammuti-kathāya bujjhanaka-sattassa pana na paṭhamaṃ param' attha-kathaṃ katheti, sammuti-kathāya pana bodhetvā pacchā param' atthakathaṃ katheti; param' attha-kathāya bujjhanaka-sattassāpi na paṭhamaṃ sammuti-kathaṃ katheti, param' attha-kathāya pana bodhetvā pacchā sammutikathaṃ katheti. Pakatiyā pana paṭhamam eva param' attha-kathaṃ kathentassa desanā lūkh' ākārā hoti, tasmā Buddhā paṭhamaṃ sammuti-kathaṃ kathetvā pacchā param' attha-kathaṃ kathenti, sammuti-kathaṃ kathentā pi saccam eva sabhāvam eva amusā va kathenti, param' attha-kathaṃ kathentā pi saccam eva sabhāvam eva amusā va kathenti.*
>
> *Duve saccāni akkhāsi Sambuddho vadataṃ varo,*

This is one way of handling the problem of conventional vs. ultimate truth. Since the *Bhagavā* spoke it, and it leads to liberation, it is a truth, even if, as in conventional words like 'man' or 'being' the word does not correspond to an actual existing entity: *yaṃ kiñci subhāsitaṃ, sabbaṃ taṃ tassa Bhagavato vacanaṃ arahato sammāsambuddhassa* (A IV 164[7-9]: 'All that is spoken by the Bhagavā, the noble, fully enlightened one is well spoken', also quoted by Aśoka in the famous Bhabhra edict, in Prakrit: *e kecci bhaṃte bhagavatā buddhena bhāsite savve se subhāsite vā.* Bloch 1950, 154). This of course is something of a truism and does not really resolve the issue. The Buddha had to use some conventional discourse because it was too cumbersome to say 'my aggregates' when talking of personal identity; but he did not misconstrue such.[32] The commentarial and later grammatical traditions dealt with the issue by distinguishing between those words which were *sacchikā*, truthful in the sense that they referred back to a *dhātu* which accurately described the thing named, and those things which were not.

Continuing the etymology of the word *Bhagavā* in the Pj I:

> But the name '*Bhagavā*' arises by reason of his virtues (*guṇanemittikaṃ*), it is not created by Mahāmāya, by the great king Suddhodana, not by 80,000 relatives, nor by the gods starting with Sakka and Santusita; as the Ven. Elder Sāriputa said, '*Bhagavā*' is not a name created by his mother, etc., it is a true (*sacchikā*) designation, that is 'the fortunate one' (*Bhagavā*). They recite this *gāthā* in order to explain those virtues which the name encapsulates:
>
> Happy (*bhagin*), loving (*bhajī*), blessed (*bhāgi*), giving all details (*vibhattavā*),
>
> He has destroyed (the afflictions, *akāsi bhaggaṃ*), he is honoured (*garū*), he is auspicious (*bhāgyavā*), For the self who is well-cultivated (*bhāvita*) through abundant right conduct (*bahūhi ñāyehi*) One who has gone to the end of existence (*bhava-anta-go*), he is called '*Bhagavā.*' (Pj I 107[11-22])

The commentary then refers to the *Niddesa*, quoted above. Most of the derivations are founded on the verb *bhaj,* with the exception of *garū* (< Skt *gṝ*, 'praise, extol'), *bhāvita* ('cultivated' p.p. of *bhū* in causative) and the strange construction *bhavantago* ('gone to the end of existence' *bhava-anta-go*) which has some similari-

Sammutiṃ param' atthañ ca tatiyaṃ nūpalabbhati;

Sańketa-vacanaṃ saccaṃ loka-sammuti-kāraṇaṃ.

Param' attha-vacanaṃ saccaṃ dhammānaṃ bhūta-lakkhaṇan ti.

32. In the *Arahanta Sutta*, a god notices various monks using the term 'I' and wonders if they are *khīṇāsava* ('free from mental obsessions'), because the use of the 'I' designation is associated by the god with wrong view. The Buddha answers that they are free of afflictions, and are only following the conventions of the world; in the commentary Buddhaghosa says that they don't say 'The aggregates eat, the aggregates sit, the bowl of the aggregates, the robe of the aggregates', as this would be violating conventional discourse.

    Spk 1, 51[20-25]: vohāra-mattenā *ti, upaladdhi* (var. *apaladdhi*)*-nissita-kathaṃ hitvā vohāra-bhedaṃ akaronto 'ahaṃ, mamā' ti vadeyya. 'Khandhā bhuñjanti, khandhā nisīdanti, khandhānaṃ patto, khandhānaṃ cīvaran' ti hi vutte vohāra-bhedo hoti. Na koci jānāti. Tasmā evaṃ avatvā loka-vohārena voharatī ti.* 'With just an expression' (*vohāra-mattena*), having abandoned talk which depends on views, not violating conventional discourse one might say, 'I, mine'. It would be violating conventional discourse to say, 'The aggregates eat, the aggregates sit, the bowl of the aggregates, the robe of the aggregates', as no one would understand. Therefore not speaking thus, he speaks according to conventional discourse.' (*hitvā* in line 21 is only in the Burmese).

ties to *Bhagavā* sonically, but not cognate. The author gives one more *gāthā*, before proceeding to explain his/her etymological principles:

Further this is an additional analysis:

> Auspicious (*bhāgyavā*), fortunate (*bhaggavā*),[33] endowed with good fortune (*yutto bhagehi*), and giving full details (*vibhattavā*)), worshipful (*bhattavā*), he has renounced existences (*vantagamano bhavesu*), thus blessed (*Bhagavā*).
>
> Here, having understood the etymology in this way, 'Augment of a phoneme, the deletion of a phoneme' (var. the reversal of a phoneme) or insertion of a phoneme within a word like (the word) 'having a spotted belly' (*pisodara*), etc. it should be understood that, because he has produced happiness in this world and the world beyond, because he has crossed over the sea of perfections of giving and morality, etc., and has good fortune, therefore he should be called 'The auspicious one' and is called '*Bhagavā*'. Because he has destroyed (*abañji*) greed, hatred, delusion .... [here follows a long list of the afflictions which the Buddha has destroyed], therefore because of this state of destruction (*bhaggattā*) he is called the destroyer (*bhaggavā*) of these dangers and is called *Bhagavā* (blessed one).' (Pj I 107^{24}–108^{15})

The section of vowel-augmentation is actually a reference to Pāṇini 6, 3, 109 and it is amplified in greater detail at *Saddhammapajjotikā* 1, 264, a commentary on the *Tissa-Metteyya-sutta-niddesa* (the *Mahā-niddesa* discussed above). The Pāṇini section, with the Kāsikā commentary goes as follows:

> 'The elision, augment and mutation of letters to be seen in *pṛṣodara* [*pṛṣat-udara* > *pṛṣodara,* 'having a spotted belly', with *-t-* > Ø, *-a-* + *-u-* > *-o-*] etc., though not found taught in treatises of Grammar, are valid, to that extent and in the mode, as taught by the usage of the sages' (Vasu 1891 [1962], vol. 2, 1241).[34] '*varṇāgamo* (*varṇa* = vowel/letter/syllable — that is, phoneme, augment; per Apte *āgama* is 'the addition or insertion of a letter'), *varṇaviparyayaśca* ('phoneme reversal, inversion, transposition'), *dvau cāparau varṇavikāranāśau* ('and two further alterations/transformations and eliminations') *dhātos-tad-artha-atiśayena yogas-tad-ucyate pañcavidhaṃ niruktam*, ('the eminent connection of the meaning of that (word) with its root, is said to be the five-fold etymology').

The examples the commentary gives are all of elision and substitution.[35] The *Saddhammapajjotikā* section repeats these verses almost identically as follows:

33. Or 'destroying' (afflictions); see footnote 26 above.

34. The Pāṇini text is simply *pṛṣodara-ādīni yathopadiṣṭam* ('*pṛṣodara*, etc. as has been taught'). The *Kārikā* reads: *varṇāgamo varṇaviparyayaśca dvau cāparau varṇavikāranāśau | dhātostadarthātiśayena yogastaducyate pañcavidhaṃ niruktam ||* which is translated above.

35. The word *yathopādiṣṭam* ('in the manner before mentioned or described') = *śiṣṭairuccāritāni* ('articulated by the learned'). Thus *pṛṣad-udvāro yasya = pṛṣodāram*; *pṛṣad udvānaṃ yasya = pṛṣodvānam* ('extinguishing by a drop of water'). Here there is elision of *-d-*. So also *varivāhakaḥ* ('accomplishing waters') = *valāhaka* ('rain or thunder'). Here *vāri* is replaced by *va* and *la* replaces the *va* of *vāhakaḥ*; *jīvanasya mūtaḥ = jīmūtaḥ* 'nourisher, sustainer, cloud'); here *vana* has been elided; *śavānāṃ śayanam* ('bed of corpses) = *śmaśānam* ('cemetery'); here *śma* replaces *śava*; and *śāna* for *śayana*; *ūrdhvaṃ khamasya iti ulūkhalam* ('a wooden mortar') — here *ulu* replaces *ūrdha*, and *khala* replaces *khama*. *piśitāśaḥ* (Pisāca demon, *piśita-aśaḥ,* 'flesh-eating') = *piśācaḥ* (same); *bruvanto 'syāṃ sīdanti* ('proclaiming, they sit on it') *iti bṛsī* ('grass, the seat of a religious student of ascetic') — here *sad* takes the affix *uṭ* in the locative and *bruva* is replaced by *bṛ; mahyāṃ rauti*

Augment of a phoneme, or its inversion
And two further, alteration and elimination of a phoneme
That eminent connection with the meaning of the roots
Is said to be the five-fold etymology.[36]

So, as we have seen in the etymology of *Bhagavā,* etymology has a five-fold path. 1) augment of a syllable, letter or vowel (*bhagga-vā,* where *-g- > -gg-*). 2) inversion of a syllable, letter or vowel , that is, metathesis (*bhavantago,* where *-van* has been placed in the second syllable and *-tago* added to the end of the word). 3) alteration of a phoneme (*bhāgyavā,* where *-g- > -gy-,* or *bhattavā*, where *-g- > -tt-*). 4) elimination of a phoneme (*bhāvita*, where *-gav- > Ø* and *vit-* has been added, with an augment of *-a- > -ā-*). 5) And since all these derivations are connected with *a* root (not *the* root, that is, *bhaj,* but *any* root (*bhañj, bhū, gam,* etc that is sonically close after these alterations), the etymology is valid. The commentary then continues with illustrations of the five-fold *nirutti* (*Saddhampajotikā* 264[14-27]):

In this way, having understood the distinguishing features of linguistic derivation (etymology *niruttilakkhaṇaṃ*), the establishment of word meaning is to be known.

1. In this respect: *Nakkhattarājā-r-iva tārakānaṃ* ('like the moon among the stars'). Here, like the addition of the *ra* sound, the addition of a non-existent letter is called *vaṇṇāgamo.*
2. '*Hiṃsanā*' (harming): when '*hiṃso*' (harming), is to be spoken as '*sīho*' (lion);[37] the exchange of what comes before with what comes after (*heṭṭhupariya-vasena*, 'under-above') of existing letters (exchange of *h-* for *s-* and vice versa) is called *vaṇṇa-viparyiyāyo* (reversal/inversion or metathesis of a group of phonemes) [*hiṃso, = si(ṃ)ho* backwards].
3. 'A new kind of donation is given as alms' (*navacchandake dāne dīyati).* Here, the substitution of one letter for another, like the substitution of *-e* for *–aṃ* (in the example given) is called *vaṇṇa-vikāra* (alteration of a phoneme).
4. *jīvanassa mūto*, 'nourishing of life' = to be pronounced as *jīmūto* ('rain-cloud' or 'sun') is called the elimination of existent phonemes (*vaṇṇavināso),* like the elimination of *-va-* and *-na* (in *jīvana*).
5. 'Overcoming with harsh words, having struck me, you speak, boy' (*pharusāhi vācāhi pakubbamāno āsajja maṃ tvaṃ vadase kumāra*, Jā, 4, 47[12-13]). Here what is called 'eminent connection with the meaning of the roots' is a distinctive connection as is appropriate (*yathā-yogaṃ*) here and there, like the decla-

(*mahī-yāṃ rauti*, 'it sings') = *mayūraḥ* ('peacock') — here *mahī* is replaced by *mayu*, and the final *ru* is elided before the affix *ac.*

36. *Vaṇṇāgamo, vaṇṇavipariyāyo,*
Dve cāpare vaṇṇavikāra-nāsā,
Dhātūnam atthātisayena yogo,
Tad ucyate pañcavidhaṃ niruttiṃ (var. niruttaṃ) ti, Saddhammapajjotikā 264[10-13].

37. Pop. etymology relates: *sahana-to ca hanana-to, sīho vuccati,* 'because of his power and injury, he is called lion'.

> ration of the meaning *abhibhavamāno* ('conquering, overcoming') for the word *pakubbamāno* ('performing').[38]

Here are a few more instances of the of *Bhagavā* etymology using these principles that occur in the *Paramathajotikā*:

> Because the word fortune (*bhaga-saddo*)[39] manifests in six phenomena in the world, — mastery, virtue (*dhamma*), repute, glory, desire and continued exertion — and 1) he has the highest mastery in respect of his own mind, or, he is complete in all qualities honoured in the world beginning with the powers of minuteness and lightness, etc., 2) likewise he has supramundane virtue, pervading the three worlds (*loka-ttaya-vyāpako*), has attained the virtues in accordance with the truth, 3) his repute is completely pure, 4) the glory of all his major and minor limbs, complete in all respects, is able to generate a joyful mind, to lead people to be eager to see his physical body, and 5) He has desire (*kāmo*), so-called because of the achievement of the desired goal, through the fulfillment just like that (*tath 'eva*) of whatever desire he has wished for or desired, for his own or another's benefit. 6) his continued exertion (*payatto*) which is called right striving (*sammāvāyāma*) is the cause of the attainment of the condition of teacher to the entire world therefore, because he is endowed with these distinctions, he is called '*Bhagavā*', with the meaning 'He has these distinctions' (*bhagā assa santi*). (Pj I 108[26]–109[10])

This is simply taking the six synonyms for *bhaga* in the dictionary and showing how the Buddha possesses each one. The next section elaborates on what *vibhattavā*, means; *vibhatta* is the past participle of *vibhajati*, 'he divides, classifies, analyses' and *-vā* is an ending meaning 'possessed of' (< Skt *-vant* or *-mant*); *vibhattavā*, therefore means, 'one who gives full details'.

> Because he gives full details of all phenomena, starting with virtuous ones, etc., or he gives full details of virtuous dhammas, etc., starting with the aggregates, the spheres, the elements, the truths, the faculties, dependent origination, etc., or he gives full details on the noble truth of lack of fulfillment in the sense of suffering, being conditioned, torment, change; (full details on) arising in the sense of striving, causes, bonds, impediments; (full details on) cessation in the sense of escape, detachment, non-conditioning , the deathless; (full details on) the path in the sense of the causes leading out of *saṃsāra* and mastery of insight; that is to say, 'Having classified (all this), having revealed it, and having taught it', therefore he is deemed '*Bhagavā*' when it is said that 'He gives full details.' (Pj I 109[10-18])

The next passage derives *Bhagavā* from the word *bhatta* (< Skt *bhakta*, 'faithful, honouring, worshipping, serving, devoted'), past participle of *bhaj*, again with the suffix *-vā*, 'he who possesses devotion, worshipful' (*bhattavā*):

38. Which is in fact what the commentary (Jā 4, 47[16]) does do: *Tattha pakubbamāno ti abhibhavanto,* as well as glossing *āsajjā 'ti ghaṭṭetvā* ('having struck'). The word *pakubbamāno* is itself neutral. Notice that the participles (*abhibhavāmāno* in *Saddhammapajjotikā* vs. *abhibhavanto* in Jā) are different forms.

39. *bhaga* < *bhaj, bhajati* = 'luck, fortune, lot, happiness, welfare, dignity, majesty, distinction, excellence, beauty, loveliness, love. He is basically giving various synonyms of the term; *bhaga = issariya* (majesty or mastery); *bhaga = dhamma*; *bhaga = yaso* (fame); *bhaga = sirī* (glory); *bhaga = kāma* (love); *bhaga = payatta* (effort). See MW where he synonymizes it with *yatna, prayatna, kīrti, yaśas, vairāgya, icchā, jñāna, mukti, mokṣa, dharma, śri.*

> And because he has associated with, served and devoted himself to the divine Brahma noble abidings, detachment from the attachments of body and mind, the liberations of emptiness, desirelessness and signlessness, and other worldly and transcendental truths beyond the human, therefore he is deemed '*Bhagavā*' when it is said that 'He possesses devotion.' (Pj I 109[18-22])

And finally, in an ingenious twist of metathesis and other changes, *Bhagavā*, becomes *vantagamano* ('one who has renounced going [to existences]'):

> Because going, called craving, to the three states of existence (*kāma, rūpa, arūpa*) was renounced by him, therefore he is called *Bhagavā*, when it is said that 'He has renounced going to existences' (*bhavesu vantagamano*), and from the word existence (*bhava*) he has taken the *bha-* syllable, from the word going (*gamana*) he has taken the *ga-* syllable and from the word renounced (*vanta*) he has taken the *va-*syllable and made the *va-* syllables long (*vā*), just as in this world *mekhalā* ('girdle') is composed from me*hanassa* (male/female organ), kha (space) and *māla* (covering) [with the meaning, 'covering the space of the male/female sexual organ']. (Pj I 109[22-27])

The Buddhist etymology of *Bhagavā* then has approximately six different roots, not to mention their various grammatical forms and affixes (*bhaj, bhañj, bhū, vam, gam, gṛ*).

Aggavaṃsa's Saddanīti

Given the close connection between Buddhist and Brahmanical etymological theory and practice, it is not surprising that by medieval times, some essentialist thinking on etymology had crept into Buddhist thought, (despite the Buddha's firm refutation of this). In this last section we will briefly look at Aggavaṃsa's twelfth century work *Saddanīti,* which both reviews old systems of nominal classifications and formalizes some new ones, specifically the category of *opapātika-nāma,* 'naturally given name', which is similar if not the same as the Mīmāṃsā concept of *autpattika* ('inherent, eternal'), the assertion that a (Vedic) word has a natural connection with its meaning, which is eternal and infallible (Holdrege 1996, 120). But even leaving the question of Brahmanism's influence on Buddhist thought aside, Aggavaṃsa's treatment of name classification illustrates the continuing importance the Buddhist tradition placed on the correct understanding of name theory and etymology.

In Chapter 27 of the *Saddanīti* (*Suttamālā*), Aggavaṃsa reviews some of the classification system of nouns and names. In very broad outline there are two:

> In this respect 'name' pays homage (*namati*) towards the meaning and name bends the meaning (*nāmeti*, causes the name to pay homage) to itself. Names like *ghaṭa* ('water-pot'), *paṭa* ('cloth'), and whatever, themselves pay homage to the meaning of *ghaṭa, paṭa,* etc., because of the origin of the name of these words in a true [that is, conformable to the root] meaning. It bends each meaning to itself because of the impossibility of knowing the meaning when the name is not true. That name is two-fold, conformable to the meaning (*anvattha*) and on account of common usage (*rūḷhi*). (Sadd 878[14-19])

We have seen these categories before. *Ghaṭa* is a suitable (*anvattha,* CPD: 'conformable to the meaning, adequate, appropriate') name for a water-pot as people are always busy with it, filling it with water (< Skt root *ghaṭ,* 'to be busy with'); the word

paṭa may easily be traced to its root, *paṭ,* 'to wrap.' The word *rūlhi* (Skt. *rūḍhi*) refers to the popular meaning of a word by tradition or custom, not related to the root.

> At one end there is conforming to the meaning (*anvatthaṃ*) in words such as 'world' (*loka* < *lok,* 'to see', '*Buddha*' (< *budh*, 'to wake up, understand') etc. At the other end, according to common usage (*rūḷhkaṃ*), are words like *yevāpanā* ('reciprocal'), *telapāyī* ('oil-drinking'). Words like Sirivaḍḍhako ('increasing fame'), etc., when used with regard to slaves are common usage, or conformable to the meaning when used with regard to a ruler. Words such as *go* ('cow'), *mahisā* ('great lord'), etc. conform to the meaning (of the root), but are also the same as common usage, Because they are also used in other (words) of going, being, and lying down, etc. [where they do not relate to the root]. (Sadd 878[20-25])[40]

Then Aggavaṃsa takes these two categories and reinterprets them in terms of the categories *neruttika* ('formed or explained as formed from a root or a grammatical operation', Cone 2010, sv) and *yādicchakaṃ* ('whatever one wishes'). *Neruttika* is similar to *nemittika* ('arisen for a reason') which we encountered above in Buddhaghosa's commentary, but in this case, the cause is the grammatical root which the word is derived from:

> Likewise the name is two-fold: *neruttika* and *yādicchaka*. In this regard, what is called *neruttika*, having been formed based on (*paccayaṃ*) just root forms (*dhāturūpāni*) referring to perceptions (*saññāsu*) and after that, being formed by (other operations starting with) the augment of a letter (*vaṇṇāgamā*),[41] etc., it is called a name, which is perfected by the characteristics of the sound (*sadda*). What is called *yādicchakaṃ* ('whatever one wishes') is a name deprived of the meaning of the letters which has merely been formed according to one's wishes. (Sadd 878[26-30])

Neruttikaṃ is any etymological operation which derives the word from its root, including those roots which have been transformed, or altered according to the phonological rules discussed above. *Yādicchakaṃ* is the same as *adhiccasamuppannaṃ* ('uncaused, arbitrary'), where the meaning of the word does not agree with the meaning of its letters or root. As we saw above, calling a slave Sirivaḍḍhiko is an example of a name that is 'uncaused', not in the sense of *opapātiko* ('spontaneously arisen'), which we will discuss shortly, but uncaused in the sense of not related to the meaning of the root from which the word is derived; for there is indeed a cause, the master's anticipated reputation growth. Aggavaṃsa then goes on to give a three-fold definition of a name:

> Thus the name is three-fold: on account of *anvattha* ('agreeing with the true meaning, conformity with the meaning'), *kārima* ('artificial; adventitious; arbitrary'); *upacārima* ('metaphorical'). In this respect what is called *anvattha* is a name depending upon an etymological meaning; what is called *kārimaṃ* is a name assigned according to whatever one desires (*yadicchākata*); and what is called *opacārimaṃ* (Skt: *upacāra,* 'a

40. Why *telapāyī* is *rūḷhikaṃ* is not clear as *pāyī* comes from the root *pā*, 'to drink,' and *tela* < *tila* ('sesame seed') < *til* ('to be unctuous'). *yevāpāna* comes from the phrase *ye vā pana* (see PED) and is not derivable from a root.

41. This is a direct reference to the Pāṇini sūtra discussed above which Aggavaṃsa also quotes in §1343 (Smith 1930 [2001], 877).

> figurative or metaphorical expression') is an expression of the real nature of something which has not become that. (Sadd 878[30]–879[4])

The term *kārima* is another word for *adhiccasamuppannaṃ* and *yadicchakaṃ. Opacārimaṃ* is a new term, meaning 'metaphor', which may be described by Aggavaṃsa as *a-tab-bhūtassa tab-bhāva-vohāro,* 'an expression of the true nature of something (*tab-bhāva*) which has not become that (*a-tab-bhūtassa*)'. Sadd gives no examples here, but the common metaphor 'He was a lion' would fit the definition, as would any transference metaphor. The four-fold definition of a name follows:

> Thus the name is four-fold: *samaññā-nāmaṃ* ('a name given by general assent'); *guṇa-nāmaṃ* ('name of virtues or qualities'); *kittima-nāmam* ('artificial, made-up names'); *opapātika-nāmaṃ* ('naturally given name'). Here, having been authorized by the public in the first age, because it was arranged by them, the name of the king Mahāsammato ('Great honoured one') is what is called *samaññā-nāma.* For in that way 'the name occurred by common consent of the people, by designation' — which is called *samaññā-nāmaṃ.* (Sadd 879[4-9])

This name is a mixture of the *sammuti-sacca* we discussed earlier (a name by convention) and the *anvattha-nāma* (a name that conforms with the meaning of the root), as the meaning of the name accords with the meaning of the root.

> *dhamma-kathiko* ('one who expounds the dhamma), *paṃsukūliko* ('wearing robes made of rags'), *vinayadharo* ('expert in the Vinaya'), *tepiṭako* ('three baskets'), *saddhā* ('faith') *saddho* ('devoted'); a name which has been handed down in such a form because of virtuous qualities, is called *guṇa-nāmaṃ* ('name of virtue'). Several hundred names of the Tathāgata starting with *Bhagavā, arahaṃ, sammāsambuddho,* etc., are just *guṇanamāni.* (Sadd 879[9-13])

Earlier Buddhaghosa told us that the epithets of the Buddha were *nemittikaṃ* ('arisen for a reason'); the *guṇanāmaṃ may* be looked upon as the cause which produced the *nemittika-nāmaṃ.*

> After attending kinsmen have paid their respects to those worthy of receiving offerings on the name day of the prince's birth, after considering and deciding, saying 'This one is called such and such', they create his name — this is called *kittima-nāmaṃ* ('an acquired name, not necessarily connected with one's nature' Cone 2000 sv). (Sadd 879[13-16])

The *kittima-nāmaṃ* is similar to both the *adhiccasamuppanaṃ* and the *kārima-nāmaṃ*; the name is arbitrary and its root does not necessarily correspond with the nature of the child, which at birth, is probably unknown.

> But an earlier designation (*paññatti*) which occurs in a later designation, an earlier appellation/expression (*vohāro*) which occurs in a later appellation, namely: although in an earlier aeon, the moon was just called *cando*, at present it is also just *cando*; in the past the sun, the ocean, the earth, the mountain, were just called *pabbato* (etc.), today also they are just called *pabbato*' — this is called *opapātika-nāmaṃ* (naturally given name), whose meaning is 'a name whose nature (*sīla*) is to arise (*sayam eva upapātana*) just by itself'. (Sadd 879[16-21])

This is clearly not a Buddhist belief, for in the Buddha's teaching there is no such thing as an essential, unchanging nature in any phenomena (*sabbe dhammā anattā*)

The word moon (*canda*) is derived from the verbal root *cand* or *ścand* which means 'to shine, be bright' with the addition of a simple *-a kṛt* affix. Similarly *suriya* ('sun') is derived from the root *svṛ, or svar,* 'to shine' (Skt, *sūrya* > P *suriya* with addition of an epenthetic *-i-* and suffix); *samudda* (< Skt *sam-udra* ('with the waters') is derived from *udra*, 'water' < root *und,* 'to flow, spring forth' with addition of affix *sam-* and suffix *-a*; *pathavī* (Skt *pṛthivī* , 'earth') is derived from the < root *pṛth,* 'to extend') with affix (fem. ending) *-vī*; and *pabbato* (Skt *parvata*, 'mountain') is derived from the adj. *parvan* ('knot, joint') and suffix *-vat, parva-vat* ('possessing knots; knotty, rugged'), probably < root *pṝ,* 'to fill'. The above passage seems to be saying that these names occur and re-occur in different aeons, because that is their nature; this might be just another statement of *anvattha* (that the appellation is in conformity with the root; that is, a name that means 'to shine' appears to designate *cando* in one aeon, and then another name which also means 'to shine' appears in a later aeon), but it appears to go further than this and say that the very name *cando* (which means to shine) appears in one aeon and then the very same name *cando* reappears in another aeon; that is, there is something constant and immutable in the nature of the moon and its sonic representation that causes its appellation to manifest as the name *cando* in one aeon, and continue with the exact same name in later ones. This would reflect an essentialist theory of language origin, which is indeed the Brahmanical one, that sound is inherent in the nature of the universe and language — specifically Vedic — is its manifestation. In this view the gods spoke Vedic; a view which is echoed in many cultures including the Jewish belief that Yahweh spoke ancient Hebrew, and even enters into Pali cultural mythology in the story of the wild boy who grows up without language and any social influence in the jungle and spontaneously speaks Pali when he is exposed to language (Collins 1998, 49).

Although the word *opapātika* means, 'spontaneously born, without cause', it is in fact not generally used in that sense in the canon. For nothing in Buddhism is without cause or condition except *nibbāna*. *Opapātika* occurs in the common trope of the lay-followers who have been spontaneously reborn, typically in the pure abodes, by the destruction of the five lower fetters and gain *nibbāna* from that state without returning to this world;[42] but this is not without cause, as this rebirth occurs because of the destruction of the lower fetters and because the higher fetters still remain. The word also occurs in the description of the four types of birth, by egg, viviparous, by moisture, and spontaneously; the latter occurs with gods, hell-beings, some men, and some of those born in the lower worlds, and again are caused by past karmic actions.

This view of '*opapātika*' as a naturaly given name also appears in a commentary on *nāmarūpa* by Buddhaghosa, glossing the dyad *nāma-rūpa* from the *Saṅgīti Sutta* (D 33):

42. D II 92: *upāsako pañcannaṃ orambhāgiyānaṃ saṃyojanānaṃ parikkhayā opapātiko tattha parinibbāyī anāvattidhammo tasmā lokā*

> nāmaṃ are the four formless aggregates and *nibbāna*. Here the four aggregates are *nāmaṃ* with the meaning of 'bending, turning towards' (*nāmana*). 'With the meaning of bending, turning towards', = with the meaning of 'naming'
>
> For unlike the name (of the king) 'Mahāsammato' ('great-agreed upon', a king who lived in the beginning of the present age), who was selected by many because of the agreement of the people; unlike a mother and father, saying, 'Let this one be called Tissa, let this one be called Phussa' who in this way create an artificial name (*kittima-nāma*) for their son; or unlike a name stemming from qualities like 'One who expounds the dhamma' (*dhamma-kathiko*) (or), 'He who is expert in the discipline' (*vinaya-dharo*)' names do not occur in this way for (such names) as feeling, (and the other formless aggregates and *nibbāna*). For feeling and the other aggregates, like the great earth and the other elements arise, making a name for themselves. When they arise, just their name has arisen. For no one says to the feeling which has arisen, 'You be named feeling', nor does the feeling perform the action of taking a name. Just as when the earth has arisen, there is no name-designation, saying 'You be called earth.' And when the world-encircling mountains and Mt. Sineru and the moon, sun and stars arise, there is no name-designation saying 'You be called the world-encircling mountains, you be called the stars.' The name has just arisen; a naturally given designation (*opapātikā paññatti*) occurs. In this way when a feeling has arisen there is no name-designation, 'You be called feeling.' When it has arisen, it is the name 'feeling' which has just arisen. This is also the process with respect to perception and the other aggregates. For in the past, feeling was just feeling, perception just perception, mental formations just mental formations, consciousness just consciousness. Also in the future and in the present. And *nibbāna* is always also just *nibbāna*. Thus the name has the meaning of bending. And also here, what is called the four aggregates also has the meaning of bending, turning towards. For they bend towards the sense objects. (Sv 977[11–33])

So it is Buddhaghosa who appears to be the source of this strange notion of spontaneously originating names which arise as a naturally given designation in the past, present and future. Perhaps this is because the aggregates — in Theravādin orthodoxy — are considered truly existent, ultimate phenomena (see above, footnote 1). Aggavaṃsa then goes on to classify the name as five-fold, all of which categories we have already seen;[43] six-fold which classifies according to the form the name takes: that is, *nāma-nāmaṃ* (kinds of names),[44] *kitaka-nāmaṃ* (names from verbal roots with suffixes), *samāsa-nāmaṃ* (compound names), *tadhita-nāmaṃ* (names formed from other nouns with suffixes), *sabba-nāmaṃ* (words beginning with *sabba*), and *anukaraṇa-nāmaṃ* (imitation names); three-fold on account of gender; another

43. *yādicchakaṃ* ('as one wishes'), *āvatthikaṃ* ('inherent'), *nemittikaṃ* ('arising for a reason), *liṅgikaṃ* ('having a characteristic'), and *rūḷhikaṃ* ('popular meaning, common language').

44. *nāma-nāmaṃ* itself has a four-fold classification. Names like *ghaṭo* ('water-pot') and *paṭo* ('cloth') are called *sāmūhika* ('aggregating'), because this kind of name arises in a multitude of many materials; names like *vedanā* ('feeling'), *saññā* ('perception') etc., are individual names (*paccekanāmaṃ*), because each one arises depending upon a unique phenomenon (*ekekam eva dhammaṃ paṭicca sambhūta-nāmattā*); names like *deso* ('region country, spot'), *kālo* ('time'), *okāso* ('space, occasion, opportunity'), etc. are *vikappa-nāmaṃ* ('imaginary names'), because they arise on account of deluded thinking about phenomena which have no self nature; and names like *sitaṃ* ('cold'), *uṇhaṃ* ('heat') are *paṭipakkhika* ('opposed'), because they arise as mutually opposing opposites.

four-fold classification, most of which we have seen (*sāmaññā*, 'general assent', *guṇa,* 'virtue or quality', *kiriyā,* 'action name', and *yādicchakaṃ*, 'what one desires'); and eight-fold on account of the different vowels (Sadd 879[27]–880[14]).

Conclusion

The Buddha considered names to be an arbitrary designation, with their meaning created by agreement. It was not until well after his death that the distinction between conventional and ultimate naming developed, in the hands of his disciples. The early *sutta*s show clearly that *inter alia,* names, perceptions, feelings, thinking, conceptions and mental proliferations were all conditioned dhammas which led to the creation of a sense of 'I', and craving, clinging and afflictions. Although names were potentially afflictive and 'had everything under their power' (see the *Nāma Sutta* quoted above, page 37), this did not mean that they were to be ignored or even neglected; words were to be penetrated and thoroughly understood, and the Buddha's words were an essential instrument for liberation, even though eventually they too had to be discarded, along with anything else that one depended upon.

One of the problems of transmitting the Buddha's teachings were the large number of disciples who did not speak an IA language or spoke a dialect different from that of the Teacher. Constrained by misunderstanding of phonemes that did not exist in their own language, this also led to altered transmission of the *Vinaya* and *Sutta*s. The passages dealing with this problem provide a valuable insight into the phonological issues that the early *saṅgha* had to deal with to try and preserve the integrity of the *sāsana,* 'with its meaning and its letters'.

At the same time the etymological practices of Brahmanism were imported into Buddhism very early on — probably from the time of the Buddha himself — to demonstrate the intellectual superiority of the Buddha and his teachings. And, despite the Buddha's teachings on the arbitrary nature of language, the commentarial and grammatical traditions developed a sophisticated theoretical framework to analyse, explicate and reinforce some of the key Buddhist doctrinal terms. *Bhagavā* is one such example which we have discussed at length, and there are hundreds more in the commentaries. Also, an elaborate classification system of different types of names was developed, again to show that the language of the Buddha, his epithets and teachings were firmly grounded in *saccikaṭṭha*, the highest truth, even though such a concept — that words by themselves can directly represent truth in a non-symbolic fashion — was quite foreign to their Founder.

While the path can be expressed in words, the ultimate nature of what the Buddha saw, *nibbāna* and dependent origination (M I 167), was *atakkāvacaro*, beyond the sphere of thought (and therefore words), because words were simply agreed upon designations and did not capture ultimate truth in their 'sonic essence', as the word '*Oṃ*' was supposed to do in the Brahmanical tradition. Words could only point to the truth which must be experienced in meditative insight, a non-verbal understanding transcending words; they themselves had no inherent, unchanging essence. Therefore they cannot directly 'correspond' to reality, but only intimate the ultimate. 'Correspondence' indicates a harmony or equivalence found only in

the highest meditation stages (*anulomañāṇa*) beyond words. Words are dualistic and symbolic, pointing to something beyond themselves, and ultimate reality is beyond all dualities.

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Abbreviations

A	*Aṅguttara Nikāya*
Apte	*The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*
Cone	*Dictionary of Pāli* (Cone 2001–2010)
CPD	*Critical Pali Dictionary* (Trenckner, Andersen and Smith 1924–)
D	*Dīgha Nikāya*
D-a-ṭ	*Līnatthavaṇṇanā*
IA	Indo-Aryan
M	*Majjhima Nikāya*
Mp	*Manorathapūraṇī* (*Aṅguttaranikāya-aṭṭhakathā*)
MW	Monier Williams *Sanskrit English Dictionary*
Nett	*Nettippakaraṇa*
Pj	*Paramatthajotikā*
Ps	*Papañcasūdanī* (*Majjhima Nikāya-aṭṭhakathā*)
PTS	Pali Text Society's *Pali-English Dictionary*
Sadd	*Saddanīti* (Smith 1928–54)
S	*Saṃyutta Nikāya*
Spk (S-a)	*Sārattha-ppakāsinī* (*Saṃyutta Nikāya-aṭṭhakathā*)
Sn	*Sutta-nipāta*
Sp	*Samantapāsādikā* (*Vinaya-aṭṭhakathā*)
Sv	*Sumaṅgala-vilāsinī* (*Dīgha Nikāya-aṭṭhakathā*)
Vsm	*Visuddhimagga*

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