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IV.—BUDDHA AS TATHĀGATA.

One of the commonest designations of the Buddha is Tathāgata, explained as meaning one who has gone the way of all flesh, etc., and derived from *tathā*, "so", and either *gata* or *āgata*, "gone", or "arrived". How and why "so gone" came to mean the Buddha is, however, not obvious. Childers supposed that it meant at first any sentient being, as one who goes the way others go, and that Buddha was simply the sentient being *par excellence*, like Son of Man.

In the older parts of the epic there is not much difference, so far as connotation is involved, between *yathāgata* and *tathāgata*. In both the meaning lies upon the surface. As *pratijagmur yathāgatam* means "they returned as they had come" (Mbh. 3, 57, 40; cf. ib. 105, 19; 107, 8, etc.), so *Nalam dr̥ṣtvā tathāgatam* means "on seeing Nala in this pass", that is, "returned" (3, 77, 6); just as *tam apaśyaṅs tathāyāntam* means "they saw him so-coming", "returning" (3, 56, 23), as previously described, to where he had been before.

But as *tathāvidha*, "of such sort", through evil associations inclines to imply an unhappy sort (*vilāpantiṃ tathāvidhām*, "weeping, so wretched", 3, 59, 16), so *tathāgata* attaches itself by a sort of fatal predilection to what is ill, *tathāgatam pāpam upāiti siddham* (5, 42, 24), etc., so that, when the poet describes horrors, he sums up the description of a furious battle with a *tathāgate*, "in so (grievous) a condition" was the field of battle (7, 186, 18):

"Then darkness horrible, and noise profound—

"Nor earth, nor sky, nor anything around

"Was visible, so (grievous) was the pass" (*tathāgate*).

The same mournful association often characterizes *tathābhūta*. In Rā'n. 7, 30, 20 (South Indian text), Indra is very wretched, and Brahman, "seeing him in so (sad) a condition", *tathābhūtam*, says, etc. Less often does *tathā* tincture the fluid meaning of other compounds. But we may note its application in a few

cases. For example, a hero falls in battle "like a fire extinguished", and "seeing him so (sadly) fallen", *tathāpatitam*, his followers rally to his assistance (7, 49, 16).

But the connotation of *tathāgata* (when it has any) is always the same, whereas *tathābhūta* varies, so that the latter may refer to something good or bad. Thus a sacrifice *tathābhūta*, in R. 7, 93, 1, is a magnificent sacrifice; while a maid *tathābhūtā*, ib. 7, 2, 19, is in a very bad state indeed, the worst state a maid can be in. If this were true of *tathāgata*, one might say that the circumstances gave the implication. One who weeps is of course in a wretched state; one felled in battle is likewise wretched; and "in such a state" is all that the word means in itself. In that case, however, it would be used indifferently of joyous and sad states, like *tathābhūta*. But *tathāgata*, like the tower of Pisa, has leaned so far over in one direction that it does not recover itself. Or it is like "so so", neutral in form but unmistakably depreciatory in effect. "How is your health?" "Oh, so so", which means that sympathy is due. Thus "seeing the army *tathāgatam*" is "in so bad a shape", never in good shape (7, 90, 5). Similarly, of the individual warrior who faints and falls and is nearly dead; *taṁ vāi tathāgatam dr̥ṣṭvā*, "seeing him in so wretched condition" (7, 122, 57). It is almost as plain as the following *tathā kṛcchragatam dr̥ṣṭvā*, "seeing him in so miserable a pass" (7, 133, 37, and again in 7, 143, 31). No literal meaning suffices here. The hero is neither "gone" nor "returned". He falls where he stood, and in falling he gets into "such a state". This very English phrase approximates to the implication of the Sanskrit. "Such a state as I was in", could be said by one relating his misfortune only.

There is an instance, at 2, 47, 29, which might seem to be opposed to this, but in reality it is not:

*śriyam tathāgatam dr̥ṣṭvā jvalantim iva Pāṇḍave
amarṣavaśam āpanno dahyāmi na tathocītaḥ,*

"The Pandus' wealth has come to such a pass
That its refulgence burns me, who am wont
To feel not jealousy".

It is the rival prince, disconcerted by the horrible luck of his adversary, who is speaking. At most, this passage shows the neutral stage, which may be rendered by "come to such a pass".

Another neutral *tathāgata* in a different form is to be found at 2, 6, 4, also from the earlier epic :

*vayaṁ tu satpathaṁ teṣāṁ yātum icchāmahe, praḥho,
na tu śakyaṁ tathā gantuṁ yathā tāir nīyatātmabhiḥ*

“ We cannot *so go* as the old pious kings,
“ Although we yearn to walk the path they trod ”.¹

From this to the regularly “ miserable condition ”, of the battle-scenes, the word passes quite naturally into an adjective euphemistically used of the dead. The misfortune is sometimes formally stated to exist. When the man Ila suddenly became the woman Ilā, it was naturally embarrassing and a little difficult for him (or her), and we are so informed : “ This was a grand misfortune for him, beholding himself in so (wretched) a state ”, *tasya duḥkham mahac cāsīd dṛṣṭvā ’tmānaṁ tathāgatam* (R. 7, 87, 16).²

The meaning “ dead ” for *tathāgata* is found in both epics. In R. 5, 13, 28 (= 26), it is said of Sugrīva, “ If he sees Rāma dead, he will renounce life ”, *Rāmaṁ tathāgataṁ dṛṣṭvā tatas tyakṣyati jvītam*, just as in the following verses, “ will cease to live, if the king is dead ”, *pañcatvaṁ ca gate rājñi*. In the Mahābhārata : “ They went to the place where the king (lay) dead ”, *yatra rājā tathāgataḥ* (1, 125, 14). So in 12, 146, 26, where the fowler has caused the bird’s death : “ Then the fowler lamented and blamed his own act, on beholding the bird dead ”, *dvijaṁ dṛṣṭvā tathāgatam*. Finally, after the king and queen had been burned to death, it became noised abroad, “ and when they heard that Prthā was dead ”, *Prthāṁ śrutvā tathāgatām*, “ they lamented greatly ; and they lamented also the death, *niryāṇam*, of the king so sadly burned ”, *tathādagdham* (15, 37, 43). Here *niryāṇa*, exit, death, is really “ gone out ”, as

¹ For *tathāgata* as *tathā + āgata*, compare 5, 34, 20 : *anārabhyā bhavanty arthāḥ kecin nityaṁ tathā ’gatāḥ : kṛtāḥ puruṣakāro hi bhaved yeṣu nirarthakāḥ*, “ Not worthy to be undertaken are certain aims, so unattainable that human effort expended upon them would be useless ” (*agata* = *aprāpta*, unattained, unattainable). Yet the usual interpretation would suffice.

² His story told *yathāgatam* is in the Bomb. text *yathāgagamam* ; 7, 88, 4, of SI. Rām. has the same usage as Mbh. Compare *tathāgatām . . . rudatīm*, 6, 114, 89. In 5, 19, 9, *tathāviṣṭām*, describing Sitā wretched, is a doubtful reading, v. l. *athāviṣṭām*. Here also *ihāgata* is “ reborn on earth ” and *evaṁgate* is quae cum ita sint (7, 51, 20 and 30), “ in such a case ”.

tathāgata is "gone so" badly. One who is *tathāgata* is "a gone case", with which locution may be compared a "goner", that is, a person (or thing) lost past recovery; also a "feeling of goneness", as a feeling of faintness, may be compared with *tathāgata* of the fainting hero (above).

So far as I have observed, the cases where *tathāgata* is synonymous with *mṛta*, 'dead', occur only in distinctly later parts of the epic: in the scene of the king's death, which, involving the following Suttē scene, is undoubtedly not early, whatever one may think in general of the epic's analysis; in the Buddhistically flavored scene of the Fowler (Śānti); in the final catastrophe of Āśrama (both belonging in fact to the pseudo-epic); in one passage of the Rāmāyaṇa in Sundara; and in one late passage, where it occurs as the title of Buddha. In the earlier epic it has the meaning "come (go) so", or "to such a pass", or "come (go) so" (as one as gone), i. e. "returned". This is found in the Gambling-House scene (introduction) and in the old Nala episode. In the middle stage of the epic, represented by the fighting-scenes of Droṇa, as cited above, *tathāgata* is almost "dead", but not quite. In no passage here is the man so described in any other than a wretched but still living state; whereas in the pseudo-epic *tathāgata*, whether translated so or not (for one might insist that the word still meant "wretched", "in such a pass"), actually designates a dead person, as it does not in the earlier epic. As if to crown the epic use, occurs the passage to which I have already referred. After Jābāli has declared that the food given at a funeral feast is wasted, because there is no life beyond (R. 2, 108, 14 f.), the orthodox Rāma, outraged at such language, exclaims (ib. 109, 34, not in B, but in C, and in the Southern version):

*yathā hi coraḥ sa tathā hi Buddhāḥ,
Tathāgataṁ nāstikam atra viddhī,*

"Know that the Buddhist seems a thief;
"An (atheist) without belief, Tathāgata!"

If, as indicated by the extant Buddhist scriptures, Buddha actually designated himself as the Tathāgata, the word could not then have had its latest epic signification! There is, however, the chance that this was an euphemistic title bestowed upon him after his death by followers avoiding to say "dead"; which

would imply that the texts were written long afterwards, when the writers felt no incongruity in making Buddha apply the title to himself. Perhaps, on the other hand, it is more probable that the Buddhistic term is illustrated not by the latest but by the earliest epic use of the word, such as that in the passage cited above, *na tu śakyaṃ tathā gantuṃ yathā tāir niyatātmabhiḥ*, which implies that one who "can go", that is a *tathāgata*, is perfected, has walked wholly in the path of the good. A third possibility, that *tathāgata* (as cited above) means "so unattainable" (in virtue), seems quite improbable. Judgment may be left to students of Buddhism, *pramāṇam bhavantas*; but, on the surface, it is thinkable that two tendencies of the word united, and established Buddha both as the One Who is Perfect and as the One Who Died.

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