Any stigma that could be attached to the character of Vessantara by gifting his wife to another is removed by the intervention of Sakka in the guise of a brahmin. Vessantara, while fulfilling his desire to perfect his liberality is saved from any stigma that could mar his character. Gifting of Maddi becomes a mere act of symbolic value. But at the point of handing her over to the brahmin it was not an act of symbolic value either to Vessantara or Maddi but very much an act in real experience. At the end it is also revealed that the elephant, gifting of which caused so much heart burn to the people of Sivi, was restored by the people of Kalinga after the ending of the drought by its power. Thus the story ends with all parties fully satisfied with the exception perhaps of Jājakka, the old greedy brahmin and his wife. That is if she knew the sad plight faced by her unfortunate husband.

Popularity of the Vessantara Jātaka

The Vessantara Jātaka, which portrays the character of the Bodhisatta, in his penultimate human birth before the realization of Buddhahood, in his attempt at the perfection of the virtue of liberality, had become very popular among Buddhists especially in Theravāda Buddhist countries. Decades back, the Jātaka put into Sinhala verse, became very popular among Sinhala Buddhists in Sri Lanka. Later a stage drama based on it also became very popular in the country. Much later, in the recent past, a popular film was also produced on the story. In all these three important elements in the story have been highlighted. In the first place efforts are made to strengthen the great admiration Buddhist show for the massive sacrifices made by the Bodhisatta Vessantara in order to win Buddhahood for the sake of the suffering samsāric beings. Secondly the pathos evoking incidents in the story such as the banishment of Vessantara from his kingdom for the gifting of the elephant, gifting of the children and the hardship they underwent in the hands of Jūjakka, Maddi’s lamentation when she failed to find her children, are highlighted so as to attract sympathy towards them. Thirdly an element that became very popular is the character of the old brahmin Jājakka. Slavishly devoted to his young wife so as to undergo much hardship to find slaves for her and, ultimately dying in over eating unable to bear on the riches he had won, portrayed to evoke great mirth in the reader or the viewer. On the other hand he is also made a target of their anger for the harsh treatment meted out to the two innocent children. The whole treatment of the character of Jājakka also may contain an indirect criticism of brahmins, a subject so much loved by Sri Lankan Buddhist writers of the past.

Popularity of the Vessantara Jātaka is also seen in some of the Buddhist customs in Thailand, especially in the north of the country. In Chiangmai parts of the Vessantara Jātaka are read in some temples on the night of the Loi Kratong festival of lights. In North East Thailand the reading of the Vessantara Jātaka is the main feature of the three day, Bun Phraawes festival to which Phraa Uppakrut is invited to be the guardian of the ceremony which the devotees believe Phraa Uppakrut could do by subduing Mara kings who come to harm them.”

C. Witanachchi

References

VESSANTARA JĀTAKA See VEYSAVARNA

VESSAVAṆA See KUVERA

VEYYĀKARĀṆA or vyākaraṇa, “explanation” or “exposition”, is the third in a listing of types of text, aṅga, in early Buddhism (See also ANGA). The present article will at first survey occurrences of vēyyākaraṇa or vēyākaraṇa in the discourses in order to ascertain the range of meaning that inhere in the term, followed by examining its implications in the context of the scheme of nine aṅgas.

The term vēyyākaraṇa frequently stands for an explanation given in reply to a question, paññassā
vyākaraṇa (D. I, 223), which could be a reply given at the right time (D. III, 135), a reply made in regard to an appropriate question (S. II, 13), or a reply given in such a way as to satisfy the interlocutor (D. I, 118). Alternatively, a vyākaraṇa given in reply may also completely miss the point of the inquiry, a situation similar to discoursing about breadfruit when being asked about mangoes (D. I, 53).

The relation of vyākaraṇa to questions is close enough for the term to be part of a polite manner of asking permission to put a question, pucheyyāhaṃ... sace me... okāsaṃ karoti paṭihassa vyākaraṇaṃ (D. I, 51). The corresponding verb vyākaroti occurs in the Vimaṃsaka Sutta, I which describes how the Buddha would freely answer any inquiry about his own level of purity (M. I, 319; see also V'AMSĀKA SUTTA). The same term also forms part of a formalic introduction to a teaching given in accordance with the Socratic method, leading the audience via a series of questions to a certain conclusion, patipucchissi, yathā tatrampatipuccheva vyākareyyakī (M. I, 230).

To be capable in replying to questions appears to have been of considerable importance in ancient Indian debate, so that some debaters would devise their questions in anticipation of the replies the other might give, evam ca no paṭiḥ evam vyākarissati, (M. I, 176). According to the Brahmatīla Sutta, out of apprehension of such debaters some conclude and Brahmins would resort to evasive answers instead of giving a proper vyākaraṇa (D. I, 26). In an actual debate situation, however, once a proper question has been asked up to a third time a reply needs to be given. Failing to do so runs the risk that one's head will split into seven pieces, sahadhammiko paṭiḥ ągacchati, akām āvyākāabbo. Sace na vyākarissati... sattadā muddhaṃ phaliṣṣoti (D. I, 94). Another threat is that one who fails to give a vyākaraṇa in reply to a question asked by a yakṣha might be driven insane by the latter, have his heart split and be taken by the feet and thrown across the Ganges river (S. I, 207 or S. I, 214).

Nevertheless, improper questions can be set aside as being unanswerable (see AVY ĀKĀTA). Questions that should be set aside in this way, thapanāya, are one out of altogether four types of questions that require a corresponding mode of reply. The other three are questions that require a categorical reply, ekāṃsa vyākaraṇa; questions that should be dealt with through further analysis, vibhajjya vyākaraṇa; and questions where, before giving an answer, counter-questions are required in order to clarify the inquiry, patipucchā-vyākaraṇa (e.g. A. I, 197).

Vyākaraṇa may also denote declarations made by the Buddha about the rebirth attained by some of his deceased disciples (D. II, 200). A retired cakkavatti ruler may give explanations, vyākaraṇa, to his son on how to properly rule the kingdom (D. III, 65); or a god may reveal his identity by making a vyākaraṇa (D. II, 284). An epithet of the Buddha is that he is one who explains or expounds, vyākaraṇa (M. I, 386). Ability at vyākaraṇa is also a praiseworthy quality of a Brahmin, a context where the term stands for expertise in matters of grammar (Sn. 595).

A mode of teaching adopted by a particular teacher may be termed a vyākaraṇa (a. III, 125). Hence the proclamation of a particular view is a vyākaraṇa, be this a view held by a monk (S. III, 112), or by outside recluses, aṭṭhānīthiyānā nīparibhūjānāṃ... evam vyākaraṇaṃ hoti (S. IV, 392). The corresponding vyākaroti in the sense of a presentation of a view or opinion occurs in a standard inquiry from the Buddha about how to correctly represent his teaching without misrepresentation, katham vyākaram ināpana mayaṃ... vuttvavādino c'eva Bhavavato assaṃma (M. I, 482); or when the Buddha instructs his monks on how to properly reply to queries put to them by outside wanderers (S. IV, 138). The same term can also stand for instructions on the development of meditative insight and tranquillity (A. II, 94).

Frequently vyākaraṇa stands representative for a whole discourse. Such identification of a whole discourse as vyākaraṇa often occurs in the concluding section, when the discourse is given a title by the Buddha, or else when its effect on the audience is reported. Other instances are when the Buddha endorses an exposition given by a disciple, indicating that he would have explained it just in the same way, aham pi tam evam evam vyākareyyaṃ, yathā taṃ... vyākataṃ (M. I, 304).

In fact, a vyākaraṇa need not be prompted by a question, as the term can simply stand for a detailed explanation given of a succinct statement (S. II, 53). The notion of a detailed exposition may also underlie
a listing found in some discourses that includes questions, paññā, summaries, udāsas, and explanations, veyyākaraṇa, (S. IV, 299 or A. V, 50). Here veyyākaraṇa seems to stand for detailed expositions given in reply to a question or else in order to elucidate a summary. Alternatively, veyyākaraṇa could just be a succinct saying, such as the catuppadā veyyākaraṇa taught in the Kūṭīgiri Sutta (M. I, 480).

Another type of occurrence of veyyākaraṇa, where the term also stands for a relatively short saying, is as a declaration of having reached the final goal (S. II, 123). Not only an arahant, but also a non-returner might make such a formal vyākaraṇa of his or her attainment (A. IV, 211). The same is the case for a stream-enterer, who could proclaim that birth in lower spheres has been transcended forever (D. II, 93). A discourse in the Aṅguttara Nikāya distinguishes between altogether five declarations of final knowledge, aṭṭhāyavyākaraṇa (A. III, 119). These could be declarations made out of delusion; out of evil wishes; out of madness; out of overestimation; or in accordance with truth. Another discourse in the same collection describes how monks skilled in mind reading will be able to find out if such a declaration of final knowledge has been made in accordance with reality (A. V, 156). In addition to referring to such declarations, veyyākaraṇa may also stand for explanations on how the final goal has been reached (M. III, 30).

In sum, then, veyyākaraṇa or vyākaraṇa can stand for replies, expositions, explanations and declarations. Such explanations could be given in reply to a question, or else without being occasioned by an inquiry. In this way, veyyākaraṇa could stand representative for a succinct saying or declaration, for a whole discourse, or even for a particular view or way of teaching.

In the standard listings of the nine aṅgas, veyyākaraṇa is preceded by sutta and geyya, and followed by gāthā, udāna, itivuttaka, jātaka, abhutadhamma and vedalla (e.g. M. I, 133). According to the commentarial definition, here veyyākaraṇa stands for the Abhidhammapiṭaka, for discourses without verses, nīggaṁkham suttaṁ, and for anything not covered by the other eight aṅgas (M. I, 106). This commentarial explanation is not particularly helpful. To associate the Abhidhammapiṭaka with the aṅga listing is an evident anachronism, and a type of text that is not already included in some way or another under the other eight aṅgas would be difficult to find.

The suggestion that veyyākaraṇa stands for discourses without verses is not born out by those discourses that employ the term to refer to themselves, as several of these do contain verses. Thus the Sakkapāḷha Sutta repeatedly has verse sections (D. II, 265, 272, 285), even though the discourse concludes with imassa veyyākaraṇassa 'Sakka-pāḷha t'eva adhivacanam (D. II, 288). Another example is the Brahmamantipāṇika Sutta, which contains verses (M. I, 328 and 330), yet concludes with imassa veyyākaraṇassa Brahmamantipāṇika t'eva adhivacanam (M. I, 331). Thus the commentarial explanation of veyyākaraṇa as discourses without verses does not fit the actual use of the term veyyākaraṇa in the Pāli Nikāyas.

Veyyākaraṇa is not only part of the standard listing of nine aṅgas, but also occurs in abbreviated listings of the aṅgas. This is the case for a three-fold listing found in the Mahāvīraṭha Sutta, which reads suttaṁ geyyaṁ veyyākaraṇassa hetu (M. III, 115). The Chinese parallel also has only these three (T. I, 739c4), while a Tibetan parallel lists altogether twelve aṅgas, a listing often found in texts of the so-called northern traditions.

Another abbreviated listing occurs in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, which reads yadi suttasa yadi geyyasa yadi veyyākaraṇapo yadi abhutadhammaḥ, thus comprising only four aṅgas (A. III, 237). A six-fold listing can be found in the Karovibhāghopadesa, reading sūtraṁ geyaṁ vyākaraṇaṁ itivattāṁ gāthādānam. At least in the last case, the shortened list is clearly the outcome of textual loss, as the same text continues to speak of the nine aṅgas, evam navāṅgasaṁca.

Thus veyyākaraṇa or vyākaraṇa is clearly a central element of the aṅga listings. Yet, unless sutta originally had a meaning different from "discourse", it would be difficult to understand why veyyākaraṇa is mentioned separately, given that veyyākaraṇa regularly stands for a discourse. Moreover, in as much as some discourses that refer to themselves as veyyākaraṇa contain verses, it seems similarly difficult to draw a clear dividing line in relation to geyya (provided this term stands indeed representative for discourses that contain verses, as suggested by the commentary M. II, 106).
According to the Śrīvākaṇṭhī, a distinction between geyya and veyyākaraṇa can be drawn in as much as the latter corresponds to what has already been explained, nīṭṭhāna, whereas geyya stands for texts that still need explanation, nīyāyathā (on these two terms cf. A. I, 60). This explanation does not seem to match the full gamut of meanings of veyyākaraṇa in the Pāli discourses, as veyyākaraṇa does not always stand for an explanation that has its full meaning already drawn out.

An example in case is the Susīma Sutta, which reports the puzzlement of Susīma at hearing other monks making declarations, veyyākaraṇa, of final knowledge (S. II, 123). The remainder of the Susīma Sutta is devoted to drawing out the implication of the veyyākaraṇa that Susīma had been unable to understand, so that at least in this instance the veyyākaraṇa made by the monks was, from the perspective of the main protagonist of the discourse, clearly nīyāyathā, in need of further explanation. Another example would be the Kīṭāgīri Sutta, which uses veyyākaraṇa to refer to a succinct saying, the catuppada veyyākaraṇa (M. I, 480). Such a succinct saying would better fit the category of nīṭṭhāna, instead of being considered nīyāyathā. The same would also hold for a verse given as a veyyākaraṇa in reply to a question in the Kevaddha Sutta (D. I, 223).

Perhaps a solution to this conundrum can be found by seeing the nine aṅgas as overlapping categories. In fact, the difficulty of treating the aṅgas as neatly separate categories arises not only when trying to distinguish between suttas, geyya and veyyākaraṇa, but also in regard to the other members of the nine-fold listing. Perhaps the listings of aṅgas, whether these comprise three or nine, never intended to represent neatly separate categories. Instead, they may just have stood representative of the Buddha’s teaching as a whole.

To assume that the aṅgas were originally not intended as neatly separate categories would imply that they would not have been used as an organizing scheme for the purpose of oral transmission. That is, the distinction into aṅgas would be too indistinct for it to exert a determining influence on the oral transmission of the early Buddhist texts in a way comparable to the division into āgamas or nikāyas. Though to draw a line between a “long” discourse and a “middle-length” discourse, for example, is to some degree subjective, a distinction into four āgamas or nikāyas does not involve the degree of overlap that can be found between the nine aṅgas.

The account of the formation of the early Buddhist canon in the Dīpavaṃśa mentions the nine aṅgas in its description of how the Buddha’s teaching was divided into chapters and collections. The way this passage is formulated does not suggest a replacement of one system with another. Instead, it seems to refer to the nine aṅgas as representative of the Buddha’s teaching as a whole, which at this point of time was divided into sections for the purpose of facilitating its oral transmission.

In fact, if the aṅgas had been divisions of texts for memorizing or organizing purposes, one would not expect the implications of the individual aṅgas to be soon forgotten. Yet, from the explanation found in later works it seems as if subsequent Buddhist generations found it difficult to make sense out of them.

It is also difficult to imagine that some reciters would learn only the type of texts that correspond to a particular aṅga. The result of such an organization would defeat its very purpose, which is to develop divisions that are easily memorized and which provide each reciter with a representative selection of the teachings. Employing the aṅgas for this purpose would result in some reciters specializing on suttas, others on geyya or else on veyyākaraṇa, and again others would memorize abbhutadhammas or vedalles etc. The net result of such a division would be disproportionate portions of texts, which would not be representative of the teaching as a whole. Given that already the division into āgamas or nikāyas led to differences of view among the reciters that specialized on them, one might well imagine what would have happened if some reciters specialized on abbhutadhamma were to meet others proficient in vedalla.

In sum, then, instead of being an early system for dividing and transmitting the teachings that was eventually replaced by the division into āgamas or nikāyas, the aṅgas may have been just a listing of textual types. For such listings of textual types the considerable overlap between individual aṅgas would not have been a problem, since the purpose of the listing would just have been to comprehensively cover...
the whole variety of the early texts. For such a purpose, the only point of importance would be to make sure that everything is mentioned, for whose sake overlap will willingly be accepted. In contrast, the division into āgamas or nikāyas clearly reflects the exigencies of oral transmission, as it divides the corpus of texts into easily memorized portions.

To assume that the purpose and function of the āgās was merely to act as a representative of the teaching as a whole, without having practical implications for the division of labor among the reciters, would concord with the broad range of meanings of veyyākarana in the discourses, covering replies, declarations, expositions, discourses and ways of teaching.

Anālayo

References

1 For the sake of consistency, the reading vyākarotā will be adopted in this article throughout, though the texts at times read hyākaroti instead.
3 This is the case for the Brahmajīla Sutta (D. I, 46); the Sakkāpaṭha Sutta (D. II, 288 and 289); the Sampasādanā Sutta (D. III, 116); the Brahmanimantaṇika Sutta (M. I, 331); the Mahāppaccaya Sutta (M. III, 20); the Cūḷārāhulovāda Sutta (M. III, 280); cf. also S. IV, 107; the Chacakka Sutta (M. III, 287); the Tissamattā Sutta (S. I, 189); the Āvatokkāka Sutta (S. III, 68); the Khemaka Sutta (S. III, 132); the Āditta Sutta (S. IV, 20); the two Gilāna Sutras (S. IV, 47 and 48); the Dhammadakkapavattan Sutta (S. V, 423); the Gotamakaceiya Sutta (A. I, 276); the Aggikkhādpamapana Sutta (A. IV, 135); and the Devayānāpannā Sutta (prose after Sn. 765). Notably, only the Sampasādanā Sutta and the Khemaka Sutta are spoken by a disciple. Thus the scope of veyyākarana as a referent to a whole discourse is clearly not confined to discourses spoken by disciples.
4 T. stands for the Taishō edition.
8 Von Hinüber: "Die Neun Āgās, Ein früher Versuch zur Einteilung buddhistischer Texte", Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens, 38, 1994: 129 suggests that suttas could originally have intended just the pānimokkha-sutta, and thence come to represent the Vinaya. The commentaries indeed include the whole of the Vinaya under the heading of suttas (MA. II, 106).
9 According to Jayawickrama: "Buddhaghosa and the Traditional Classifications of the Pāli Canon", University of Ceylon Review, 1959: 12, āgās may "represent the ākkhāya-type containing stanzas punctuated with narrative prose".
10 Matsunami: Śrāvakabhūmi, Tokyo 1998: 228; yac ca sūtraṁ neyātham, ādam ucyate geyaṃ ... yac ca sūtraṁ nīyātham, ādam ucyate veyyākarana (the same work also takes geya to stand for text with verses and veyyākarana for proclamations about the rebirth of disciples); cf. also Ruegg: "Remarks on the Place of Narrative in the Buddhist Literatures of India and Tibet", India, Tibet, China: Genesis and Aspects of Traditional Narrative, Firenze 1999: 206
11 Jayawickrama op. cit.: 11 comments that "there seems to be a good deal of overlapping, for the same piece can belong to several of these categories at the same time", concluding that the āgās are "a mere description of literary types and not a division into water-tight compartments".
12 Dps. 31 (4.15): suttam geyāyam veyyākaram, gāludānītivattakam, jākabhūtavadeallaṃ, navādānān sattuḥ āsaraṇam, pavhibhātā mānā theri, saddhamma anvīnānām, viggapāsādākanāmātāma, samyutta ca nipātakam, āgamapitakam nīma, okasān suttasmattān.
VIBHAJJAVĀDA (1) : (Sanskrit Vibhajjavyādā or Vibhadyavādā) the "Doctrine which analyses or 'religion of logic or reason' according to the Pali Text Society Pali-English Dictionary. But Mrs Rhys Davids seems to prefer a rendering like 'to particularize' to this Dictionary rendering. She also uses the terms analyst, or particularist in the sense of vibhajjavyādā, a holder of the vibhajjavyādā conception. N.Dutt calls vibhajjavyādā teaching analytic and not synthetic. Anyhow vibhaja is the gerund of the verb vibhajati to distribute, divide, distinguish, dissect, divide up, classify, to deal with something in detail, to go into detail. (PED. s.v vibhajati).

In some places when certain questions were put to him the Buddha would reply that 'in this place' (ettha) he is a vibhajjavyādā but not an ekammapavādā. Such a statement in the Subha Sutta (M.II. 197) has been rendered into English by Miss Horner as, "On this point I, Brahmī youth, discriminate, on this point I do not speak definitively". Thus accordingly, at least in this context, the Buddha is one who replies discriminatively and not one who gives a categorical reply. Undoubtedly this reply given by the Buddha is based on one of the four types of questions differentiated by him according to the mode of replying applicable to each of them. Thus there are questions needing 1. a categorical reply (ekam̄sasāvyakaranīya), ii. a discriminative reply (vibhajjasāvyakaranīya), iii. a counter question as the reply (patipucchāsāvyakaranīya) and, iv. to be set aside without an answer (phapanāya-A.II.46). It is very clear from this and other discourses that the second type of answering a question is only one alternative and not the only one used by the Buddha. Thus the above discourse says-

"Skilled in the questions four they call a monk
Who knows to answer fitly thus and thus"

A monk has to be skilled in using all the four modes as the question demands. The Buddha calls himself a discriminator and not a generalizer in this particular context but not always. It is well known, for instance, how he left certain metaphysical questions unanswered as not profitable or useful for the realization of liberation from dukkha. It is also said that a person can be judged competent or incompetent if, in conversation, he replies questions fittingly in accord with these four modes of replying (ibid I.197). Buddhaghosa (DA II.567), in his discussion on mahāpadesas, has explained with illustrations how these four modes should be applied in answering questions.

Vibhajjavyādā Identified with Theravāda.

The Mahāvamsa (5.271-272), the Pali Chronicle of Sri Lanka, avers that the 3rd century A.C. orthodox Buddhist monks in the Mauryan Empire had styled the Buddha a Vibhajjavyādā. This was a period, according to this chronicle, when the Saṅgha had become flooded with numerous holders of heretical views. Aranhat Moggaliputta Tissa, the leader of the orthodox monks, who did not desire to commiserate with such heretical elements, had withdrawn from active participation in the affairs of the Saṅgha and lived in retirement in a forest hermitage. But he returned to the capital to help Emperor Asoka to revive the sagging conditions of the religion. Queried by him in conclave, each monk labeled the Buddha as, e.g., an eternalist, annihilationist etc. according to one's own views. But the holders of the true and correct views in accord with the Dhamma called the Buddha a Vibhajjavyādā, which was confirmed by Aranhat Moggaliputta Tissa. The Mahāvamsa Commentary (vol.1.240) explains that, because the Buddha was an analyst of the aggregates etc. he was a Vibhajjavyādī (khandhādīnavibhajjakattavibhajjavādī Sammāsambudho). This however seems to be a different proposition from what was discussed above. By analysing a person into aggregates (khandha) etc. the Buddha demonstrates the absence of a permanent entity or soul in a person. The aggregates etc. into which a person is analyzed are collectively
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VOLUME VIII

FASCICLE 3 : Vācā – Z hong a-han

2009