

## Reflections on the Teachings of Ahīnas Āśvatthi, with a Translation of *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* 2.419 and 2.421

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The teachings of Ahīnas Āśvatthi are set forth in one of the many stories told in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* (JB). In this article I will venture to translate portions of that story, and offer some reflections on the challenges and pleasures of reading this part of the JB. It is my hope that this article will draw attention to Murakawa’s editorial achievement with respect to the problematic text of the JB, and to the possibilities the JB may hold for shedding light on Brahmanical religious culture as it was experienced in ancient India.

### Introduction

Ahīnas Āśvatthi is the name of a character who appears in different contexts in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* (JB). He appears, for example, in JB 2.100 as a brahmin in the service of King Darbha Śātānīki, whom Ahīnas and another brahmin help through the power of sacrifice (Deeg 1993: 108; Koskikallio 1999: 316). In JB 2.122–24 Ahīnas Āśvatthi and other priests help their patron Keśin Dārbhya extinguish a rival by means of a *parikrī*, a kind of *soma* sacrifice (Deeg 1993: 107; Koskikallio 1999: 310). Ahīnas Āśvatthi appears in JB 1.285 as a court priest (*purohita*) who is displaced by a younger priest (Deeg 1993: 107; Koskikallio 1999: 311). He also appears in JB 3.350 as a ritual specialist and thinker (R. M. Smith 2000: 59).<sup>1</sup>

Brahmin, advisor, ritual specialist, priest who knows about a powerful *soma* sacrifice – these are some of the ways Ahīnas Āśvatthi is depicted in the JB. He is also depicted in the JB as a father and teacher whose words are worth remembering. Indeed, the whole of JB 2.419–26 tells of how Ahīnas Āśvatthi once taught his sons some important lessons to do with their sacrificial religion. That story, which I call the ‘Ahīnas teaching episode’, is the subject of this paper.

Caland translated the entire Ahīnas teaching episode (JB 2.419–26) into German nearly one hundred years ago (Caland 1919: 219–28, = §168). Since then scholars including Caland have translated fragments or commented briefly on parts of JB 2.419–

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<sup>1</sup> *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 3.10.9.10–11 tells of how the similarly named Ahīnas Āśvatthya went to heaven on account of his ritual knowledge, and achieved communion (*sāyujya*) with the sun; cf. Macdonell and Keith 1912, vol. 1: 51, 69. In *Atharvaveda Saṃhitā* (Paippalāda recension) 17.35 Ahīnas Āśvatthi comments on a rite (Bhattacharya 2004: 182).

26 in works published in English.<sup>2</sup> But as far as I am aware no one has published a detailed English-language account of the Ahīnas teaching episode, or translated significant portions of JB 2.419–26 into English. This paper, I hope, will be a small step towards these desirable goals.

My main interest in the Ahīnas teaching episode concerns: (1) the possibility that this episode reflects the way brahmin teachers actually spoke when they taught their students; (2) the possibility that this episode reflects the way brahmin students were sometimes confused by and dissatisfied with what they were taught; and (3) the parallels that can be drawn between parts of the Ahīnas teaching episode and parts of the *Tevijja Sutta*, an early Buddhist discourse. We will return to these points in the conclusion of this paper, but only briefly; for it may be that the Ahīnas teaching episode raises more questions than it answers.

### **Text and Context**

As a Brāhmaṇa of the Sāmaveda the JB is among other things a compendium of lore related to different kinds of *soma* rituals and the various chants and chant variations that Sāmavedic priests are supposed to perform during those rituals.<sup>3</sup> The JB is organised such that different sections of the text are devoted to different kinds of rituals (Vira and Chandra 1986: xiii–xvi; Murakawa 2000: 110–11), and in this the JB is not unlike other Brāhmaṇa texts. But the JB is generally regarded as one of the more problematic texts. This is because quite apart from its own idiosyncrasies, the manuscript transmission of the JB has evidently been quite corrupt (Oertel 1896: 80; Vira and Chandra 1986: vii–xi). Fortunately, Akiko Murakawa has helped to improve the situation by preparing, as part of her doctoral thesis, a ‘critical edition’ of the portion of the JB that is devoted to the *soma* ritual known as the *gavāmayana* (Murakawa 2007).<sup>4</sup> The Ahīnas teaching episode is part of the text Murakawa edited, and the translations below are based on Murakawa’s edition.

In order to appreciate the teachings of Ahīnas Āśvatthi it is necessary to bear in mind a few points about *soma* rituals in general and the *gavāmayana* in particular. Perhaps the most salient feature of *soma* rituals in general is that they are organised around ‘pressings’ (*savana*), that is, services in which the juice of the *soma* plant or an alternative is pressed out, offered to the gods, and consumed by the main participants in the ritual (Fujii 2011: 3). In a pressing service, different kinds of priests are responsible for different tasks. Yajurvedic priests, for example, perform the physical work of the ritual and make formulaic utterances (*yajus*). Ṛgvedic priests recite ‘praises’ (*śastra*)

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Caland 1931: 89; Gonda 1975: 323; Gonda 1984: 13–14, 20, 69; Hock 1989: 108; Heesterman 1993: 280 n. 111; Malamoud 1996: 203, 324 n. 23; Witzel 1997: 294 n. 161, 308 n. 258, 321 n. 340; Witzel 1999: 50; and Lubin 2005: 79 n. 5.

<sup>3</sup> The JB also deals with the *agnihotra* ritual and funeral rites (JB 1.1–65); see Bodewitz 1973.

<sup>4</sup> Murakawa calls her edition ‘eine neue ... kritische Edition des Gavāmayana-Kapitels des Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa’ (2007: i).

consisting of verses (*rc*) from the *Ṛgveda Saṃhitā*. The more musical Sāmavedic priests sing or chant ‘lauds’ (*stotra*) consisting of arrangements of verses from the *Sāmaveda Saṃhitā* set to prescribed tunes (*sāman*).<sup>5</sup> For Sāmavedic priests the *sāman* is the essential element in the ritual, and a major preoccupation of the Brāhmaṇa texts of the Sāmaveda is the setting of the right verse(s) to the appropriate tune(s) as the ritual occasion demands (Winternitz 1991: 164–65). The word *sāman* in general means the tune or melody to which a verse is sung or chanted, but it can also refer to the sung or chanted verse (Sen 2001: 118). With the complications of metre, interjections, and other factors, there is much more to the *sāman* singer’s craft than these brief remarks indicate; suffice it to say here that the work of Sāmavedic priests is a complex matter. We will see indications of this complexity in the teachings of Ahīnas, but technicalities will not be the focus of this paper.

Apart from time spent on preliminaries, the least complicated *soma* ritual lasts for a single day, over the course of which three different pressing services take place (Witzel 2005: 80; Fujii 2011: 3). But by altering the various elements which make up a daily *soma* ritual programme, priests could create different ritual programmes, and they could combine these into longer *soma* rituals lasting more than one day. Such is the *gavāmayana*. The exact form and duration of the *gavāmayana* may have varied according to the understanding of different Brahmanical schools, but primary and secondary sources tend to describe the *gavāmayana* as lasting for a year.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the *gavāmayana* is a year-long *soma* ritual made up of many shorter *soma* rituals, each with its own day(s) on which *soma* is pressed. Over the course of a *gavāmayana* there are many days on which pressing services take place, and many opportunities for the participating priests to perform their specialised functions.

The *gavāmayana* is generally held to be a member of the *sattra* class of *soma* rituals (Sen 2001: 63). Here again authorities differ on what exactly counts as a *sattra*, but in general the name *sattra* (‘session’) is given to *soma* rituals that last from twelve or thirteen days to a year or more (Sen 2001: 115; Monier-Williams 2005: 1138; Witzel 2005: 80). An important characteristic of *sattra* rituals is that priests conduct these rituals solely for their own benefit (Keith 1925, vol. 1: 290; Sen 2001: 115; Witzel 2005: 80). That is, in a *sattra* there is no patron apart from the participating priests, who are themselves the joint beneficiaries of the *sattra*. By means of a *soma* sacrifice, or a *sattra* in particular, human beings can gain a place in heaven (*Taittirīya Saṃhitā* 7.4.9.1 [tr. Keith 1914, vol. 2: 608]; Haug 1922: lv). But the risks involved in trying to carry out complicated *soma* rituals are substantial (B. K. Smith 1989: 106ff.), and it is priests who suffer if, after all is said and done, the *sattra* is defective (Keith 1925, vol. 1: 290).

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<sup>5</sup> Most verses of the extant Sāmaveda recensions come from the *Ṛgveda Saṃhitā* (RV) (Jamison and Witzel 2003: 69).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* 7.5.1–2 (tr. Keith 1914, vol. 2: 619–21); Sen 2001: 63; Murakawa 2000: 112–13; Murakawa 2007: vii.

The Ahīnas teaching episode, then, is part of the lore of the *gavāmayana*, a lengthy and demanding form of the *sattra* type of *soma* ritual. As such, the Ahīnas teaching episode both partakes of and contributes to the stupendous Brahmanical thought-world of sacrifice and related ideas including time, danger, opportunity, and knowledge. Some of these ideas come through directly in the teachings of Ahīnas Āśvatthi, but even where they are not explicitly mentioned they inform virtually everything Ahīnas says.

### Features of the Text / Teachings of Ahīnas

The text of the JB narrates the Ahīnas teaching episode as if it took place on a single occasion in the past. The text tells the story in three distinct phases. The first phase establishes the simple frame story in which the (three or more) sons of Ahīnas tell him they want to perform a *sattra* (JB 2.419). When they ask for his teachings on the subject, Ahīnas tries to dissuade his sons, pointing out the dangers in their proposed course of action. But the sons persuade Ahīnas to teach them, and in the second phase of the story Ahīnas does so by proclaiming seventeen maxims (JB 2.419). In the third phase of the story Ahīnas explains the maxims (JB 2.420–26).

Here it is worthwhile to preview and consider how the text presents the teachings of Ahīnas, and to think about how one might approach the translation of those teachings. As we will see below, the first maxim Ahīnas proclaims in JB 2.419 is: *ṣaṭsu sma pratiṣṭhāsu pratiṣṭhata*, ‘Always stand firm on the six firm supports.’ This seems to point to any number of ideas and statements, about ‘standing firm’ and the like, found throughout the Vedic corpus. But what does it mean? In JB 2.420 Ahīnas will explain: *yad vo ’vocam ṣaṭsu sma pratiṣṭhāsu pratiṣṭhateti nidhanavanti sma pavamānamukhebhyo mā cyāvayatety eva vas tad avocam ity*. I translate this as:

When I proclaimed to you, ‘Always stand firm on the six firm supports’, I really thus proclaimed to you: ‘Do not ever move those [chants] having a finale from the beginnings of the *pavamāna* [lauds].’

This explanatory statement, with its rather technical reference to Sāmavedic chants and terminology (a *nidhana* is a concluding chorus or ‘finale’),<sup>7</sup> is followed by more elaboration, which need not be examined here. It is worth pointing out, however, that with respect to translation, the word ‘said’ for *avocam* would be problematic in some of the other explanatory passages in the Ahīnas teaching episode. Therefore, to preserve a sense of the uniform syntactic framework according to which the explanation of every maxim begins, I have settled on the word ‘proclaimed’.

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. *pavamānamukhe* at *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* (PB) 4.6.14 (tr. Caland 1931: 58). On the association of *nidhana* (‘finale’, but also ‘settling down’, etc.) with the idea of stability in the PB, see Benedetti 2013: 41–42.

Turning to another example, in JB 2.419 Ahīnas proclaims the maxim: *daivyaṃ sma mithunam upeta*. The semantic range of the verbal form *upeta* (here probably from *upa + √i* rather than *upa + ā + √i*) and the noun *mithuna* is such that this maxim could mean any version of the following:

- Always perform / approach / turn towards the divine couple.
- Always perform / approach / turn towards the divine coupling.
- Always perform / approach / turn towards the divine copulation.

One could also translate *upeta* as ‘undertake’ or a similar verb, and *mithuna* as ‘mating’, ‘pair’, or ‘pairing’. Given the options, it is difficult know how the maxim should be translated. For help, one could look forward to JB 2.422 and see how Ahīnas there explains the maxim, which he does by saying: ‘*tha yad vo ’vocaṃ daivyaṃ sma mithunam upetety uccā te jātam andhasā (JS 3.3.1a) svādiṣṭhayā madiṣṭhayā\_ (JS 3.5.1a) \_ity ete eva vas tad gāyatrīāv avocam ity. etad vai daivyaṃ mithunaṃ yad ete gāyatrīāv.*’<sup>8</sup> For our purposes here I render this passage as follows, leaving *upeta* and *mithuna* untranslated for effect:

Now when I proclaimed to you, ‘Always *upeta* the divine *mithuna*’, I really thus proclaimed to you these [two] [verses] in *gāyatrī* [metre]:

*High above it was born through your stalk ...  
In the sweetest, most exhilarating ...*

This indeed is the divine *mithuna*, namely these [two] [verses] in *gāyatrī* [metre].

After more elaboration (not shown here), Ahīnas continues his explanation in JB 2.422 by saying *tasmād ete eva gāyatrīau kārye*, meaning:

Therefore it is these [two] [verses] in *gāyatrī* [metre] which should be performed.

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<sup>8</sup> Sanskrit text from Murakawa 2007. Here and elsewhere, her underscores indicate that sandhi has been resolved. Murakawa inserts intertextual citations into the text of JB 2.422, marking the *pādas* that the text quotes. The JB’s citation method is to quote just the *pratīka* (i.e. the first *pāda*) of the cited verse; but the whole verse is thereby invoked. Murakawa cites the *Jaiminīya Saṃhitā* (JS), but these *pādas* can also be found in similar or identical form at ṚV 9.61.10a and 9.1.1a respectively. For the translation of these *pādas* I adapt the ṚV translations of Jamison and Brereton (2014, vol. 3: 1282, 1235), whose artful rendering of Sanskrit case endings (as in e.g. ṚV 9.1.1a) does not always follow expected patterns. Cf. Caland’s translation of these *pādas* (1931: 274, 131), the first of which is quoted in PB 12.3.1.

Such lines are representative of the kinds of explanations found throughout JB 2.420–26, the explanatory portions of the Ahīnas teaching episode. As such they undoubtedly form part of the payload the episode is designed to carry: this is lore about how and why one is supposed to perform certain parts of the ritual. According to the explanation provided by Ahīnas, the *mithuna* in question turns out to be a pair of verses which should be performed (*kārye*). Based on this understanding, one could translate the maxim *daivyaṃ sma mithunam upeta* in JB 2.419 as: ‘Always perform the divine pair.’ However, I believe that one should not do this. As will become clear as we continue, an important feature of the Ahīnas teaching episode is that although the maxims proclaimed in JB 2.419 contain several words that trained brahmins would have associated with ritualist discourse, the maxims themselves are meant to be a blend of the cryptic and the platitudinous. They are meant to be somewhat obscure – a point which the text itself goes on to make. Because the maxims of Ahīnas can be interpreted in different ways, they generate a kind of narrative tension which is resolved (in perhaps unexpected ways) when Ahīnas explains in JB 2.420–26 what he meant in JB 2.419. The Ahīnas teaching episode is thus structured around the presentation and subsequent explanation of ambiguous maxims, and I believe that the translation of the maxims should not be overdetermined by what Ahīnas later says each maxim actually means.

To return to the maxim *daivyaṃ sma mithunam upeta* and how it should be translated: we do not have a word in English which by itself captures the semantic range of *mithuna*. Because the hearers or readers of the maxim at first cannot be sure what exactly *mithuna* means, connoting as it does a pair or the bringing together of a pair, I translate *mithuna* in what follows as ‘pairing’.<sup>9</sup> As for the verbal form *upeta*, here again the translator is faced with difficult choices. For the word *upeta* is used in four maxims, and it is doubtful that a word such as ‘perform’ is the best choice for all four, though such a translation is often appropriate for *upa + √i* in ritualist contexts (we should also keep in mind that *upeta* could be understood as a form of *upa + ā + √i*). Caland gets around the difficulty by using three different verbs for *upeta*.<sup>10</sup> While this may improve the readability of each maxim, I wonder if it does not alter the character, and sacrifice some of the deliberate obscurity, of the maxims. As alluded to above and as we will see below, the text itself tells us the maxims are obscure. Because the hearer or reader of the text hears or reads the same word *upeta* in different maxims, in what follows I shall translate all instances of *upeta* in the same way, as ‘attend to’. I hope this captures the flavour of what the sons are being told, without being too specific about what exactly the sons are being told to do.

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<sup>9</sup> Caland has ‘Paarung’ (1919: 222). Bodewitz translates *mithuna* in JB 1.306 as: ‘couple (or: pairing, copulation)’ (1990: 174).

<sup>10</sup> For the four instances of *upeta* Caland uses ‘begehen’, ‘begehen’, ‘einhalten’, and ‘angehen’, respectively (1919: 222, 223).

Similarly, I shall read the six instances of *meta* in the maxims as *mā ita* and translate them, save for one instance, as ‘do not depart’. The remaining instance of *meta* will be translated ‘do not go’.

In sum, I view the maxims as deliberately ambiguous proclamations which can nonetheless be related to what is probably a conservative social order and the ritualist concerns of its priests. This view, rightly or wrongly, informs my approach to translating the maxims, where viable alternatives call for choices to be made.<sup>11</sup>

### Translations

The translations below began as working translations undertaken primarily out of a desire to contextualise the way the rare word *añjasāyana* is used, in JB 2.419 and 421, to refer to paths ‘going straight’ to heaven (Shults 2013: 122). This, indeed, is why I have selected only these two portions of the Ahīnas teaching episode for translation in this article. The translations below remain works in progress, and one hopes that a more skilled interpreter of Vedic ritual literature will soon translate the whole of JB 2.419–26 into English. In the meantime I venture these translations in the hope of spurring debate and progress.

The relevant portions of Murakawa’s Sanskrit text are shown below, without the markers with which Murakawa annotated a large share of the words in her edition. In order to make clear how I am reading the text, I have opted to repeat the words of the Sanskrit text line by line with sandhi effects removed, and to translate the text in a line by line fashion.

#### *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa 2.419*

ahīnasaṃ hāsvatthiṃ putrā upasametyocus: sattrāyāmo vai bhagavo ’nu naś śādhīti. sa hovāca: maivaṃ vocata. durupadharṣo vai saṃvatsaro. yathā vai rathanābhāv arāḥ pratiṣṭhitā evaṃ vai saṃvatsare sarve mṛtyavaḥ pratiṣṭhitā. athaitad evaṃ brūtheti. te hocus: teṣāṃ vai tvam eva bhiṣag asi. tvam prāyaścittir anv eva naś śādhīti. tad dhāsyā priyam āsa. sa hovāca: \_evaṃ ced brūtha ṣaṭsu sma pratiṣṭhāsu pratitiṣṭhata. ṣaḍbhyas sma haritmatībhyo meta. catuścakraṃ sma pārayiṣṇuṃ samārohata. svargasya sma lokasya patho ’ñjasāyanān meta. saṃvatsarasya sma vyāptam atiplavadhvaṃ. daivyaṃ sma mithunam upeta. praspāṣṭāt sma sārthān mā hīyadhvam. acyutaṃ sma yajñasya mā cyāvayata. yajñasya sma śvastanam upeta. vācaṃ sma satyavatīm upeta. varṣiṣṭhān smājau yuñdhvam. uttarāvatīm sma śriyam upeta. svarge sma loke pratitiṣṭhata. grāmāt smāraṇyaṃ meta. jñānāt smāvīrbhāvān meta. daivyāt sma vivāhān meta. yajñāt sma metety. etāni hainān anuśāśāsa. te hocur: anu na idam aśiṣaḥ parokṣeṇeva. tathā no ’nuśādhi yathedaṃ vijānīyāmeti.

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Heesterman’s view that in the maxims ‘the identification of the phases of this *sattra* looks suspiciously like those of a *vrātya* campaign’ (1993: 280 n. 111).

*ahīnasam ha āśvatthim putrāḥ upasametya ūcuḥ:*

After coming to meet Ahīnas Āśvatthi his sons said [to him]:

*sattrāyāmaḥ vai bhagavaḥ anu naḥ śādhi iti.*

‘We truly want to perform a *sattra*, Revered One. Teach us.’

*saḥ ha uvāca: mā evam vocata.*

He said: ‘Do not talk so.

*durupadharsaḥ vai saṃvatsaraḥ.*

‘A [*sattra* which lasts a] year is truly a difficult venture to undertake.<sup>12</sup>

*yathā vai rathanābhau arāḥ pratiṣṭhitāḥ evam vai saṃvatsare sarve mṛtyavaḥ pratiṣṭhitāḥ.*

‘Just as spokes are set firmly in the hub of a chariot wheel, so all kinds of deaths<sup>13</sup> are set firmly in the [*sattra* which lasts a] year.

*atha etat evam brūtha iti.*

‘Yet about this you speak thus.’

*te ha ūcuḥ: teṣām vai tvam eva bhiṣak asi.*

They said: ‘Surely for those [many possible kinds of deaths] it is you who are the healer.

*tvam prāyaścittiḥ anu eva naḥ śādhi iti.*

‘You are the remedy. Do teach us.’<sup>14</sup>

*tat ha asya priyam āsa.*

That was pleasing to him.

*saḥ ha uvāca: evam ced brūtha ṣaṭsu sma pratiṣṭhāsu pratitiṣṭhata.*

He said: ‘If you say so. [Here is what you must know:] Always stand firm on the six firm supports.

*ṣaḍbhyaḥ sma haritmatībhyaḥ mā ita.*

‘Do not ever depart from the six gold-coloured ones.

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<sup>12</sup> The *sattra* which lasts a year is the *gavāmayana*, to which this part of the JB is devoted.

<sup>13</sup> Gonda has ‘deadly perils’ (1984: 14).

<sup>14</sup> *Prāyaścitti* is often used to refer to that which neutralises ritual mistakes and restores the integrity of the sacrifice. It is often translated ‘expiation’.

*catuścakram sma pārayiṣṇum samārohata.*

‘Always mount the four-wheeler,<sup>15</sup> [which is] able to convey to the other side.<sup>16</sup>

*svargasya sma lokasya pathaḥ aṅjasāyanāt mā ita.*

‘Do not ever depart from the path going straight to the heavenly world.

*saṃvatsarasya sma vyāptam atiplavadhvam.*

‘Always cross over that which is spread through the year.<sup>17</sup>

*daivyaṃ sma mithunam upeta.*

‘Always attend to the divine pairing.

*prasaṣṭāt sma sārthāt mā hīyadhvam.*

‘Do not ever be left out of the prominent company.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Caland inserted the word ‘Wagen’ in parentheses into his translation of this passage, suggesting that a kind of vehicle is meant (1919: 222). Olivelle defines *catuścakra* as follows: ‘This is an optional rite to be performed on a new- or full-moon day. It ... consists of four offerings’ (1999: 327).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Keith’s translation of *pārayiṣṇu* at *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* 1.5.11.5, ‘able to convey across’ (1914, vol. 1: 83).

<sup>17</sup> Caland translates *vyāptam* as ‘Ausfüllung’ (1919: 222); I follow Gonda (1984: 14) in reading *saṃvatsarasya vyāptam* as ‘that which is spread through the year’. This is evidently a reference to the *gavāmayana*, the *sattra* in question, which one must safely navigate or ‘cross over’.

<sup>18</sup> I read *√hā* with a range of possible meanings including ‘be excluded from’, ‘be detached from’, and ‘be left behind’ (Caland has ‘zurückbleiben’). If *sārtha* means a kind of group (Caland has ‘Schaar’, followed by a question mark), the rare expression *pra + spaṣṭa* suggests a group that is very visible or distinct, or perhaps ‘forthright’; *prasaṣṭa* appears as a variant reading of *praphulla* (‘blooming forth’) in one manuscript of the *Brahma Purāṇa* (Schreiner and Söhnen 1987: 589 n. 6). The explanation in JB 2.423 equates *prasaṣṭaḥ sārthaḥ* with the *bṛhat* and *rathantara*, two tunes/chants said to help one through the wilderness (of the pressing services) as a warrior helps one through the wilderness. JB 2.423 continues: ‘Now, where [someone] goes through the jungle with a kṣatriya, what non-Aryan notices him there ...’ (Hock 1989: 108). According to Witzel (1999: 50), the text of JB 2.423 ‘insists on Kṣatriya accompaniment during travel, necessary to keep the Dasyu at bay’ and turn them *madhu*, ‘sweet’. The maxim is thus explained by the idea of being noticed by potential enemies who become ‘sweet’ if one is seen in the company of a warrior. According to Caland (1931: 89) the motif of travelling in a company extends into JB 2.424: ‘... these two raisings of the gaurivīta wander (before the journeying troop) (as) the two (persons) that look out for a stopping-place’.

*acyutam sma yajñasya mā cyāvayata.*

‘Do not ever move the immovable [part] of the sacrifice.’<sup>19</sup>

*yajñasya sma śvasthanam upeta.*

‘Always attend to the next day of the sacrifice.’

*vācam sma satyavatīm upeta.*

‘Always attend to truthful speech.’

*varṣiṣṭhān sma ājau yuñdhvam.*

‘Always harness [yourselves to] the best ones in the race.’<sup>20</sup>

*uttarāvatīm sma śriyam upeta.*

‘Always attend to the superior glory.’

*svarge sma loke pratitiṣṭhata.*

‘Always stand firm in the heavenly world.’

*grāmāt sma aranyam mā ita.*

‘Do not ever go from the village to the forest.’

*jñānāt sma āvirbhāvāt mā ita.*

‘Do not ever depart from knowledge, being manifest.’<sup>21</sup>

*daivyāt sma vivāhāt mā ita.*

‘Do not ever depart from the divine marriage.’

*yajñāt sma mā ita iti.*

‘Do not ever depart from the sacrifice.’

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. *yád ácyutam* in ṚV 6.15.1d: ‘... the embryo eats just what is immovable’ (Jamison and Brereton 2014, vol. 2: 789). In *Atharvaveda Saṃhitā* (Śaunaka recension) 12.3.35 we find *ácyutaṃ tvā devátās cyāvayantu*, ‘thee that art unmoved let the deities make to move (cyu)’ – wording that is said in other contexts to accompany ‘the removal of the vessel’ or ‘the insertion of the end of the sacrificial post in the ground’ (Whitney 1905, vol. 2: 689).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Baudhāyana Śrautasūtra* 14.17: *tān brūyād yuñdhvam iti*, ‘one should say ... “Do you yoke them”’ (Kashikar 2003, vol. 3: 902, 903).

<sup>21</sup> Murakawa points out (2007: 83 n. 50) that in the underlying manuscripts and editions there are a few different readings of *smāvīrbh-* (which Caland reads as *smāvīrbhavān*, 1919: 219). Cf. examples of *jñāna āvirbhāva* in JB 3.31.

*etāni ha enān anuśāśāsa.*

He taught these [teachings] to them.

*te ha ūcuḥ: anu naḥ idam aśiṣaḥ parokṣeṇa iva.*

They said: ‘You have taught us this in a somewhat obscure way.’

*tathā naḥ anuśādhi yathā idam vijānīyāma iti.*

‘Teach us so that we can understand this.’

\* \* \*

JB 2.419 thus ends with the sons asking Ahīnas to clarify the meaning of the maxims. This is the turning point in the Ahīnas teaching episode, and the point at which we as hearers or readers of the text realise that we have been put into the position of the sons. That is, we look forward to learning how the text of the JB is going to explain the maxims, just as the sons of Ahīnas look forward to hearing their father explain what he taught them obscurely (*parokṣeṇa*).

Ahīnas will oblige with a further set of teachings, explaining the maxims in the order they were pronounced. We have already seen some examples of how Ahīnas goes about explaining a maxim, and those examples are typical of how Ahīnas, starting in JB 2.420, will explain all the maxims – that is, he will explain them mainly in terms of ritual elements of concern to Sāmavedic priests. But here we skip over JB 2.420 and proceed to JB 2.421.

In JB 2.421 Ahīnas explains two maxims: the one about the ‘four-wheeler’, and the one about the path ‘going straight’ to heaven. The explanation of each maxim begins with the words *atha yad vo ’vocam* (‘Now when I proclaimed to you’), followed by a restatement of the maxim in question. That is, Ahīnas directly quotes himself, each quoted maxim being marked by the particle *iti*. Another *iti* marks the end of the larger statement in which Ahīnas quotes himself and says what the quoted maxim means or stands for. This basic pattern, which we have seen above, applies to all the explanations in the Ahīnas teaching episode (in some explanations the ‘meaning’ of a quoted maxim is also end-marked by an *iti*). In most of the explanations this basic pattern is supplemented with further explanatory statements, and it is possible that some of these are the comments of the unknown narrator. On the other hand, as Brereton makes clear in his response to Verpoorten’s study of the use of *iti* in the JB and the *Śābara-Bhāṣya*, there are places in the JB where *iti* serves not to mark the end of the speaker’s comments, but to divide the speaker’s longer argument into major segments (Brereton 1991; Verpoorten 1991). The issue needs further study, but I shall take it that *iti* is used in this way in most of JB 2.420–26, and I shall read the whole of JB 2.421 as the speech of Ahīnas.

**Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa 2.421**

atha yad vo 'vocaṃ catuścakraṃ sma pārayiṣṇuṃ samārohateti pra soma devavītaye (JS 3.12.4a) parīto ṣiñcatā sutam (JS 3.55.4a) abhi somāsa āyavaḥ (JS 3.19.1a) punānas soma dhāraya\_ (JS 3.3.4a) \_ity etā eva vas tac catasro bṛhatīr avocam ity. eṣa ha vai catuścakraḥ pārayiṣṇur yad etā bṛhatyas. sa yathā catuścakreṇa pārayiṣṇunā yatra jigamiṣet tad gacched evam evaitābhir bṛhatībhis svargaṃ lokaṃ gacchanty. atho eṣa vāva devarathas. sa yathā devarathena suyuktena yatra jigamiṣet tad gacched evam evaitābhir bṛhatībhis svargaṃ lokaṃ gacchanti. tasmād etā eva bṛhatīḥ kāryā. atha yad vo 'vocaṃ svargasya sma lokasya patho 'ñjasāyanān metety auśanakāve eva vas tad avocam ity. eṣa ha vai svargasya lokasya panthā añjasāyano yad auśanakāve. auśanaṃ purastād bhavati kāvam upariṣṭāt. tāv etat pitāputrāv eva nāvam ajatas. sa yathā pitāputrau nāvam ajantau tām ariṣṭāṃ svasti pāraṃ gamayeyātām evam evaitad auśanakāvābhyāṃ svasty ariṣṭā udṛcam aśnuvate. tasmād auśanakāve nāvāsṛjye.

\* \* \*

*atha yat vaḥ avocam catuścakram sma pārayiṣṇum samārohata iti pra soma devavītaye (JS 3.12.4a) pari itaḥ ṣiñcata sutam (JS 3.55.4a) abhi somāsaḥ āyavaḥ (JS 3.19.1a) punānaḥ soma dhārayā (JS 3.3.4a) iti etāḥ eva vaḥ tat catasraḥ bṛhatīḥ avocam iti.*

'Now when I proclaimed to you, "Always mount the four-wheeler, [which is] able to convey to the other side", I really thus proclaimed to you these four [verses] in *bṛhatī* [metre]:

*Forth, O Soma, to pursue the gods ...*

*From here sprinkle around the pressed ...*

*The soma juices, the Āyus, into ...*

*Being purified, O Soma, in a stream ...*<sup>22</sup>

*eṣaḥ ha vai catuścakraḥ pārayiṣṇuḥ yat etāḥ bṛhatyaḥ.*

'This indeed is the four-wheeler [which is] able to convey to the other side, namely, these [verses] in *bṛhatī* [metre].

*saḥ yathā catuścakreṇa pārayiṣṇunā yatra jigamiṣet tat gacchet evam eva etābhiḥ bṛhatībhiḥ svargaṃ lokaṃ gacchanti.*

'As one would go to that place where one would like to go by means of a four-wheeler [which is] able to convey to the other side, just so do they [who perform the ritual correctly] go to the heavenly world by means of these [verses] in *bṛhatī* [metre].

<sup>22</sup> These quoted *pādas* can also be found at ṚV 9.107.12a, 9.107.1a, 9.107.14a (cf. 9.23.4a), and 9.107.4a (cf. 9.63.28a), respectively. For all four *pādas* I again adapt the translations of Jamison and Brereton (2014, vol. 3: 1354–55). Jamison and Brereton translate *dhārayā* as 'in a stream'; cf. Caland's translation of this *pāda* quoted in PB 15.9.2: '... by the stream' (1931: 415).

*atha u eṣaḥ vāva devarathaḥ.*

‘And also this is, indeed, the vehicle of the gods.

*saḥ yathā devarathena suyuktena yatra jigamiṣet tat gacchet evam eva etābhiḥ bṛhatībhiḥ svargam lokam gacchanti.*

‘As one would go to that place where one would like to go by means of a well-harnessed vehicle of the gods, just so do they [who perform the ritual correctly] go to the heavenly world by means of these [verses] in *bṛhatī* [metre].

*tasmāt etāḥ eva bṛhatīḥ kāryāḥ.*

‘Therefore, it is these [verses] in *bṛhatī* [metre] which are to be performed.

*atha yat vaḥ avocam svargasya sma lokasya pathaḥ añjasāyanāt mā ita iti auśanakāve eva vaḥ tat avocam iti.*

‘Now when I proclaimed to you, “Do not ever depart from the path going straight to the heavenly world”, I really thus proclaimed to you the *auśana* and the *kāva*.

*eṣaḥ ha vai svargasya lokasya panthāḥ añjasāyanaḥ yat auśanakāve.*

‘This indeed is the path going straight to the heavenly world, namely the *auśana* and the *kāva*.

*auśanam purastāt bhavati kāvam upariṣṭāt.*

‘The *auśana* is in front, the *kāva* behind.

*tau etat pitāputrau eva nāvam ajataḥ.*

‘They in this manner are father and son propelling a boat.

*saḥ yathā pitāputrau nāvam ajantau tām ariṣṭām svasti pāram gamayeyātām evam eva etat auśanakāvābhyām svasti ariṣṭāḥ udṛcam aśnuvate.*

‘As a father and son propelling a boat would conduct it safely and unharmed to the other side, just so, in this manner, by means of the *auśana* and *kāva* do they [who perform the ritual correctly] reach the end [of the year-long *sattra*] safely and unharmed.

*tasmāt auśanakāve na avasṛjye.*

‘Therefore the *auśana* and *kāva* are not to be abandoned.’

\* \* \*

JB 2.421 thus ends with a statement on the importance of the *auśana* and the *kāva*. Each of these is the name of a *sāman*. JB 1.166 uses a similar boat simile to speak of the *auśana* and *kāva*, and according to Bodewitz (1990: 94) the image we should have is of a father and son, the one fore and the other aft, poling (i.e. punting) a boat across a body of water (Bodewitz uses the verb ‘punt’ in his translation of JB 1.166). The significance of

the ‘fore and aft’ imagery in these JB passages seems to be that over the course of a pressing day the *auśana* is the last *sāman* of the five used for the first midday laud (the *mādhyandina-pavamāna-stotra*), and as such it precedes the following four midday *pr̥ṣṭha* lauds, which are followed in the third pressing service by the *ārbhava-pavamāna-stotra*, a laud which itself ends with the *kāva*.<sup>23</sup> A similar idea is expressed at PB 8.5.16, in which the *auśana* and the *kāva* are called the ‘strings’ (*raśmi*) of the sacrifice. About this Caland writes: ‘The sacrifice is, so to say, kept in a case which is closed up or pressed together by means of two strings: the *auśana*, the last of the midday laud ... and the *kāva*, the last of the *ārbhava*-laud’ (1931: 176). The power of such imagery must come from the fact that the four midday *niṣkevalya* praises and the four midday *pr̥ṣṭha* lauds with their accompanying activities, so important for the pressing day as a whole, are effectively contained by the performances of the *mādhyandina-pavamāna-stotra* and the *ārbhava-pavamāna-stotra* (and the *sāman* with which each ends). That is to say, the main part of the midday pressing service, including ‘the centre of the whole Soma feast’ (Haug 1922: 130 n. 29), is safely carried by other parts of the day’s ritual programme, in particular the *auśana* and the *kāva*.

Furthermore, it is these – the *auśana* and the *kāva* – which Ahīnas calls the *añjasāyana* path (i.e. the path ‘going straight’) to heaven. Here again are motifs found throughout ancient Indian literature: what is said about the *auśana* and the *kāva* links reaching the ‘other side’ (*pāra*) with reaching heaven, the highest religious goal. In JB 2.421 this goal is also assimilated to the idea of reaching the end of the *sattra* ‘safely’ (*svasti*) – that is, without making any ritual mistakes or otherwise having the ritual go wrong. That this is the point of the entire Ahīnas teaching episode is underscored by the way the episode ends. The final lines of JB 2.426 are: *etāṃ haibhyas tat saṃvatsare ’riṣṭim uvāca. te ya evaṃ vidvāṃsas saṃvatsaram upayanti svasty evāriṣṭā udṛcam aśnuvate*. This can be translated as follows:

Thus he told them of this safety in [performing] the [*sattra* which lasts a] year. Those who perform a [*sattra* which lasts a] year knowing thus, reach the end [of the year-long *sattra*] quite safely and unharmed.

## Conclusion

Like many things said in Brāhmaṇa texts to communicate the solemn truths of the sacrificial religion, the maxims of Ahīnas are enigmatic – though not all to the same degree. Not without interest in their own right, the maxims are perhaps more interesting for the reaction they provoke. For as we have seen, the sons of Ahīnas are not satisfied with these obscure teachings. The sons ask for clarification, and they are given what are supposed to be clarifying explanations. The sons are told, for example,

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<sup>23</sup> See the tabular pressing-day schedules provided by Bodewitz (1990: 307) and Fujii (2011: 3).

that the path which goes straight to the heavenly world is actually a pair of tunes or chants (*sāman*), whose significance is then further elaborated.

The text does not say if the sons were happy with this or the other explanations. But how brahmins might have reacted to such teachings is certainly worth thinking about. For the explanations of Ahīnas, even more than the maxims, are typical of the kind of statements Brāhmaṇa texts habitually employ to express the deeper significance of the ritual and its subordinate parts: as in so many Brāhmaṇa-style texts, the stress is on correctly understanding a complex and amorphous web of meanings and interrelations (Witzel 2005: 81). Did brahmins always find such teachings understandable? Did they always find such teachings credible? Could the perplexity and dissatisfaction of the sons in the Ahīnas teaching episode actually reflect an underlying reality that persisted at some level in the Brahmanical community? Could it be that some brahmin students turned away from Brahmanical religious culture because of teachings like those of Ahīnas?

According to early Buddhist texts, some brahmins did turn away from Brahmanical religious culture when they encountered what they took to be superior teachings – and perhaps more importantly, clear teachings. Time and again the early Buddhist texts depict brahmins and other characters expressing great satisfaction and appreciative amazement at the *clarity* of the Buddha's teachings (like a 'lamp in the darkness', etc., etc.). The historical truth of such depictions is hard to gauge, but faced with them we are bound to wonder if teachings such as those of Ahīnas – or compositions such as the JB itself – left some brahmin students confused and unsatisfied, and finally receptive to alternative teachings on such important matters as attaining heaven.

The teachings of Ahīnas Āśvatthi offer a point of entry for thinking about the reception of Brahmanical teachings by brahmin students in ancient India, for here is a documented response of at least initial dissatisfaction with such teachings, even if that response is only a kind of plot device. The whole topic needs further consideration, which I plan to take up in a forthcoming article. But here I would like to suggest that the *Tevijja Sutta*, an early Buddhist discourse found in the *Dīgha Nikāya*, may be the other half of a story which is only partially told in the Ahīnas teaching episode. I mean this not literally, of course, but figuratively. For in the *Tevijja Sutta*, two young brahmins approach the Buddha for help in resolving a dispute about none other than the 'straight path' which leads to their high religious goal.<sup>24</sup> The brahmins, the text makes clear, learned of the 'straight path' from their teachers, and they call this straight path *añjasāyana* – the same word used by Ahīnas in JB 2.419 and 421. This is remarkable because *añjasāyana* is a rare word: apart from the *Tevijja Sutta* and commentaries, it is apparently used only in a few Brahmanical texts, to metaphorically identify rituals or parts of rituals as straight paths to heaven (Shults 2013: 120–23). In the *Tevijja Sutta* the Buddha teaches the young brahmins what the straight path to their high religious goal

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<sup>24</sup> For the original of this passage, see Rhys Davids and Carpenter 1890: 235–37.

really is, and in this he is comparable to Ahīnas. Indeed, it may be that these are the only named characters in ancient Indian literature who teach questioning brahmins about the *añjasāyana* path. Again figuratively, it is as if the Buddha in the *Tevijja Sutta* is vying for the intellectual allegiance of the sons of Ahīnas, and calibrating his explanation to appeal to their desire for clarity.

In any case, the Ahīnas teaching episode presents us with interesting perspectives not limited to the realm of ritual sacrifice or the related ideas of time, danger, etc. It offers a perspective on – indeed it is an example of – a more artful way of telling a story; more artful at least in comparison with some of the rudimentary stories, about brahmins who said this or that, found elsewhere in Brahmanical texts. This is not drama, to be sure. But the composer of the Ahīnas teaching episode succeeds in creating a kind of narrative tension, and in portraying a very plausible human reaction to obscure teachings. Here again we are bound to wonder how much art imitated life.

### Abbreviations

JB	<i>Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa</i>
JS	<i>Jaiminīya Saṃhitā</i> = <i>Sāmaveda Saṃhitā</i> (Jaiminīya recension)
PB	<i>Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa</i>
ṚV	<i>Ṛgveda Saṃhitā</i>

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