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EVIL-WIT, NO-WIT, AND HONEST-WIT

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THERE IS a well-known story in the first book of the Pañcatantra, which is variously called *Duṣṭabuddhi and Dharmabuddhi*, *Badheart and Goodheart*, or *Duṣṭabuddhi and Abuddhi*, *The Treacherous Man and the Simpleton*.¹ These variations in title are due to an apparent discrepancy between the catch-verse and the prose story. It is the purpose of this paper to explain and remove this apparent discrepancy.

The catch-verse to the fable reads in the Tantrākhyāyika² as follows:

*duṣṭabuddhir abuddhiś ca dvāv etāu dhiñmatāu mama
tanayenā 'tipāṇḍityāt pitā dhūmena mārītaḥ.*

'I have a very low opinion of both the evil-minded man (Evil-wit) and the fool (No-wit) alike. The son, because he was all too clever, caused his father's death by smoke.'

I shall consider later the variants of the other versions; for the present let me merely say that there is no doubt that T's version, just quoted, is that of the original Pañcatantra in all respects, except that possibly in the third pāda the synonym *putra* may have occurred instead of *tanaya*, 'son'. There is, at any rate, no doubt that the original Pañcatantra did not mention Dharmabuddhi, 'Good-heart' or 'Honest-wit,' in the stanza, and that it did speak of Duṣṭabuddhi and Abuddhi, 'Evil-wit' and 'No-wit', or the evil-minded man and the fool.

The story then begins, virtually in identical language in all

¹ The story is numbered in the several versions as follows (note that after the name of each version I enclose in parenthesis the abbreviation of the name which I shall use in this paper): Tantrākhyāyika (T) I. 15; Southern Pañcatantra (SP) I. 14; Nepalese (N) II. 14; Textus simplicior (Spl), ed. Kielhorn-Bühler, I. 19; Pūrṇabhadra (Pn) I. 26; Somadeva (So) I. 11 (Kathāsaritsāgara, ed. Durgaprasad and Parab, 60. 211 ff.); Kṣemendra (Kṣ) I. 14 (Śivadatta and Parab, Brhātkaṭhāmañjarī, 16. 369 ff.; Mankowski, I. 116 ff.; references are made first to the former, then, in parenthesis, to the latter); Old Syriac (Sy) I. 13. The story is not found in the Hitopadeśa.

² T vs I. 167. In the other versions the vs occurs: SP I. 141, N II. 114, Spl I. 396, Pn I. 389, Sy I. 101; cf. So 60. 210 (?), Ks 16. 368 (I. 115).

Sanskrit versions (except Ks, see below) : 'In a certain locality there livd two merchants' sons who wer frends, and their names wer Duṣṭabuddhi and Dharmabuddhi (Evil-wit and Honest-wit).' It goes on, also in substantially identical fashion : The two went on a trip together, and Honest-wit found a purse of money, which he shared with his frend. Returning home, they buried most of the money in a secret place, agreeing to take equal amounts as they needed it. Evil-wit stole it all, and then accused his frend of having done so. The case came before the court, and Evil-wit volunteerd to call as witness the *devatā* (spirit) in the tree at the base of which the money was buried. The court adjourned to the next day, when all proceeded to the place in order to take the tree-spirit's testimony. But Evil-wit had hidden his father, in spite of the latter's protest, in the trunk of the tree; and when they put the question 'Who stole the money?', the father, impersonating the tree-spirit, replied 'Honest-wit'. The latter, conscious of innocence, lighted a fire in the hollow trunk of the tree, which soon brot Evil-wit's father tumbling down, half-choked and blinded. The truth of course was thus revealed.

Thruout this story no other name than Dharmabuddhi, 'Honest-wit', is used for the righteous merchant in any Sanskrit recension. Only in the offshoots of the Pahlavi translation is he cald 'the simpleton' (Schulthess, 'der Einfältige'), representing, apparently, the Sanskrit word Abuddhi. But in view of the unanimity of all the Sanskrit versions it can scarcely be doubted that the Pahlavi is secondary, and that the original had in the prose story the name Dharmabuddhi. Evidently the Pahlavi has taken the name Abuddhi from the catch-verse and applied it to the honest merchant in the prose story.

The problem that confronts us is then this. In the original form of the catch-verse are mentiond only two names or epithets—Duṣṭabuddhi, 'Evil-wit,' and Abuddhi, 'No-wit.' In the original of the following prose ar likewise mentiond only two names—Duṣṭabuddhi, 'Evil-wit,' and Dharmabuddhi, 'Honest-wit.' It has always been assumed—not unnaturally—that we must infer from this the equation Abuddhi = Dharmabuddhi; or in other words, that the person cald 'No-wit' in the verse is cald 'Honest-wit' in the prose.

It seems to me, however, that we should hesitate long before

accepting this equation, for several reasons. In the first place, the literary harshness assumed is such as could hardly be paralleled in the original Pañcatantra. The name Honest-wit would be substituted baldly for No-wit (the righteous man for the simpleton), without a word of motivation or explanation, with nothing to indicate that it is not the simplest and most natural sequence in the world! It almost passes belief that any story-teller could be so slovenly; and the story-teller of the original Pañcatantra was in general anything but slovenly.

In the second place, is there anything in the story to justify calling Dharmabuddhi a 'simpleton'? Hertel (*Tantrākhyāyika*, Translation, p. 51, n. 2) says his dullness consists in the fact that he entertained friendly feelings for Duṣṭabuddhi and divided his mind with him. But a much more prominent place in the story is occupied by the scheme by which Dharmabuddhi exposes the trick played upon him by Duṣṭabuddhi; and in this incident Dharmabuddhi shows marked cleverness. It seems *a priori* unlikely that a person capable of such shrewdness would be called a 'fool.'

These considerations suggest that perhaps all previous interpreters may have been wrong in assuming the identity of Abuddhi, the 'No-wit' of the catch-verse, with Dharmabuddhi, the 'Honest-wit' of the prose story. There is, in fact, not a single particle of evidence to show that this identity was felt by the author of any Sanskrit recension. More than this: there is clear and decisive evidence to prove that in *some* Sanskrit recensions, at least, just the opposite was true; it is Duṣṭabuddhi, 'Evil-wit,' whom they consider the 'fool,' not Dharmabuddhi, 'Honest-wit.' And this is, when one thinks about it, just what the story clearly means to teach (compare the last paragraph of this article, below). The catch-verse and the prose story are in perfect agreement on this point, that Evil-wit proves himself a fool and causes the death of his own father by being too clever and tricky. Let us examine the evidence which shows that certain Sanskrit recensions regard it in this light.

1. In the prose story of all Sanskrit recensions (I use the term 'prose' loosely to include the poetic versions of So and Kṣ, distinguishing thus their versions of the story proper from their versions of the original catch-verse), the name Duṣṭabuddhi, 'Evil-wit,' is always used without variant for the villain except

that Spl uses the synonym Pāpabuddhi (copied also in Pn in one or two places where it follows Spl), and except also for Kṣ, which is peculiar and highly interesting. Kṣ 368 (115) reproduces the original catch-verse thus:

*abuddhiyogād adhamāḥ sarvadā vipadāspadam
pitā dhūmena nihataḥ sutenā 'dharmabuddhinā.*

'Because of their folly (no-wit) the base ar always subject to disasters. The Dishonest-witted (*a-dharma-buddhi*) son kild his father with smoke.'—In the following story, representing the original prose, Kṣ begins with the statement: 'There wer once two frends, Honest-wit (Dharmabuddhi) and No-wit (Abuddhi).' The name of the villain occurs later on five times more—twice as Abuddhi, 'No-wit,' twice as Duṣṭabuddhi, 'Evil-wit,' and once as Durbuddhi, a synonym for the latter. It certainly needs no argument to show that Kṣ thot of Abuddhi as a synonym, not of Dharmabuddhi, but of Duṣṭabuddhi.

2. The variants of the catch-verse, quoted abov in its T form, in other Sanskrit recensions, show that they too had the same understanding. The Jain versions (Pn and Spl) read for the first half of the catch verse: *dharmabuddhir abuddhiś* (Spl *kubuddhiś*) *ca dvāv etāu viditāu mama.* (It is noteworthy that one manuscript of T reads just as Pn does in the first pāda.) It is obvious that to these versions also Abuddhi is the same as Duṣṭabuddhi. In SP we find: *duṣṭabuddhir dharmabuddhir dvāv etāu vaṇigātmajāu.* So the edition; but several of the best mss. (recension *a*) either agree absolutely with T or point in that direction; and N agrees with T. This is sufficient to prove that T's reading was that of the tru and original SP text, and of the original Pañc. However, the readings of the secondary SP mss. and of the edited text ar interesting as showing that the writers of these codices or their archetype felt averse to a reading which *seemd* to identify Abuddhi with Dharmabuddhi, the simpleton with the honest man, when the clear intention of the story is inconsistent therewith.

My explanation is that the original catch-verse red like T, but that Abuddhi, 'No-wit,' was not intended to refer to Dharmabuddhi, 'Honest-wit,' in the following story. On the contrary, the meaning of the catch-verse is that Duṣṭabuddhi, 'Evil-wit,' is just as bad as (any, indefinit) Abuddhi, 'No-wit;,' in short, that 'honesty is the best policy.' The catch-verse says: 'I hav just as

low an opinion of Evil-wit as of No-wit ; one is as bad as the other. And to prove it, I refer you to the case of Evil-wit who caused his father's death by his excess of cunning, thereby showing himself no better than a fool, or a No-wit.'

This is the only explanation that does justice to the point of the story and avoids the unendurable harshness of naming a character in the catch-verse by a name wholly inconsistent with the name he bears in the actual story. The variations of the several recensions are due to their failure to see the point of the term Abuddhi, 'No-wit,' in the catch-verse. They all, except Pahlavi, support my contention that Honest-wit cannot have been identified with No-wit ; and Pahlavi is proved to be secondary by the fact that all Sanskrit recensions, without exception, are unanimous in using the term Dharmabuddhi in the prose story for the character which Pahlavi calls 'the simpleton'. This confusion of Pahlavi is explained by the same misunderstanding which was found, with different results, in various of the Sanskrit recensions.

The location of the fable in the frame story of Pañc. Book I shows that 'honesty is the best policy' is what it intends to teach. It is told by the jackal Karaṭaka to warn the evil-minded and treacherous Damanaka of the fate that is in store for him if he follows in the course he has begun. Damanaka is the prototype of Duṣṭabuddhi, 'Evil-wit,' and Karaṭaka, the teller of the story, means to let him see that evil-mindedness is really folly and brings one to disaster. To represent Dharmabuddhi, 'Honest-wit,' as foolish would spoil the moral that is obviously intended.