**ajaya-, ajeya- and ajayya-**

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According to the lexicons of Böhtlingk-Roth (BR), Monier-Williams (MW), V.S. Apte and Deccan College (DC) all the three words mean ‘invincible, unconquerable, unsurpassable’. Of the three words *ajaya* occurs both as an adjective and noun, while the other two only as adjectives.1 As noun, *ajaya* means ‘defeated’.

It is necessary to look a little more closely at the adjectival meaning of these words.

1. *ajaya-*: As mentioned above, it functions both as adjectival and as noun.

   A. *ajaya- Adjective*: i) Meaning ‘invincible’. In this meaning na jayah yasya or nästi parair jayo yasya (Apte) ‘who cannot be defeated’ the genitive yasya is treated as objective genitive (*karmuṇi śaṣṭhi*).2 There are many examples of this meaning given in the dictionaries.

   ii) Meaning ‘who cannot win’. This meaning is given only by the author of *Kāśikāvṛtti* while commenting on Pāṇini 6.2.157. According to this *sūtra*3, if the words ending in the suffix *ac* (*a*) and *ka* (*a*) are preceded by *naṇ* and if the meaning intended to be conveyed is incapability (to do something), the end syllable of the compound receives the acute accent. The *Kāśikā* gives two examples for the affix -ac, viz. *apacā* and *ajayā* and explains the former as *yāḥ paktuṇa śaknoti ‘one who cannot cook’. Obviously, the latter example *ajayā* is to be understood as *yāḥ jetum na saknoti ‘who cannot win’.4 However, there is no example of the use of *ajayā* in this meaning in any of the dictionaries.

   B. *ajaya- noun*: Meaning ‘non victory, defeat’ (*na jayah*).
There are many examples of this meaning given in the dictionaries.

2. *ajeya*- Adjective: According to BR, MW and DC dictionaries, the meaning of *ajeya* is 'invincible'. They give many examples for this meaning. However, according to the Pāṇinean tradition, the meaning of *ajeya* should really be 'one who does not deserve to be conquered, whom it is improper to conquer'. While commenting on the Pāṇinisūtra 6.1.81 (see below under *ajayyā-*), commentators observe that *jeya* means 'whom it is proper to conquer, who deserves to be conquered' (*jetum yogvah*). Hence *ajeya* should mean its opposite 'whom it is improper to conquer, who does not deserve to be conquered'. However, the citations given in the dictionaries (especially DC) point to the meaning 'one who cannot be conquered, invincible' (however, see below) i.e. *ajeya* is synonymous with *ajaya* and *ajayya*. The word *ajaya* has received this meaning only on the strength of convention (*rūḍhi*).

The V. S. Apte dictionary and the Šabdakalpadruma, however, assign to *ajaya* the meaning which is in keeping with the grammatical tradition noticed above. Apte gives the meaning 'not fit to be conquered', but does not give any example to support the meaning. The Šabdakalpadruma gives the meaning ‘*ajayaniya, ajetavya*’ and cites in support a part of the stanza from the Skandapūraṇa, Kāśikhaṇḍa 23.60. The citation reads as- *ajayas tvai ca samgrāme mamāpi bhaviṣyasi*. But this example does not seem quite appropriate. The stanza in question appears in the praise of Viṣṇu by Śiva. In that context the word *ajaya* is more likely to mean 'one who cannot be conquered' rather than 'one who does not deserve to be conquered'. (“You will be invincible for me in battle”).

But it is possible to point to another citation as a suitable example. It is given in the DC dictionary. It occurs in the Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa 1.265 and in the dictionary it is taken to
mean ‘invincible, unconquerable’. The passage reads as:

\[
yato na vā iđam etā vigiyante tato nedan bhāhmaṇā jīyante l
\]
\[
thā yarhy etā na vijagur ajeyā na bhāhmaṇā āsuḥk\]

Since the context is of conquering or not conquering the Brāhmaṇas, it does not seem natural to interpret ajeya as unconquerable. It should be taken to mean ‘one who does not deserve to be conquered, whom it is not proper to conquer’. The passage says that when the Brāhmaṇas sang the sāmans pertaining to the three savanas properly, they were held in respect, they were deemed as not deserving the humiliation of defeat (ajeyāḥ). But now, since the Brāhmaṇas sing them in an improper way (vigiyante), they have lost their respectable position and are made to suffer defeat (jīyante).

If this interpretation is accepted we have at least one example of ajaya in the meaning acceptable to the Pāṇinean tradition. Since the example occurs in a Brāhmaṇa it is likely to be closer to the date of Pāṇini who apparently know the word ajeya only in this meaning. The word came to be used in the other meaning ‘invincible’ sometime after Pāṇini. Its earliest use, according to the DC dictionary, is since the epics.

3. ajayyā : Adjective : According to Pāṇīqiṣūtra ksaya\(ajayyau\) sakyārthe (6.1.81), the word jāyya means ‘one who can be conquered, whom it is possible to conquer’ (sakyo jetum). Consequently ajayyā would mean ‘whom it is not possible to conquer, invincible’. There are many examples of this meaning given in the dictionaries.

Conclusion : According to the grammatical tradition ajayyā is the only word which unambiguously means ‘invincible’.

The word ajaya may mean ‘invincible’. But it is ambiguous, since it may also mean ‘one who cannot win’.

The word ajeya has come to be used in the meaning ‘invincible’ since the epics times. It has no basis in grammar. The word should really mean ‘whom it is not proper to conquer’.
Footnotes

1. That *ajaya-* and *ajeya-* occur also as proper names is beside the point.
2. But in Śabdakalpadruma, *ajayā* is explained as
   *na jīyate parājīyate asau l' ji karmanī ac.*
3. *ackāv aśaktau.
4. This meaning of *ajaya* ‘who cannot win’ can be had also by interpreting the genitive in ‘*na jayah yasya* as subjective genitive.
5. Śabdakalpadruma, by mistake, prints *bhavīṣyati.*
6. BR gives one more meaning for *ajaya-* viz. ‘that what it is improper to win (in play)’ (*was nicht abgewonnen werden dürfte [im spiele]*) and refers to Vopadeva’s Mugdhabodha 5.6: *ajayyam jīgāya tān.* It is difficult to know that what could be the subject of *ajaya.* What could possibly be which Kṛṣṇa should not have won while playing with the cowherd boys? *The whole line runs as* - *gopālān anvāśāt ketīms tatrājayyam jījāya tān.* But since Vopadeva also gives the meaning of *jayya* as ‘who (or which) can be conquered’ under 26.16 (*jetuṁ śahyam*), his meaning of *ajayya* should be its opposite. This meaning is, however, not suitable in the context of the above line. Hence we have to assume that *ajayyam* is a mistake, inadvertently committed, for *ajeyam* (tatrājeyam jīgāya tān).

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