Buddhist Emptiness Through Sunyata Non-Self and Dependent Origination

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The Meaning of Emptiness in Buddhist Thought

Emptiness is often perceived as the central teaching of Buddhism. However, its actual meaning is normally misunderstood by many. Nevertheless, if one is supposed to fully embrace Buddhism, then there is the requirement to be clear about the true meaning of emptiness because the wrong comprehension of its meaning might be confusing and harmful. According to Robbins, emptiness mistakenly gasping is compared to the act of picking up a poisonous snake using the wrong end (14). Further, emptiness is considered to be a central ideology in the Mahayana Buddhist philosophy, though it has more than one meaning that an individual can derive from it.

It is important to note that emptiness does not refer to entire nothingness; that is, it does denote that nothing occurs at all. Besides, this should be the nihilistic interpretation and not the use of common sense (Garfield and Jan 20). Therefore, what emptiness means is that things do not normally occur in the manner in which the individuals perceive them to do. In this way, emptiness is referred to as the actual nature of events as well as things, however, in order to avoid the misunderstanding that emptiness is an independent true or rather the absolute reality. Therefore, emptiness is not just some sort of heaven or even a distinct realm different from this world but also its afflictions.

Moreover, Chan asserts that every phenomenon within its own existence is empty, not that every phenomenon is actually empty (225). This distinction is deemed to be vital in understanding emptiness and Buddhist life. In this case, the own existence refers to a totally different independent occurrence. Moreover, the distinction means that all the things people perceive do to occur alone, rather, all the things are deemed to be a tentative expression of a person's seamless, constantly changing landscapes. Thus, every person or thing has no permanency, an identity that is fixed, and all the things are taken together, which is commonly referred to as inter-being.

Buddhist Language and Interpretations of Sunyata

In the teaching of Buddha, he used terms like voids, calmness, no rising and falling, and extinction in order to clarify the profound meaning of sunyata, emptiness. Further, if an individual interprets the Buddha's teachings superficially from the language and words he used in the teaching, a person can

just gain the worldly and not the true intention of the teaching, which is the deeper implications of the Buddha's teachings. Besides, these teachings have a supra-mundane context and not worldly knowledge (Garfield and Jan 25). For instance, emptiness and the state of nirvana, where it is common to all that there is no rising or falling, is understood by many people as a state of gloom and non-occurrence. But they fail to recognize that, rather than the contrary, emptiness has substantial as well as positive implications.

Additionally, the sutras frequently use the term a great void to explain the importance of emptiness. Generally, people comprehend that the great void is something that contains nothing. Nevertheless, from the Buddhist viewpoint, the nature of the great void suggests that it is something that does not hinder the existence of other things, in which every other matter performs its own purposes (Robbins 17). Moreover, the great void cannot be disconnected from the substantial world. Therefore, the profound importance of emptiness, as well as the nature of emptiness in Buddhist life, shows the great void and its non-obstructive nature.

Emptiness does not just infer the great void; instead, it is the basis of every phenomenon in both the mind and form. It is, therefore, the actual nature of every phenomenon, and it is the core principle of every occurrence (Chan 226). Besides, this also means that if the existence of the universe was neither empty nor impermanent, every resulting phenomenon should not rise because of the co-existence of many reasons, and in this way, there will be neither rising nor falling. Therefore, the nature of emptiness is of positive importance.

Emptiness, Non-Self, and Mahayana Philosophy

The concept of emptiness is considered to be a vital ideology in Mahayana Buddhism. The emptiness referred to here is not actually the nonexistence of things but the emptiness of the soul. Thus, the ideology of emptiness can be compared to the principle of Anatta. However, when comparing Buddhism and other religions, there are two distinctive characteristics unique to Buddhism from other religions (Garfield and Jan 30). The vital one is the rejection of the occurrence of the soul. Further, Buddha establishes the ideology of no soul tactics in the three ways of thinking. The three thinking are mainly based on the three characteristics referred to as Tilakkhana in Buddhism. Besides, the three characteristics remain very significant in the realization of Nirvana, and the characteristics are found within the methods of insight. All three ways are established in the three Sutra groups that were established in Buddhism.

During the period of Buddha, the ideology of the occurrence of the soul had a deeper place in the hearts of individuals. Moreover, at a time when Buddha talked concerning the first discourse, out of the five listeners, only one gained the initial stage of sainthood. This is because all of them, being Brahmins, believed in the occurrence of the soul, which Buddha detested. Besides, the belief in the existence of the soul is significant for the Brahmins. Further, the Brahmins believed that there are two types of souls, which are the universal soul, referred to as Brahma-atma, as well as the individual

soul, Jiva-Atma (Van, William, et al., 52). According to the teachings of Buddha, there is no existence of the soul, as commonly believed by Brahmanism; hence, in order to make the five ascetics recognize that there is no existence of the soul, the Buddha was forced to preach to them another discourse, which he called Anattalakkhana sutta.

Dependent Origination and the Relational Nature of Existence

The ideology of emptiness can also be applied to the principle of dependent origination. In this ideology, everything is conditioned and related to one another. In addition, they are deemed to be empty of independent occurrence. Hence, within the Heart Sutra, Bodhisattva states that form perception, consciousness, feeling, and volition are within their own existence, which is empty and void. Therefore, in the life of a Buddhist, everything is considered to be empty. Overall, it means that all the things in the world are empty of souls; therefore, they believe that nothing occurs independently.

Emptiness is at the centre of Buddhist philosophy. However, the term emptiness is often misunderstood, especially when one approaches Buddhism for the first time (Kim 15). The notion of Buddhism is common to the traditions of Buddhism, and it usually stresses that the state of emptiness permits access to a broader reach of the teachings of Buddha. Nevertheless, in the term itself, emptiness means an actual sense of meaning behind its usage among Buddhists. The term emptiness may mean the state of hopelessness or nothingness or, rather, the absence of anything. However, the question that then begs is the emptiness of what? Because emptiness tends to be a difficult term to understand, it was taught because it gives an in-depth insight into the reason why we suffer. Indeed, Buddhists believe that humans suffer because of the things they desire and see. And can be owned by ego (Chan 227). The implication is that the term emptiness among Buddhists suggests that everything that humans may desire to have is void and that they do not last. Therefore, people are encouraged to pursue only things that will last and have meaning in their lives. Also, the teachings of Buddhism talk to a great extent about suffering and the reason why humans suffer. Mahayana's perception of emptiness concentrated on realizing enlightenment for everyone and focused on bringing enlightenment to all conscious humans.

In summary, the teachings of Buddha on emptiness place emphasis on spiritual insight instead of scholarly philosophy. The term could be interpreted to instil happiness among the people as they pursue the truth that is eternal. The tradition behind the teachings of emptiness is meant to preach gentleness as well as wisdom and a sympathetic call for every human being. Moreover, the term denotes an evangelical zeal that aims to liberate humans and persuade them to be able to a pure and spiritual life.

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