

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BUDDHISM AND PHILOSOPHY: IN THE BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS THOUGHT THE BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract: Buddhism is one of the world's largest religions and originated 2,500 years ago in India. Buddhists believe that the human life is one of suffering, and that meditation, spiritual and physical labor, and good behavior are the ways to achieve enlightenment, or nirvana.

Quite literally, the term "philosophy" means, "love of wisdom." In a broad sense, philosophy is an activity people undertake when they seek to understand fundamental truths about themselves, the world in which they live, and their relationships to the world and to each other. As an academic discipline philosophy is much the same. Those who study philosophy are perpetually engaged in asking, answering, and arguing for their answers to life most basic questions. To make such a pursuit more systematic academic philosophy is traditionally divided into major areas of study.

Buddhist philosophy is the ancient Indian philosophical system that developed within the religio-philosophical tradition of Buddhism. It comprises all the philosophical investigations and systems of rational inquiry that developed among various schools of Buddhism in ancient India following the parinirvāṇa of Gautama Buddha (C.5th century BCE), as well as the further developments which followed the spread of Buddhism throughout Asia.

I. INTRODUCTION

Buddhism is one of the world's major religions. It originated in South Asia around the 5th century B.C.E. with Siddhartha Gautama, and over the next millennia it spread across Asia and the rest of the world. Buddhists believe that human life is a cycle of suffering and rebirth, but that if one achieves a state of enlightenment (nirvana), it is possible to escape this cycle forever. Siddhartha Gautama was the first person to reach this state of enlightenment and was, and is still today, known as the Buddha. Buddhists do not believe in any kind of deity or god, although there are supernatural figures who can help or hinder people on the path towards enlightenment.

Born on the Nepali side of the present day Nepal-India border, Siddhartha Gautama was a prince around the fifth century

B.C.E. who, upon seeing people poor and dying, realized that human life is suffering. He renounced his wealth and spent time as a poor beggar, meditating and traveling but ultimately, remaining unsatisfied, settling on something called "the Middle Way." This idea meant that neither extreme asceticism nor extreme wealth was the path to enlightenment, but rather, a way of life between the two extremes was. Eventually, in a state of deep meditation, he achieved enlightenment, or nirvana, underneath the Bodhi tree (the tree of awakening). The Mahabodhi Temple in Bihar, India—the site of his enlightenment is now a major Buddhist pilgrimage site.

Buddhism combines both philosophical reasoning and the practice of meditation. The Buddhist religion presents a multitude of Buddhist paths to liberation; with the expansion of early Buddhism from ancient India to Sri Lanka and subsequently to East Asia and Southeast Asia, Buddhist thinkers have covered topics as varied as cosmology, ethics, epistemology, logic, metaphysics, ontology, phenomenology, the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of time, and soteriology in their analysis of these paths.

II. BUDDHA'S TEACHING IN BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

The Buddha defined his teaching as "the Middle Way" (Pāli: *majjhimāpatipadā*). In the *Dharmacakrapravartana Sūtra*, this is used to refer to the fact that his teachings steer a middle course between the extremes of asceticism and bodily denial (as practiced by the Jains and other Indian ascetic groups) and sensual hedonism or indulgence. Many Śramaṇa ascetics of the Buddha's time placed much emphasis on a denial of the body, using practices such as fasting, to liberate the mind from the body. Gautama Buddha, however, realized that the mind was embodied and causally dependent on the body, and therefore that a malnourished body did not allow the mind to be trained and developed. Thus, Buddhism's main concern is not with luxury or poverty, but instead with the human response to circumstances.

Another related teaching of the historical Buddha is "the teaching through the middle" (*majjhena dhammaṃ desana*), which claims to be a metaphysical middle path between the

extremes of eternalism and annihilationism, as well as the extremes of existence and non-existence. This idea would become central to later Buddhist metaphysics, as all Buddhist philosophies would claim to steer a metaphysical middle course.

III. THE BASIC TEACHINGS IN BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

Apart from the middle way, certain basic teachings appear in many places throughout these early Buddhist texts, so older studies by various scholars conclude that the Buddha must at least have taught some of these key teachings:

The Four Noble Truths, which provide an analysis of the cause of suffering (duḥkha)

The Noble Eightfold Path, which illustrate the path to spiritual liberation (mokṣa)

The four dhyānas (meditations)

The three marks of existence, three characteristics which apply to all phenomena and which are: suffering (duḥkha), impermanence (anicca), and non-self (anattā)

The five aggregates of clinging (skandhā), which provide an analysis of personal identity and physical existence.

Dependent origination (prafītyasamutpāda), a complex doctrine which analyzes the how living beings come to be and how they are conditioned by various psycho-physical processes

Karma and rebirth, actions which lead to a new existence after death, in an endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (saṃsāra)

Nirvāṇa, the ultimate soteriological goal which leads to the cessation of all suffering

According to N. Ross Reat, all of these doctrines are shared by the Pāli Canon of Theravāda Buddhism and the Śālistamba Sūtra belonging to the Mahāsāṃghika school. A recent study by Bhikkhu Analayo concludes that the Theravādin Majjhima Nikāya and the Sarvāstivādin Madhyama Āgama contain mostly the same major Buddhist doctrines. Richard G. Salomon, in his study of the Gandhāran Buddhist texts (which are the earliest manuscripts containing discourses attributed to Gautama Buddha), has confirmed that their teachings are “consistent with non-Mahayana Buddhism, which survives today in the Theravada school of Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, but which in ancient times was represented by eighteen separate schools.”

However, some scholars such as Schmithausen, Vetter, and Bronkhorst argue that critical analysis reveals discrepancies among these various doctrines. They present alternative possibilities for what was taught in earliest Buddhism and question the authenticity of certain teachings and doctrines. For example, some scholars think that the doctrine of karma was not central to the teachings of the historical Buddha, while others disagree with this position. Likewise, there is scholarly disagreement on whether insight (prajña) was seen as liberating in earliest Buddhism or whether it was a later addition. according to Vetter and Bronkhorst, dhyāna constituted the original "liberating practice", while discriminating insight into transiency as a separate path to liberation was a later development. Scholars such as Bronkhorst and Carol Anderson also think that the Four Noble Truths may not have been formulated in earliest Buddhism but as Anderson writes "emerged as a central teaching in a slightly later period that still preceded the final redactions of the various Buddhist canons."

According to some scholars, the philosophical outlook of earliest Buddhism was primarily negative, in the sense that it focused on what doctrines to reject and let go of more than on what doctrines to accept. Only knowledge that is useful in attaining liberation is valued. According to this theory, the cycle of philosophical upheavals that in part drove the diversification of Buddhism into its many schools and sects only began once Buddhists began attempting to make explicit the implicit philosophy of the Buddha and the early texts.

IV. THE MODERN BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

Buddhist modernism emerged during the late 19th-century and early 20th-century colonial era, as a co-creation of Western Orientalists and reform-minded Buddhists. It appropriated elements of Western philosophy, psychological insights as well as themes increasingly felt to be secular and proper. It de-emphasized or denied ritual elements, cosmology, gods, icons, rebirth, karma, monasticism, clerical hierarchy and other Buddhist concepts. Instead, modernistic Buddhism has emphasized interior exploration, satisfaction in the current life, and themes such as cosmic interdependence. Some advocates of Buddhist modernism claim their new interpretations to be original teachings of the Buddha, and state that the core doctrines and traditional practices found in Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism are extraneous accretions that were interpolated and introduced after Buddha died. According to McMahan, Buddhism of the form found in the West today has been deeply influenced by this modernism.

Buddhist modernist traditions are reconstructions and a reformulation with emphasis on rationality, meditation, compatibility with modern science about body and

mind.[15][16] In the modernistic presentations, Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhist practices are "detraditionalized", in that they are often presented in such a way that occludes their historical construction. Instead, Buddhist modernist traditions often employ an essentialized description of their tradition, where key tenets are reformulated in universal terms, and the modernistic practices significantly differ from Asian Buddhist communities with centuries-old traditions

V. CONCLUSION

Buddhist philosophy have often been the subject of disputes between different schools of Buddhism, as well as between representative thinkers of Buddhist schools and Hindu or Jaina philosophers. These elaborations and disputes gave rise to various schools in early Buddhism of Abhidharma, and to the Mahāyāna traditions such as Prajñāpāramitā, Mādhyamaka, Sautrāntika, Buddha-nature, and Yogācāra. One recurrent theme in Buddhist philosophy has been the desire to find a Middle Way between philosophical views seen as extreme.

VI. REFERENCES

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