

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE SHIN-SHU DOCTRINE

BUDDHISM is a religion of enlightenment as is shown by the term "Buddha," which means the "Enlightened One." In fact, enlightenment is the only mark that distinguishes Buddhism from other religions. The light that dispels the cloud of ignorance must come from within. Originally, Buddha rose against the Brahmanic teachings that seek God outside, and worship and pray to him as something wholly external to oneself. What Buddhism is may also be gleaned from the historical facts concerning the life of Shakyamuni himself.

What is now most strange in the development of Buddhism is that a religion of enlightenment has come to be a religion of salvation, known as the Shin-shu Buddhism, and that Amitabha Buddha as saviour and transcending history is recognised in place of Shakyamuni who is merely the expounder of the Dharma. How these contradicting conceptions came to be embraced under one name of Buddhism requires special inquiries. Shall we regard, as is traditionally done, the doctrine of enlightenment as Shakyamuni's own religion, while the doctrine of salvation is meant for others less endowed than the Buddha himself? Or, are they both to be considered one missionarising religion? Or, is it that the contradictions are only apparent and really unified in a higher principle which is the foundation of Buddhism? Or, is Buddhism as religion of salvation a mere later evolution of primitive Buddhism in order to satisfy the spiritual demands of his disciples or of the peoples among whom it began to spread after his Nirvana? In this case, the Amitabha doctrine of

Buddhism is either a sort of contortion or an interpolation of an idea originally foreign to the spirit of Buddhism. Whatever all this is, when the Amitabha conception is to be traced historically and objectively to its sources, we have to adopt one of the following interpretations as offered by various scholars, past and present. There are three interpretations: (1) one offered by the ecclesiastic authorities, (2) the theory of historical development, which is generally accepted by scholars, and (3) what may be termed mythological based on the traditional stories of the past births of Dharmakara. Historically, one of these explanations may suffice to account for the development of the Amitabha doctrine, but from the religious point of view, we feel no satisfaction with these theories; for the doctrine is essentially to be considered from one's inmost religious consciousness which will inevitably lead us to enter much more deeply and penetratingly into the nature of the enlightenment as realised by the Buddha himself. Whether this is a religion of enlightenment or one of salvation, its ultimate reason must be sought in the inner consciousness of the Buddha as long as it is designated under one title of Buddhism. Apart from the inner life of Shakyamuni as the founder of Buddhism, no religion bearing the name can exist.

What are then the contents of his inner consciousness when he attained Buddhahood? All the sutras, Mahāyāna as well as Hinayāna, declare that it is beyond description, beyond the ken of understanding. Even the Honored One himself was for a while unable to express himself as to the contents of his inmost consciousness. But in the second week after the Enlightenment, he began to manifest something of his secrets, and was never tired thenceforward of expounding the Dharma. If the contents of his enlightenment were altogether ineffable and incomprehensible, what should we say about his fifty years' sermons? What did he after all talk

about? As it happened, the Honoured One did not enter Nirvana right after the attainment of Buddhahood, but tried every means to make himself intelligible to the whole world through his daily discourses; and if so, the thing for us to do must be to find the key in them that will unravel the mystery of all Buddhism. His discourses may be divided into various categories such as "True" and "Provisional," or "Real" and "Temporal," as most Buddhist scholars are apt to do, but there must be one word or one phrase either tentatively or manifestly expressed in them which is in direct touch with the contents of the Buddha's inner consciousness.

When the Honoured One began to speak after the Enlightenment his first utterance was, "I alone am the honored one," and later, "I without a master am enlightened by myself." In this, both the Mahāyāna and the Hīnayāna agree, there is no discord as far as these utterances are concerned. Now, they are very simple expressions and quite plain, but on that very account since of old there have been many misunderstandings regarding the true spirit of Buddhism. For the word "I" or "self" is generally the source of disagreement in many ways, taking it in the sense of self-assertion, or the dominance of "me" over the rest of the world. If so, however, where is the truth of Buddhism as distinguished from other Indian philosophical schools upholding the supreme ego? From Hinduism which bows before an external God, Buddhism may be differentiated, but it ceases to be what it was and is. And again if we understand the Buddha's "Enlightened by myself without a master," in its apparent and ordinary sense, how do we distinguish his enlightenment from that of the Pratyekabuddha, who is also said to get enlightened without a master? As we all know, the latter form of enlightenment, strictly speaking, is not approved by Buddhists generally. Do we then regard the Honoured One as attaining to Buddhahood through a master,

in spite of his own declaration? This is impossible. Besides, in this case the Honoured One is to be considered only one of the Shravakas or hearers. As long as we make the distinction of the three "Yānas" (vehicles) and of their corresponding spiritual attainments, it is only rational to see something quite unique and characteristic of the Buddha in his first reference to the "self." This is not the mere assertion of an enlightened "me" standing in opposition to "not-me," nor is there in the "self" of the Honoured One any acknowledgment of an "other" savior through whom his own salvation was effected, or through whose mediation he attained to Buddhahood. While the "enlightened self" is full of difficulties and unknowabilities, it is the basis of Buddhism on which are built the doctrine of salvation as well as that of enlightenment. Let us see to it more closely.

Generally speaking, the "self" stands in contrast to the "other," and when the former is affirmed, the latter is supposed to give way. Most of the misconceptions as regards the inner consciousness of the Honoured One when he attained to Buddhahood come from this notion of relativity between *meum* and *teum*. This is quite true, seeing that the world of our ordinary experience is relative and mutually determining. For instance, parents are parents because of their children, and children are children because of their parents. There are no two externally separate worlds, each of which belongs exclusively to one of the pair. If they are separate and unrelated, the one always in opposition to the other, parents are no more parents, nor are children any more children. While we have to make distinction between the two, there must be the only one world between them so that with all their contrasts and mutually exclusive features they are unified in the thought of oneness. Therefore, the parental world is constructed in the filial world, and conversely. Everything thus lives in its opposite, its true self subsists in otherness and not necessarily

in itself alone. If this is so, the "self" in the enlightened consciousness of the Honoured One had nothing to do with the mutuality or exclusiveness of *meum et teum*. The "self" in truth was quite an inclusive one, there was in it no notion of subordination either. As is suggested in the word "alone," the enlightened "self" of the Honoured One transcends all forms of relativity. This point is fully discussed by Nāgārjuna in the beginning of his *Madhyamika-shastra*.

When the Honoured One under the Bodhi tree exclaimed, "I alone am honored," in this "I" there must have been comprehended the second person "thou." In his inner consciousness, it is true that there was the mutuality of "me" and "thee," but in the most enhanced manner the two notions must have been unified and thoroughly interpenetrated. Far from being exclusive to each other, "I" was "thou" and "thou" was "I." The union was perfect in the sense that there was "I" and there was "thou" and yet they were merged in each other without a mediumship of a third term. "Thou" was made complete in "me" and "I" in "thee,"—this was indeed the "self" of Buddhahood. Herein the Honoured One entered the world of relativity and grew conscious of the Law of "selfhood." Enlightenment thus does not consist in the negation of the opposites, nor in their affirmation. It really transcends the world of relativities. It lies where they are thoroughly unified, each distinctive of the other, and yet wholly reflected in the other. Psychologically stated, the "enlightened self" of Buddhahood is the subjective ego and at the same time the objective ego. Grammatically, the Buddhist "self" is declined "I", "my", and "me." The conditional world with all its multitudinous variations is reflected in the transcendental "selfhood" thoroughly enlightened in the mind of the Buddha. Whatever confusion of thought that manifests itself in the popular interpretations of enlightenment, comes from adhering to the fixed notion of

the self as wholly exclusive of otherness. This exclusiveness or domination altogether goes against the spirit of Buddhism, making it stand on the same level as the other Indian theories of the "self" (*ātman*). The doctrine of non-ego which is one of the three characteristic "seals" of Buddhism distinguishing it from other religions, Indian or otherwise, will lose its significance if the "self" is to be interpreted in its narrow and unenlightened sense. For the non-ego theory gains its real importance when it is seen in connection with its positive counterpart, that is, the theory of "self" in the enlightened consciousness of the Buddha. Non-egoism is no negativism. It simply negates the preconceived substantial notion of the ego. Therefore, in the *Nirvana Sutra*, Nirvana is designated as the realisation of the greater ego, which is however not to be confused with the generalisation of the self, advocated by non-Buddhist philosophers. The Buddhist conception of the self consists in its constant flowing, in its never-ceasing evolution and differentiation. All things are ever changing, ever flowing, and stop not even for a moment in their onward rush; and in their persistent rush there obtains the "self" in the enlightened consciousness of the Honoured One.

The doctrine of Nāgārjuna who is considered the first Father of Mahāyāna Buddhism, revolves around the pivot-idea of "Emptiness Unattainable." Emptiness is negation, negation of all, including even the idea of emptiness itself. Nāgārjuna again calls this "absolute emptiness of Emptiness." When negation is negated, we have great affirmation. In his *Madhyamika Shastra*, the self is designated as "actor", and its "fixed" reality is positively denied, for it is empty in its nature, in its last analysis. Since the doctrine of "Emptiness Unattainable" aims at the smashing of the substantial conception of the ego, this negation comes out in the form of affirmation in his *Dasabhumikavibhasa Shastra*, where in Vol. V, Chap. 9, the author refers to the doctrine of salvation in

this wise: "If people thought of this Buddha's immeasurable power and merits, they would instantly enter upon the definite state. Therefore, I all the time think of him." The "I" here referred to as the thinker of Amitabha Buddha has no odium of the ego, narrow and encased in a hard cell, or the ego of the non-Buddhist schools. The non-ego theory of Buddhism, therefore, according to Nāgārjuna means that there is no "original dweller", there is no "actor", and there is no "recipient" of an act. What really exists is the "self" that goes on transforming itself from "I" to "my", or "mine" to "me". Sometimes it is an "original dweller," sometimes an "actor", and sometimes a "recipient." Changing from one state to another, flowing through various forms of selfhood, and yet leaving no fixed trace of selfhood, the Buddhist ego asserts itself.

So with Asanga and Vasubandhu, their conception of the Ālayavijñāna is not to be confused with the non-Buddhist ego-soul. They distinguish the three aspects of the Ālaya, as in itself, as a cause, and as an effect, and declare that it is not, like the ātman of other Indian teachings, permanent, unified, and dominating, but that it is succession, transformation, and differentiation, or that it is like a stream in the state of constant flowing. The seventh Vijñāna of Vasubandhu thus corresponds to Nāgārjuna's "actor" whose world is that which appears in the act of self-introspection or that which constitutes this world of ignorance and relativity; while he refers to the eighth Vijñāna or Ālaya-Vijñāna, in the midst of which the "mind-seeds" are tending to act, and acts are fuming the seeds, and the three factors are mutually acting, and the cause and the effect are working simultaneously, regarding this Vijñāna as corresponding to Nāgārjuna's "Emptiness Unattainable." Vasubandhu again, like Nāgārjuna, touches on the doctrine of salvation in his *Treatise on Being Born in the Pure Land*, where he says; "O the World-honoured One!

I with singleness of heart take refuge in the Tathāgata whose light passes unimpeded throughout the ten quarters!" Vasubandhu's "I" is no more or less than that of Nāgārjuna as affirmed in the *Dasabhmikavibhāsa*, while both are really asserting the "self" in the enlightened consciousness of Buddhahood. Shinran Shonin thus made these two Mahāyāna Buddhists Patriarchs of the Shin Sect in India. Whatever this is, we cannot fail to notice that there is something common to all these notions of the "self" as variously expounded by the great Indian Buddhist Fathers, which is to say, their non-ego is neither the negation nor the affirmation of the popular ego, but the thorough-going unification of "me" and "thee" in which there is "I" in "thee" and "thou" in "me." This being so, there is no apparent or covert contradiction in the two forms of Buddhism as the religion of salvation on the one hand and as the religion of enlightenment on the other. In the mind of the author of the universe, therefore, there is the thought of the "self" which does not exclude or dominate over the "other." Its fluidity admits it to flow from one state to another and never clings to the idea of fixity. When Shakyamuni declared that "I alone am honoured," he came for the first time to the realisation of this absolute freedom contained in the idea of the "self." The "self" thus has ceased to be always the singular number, for it comprises in itself innumerable "selves" which in the ordinary world are translated into pluralistic "thee." In the aloneness of the "self," therefore, there is room enough for Nāgārjuna's "I bow reverently," Vasubandhu's "I with singleness of heart," or Zendo's "You come instantly with singleness of heart."

Regardless of its being Hināyāna or Mahāyāna, all Buddhism must find its ultimate reason in the enlightened consciousness of the Honoured One who is first and last the founder of the faith known as Buddhism. And we have

found this reason in the idea of the "self" expressed in the first utterance of the Enlightened One. We have also found that in this "self" there are really no mutually excluding notions as regards *meum et teum*, for these are simultaneous and coextensive and identical. Whenever there is the awakening of the true "self" there is the realisation of the "otherness." Where thou abidest, therefore, there is my abode; I am with thee, I work with thee; the Tathāgata in fact never leaves me. In short, the doctrine of enlightenment is based on the notion of the self conceived as identical with "thee," whereas the doctrine of salvation, not denying the first affirmation, builds up its foundation on the idea of "thou-hood" wherein embraced lies the "I." However superficially the Shin Sect stands opposed to the enlightenment of the Honoured One, it is really rooted in it, and the teachings of the Pure Land issue out of the relationship of the "self" and the "other," of "thee" and "me." By the "other" is meant the Law and by "thee" Amitabha Buddha, the saviour of the world.

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