



AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF BUDDHIST SCHOOLS

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Abstract:

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the major Buddhist schools, exploring their philosophical doctrines, meditation practices, and historical development. By examining Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana traditions, the research delves into the core teachings that distinguish these schools while also highlighting their common foundations. The study emphasizes the role of meditation and ethical conduct as central components in the pursuit of enlightenment across different traditions. Through a comparative approach, the research sheds light on how these schools have evolved over time and adapted to various cultural contexts, thereby contributing to the diversity and richness of Buddhist thought and practice.

Keywords: Buddhist schools, Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana, meditation, enlightenment, philosophical doctrines, ethical conduct, historical development, comparative analysis, Buddhist traditions.

Introduction

Theravada, Sarvastivada, Mahasanghika, Puggalavada, and Sautrantika are Buddhist schools whose philosophical doctrines have significantly influenced the development of the Abhidhamma. Puggalavada, known as the school of personalists, centers around the concept of the "person" as its main theoretical framework. According to the Buddha's teachings, a "person" is understood as the aggregation of five aggregates. These aggregates can be analyzed in two distinct ways:



1. **External Analysis:** This involves the sensory experiences related to form, sound, smell, taste, and touch.
2. **Internal Analysis:** This refers to the sensory organs and the mind—specifically the eye, ear, nose, tongue, skin, and mind.

At times, the Buddha equated the "person" with these six senses, a concept referred to as "chadhuturo puriso," where the six senses are collectively understood as the person. In the first method of analysis, *rupa* (form) is not divided, while the mind is analyzed into components, with *rupa* as the form and the other four aggregates related to the mind:

1. **Rūpa** (Form)
2. **Vedanā** (Sensation)
3. **Sannā** (Perception)
4. **Sankhāra** (Mental formations)
5. **Vinnāna** (Consciousness)

In the second method, *rupa* is divided into five parts, while the mind remains undivided, emphasizing the concept of the person. When the person is analyzed using this method, no permanent self remains:

1. **Eye**
2. **Ear**
3. **Nose**
4. **Tongue**
5. **Skin**
6. **Mind**

To analyze both form and mind, the teaching of the eighteen elements is applied:

1. **Eye** (form) – Eye consciousness
2. **Ear** (sound) – Ear consciousness
3. **Nose** (smell) – Nose consciousness



4. **Tongue** (taste) – Tongue consciousness
5. **Skin** (touch) – Body consciousness
6. **Mind** (idea) – Mind consciousness

The Buddha taught that there is no permanence in the five aggregates, the six senses, or the eighteen elements. Therefore, according to the Puggalavada school, when there is no permanence, what continues to the next life? They assert that beyond the five aggregates, there is a "person" that transmigrates from one birth to another. In the *Bharabhava Sutta* from the Digha Nikaya, the terms *Bhara* (burden) and *Hara* (carrier) are used to describe the five aggregates and the person who carries them. This interpretation led to the concept of *bharahara*, or the carrier of the burden, meaning the person who carries the five aggregates. The Puggalavada concept emerged due to a misunderstanding of the Buddha's teachings on conventional and absolute truth. To refute this idea, three methods of explaining the person were developed. Consequently, the Abhidhamma was formulated to reject the Puggalavada theory by analyzing the person into the five aggregates, six senses, and eighteen elements.

Puggalavāda

Puggalavada came into being as origin of several schools. The main theory was that the existence of a person. In addition to the five aggregates this person transmigrates from one existence to the other after the desolation of five aggregates at the death. They introduced to prove the reality of the concept of person, they quote many statements of the Buddha such as "bharaharasutta etc. and also the statements of the Buddha which refers to the person four person such as eight noble people have been taken into consideration in formulating the theory of person.

The Theravadins have not accepted this theory and it has been criticized in the 1st chapter of Kathavatthupakarana. According to Theravadin the terms referring to person in the discourses are conventional teaching. They are not absolute teaching. Therefore, we have to analyze such concept and should understand that they refer not to a particular concept of person but to the five aggregates.

The criticism on the part of the Theravadins as have simile influenced the origin and development of the Theravada theory of Atoms. In this regard the Theravada concept of



conventional truth and absolute truth can be considered as the mostly influenced concept in the Theravada Abhidhamma. Not only in Theravadin but also in other Buddhist tradition such as Sarvasativada, Sautrantika, Madyamika and Yogacara were influenced by this theory and they also have tried to interpret the theory of two truths in their own way. The theory of double truths (Samutti and Paramattha) has been one of the most influent points of Abhidhamma which created different theories in their teaching. **Sarvastivada** maintained the theory of Dharma. To this view the basis element of the existence of the world is called dhamma. They are

1. Four great elements,
2. Six senses,
3. Twelve bases, and
4. Eighteen elements.

On the other hands the medium of connection of identity form life to life is called dharma. It is the changing of dharma that creates new life after death. And they emphasized the dharma are 75. They are as follows;

1. Citta consciousness
2. Caitta mental concomitant
3. Rupa matter
4. Cittaviprayuttasamsakara non mental non material elements
5. Asamsaka non conditional element

Each and every dharma has two parts

1. The nature changing. It can be changed when the time being which belongs to inside.
2. The nature of unchanging. It cannot be change and belong to outside.

Sarvasativada also belongs to the Schools of Theravada tradition. They are so called their main theory is that of own nature of the element exists in the period of time. Theravadins emphasized reality of elements only in the present time. Sautrantika also criticizes the periodical existence of element of the Sarvasativadin. The Sarvasativadin theory dhamma was considered by other as the favoring to the theory of soul. Further they introduce a theory of four moments as arising, existing, decaying and destruction.

A new category of elements non mental and non- material elements (Cittaviprayuttasamsakara and Asamsaka) was introduced by the Sarvasativadin and it was totally



rejected by the Sautrantika. It seems that they have overcome the concept of five aggregates by introducing new categories of elements. Anyway, they Sarvasativada Abhidhammic teaching have influenced much the origin and development of philosophical concept in the other Buddhist traditions such as the Sautrntika, Madyamika and Yogacara. Sautrantika School was one of the major schools of Buddhism. It is stated that Theravda was originated from the Sautrantika tradition. According to the meaning of the term Sautrantika, they were very faithful to the discourses of the Buddha (sutranta ika). It means that they did not favor the later addition to this canon specially the Abhidhamm.

According to some scholars the early Sautrantika were the Theravadins who also were very faithful towards the Discourses of the Buddha. Anyway, there are some opinions of the Sautrantika which are somewhat different from those of the Theravadins. The Buddha's teachings were very famous as the critic of the Sarvasativada Abhidhamma directly or indirectly. The Sautrantika criticism influenced the origin and development of Abhidhamma tradition. The following theories of Sarvasativada Abhidhamma were criticized by the Sautrantika.

1. The Sarvasativada believed the own nature of element exists in three periods of time. The Sautrantika did not accept that and they emphasized the momentary nature of elements.
2. The Abhidhamma theory of Sarvasativadin also criticized by Sautrantika. They say that if the smallest unit of matter (atom) cannot be further reduced, it falls to the theory of soul. And if the smallest unity of matter has no direction, the concept of the aggregates of Abhidhamma becomes meaningless.
3. The Sarvasativada accepts direct perception and indirect perception as means of knowledge. But the Sautrantika accepted only indirect perception.
4. Sarvasativadin accepted the reality of external world and they believed that the external thing can be perceived through the senses directly. But the Sautrantika did not accept the reality of external thing and they say indirect perception.
5. The famous Buddhist scholars Vasubandu who was first a follower Sautrantika tradition of the Vinnanavada tradition of Madyamika at a later period.

The Sautantika criticism of the Sarvasativada Abhidhamma influenced directly in directly the origin of Mahayana Vinnanavada on one hand and on the other development of some Abhidhamma concept in the Theravada. Theravadins who were in Sri Lanka were aware of the Sautrantika



criticism of the Sarvasativada. According to the Abhidhamma the smallest unit of matter consists of eight limbs. They do not accept a unitary material element which is invisible as held by the Sarvasativadin.

The reason for this is perhaps the Sautrantika criticism of the atomic theory of Sarvasativadin. Further the Sarvasativada theory of favor moments were criticized by Sautrantika and it was reduced two moments. As a results Theravadin also have tried to introduce two moments although they have introduced the second moment (thita) but as a phase, not as a separate moment.

In this concept we also thought that the Mahayana tradition of Madyamika also was influenced by the origin of the Sautrantika. The Sautrantika criticism of the reality of element, the Sarvasativadin indirectly prepare the background for origin of the concept of void ness in the Madymika tradition. Another theory of Sautrantika was the theory of Bija (seeds). According to this theory they impress one of good and bad deeds are stored up in the consciousness or seed. They become active only in the appropriate environment. This theory of seed had influenced the origin of store consciousness (Arayavinnana in the Madyamika tradition of Vinnanavada.

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