

BRAHMANISM AND BUDDHISM

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In this paper my object is to make a critical study of the valuable paper of Mr. B. Ghosh on "Upanishadic terms in Buddhism" published in the *Bulletin of Tibetology*, Vol VI, No. 3. The subject is very wide and so the present paper proposes to deal with three such terms. These are :—

1. Brahma and Brahmana
2. Atman and Brahman
3. Pudgalavada

At the outset, I should state that both the Upanishads and the Buddhist literature were products of the same country, using the same vocabulary, Pali being a modified form of Sanskrit, and Pali literature also was replaced later by Sanskrit by the Sarvastivadins and the Mahayanists.

Re. Brahma and Brahmana.

The word "Brahma" means "pure, sacred" as in e.g. the word Brahmacariya or Brahmacarya. The word "Brahma" is frequently used in the Buddhist texts, e.g., Brahmajala-sutta, Brahmacariyavasa, Brahmavihara (maitri, karuna, mudita and upeksha) and so forth. Brahmacakka has also been used as a synonym of Dhammacakka, as the wheel of law leads to purity. From the word Brahma is derived Brahmana, which word is found in the Taittiriya Samhita (vi.6.1.4.), Kathaka Samhita (xxx.1) and in many other texts, meaning "descendant of a Rshi (arsheya), requiring purity and learning like the Vedic Rshis. A Brahmana must have preeminence in knowledge and not mere descent. Satyakama Jabala was the son of a slave-girl and so his parentage was not known. He frankly told this fact to Rshi Gautama Haridrumata (Cha. Upa., iv. 4 and so he was accepted as a Brahmin pupil by the sage.

In the 6th/5th centuries B.C. when Prince Siddhartha Gautama was born, Brahmanism had deteriorated into Varnasrama-dharma attaching importance to birth only and not to purity or learning. The society was divided into four hidebound castes as Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra, which included even Namasudras and other backward classes as also the untouchables. Worship of gods lost its sanctity and ended in animal sacrifices in the name of gods and goddesses.

The term "Brahmana" of the Upanishads was accepted by the Buddhists. In the undermentioned stanzas of the Dhammapada, the use of the word Brahman is illustrated:

न जटाहि न गोत्तेन न जच्चा होति ब्राह्मणो ।
यम्हि सच्चं च धम्मो च सो सुखी सो च ब्राह्मणो ॥

(Not by matted hair not by lineage not by caste, does one become a Brahmin. He is a Brahmin in whom there are truth and righteousness. He is blessed).

बाहितो पापो ति ब्राह्मणो समचरिया समणो ति वुच्चति ।

(Because he has put aside (bahishkrta) evil, he is called a Brahmin; because he lives in serenity is called a Samana).

झायिं विरजम् आसीनं कतकिञ्चम् अनासवं ।
उत्तमत्थम् अनुप्पत्तं तम् अहं ब्रूमि ब्राह्मणं ॥

(Him I call a Brahmin who is meditative, free from passions, settled, whose work is accomplished, who is free from taints and who has attained the highest end).

पुब्बेनिवासं यो वेदि सग्गापायं च पस्सति ।
अथो जातिक्खयं पत्तो अभिञ्जावोसितो मुनि ।
सब्बवासितवसानं तमहं ब्रूमि ब्राह्मणं ॥

(Him I call a Brahmin, who knows his former existences, who perceives heaven and hell, has reached the end of existences, is a sage whose knowledge is perfect and has accomplished all that is to be accomplished).

Brahmana both in the Upanishadic thought and Buddhism is accepted as a term for a saint, one who has attained final sanctification. The Brahmin is one who casts off belief in happy worldly existences, the basis of desire (trshna). Not by ritual and sacrifices, not by isolation and trance but by self concentration and exercise of Maitri and Karuna does one transcend I-ness and become a Brahmin, who knows the highest truth (paramartha satya). Buddha saya "cut off the stream of existence with energy (virya).

Re. Atman and Brahman.

The background of Buddhism is the same as that of Brahmanism, viz., Brahman the Impersonal but not, of course, the Vedantic Para-

matman, the existence of which is denied in Buddhism. A few extracts are being quoted from the Upanishads in support of this contention of ours.

Bṛhadāranyaka Upa (iv.4.7):—

यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा येऽस्य हृदि स्थिताः ।
अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवति अत्र ब्रह्म समस्नुते ॥

(When all desires, which entered into one's heart, are eschewed, there does the mortal become immortal and he attains Brahman).
Mundaka Upanishad (iii.2.8.);-

यथा नद्यः स्यन्दमानाः समुद्रेऽस्तं गच्छन्ति नामरूपे विहाय ।
तथा विद्वान् नामरूपाद् विमुक्तः परात्परं पुरुषमुपैति दिव्यम् ॥

(Like rivers flowing into the ocean disappear abandoning name and form, so the wise attains the divine person beyond the beyond (i.e. infinity).

Re. Atman (Soul).

The fundamental difference between Buddhism and the Upanishadic thought lies in the conception of soul of an individual (jivatman). The watchwords of Buddha consisted of dukha, anicca and anatta. The first word dukkha means that worldly existence is misery because it is impermanent, momentary (anitya, kshanika) and lastly anatman (i.e. unreal) absence of nitya atman (permanent soul) corresponding to Vedantic Jivatman. A person is a composite of namarupa (mind and matter) sub-divided into five constituents (skandhas). These five constituents are ceaselessly changing, hence kshanika. A baby loses its babyhood when it grows up and becomes a youngman. The youngman loses his youth, his blood, flesh and bone when he becomes old. The change is effected every moment as our nails grow and need trimming every week or fortnight and so it is said that there is no continuous personal identity (na ca so na ca anno). (Vide Milindapanha, p. 40). This conception is expressed in these stanzas:—

सब्बे संखारा अनिच्चा ति यदा पञ्जाय पस्सति ।
अथ निब्बिन्दति दुक्खे, एसो मग्गो विमुद्धिया ॥
सब्बे संखारा दुक्खा ति यदा पञ्जाय पस्सति ।
अथ ॥
सब्बे धम्मा अनत्ता ति यदा पञ्जाय पस्सति ।
अथ ॥

All things are impermanent (anitya), lacking in self (anatta) or reality and therefore sorrowful (dukkha.)

Re. Pudgalavada

Pudgalavada (Pudgalatman) is the fundamental doctrine of Vatsiputriyas or Sammitiyas, who were also known as the Avantakas, because they claimed as their patron-saint Mahakaccayana, the direct disciple of Bhagavan Buddha, and a native of Avanti. Besides this fact, the Sammitiyas had many adherents in Avanti. It is striking that at Hiuen Tsang's time, the largest number of monks belonged to the Sammitiya school. In the inscription of Sarnath of the 4th or 3rd century B.C. it is seen that the name of Sarvastivadins was replaced by their name. From this inscription it is evident that this school had its origin prior to this date. Hiuen Tsang states that 15 treatises of this school were translated into Chinese. One of these texts, the Sammitiya-nikaya-sastra, has been translated into English by Professor Veakataraman of the Visvabharati. This text is the main source of our information, apart from the treatises on sects written by Vasumitra, Bhavya and Vinitadeva. The latter two exist in Tibetan translations.

The Pudgalavadins rely on the following statements of Buddha:—

(i) अत्थि पुगलो अत्तहिताय पटिपन्नो

(there is a person who exerts for his own good).

(ii) एकपुगलो लोके उपज्जति बहुजनहिताय बहुजनसुखाय लोकानुकम्पाय

(there appears a person, who exerts for the good and happiness of many out of compassion for the world of beings). Kathavatthu 1.

Basing on such words of Buddha, the S. (henceforth abbreviated for Sammitiyas) state that the puggala of the above-mentioned passages is something positive. It is not something apart from the five constituents (skandhas) of a being; it is not possible to establish a relation between the pudgala and the skandhas, i.e. like the container and the contained. On the other hand, though it possesses all the characteristics of the skandhas, it is not like them caused and conditioned (sahetu sappaccaya).

In support of their contention the S. rely on the Bharahaa-sutta of the Samyutta Nikaya (III, p. 25), which is as follows:—

कतमो भिक्खवे, भारो ?

पञ्चुपादानक्खन्धातिस्स वचनीय

कतमे पञ्च ? सेय्ययिदं रूपुपादानक्खन्धो, वेदनुपादानक्खन्धो,

सञ्जुपादानक्खन्धो, सङ्गारूपुपादानक्खन्धो, विज्जाणुपादानक्खन्धो; अयं

बुच्चति, भिक्खवे भारो ।

(What, O Bhikkhus, is the burden? Burden refers to the five constituents: matter, feeling, preception, impression and consciousness. These are called bhara.)

कमतो च, भिक्खवे, भारहारो ? पुग्गलो तिस्स वचनीयं ।
ख्वायं आयस्मा एवं नामो एवंगोत्रो; अयं वुच्चति,
भिक्खवे भारहारो ।

(What is, O Bhikkhus, is the carrier (haro) of burden ? The person (puggala), which has a name, a lineage is called the carrier of burden.)

In the Tattvasangraha (p. 130) Kamalasila quotes its Sanskrit version

भारहारः कतमः पुद्गलः
यो असावायुष्मान्नेवं नामा
एवं जातिः, एवं गोल, एवम् आहार
एवं सुखदुःखं पटिसंवेदी
एवं दीर्घायुरित्यादिना पुद्गलो व्याख्यातः ॥

(Note: The Sanskrit version is slightly better. It is not translated as it is easily intelligible).

Another very important argument put forward by the S. is that a person (puggala) in the first stage of sanctification (sotapanna) is called also sattakkhattuparama (i.e. will have seven more existences at the most) to attain Nibbana. This implies that Puggala continues. The S. make their position clear by stating they accept anattavada of Buddha but they contend that puggala is not soul but something apart from the skandhas but having all the characteristics of the skandhas. It maintains the link between two existences of a being, but there is an end of it in Nibbana.

Samyutta Nikaya III, p. 26:—

भारा हवे पञ्चक्खन्धा, भारहारो च पुग्गलो ।
भारादानं दुखं लोके, भारनिक्खेपनं सुखं ॥
निक्खिपित्वा गहं भारं, अठ्ठं भारं अनादिय ।
समूलं तण्हम् अबुद्ध्य, निच्छातोपरि निब्बुतो ति ॥