

INDIAN PHILOSOPHY AND BUDDHISM

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印度哲學與佛教

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## PREFACE

In the past, we Chinese students knew from the Buddhist canons the names of Indian classics such as the Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanisads; and six philosophical systems—Samkya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisesika, Mimamsa and Vedanta; but generally lacked a systematic knowledge of their contents and theories. As it is known, there are nearly 6000 volumes of the Chinese Tripitakas made from their Sanskrit originals by a number of pious Buddhist pundits of both India and China in succession from 67 A.D. of the later Han Dynasty down to 1032 A.D of the Song Dynasty; of these voluminous Buddhist scriptures, only few are found dealing with the so-called Tirthaka philosophies. Again, we were, more or less, preoccupied with a somewhat prejudiced view or an inaccurate conception gathered from the Buddhist sources that the Dharma taught by the Lord Buddha was true while any other theory propagated by the Tirthakas was untrue or false. That the Chinese intellects both in the past and at the present have been, consciously or unconsciously, laying stress not so much on the study of Indian traditional philosophy as on that of Buddhism, is by and large due to the above factors. As a result, Indian philosophy that ought to occupy, in the curriculum of philosophy in our colleges, universities, or academies, a place of no less importance than that of any other philosophy, still remains, since the inflow of Buddhism into this country from India 2000

years back, a gap to be filled in the realm of philosophical research in China.

What is the present situation of studies in Indian philosophy in China? My book "Indian Philosophy and Buddhism" appearing just now is aimed at giving some informations in this respect, telling my readers that some serious steps are being taken towards filling the gap in the study of Indian philosophy (especially of the six systems of orthodox philosophy as well as philosophies of contemporary India) and its relation to Buddhism in certain educational and academical institutions in China today.

I take this opportunity to express a deep debt of gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Zhau Pu-chu, D. Litt. (honoris causa, Ryukoku University, Japan), President of the Chinese Buddhist Association, who has so kindly written, with his artistic pen, the Chinese title of my book on the latter's front cover. The Chinese Institute for Studies in Buddhist Culture accepted the work to be its first academic publication, and to it my indebtedness is also due. I acknowledge my gratefulness to those esteemed friends of the Institute who have shown a profound concern in all possible ways in seeing the book through the press. Lastly, I have to give my heart-felt thanks to the Beijing Foreign Language University Press which has taken much trouble of printing and publishing the work.

The author.

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# Caste-System And Two Opposite Views On Man In Indian Philosophical History

The view on man is the issue of how to treat man and weigh his value. The issue has been always the fundamental one in the history of Indian philosophy. The Rsis (masters of religious philosophy) and professors (authoritative scholars mastering the Indian classics have made a long exploration and debate on it, and opinions were so varied that no unanimous conclusion could be drawn. From the viewpoints of the history of ideological development in India, all the viewpoints or theories on man can be divided into two factions: the orthodox view and unorthodox or anti-orthodox one. Of course, these two views are antagonistic.

## 1. Orthodox View on Man

The orthodox view on man is in brief to treat man and weigh his value according to the caste-system of Brahmanism(now Hinduism).

What is the caste-system? In the slave society of ancient India(before and after 1500 years B.C.) people were divided into four different castes in accordance with their professions: 1. The Brahmana who professionally offered scarifices to Heaven or engaged in witchcraft; 2. The Ksatriya who took charge of military and political affairs; 3. The Vaisya who engaged in handicraft, commerce

and agriculture. 4. The Sudra who engaged in agriculture and other manual labour. ① With the development of production, the division of professions became more definite and strict. Afterwards the Brahmana and Ksatriya colluded with each other and artificially fixed the limits of four castes' professions, strictly forbidding mutual exchange of work in production. They also stipulated the former two castes (Brahmana and Ksatriya) as being the high castes and the latter two as being the low ones. In the social intercourses people must observe this regulation: Those who came from the Brahmana or Ksatriya were the privileged; those who came from the Vaisya and Sudra must be treated as humble ones. The latter two castes should be subordinate to the rule of the former two, serve them and specially do heavy manual labour for them.

The so-called high castes and low castes were actually the ruling ones (class) and the ruled ones(class): Castesystem was in fact a product of the social and class contradictions, and itself was full of the sharp contradictions among the two antagonist classes. To ease and cover these contradictions and consolidate the ruling position of the former two castes, the Brahmana especially invented myths to deceive the masses. Why were people divided into the four different castes? Why were the Brahmana and Ksatriya stipulated as noble and high castes? Why were the Vaisya and Sudra defined as humble and low castes? Who worked out such regulations that the low castes should be subordinated to the higher ones and served them? The Brahmana answered that the four

castes of the people were created by Brahma (another name of the Person or Purusa): Brahma bore the Brahmana from his oral cavity, Ksatriya from his own arms, Vaisya from his own thighs and Sudra from his own feet (See Rgveda III.53.7; X,90,12). That the Brahmana and Ksatriya were the high castes and the Vaisya and Sudra were the low ones was completely prearranged by Brahma. Brahma also stipulated that the low castes were subordinated to and worked for the higher ones. Therefore, the destiny, grade and value of the four castes had been decided by Brahma before they were born. From the day when they were born, they should live like this generation after generation and it could never be changed.

To let the broad masses of the people believe in the myth of such caste-system (the former two were nobles and the latter low ones) and recognize it as such, the Brahmana also racked his brains to work out voluminous dharma-sastras on the slavish-feudalist ethics. One of them was Manava-dharma-sastra, ② which Indian scholars considered as the authoritative work up to now. Dharma-sastra, just as its name implied, was to formulate "dharma" which in modern terms means moral principle and ethic standard. This Manava-dharma-sastra fully recognized the myth of the four caste system created by Brahma, considering it as the sacred revelation of the prime deity; and thus worked out the four different dharmas (the behaviour standards for different castes) in details. The scopes and applications

of these four different dharmas were very well defined and so strict like four unbridged gaps. All the people of the four castes must observe their respective dharmas stipulated by Manava-dharma-sastra and were not allowed to make any impermissible behaviour (beyond the scope of the caste-system dharma). The low castes were certainly not allowed to rebel against the high ones, otherwise, they would commit the crimes of breaking Heaven's law and be punished. Another famous work, Artha-sastra ③ also recognized the authority of the Rgveda and stipulated the four different dharmas for the four castes (Artha-sastra Vol.1, chapter 3). All these authoritative ancient classics have been, for 2000 years, the ethical basis justifying Brahmanism's viewpoints of treating people according to the caste-system.

Furthermore, the Brahmana searched the ethic basis in philosophy for the myth of the creation by Brahma of the four castes. At the end of the Rgveda (about the fifth century B.C.) the Brahmana turned from religious ritualism into philosophical speculation. They created the epoch-making Upanisads ④ in the history of idealist philosophy. In this book they philosophized Brahma's myth, and put forward the philosophical principle of the so-called Brahma and Atman. What was Brahman? From idealism they considered Brahman to be absolute and sole, but in two aspects: agnostic aspect and gnostic one; the former is the noumenon of Brahman and the latter is the appearance of Brahman. In terms of the noumenon, Brahman might be called "agnostic Brahman" while it could be

named as "gnostic Brahman" in terms of phenomenon. However, agnosticism and gnosticism are different in name and Brahman is the soleness. ⑥ (Taitiriya Upanisad II.6) The agnostic Brahman is invisible, unsubstantial, unspeakable and unstatic (ibid,7). It was the Person, sacred and purified, formless and featureless, without inside and outside, and deroid of birth and death. (Mundaka Upanisad II.1.2; Svetasvatara Upanisad VI.9) There is no merit that would attach it, and on fault that might disturb it. (Brihadaranyaka Upanisad IV .3.22). It is the cause as well as the effect (Chandogya Upanisad VI.1.4). But at the same time it is not the cause and the effect. (Svetasvatara, IV.9) Therefore, it is complete in unity and quiet to do nothing (ibid VI.1.9), and unknowable. From objective idealism, however, Brahman is the deity of deities, creator of the universe and guardian of the world (Mundaka Upanisad I.1.1). It was the sources of all things on earth and the origin of the universe. Creatures were born from it. After being born, they are living on it. When they depart from the human society, they would still return to it... (Taitiriya Upanisad III.1.1). It bred all both in the animate and inanimate nature (Chandogya Upanisad VI.2.3), because Brahman is life (ibid I.10.4), soul (ibid. III.12.6), material (ibid VI.1.3), ether (ibid I. 9.1) and light (ibid III. 12. 6). The life, soul, material, ether and light are all the concrete phenomena and characteristics of Brahman. Although it can not be explained from the secular science of physics, it

obviously shows that Brahman is not agnostic — Brahman's knowable aspect. It was just the knowable aspect of Brahman that created all things of the universe including the four castesystem of mankind, and this was the very revelation the Brahmana quoted to prove the myth of their invention — creation by Brahman of the four castes was in conformity with philosophy.

What is Atman? As just mentioned, Brahman is a life. The life here is referred to the very Atman. Brahman and Atman are one and two, and two and one. Their relations are like those between the fire and spark (Brihadaranyaka II.1.2). The spark comes from the fire and shares the same nature with the fire and is identified with the fire in oneness. Atman comes from Brahman and shares the same noumenon with Brahman and is in the same identity with Brahman. Although this Atman or life(soul) exists in the human body, it is generally the same with Brahman—no birth and no death, no going and coming back, always new and always old, and existing permanently; the body would die, but Atmen would not die(Kathaka Upanisad I.1.18). Again, "the body would die and Atman would not die" does this mean that after the body's death, the soul(Atma) would join Brahman in oneness? The Brahmana considered it not so simple, and the question of karma needs to be solved. Karma means the invisible and unextinct effect or impression left in one's soul after he had done good things or evil things. In addition to being locked up within the

bodily prison, the individual Atman has to fall under the domination of his own karma. After the human body perishes, Atman would immediately appear and would, in accordance with good or evil karman done by one in his life, take good or bad rebirth in the place where his atman should go —paradise, man's world or hell. For example, if a person had done good things, his atman would go into the paradise after his death. But when his good reward ends — having finished enjoying a happy life, his atman would be again born into the man's world or other place. This is the theory of the so-called "karman and sam-sara" (Chandogya Upanisad IV.10; Kausitaki Upanisad I.1.2). Is this to say that Atman could not avoid the samsara and turn into one with Brahman? No. If you correctly learn the knowledge of Brahman, think it over again and again, or piously worship Brahman, you could get rid of its influence, would not come back into the man's world and would realize the divine and perfect reunification with the noumenon of Brahman. This is the moksa which is often mentioned in Indian religion-philosophy. This set of the Indian philosophical theories is undoubtedly a typical idealist fatalism.

The Brahmana in the Upanisads created idealist philosophy and in various dharma-sastras worked out many complicated religious regulations and norms of all sorts, and their attempt and aim were very clear: (a) Attempting to make people believe that the four caste-system had been created by the big deity Brahman and conformed to the philosophy of Brahman; the man's value was

differentiated as noble and low in accordance with the caste system; the man's value of the former two castes high and noble and that of the latter two ones was low and mean. (b) Frightening the masses with the theory of karma-samsara and forcing them to accept fatalism: Since the caste-system was God's will, destined and unchangeable, men in any case — even under the extremely unhuman circumstances of being enslaved and oppressed, have to resign themselves to adversity, obey the predestination by Brahman and do not do anything beyond their caste-limits, otherwise they would commit blasphemy and offend the society. Even if they might escape punishment by sheer luck, they would not escape the retribution next life as a result of the karma's influence. (c) To collude with the Ksatriya and to fully use the so-called moral principle and ethic standard serving the interest of these two high castes (Brahmana and Ksatriya) in order to strengthen the privileged position of the Brahmana and the dictatorial slavish rule of the Ksatriya and maintain them for ever.

History has proved that although the efforts by the Brahmana were often opposed and criticized, they were a success. For the caste-system and such an idealist philosophy which served the former and covered the caste (class) contradictions, were so propagated that they won acceptance by the majority of the Indian people, and in the long testing process (from 1500 B.C. to 500 B.C.) succeeded in forming a generally recognized orthodox doctrine— Brahmanism advocating the

dealing with people according to the caste-system. Even today, such a view-point is, if not playing a dominating role in ideology, still affecting most Indians's views towards people.

## 2 Non-orthodox Viewpoint on Man

In the sixth century B.C., and especially after the birth of Buddha (556 B.C.) and his Nirvana (486 B.C.)®, Brahmanism suffered a biggest setback in history. For at this juncture, its viewpoint of the caste-system and relations between people were criticized and repudiated by many new-born religions and philosophical sects, and this nearly shook its ruling position in the ideological field at root.

During this period India entered the Iron Age. Although the slavish relations of production were strengthened, the self-reliance and natural economy in villages and communes prevailed, and the productive forces developed more rapidly than ever before. Handicraft, agriculture and commerce prospered not only on the two banks of the Ganges River, but also at the mouth of the Yamuna River. In the political field, dozens of slave-master-owned states, big and small, were set up one after another. According to the early Buddhist record there were at least 16 states, (Janayasabha-suttanta, see Dirghagama, Taisho Tripitaka, Vol.1,p.34) of them Kosala, Magadha and Gandhara, for instance, were comparatively strong slave-owner countries. To win hegemonism these slave-owner countries waged long and fierce struggles for mutual annexation. About the third century B.C., slave-

owner Chandragupta rose in power from the northwest, and went on an east expedition to Magadha where he overthrew the Nanda kingdom and established the Mauriya-vamsa. King Chandragupta's grandson Asoka wore the crown in 268 B.C. (218 years after the Buddha's death). King Asoka was ambitious and craved for greatness and successes. He founded a strong military power by which to expand territory from north to south and from east to west, conquering foreign countries, and thus established the first and unified centralized imperialist state in Indian history. He was converted to Buddhism and proclaimed it as a state religion. He sent many Buddhist missions to all parts of the country and its north-western and southern neighbouring states ⑦ to publicize Buddha's dharma. Therefore, Buddhism was once at the zenith; and other religions including Brahmanism and philosophical factions were seen much declined in comparison with Buddhism, just like stars becoming dim in contrast with the sun.

In culture and especially in spiritual awakening, the Ksatriya, Vaisya and Sudra were united to struggle with the Brahmana for cultural leadership at that time and broke through the setup of Brahmana's absolute control in the ideological field. Views held by the public towards the caste-system, human interrelationship and man's value were seriously antagonist against the orthodox viewpoint. This concretely found expression in the appearance of the two big religious schools — Jainism and Buddhism and six factional philosophies and

the six heretical teachers.

According to Jainism's legend, there were 363 philosophical factions at that time, while the early reliable record of Buddhism said that there were then 62 views (62 philosophical viewpoints) (Brahmajala-sutta, see Dirghagama, Taisho Tripitakas. Vol.1, pp. 88-94). Although the number of philosophical factions as mentioned in the Jain legend was hardly to check, a vivid picture showing different opinions coming forth from between idealism and materialism, idealism and idealism, and heated contentions among schools of thought could be entirely imagined. The ideological trend of these religious sects and philosophical schools excepting the six schools of traditional philosophy was generally against the orthodox viewpoint of Brahmanism — against the caste-system, the viewpoint on the man's value according to the caste-system. They seemed to agree with each other in forming an united front to challenge the authority of the Vedas and the ruling position of the Brahmana in the religious and philosophical fields.

Let us first brief the teachings of the six heretical teachers (Samannaphala, see Dirghagama, Taisho Tripitakas Vol.1, pp. 107-109; and *ibid*, pp. 270-276). "Heretical paths" means religions and philosophical factions other than Buddhism — a derogatory term which Buddhism used to refer to paganism. They were six famous philosophical teachers with Buddha at the same time. They were representatives of those who opposed Brahmanism and the orthodox idealist philosophy: 1) Ajitakesakam-

bala. He was the first patriarch of the materialist Lokayata school. Although his theory originally came from the Upanisads, he did not inherit the idealist philosophy of the latter, but accepted the naive materialist ideology which the Upanisads criticizes ①. He flatly rejected the sacred authority of the Vedas and especially the Brahmanic creationism. He considered that the universe being naturally born came up without cause and Atman is the human body consisting of four big elements — earth, water, fire and wind. Once the human body dies, it returns to the four big ones, and Atman (soul) immediately disappears. And karma, samsara and moksa are purely nonsense. That the four castes were born from the mouth, arm, thigh and foot of Brahman was a lie to dupe the people. He held that it was indeed a rare opportunity that one was born in the world and so, one should treasure the chance of one's own existence. One should make use of man's value to the utmost and should seek for material and realize one's desire to heart's content. The formulation of the Lokayata school was similar to Epicurus. He was called the teacher of uccheda darśana in Buddhism. 2) Sanjaya Vairatiputra. He was an indeterminist, considering that in this world the evil doer has no crime and well-doer has no happiness. Whether things like cause and effect exist or not, real or false can be hardly decided and believed. 3) Maskari Gosaliputra. He was a negativist, considering that to do good thing is futile and to do evil thing meets no reprisal whatsoever. There exists no present or