

The Concept of “Sunnata” in Madhamaka Philosophy and it’s parallel in Early Buddhism

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1. abstract

The concept “sūññata” is the central philosophical theory of Madhyamaka school of Buddhism which is developed by venerable Nagarjuna. Frima facie the concept “sūññata” has particular equivalent with causality (paticcasamuppada) of early Buddhism. The concept “sūññata” is not a own view of venerable Nāgarjuna, it’s germs can be founded in early Buddhist discourses. But sūññata as correspondence with causality is the logical innovation of Nāgarjuna. There is number of instances in early Buddhism which implicate the doctrine of sūññata. In Mōgaraja sutta of suttanipata Buddha advised to venerable Mōgaraja to look upon the world as being non substantial (suññō lōkō avekkassō mōgaraja sadāsātō). Sunnatalōka sutta in Suttanipa Buddha said to venerable Ananda that the word is called empty due to the avoid of soul and things belonging to soul, further Buddha said, the eye is avoid of soul and thing belonging to soul, the form is avoid of soul and thing belonging to soul therefore world is called empty. Buddha mentioned in Pindapata Parisuddhi sutta that the reflection on sūññata (sunnata vihāra) as the way cultivated by all great beings. In Dhammapada sūññata is recognized as Vimokkha which is another name for Nibbāna. Thus sūññata in early Buddhism has used to indicate the nature of world phenomena as well as equivalent for Nibbāna.

Thus above concepts of sūññata in early Buddhism developed by Nagarjuna as equivalent with paticcasamuppada in Madhyamaka philosophy. Nāgarjuna mentioned Mūlamadhyamakarikā that “nowhere and never does a reality existing or originate out of itself or out of another or out of both or without a cause”. In same manner Acelakassapa sutta Buddha explained “things happed neither by itself nor by another nor by both nor by no cause all things are said to be dependently originated”. Again Nāgarjuna said in Mūlamadhyamakarikā that phenomena can never have independent existence as long as they are dependent for their arising on various conditions. the only way in which nature of dhamma can be describe is to say that they are suñña. Therefore it is seems to be that Nāgarjuna concluded in Mūlamadhyamakarikā That the paticcasamuppada equivalent sūññata, sūññata equivalent to Madhyamapratipadā and pratityasamuppada equivalent to Madhyamapratipadā

2. Introduction and research problem/issue

The concept sūññata was developed by Venerable Nāgarjuna as a matter of dialectical necessity. The Mahayana system clearly recognised this dialectical necessity when they speak of the non-substantiality of individual (pudgala nairathma) and non-substantiality elements (Dharma Nairathma). The seeds of this teaching of sūññata can be seen in early Buddhist discourses. Buddha always explained that there is no ultimate essence as soul in inside of individual as well as in external world. Buddha said that ultimate characteristics of phenomena are impermanence, suffering and non soul. In this context it seems to be that there is parallel between early Buddhism and sūññata concept. But research problem are what is the ultimate meaning of” sūññata” accordance with early Buddhism.? Did concept of sūññata use in early Buddhism to indicate paticcasamuppada? as well as did the concept sūññata use in early Buddhism to indicate nature of the phenomena and Nibbana? Finally, is the concept sūññata in Madhyamaka philosophy really a logical development of paticcasamuppada?

3. Research Methodology

Data was collected referring library and E- library. The data from the primary and secondary sources related to the field collected through the libraries and discussed with scholars in the field. The data analysis method of the research is comparative method. Here comparatively studied the concept sūññata in madhyamaka philosophy and early Buddhism.

4. Results and findings

The result of the research is that there is a parallel between paticcasamuppada and concept sūññata in madhyamaka philosophy and it is possible to find that the concept of sūññata is the logical implication of paticcasamuppada.

5. Conclusions, implications and significance

The madhyamaka school of philosophy innovated the concept of paticcasamuppada as sūññata to emphasis the relativity of word phenomena and to emphasis the middle path. The essence of the paticcasamuppada is relativism, the essence of relativism is dispel of all the views. The essence of dispel of all views is middle path. middle path itself means sūññata.

6. References (Selected)

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