

## Study of the Buddhist View of No Self

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### Abstract

**No self is one of the doctrines of the philosophy of Buddhism. Buddhism emphasizes no-self and rejects the existence of unchanging soul. Although there is no self in the world, the object of performing the act and the object of receiving the consequences are still the same. Although there is no ego in the world, man has free will.**

### Keywords

**No Self; Five Aggregates; Karma; Free Will.**

### 1. Introduction

While ordinary people believe that there is a self in the world, Buddhism rejects common sense and proposes that there is no self in the world. At the same time, although Buddhism holds that no self exists, the object of performing the act and the object of receiving the consequences are still the same. These puzzling ideas of Buddhism are the subject of this essay.

To summarize, Buddhism considers what ordinary people think of as the self to be the substitution of an identity for the self. For example, if Tom's is a man, one would think that a man is Tom's ego. If Tom's is a child, one would think that the child is Tom's ego. If Tom's is a teacher, one would think that the teacher is Tom's ego. If Tom's is a genius, one would think that the genius is Tom's ego. If Tom's is a beautiful woman, one would think that the beautiful woman is Tom's ego. Certain religions would argue that behind these identities Tom has an unchanging soul. This soul is Tom's true self. Buddhism strongly rejects the idea that Tom has an unchanging soul.

### 2. Reasons for No Self

Buddhism believes that human beings are a combination of the five aggregates. There is no one self in the world.

First of all, human beings are divisible in essence. The so-called human being is not an indivisible whole, but can be divided into five aggregates, such as body, feelings, minds, action and consciousness, among which body is the material element that constitutes me, and thought, action and consciousness are the spiritual elements that constitute me. If body is me, then I am just a physical body. If feelings are me, then I will just be a bunch of feelings. In recent times, there have been arguments that the essence of the self is the sameness of the personality of memory, but this is also unreasonable. Human memory is always changing. When A has a certain memory, he is A. When A forgets this memory, is he not A anymore? Also, if the memory is me, two persons with the same memory are the same?

Secondly, people are not unchanging. There was a man named Tom. When Tom was young, he was a childish boy. When Tom was middle-aged, he was a strong man. When Tom was old, he was a frail old man. If there is an ego of Tom, which is Tom's ego among the child and the old man?[1]

Finally, people are not self-mastered. If the ego can be self-mastered, then I should be able to decide my own state and nature, I can be as tall as I want, as strong as I want, as beautiful as I

want, and there should be no ugliness or disease in the world. But the fact is just the opposite, man is always in his own unfreedom, and cannot decide his own state and properties as he wants.

The above three points can show that there is no self in the world.

Buddhism views things in terms of cause and effect. Things are divisible. For example, the human flesh and mind are composed in order. The physical body is made up of the head, torso, and limbs in that order. The head is made up of the eyes, ears, mouth, and nose in that order. All things are dependent on certain conditions for their present temporary existence. Looking at the universe according to cause and effect, one can conclude that the world is changing. Looking at fate according to cause and effect, one can conclude that perception is change. Life is changeable and unchanging; there is no such thing as a constant. There is nothing in the world worth being happy about. Human desires are infinite, and when one need is satisfied, a new one is created. But not all needs will be satisfied, so people will feel pain because they are not satisfied.

All things in the world are egoless, because all things are composed of various causal conditions, in change. All things are synthetic, relative and temporary. But people do not understand this truth and cling to the pursuit of the self and the appropriation of external things, which hinders the understanding of Buddhist truth.

At the same time attachment to the self is the source of suffering. Hinayana Buddhist scholars believe that human being is a collection of form and spirit, and that there is no human self apart from matter and spirit. Human being does not have an entity, the state of existence of both human physical and mental being is changing, and death is the dissolution of human life. At the same time as a person dies, a new aggregate is created under the dictates of the law of cause and effect, and this new life form is also egoless. But the world clings to the idea of the self and becomes greedy for life. Attachment to the self is the source of suffering and must be broken with all one's might. According to the Buddha, life is full of worries and sufferings. Life's birth, old age, sickness and death bring endless worries and sufferings. All these are rooted in attachment to the self. Attachment to the ego is manifested in four states. They are stupidity, prejudice, pride and greed. In Buddhism, these states are called the four fundamental worries.

Attachment to the ego means that one clings to the physical body as the true self. Since there is no self in the world, the attachment to the self arises, and the self-centeredness gives rise to all kinds of worries. People cling to the physical body as the true self, so they are greedy for life and fear death. The Buddha believed that attachment to the ego means not understanding the truth. If people can get rid of their attachment to the ego, they can be liberated.

Therefore, to study Buddhism, one should pay attention to the removal of attachment to the ego. People should study Buddhist theory to establish the correct view that there is no ego and no self. Without attachment to the ego, greed will not arise. Without attachment to the ego, one will be able to moderate one's desires. Without attachment to the ego, one does not base one's happiness on the suffering of others. Without attachment to self, one can be open-minded and open-minded; without attachment to self, one can serve the public without self-sacrifice; without attachment to self, one can walk the road of life without fear. In a word, only when the attachment to the self is broken, only when the attachment to the self is perfected, only when the personality is perfected, only when the spirit is enriched, only when the mind is purified. If this is the case, there will be no suffering in life, but only peace and happiness.

No-self should not be considered as negative or annihilistic. Like Nirvana, it is Truth, Reality; and Reality cannot be negative. It is the false belief in a non-existing imaginary self that is negative. The teaching on Anatta dispels the darkness of false beliefs, and produces the light of wisdom. It is not negative: as Asanga very aptly says: 'There is the fact of No-selfness.'

### 3. Karma and No Self

As well as no self, karma is one of the doctrines of Buddhist philosophy. But there seems to be a contradiction between karma and no self. The object of performing the act and the object of receiving the consequences must be the same in Buddhist karma theory. Since Buddhism says that there is no self. How can we ensure the object of performing the act and the object of receiving the consequences are still the same? The Buddhist answer to this is that there is no unchanging self. People are made up of the five aggregates. At the same time, the human body and mind are similar and successive, and there are links between the past state, the present state and the future state.[2]

In other words, because sentient beings are self-centered, there is a personality subject that creates karma that is assumed to be me, and the karma done by this "me" can only be borne by oneself and the subject of one's own continuum, just like eating and sleeping cannot be replaced by others. [3]

For example, Tom killed someone when he was young, and was caught in his old age. Everyone will admit that young Tom and old Tom are the same person, although he has changed a lot. The same is true in the context of reincarnation. Tom was a man in this life and became a cow in the next life. The man in this life and the cow in the next life are still Tom.

In summary, Buddhism's non-self karma theory is different with other religions' self karma theory .

Early Buddhism was formed on the basis of the critical assimilation and adaptation of some Brahminical theories. Many of its concepts were related to Brahminical ideas. This is also true for the concept of reincarnation. In creating its theory of reincarnation, Buddhism absorbed the Brahmin concept of karma and the Brahmin theory of "karma". However, the "good" and "evil" elements of the Buddhist theory of "karma" are not the same as those of the Brahminical theory of "good" and "evil". The content of "good" and "evil" in the Buddhist theory of "karma" is not exactly the same as that of Brahmanism. The early Buddhist concept of reincarnation differs significantly from the Brahminical concept of reincarnation, mainly in the question of the subject of reincarnation and the specific form of reincarnation. Early Buddhism asserts that there is no self. This is opposed to the basic concept of Brahmanism. In Brahmanism, there is an "I" in the phenomenon of human life, which is the subject of reincarnation. It is this subject who is responsible for one's actions, and it is this subject who is the bearer of karma. But one of the basic points of early Buddhist doctrine was the denial of the existence of an unchanging self in the world. Buddhism believes that things and human life phenomena are composed of many elements, and that the change of things or human life phenomena is just a combination of elements. The relationship between cause and effect is also the relationship between the elements. Therefore, Buddhist reincarnation is also the result of the interaction of various conditions, in which there is no dominant subject. This is the main characteristic of the Buddhist theory of reincarnation at the time of its formation. The interpretation of Hinayana Buddhism is more typical of reincarnation. According to the early Buddhist concept, people will reincarnate after death due to their previous karma. If one understands that there is no self, one's cycle of birth and death will continue. The suffering in reincarnation will not end. Only by understanding no-self can one escape from the cycle of rebirth and achieve liberation. However, early Buddhism does not explain what it is that goes on in the cycle of rebirth. If it is only the phenomenon that changes, and there is no subject in it, then who makes the good and bad karma? Who should be responsible for the results? These questions were not discussed in early Buddhism. For early Buddhism, it was extremely important to uphold the doctrine of non-self. This was the fundamental doctrine that distinguished Buddhism from Brahminism. Early Buddhism preached equality and rejected the eternal dominance of Brahmins in society. It was against the idea that there was anything static in nature or in human society. But the concept of

reincarnation was also important to early Buddhism. Because the concept of reincarnation is closely related to the theory of liberation. This concept was necessary for Buddhism to attract followers and to lead people to do good deeds. Without the concept of reincarnation, it would have been difficult to establish a religious ethics in Buddhism. Without the concept of reincarnation, it would be difficult to establish a religious ethical doctrine of Buddhism, which would be unattractive to the general public and unbinding to the believers. As for the difficulties in logical interpretation arising from the problem of no-subject in reincarnation, early Buddhism did not consider them. This has attracted the attention of some followers in Mahayana Buddhism and has led to some adjustments to the relevant Buddhist theories.

The concept of reincarnation was introduced to China along with other ideas of Buddhism. The Chinese also had a process of transformation of this concept from India. The concept of reincarnation in Chinese Buddhism is related to and different from the concept of reincarnation in Indian Buddhism. After the introduction of reincarnation into China, it was difficult for Chinese monks to understand the difficulties of Indian Buddhism in this regard. Therefore, some monks directly proposed that there is a self. In their view, it is unbelievable to speak of reincarnation without the subject of reincarnation.

The concept of reincarnation has had a significant influence not only on the theories of some of the major Buddhist sects in China, but also on the Chinese people. The idea of reincarnation plays a restraining role in the behavior of many people. The idea that good is rewarded with good and evil with evil is deeply rooted in people's minds. Many people did not know much about the profound meaning of Buddhism. They do good deeds in order to get a good reward. In the afterlife, they will have a good destiny. In this sense, the idea of karma can have some positive effects under certain conditions. Many people who believe in reincarnation actively perform good deeds based on the consideration of karma and retribution, seeking to avoid harm. This has some positive significance for the peace and stability of society. Internally, this aspect of Buddhism is also a useful tool for the order to ask its followers to observe the precepts and strive for goodness. It plays an important role in promoting or maintaining the development of Friesianism.

#### **4. Free Will and No Self**

Buddhism believes that there is no ego. Buddhism believes that man has free will. The fact that man has free will means that he has the right to make free choices. If there is no free will to decide whether one does good or bad things, the Buddhist theory of cause and effect is not valid. Only when one has free will do one's actions have the corresponding ethical value. But there seems to be a contradiction between free will and cause and effect. If every thing, including our thoughts, is generated because of conditions. And these conditions in turn are generated by other conditions. Everything falls into a causal relationship. Then every thing that comes into being is determined by the previous conditions. Does man still have free will. Is such a free will only an illusion. Also when people act in such a way that causality seems to be set up as a kind of determinism. But this is not in accordance with the Buddha's intention.

The Buddha argued against determinism and defended free will. Again, only if there is free will can people be responsible for their own actions, and this way there is a Buddhist view of karma. Therefore the existence of free will is also indispensable for Buddhist theory itself. It would be inconsistent with the Buddha's statement if one's thoughts were entirely determined by what has gone before. The Buddha did not deny the existence of free will while acknowledging karma. There is no contradiction between the two.

We are free to make choices in our lives. To things because of our greed to want to acquire. This behavior seems to be a form of free will. For example, we freely choose to eat or not to eat. We freely choose to go to class or not to go to class. We freely choose which way to go home. These

choices seem to bring about some visible change in us. But in the Buddhist view the end of all these actions is still a dead-end cycle. If one does not realize that there is no self, one will only be in the cycle of karma forever. And so we are free to go back to the cycle of rebirth. This choice is clearly not free will. As a logical starting point it is only a blind impulse. For our choices are, in the Buddhist view, nothing more than cycles dictated by folly. According to Buddhist teachings we have to translate this potential free will into reality. That is, to recognize no-self. To realize no-self is to attain wisdom. To attain wisdom is to have true free will. In this way our choices are truly free choices. Free will in Buddhism is freedom within the limits of necessity. And to realize no-self is the way to obtain free will.

## 5. Conclusion

There is no one unchanging self in the world. The ego is made up of many parts. Also there is karma in the world. Each person has to accept the consequences of his or her actions.

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