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PREFACE

We are happy to present this commemoration volume to the general public on the occasion of the 100th birth anniversary of Mahâmahopâdhyâya Padma-vibhusana Pandit Gopi Nath Kaviraj. It was the decision of the Centenary Celebration Committee to bring out the volume in four different sections, in each of the four languages in which Kavirajî wrote. Originally, the late Dr. Jaideva Singh was assigned the responsibility of preparing the English section. The sudden death of this discerning scholar dealt a severe blow to the activities of the board of editors.

"Navonmeça", the name given to this volume, is indeed very significant. The articles contained herein aim at nava-umeya, revealing new aspects of the topics selected. Kavirajî helped to develop the insight of the enquirers who approached him. Seekers of the Truth flocked to him not only from the whole of India, but also from foreign lands. He helped them all with his supernormal range of learning and wisdom. These articles have been collected to serve as a floral tribute of vâk to the genius of the great savant.

We wish to put on record our deep sense of gratitude to the contributors, all of whom are eminent scholars in their fields. The ready response of veteran scholars such as Thakur Jaideva Singh, Andre Padoux, B. N. Pandit, A. N. Jani, J. Gonda, Kamaleshwar Bhattacharya, Sirsir Kumar Ghosh and Shibiban Bhattacharya, to name only a few, has been extremely rewarding. The contributions made by them have justified the idea of navonmeça. Herein, the seeker of knowledge will find expositions of sponda, the various aspects of Kashmir Saivism, the role of bhâvanâ in the worship of Tripurasundari, the significance of Mahâkâli, the concept of âyuḥ and mysticism in Indian philosophy.

The volume is dedicated to the commemoration of one of the greatest mystic sadhakas of our era, whose dearest subjects were Tantra, Âgama and Yoga, and who attained enlightenment through incessant sadhanâ. A seer of the truth, Kavirajî was free from sectarian bias and appreciated the value of all sects and schools. In his vision, all paths lead to Ultimate Reality and all conflicts are resolved in a fundamental unity. Some learned contributors have given exposition to this insight of the great Ācârya. The articles by Arlene M. Breuinin and Navjivan Rastogi respectively present Kavirajî’s concept of Akhanda-mahâyoga and his exemplary interpretation of Kashmir Saivism.
THE ANĀTMAN CONCEPT IN BUDDHISM

KAMALESWAR BHATTACHARYA

It is admitted by all—ancient Masters (with the exception of some heretics) as well as modern scholars—that the Buddha denied ātman—a denial which is well known, through the Pali expression, as the doctrine of anattā. And this doctrine is rightly understood to be a basic tenet of Buddhism. However, both the ancient Masters and the modern scholars are divided on the issue of whether this denial concerns ātman in general or, rather, a particular view or particular views of ātman (for a while I will leave the term ātman untranslated; for in different contexts it has different meanings—which will become clear as we proceed). The present paper is an attempt to clarify this issue—a vital issue, indeed, as on its clarification will depend the solution of many of the metaphysical problems that the modern studies of Buddhism have given rise to.

Naturally, we shall have to turn first to the words of the Buddha himself—or, at least, to what tradition has recorded as such. And these words, fortunately, are quite illuminating. Nowhere is the Buddha reported to have stated: “There is no ātman”. On the contrary, in hundreds of places spread over the Pali Canon, we hear him say, speaking of the five khandhas (skandhas) in Sanskrit) “aggregates” that constitute the psycho-physical individual: “This is not mine, I am not this, This is not my ātman” (n’ etam mama, n’ eso ‘ham asmi, na m’ eso attā).

What is denied, therefore, is the individuality of the individual, and nothing more. And the reason for this denial is also clearly indicated, e.g.: “Those leaders in religious life who conceive of the ātman in so many ways have all in view the five aggregates which are the object of grasping (upādiṇṇakhandha), or some one among them”. Indeed, we know from the Pali Canon, as well as from the Upaniṣads (which preceded the Buddha), that the common people of those times conceived the psycho-physical complex as the ātman—in other words, as the essence of the individual. The superior people, however, while rejecting the gross body, saw the essence of the individual in a subtle element—e.g., consciousness. The

Upaniṣadic doctrine of the ātman—We shall see in a while what it exactly was—was proclaimed against this background.²

Now, so far as the words of the Buddha are concerned, a penetrating logical analysis of them was given, in ancient times, by the non-Buddhist logician Uddyotakara (6th-7th centuries). In his polemic against the Buddhists who contended that the Buddha had denied ātman in a general way, he pointed out that this position was untenable because the Buddha's words contained no negation such as “I am not, You are not” (nāham asmi, na tvam asa). The Buddha merely said: “I am not the five aggregates, You are not the five aggregates”. It is a particular negation (vijeyapratipāda), not a universal negation (omanyapratipāda). And a particular negation invariably implies a corresponding affirmation: when I say “I do not see with the left eye”, I do not mean to say that I see with the right eye (vāmenākṣāṇa na paśyāmyyukte ganyata eva daśagīvī paśyāmi).³

Despite the biased criticism of Uddyotakara by two great Buddhist Masters, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalālā,⁴ it should be admitted that there is a great deal of logic in his reasoning. In other words, the Buddha's denial of a particular view or particular views of ātman cannot be logically interpreted as a general negation of ātman; on the contrary, this “particular negation” implies his acceptance of some other view of ātman—which, as we shall see later, is not really a “view”, because it is a matter of immediate spiritual realization.

Quite recently, a new interpretation of the anatī doctrine from the logical standpoint was attempted by a professor of Philosophy at the Sorbonne, Paris. Professor Guy Bugault writes:

“...well before Russell...the Buddha had already put forth a three-valued logic (albeit implicitly and in practice). Besides true and false, this logic would admit a third possibility: nonsense, absurdity, or incongruity”.

This position, unfortunately, is not worth paying attention to. My esteemed friend and colleague Hans Herzberger, Professor of Logic at the University of Toronto, Canada, has been kind enough to send me a long comment on an important part of Professor Bugault's article, and on the question under consideration he writes:

4. Tattvasaṃgraha 349 and Paññikā thereon.

“I find considerable confusion about” ‘three-valued logic’ in the text. Thus:

“. well before Russell...the Buddha had already put forth a three-valued logic (albeit implicit and in practice)” (P. 28).

If so, what are the rules of inference and (‘implicit’) truth-tables of this logic? While it is true that denying (i) “[At least one of any pair (A, —A) of propositions is true]” leads in the direction of three-valued logic, this is not ineluctable, and Russell is a good test case. Russell certainly brought PB (=Principle of Bivalence) into doubt, but his own logic was strictly ‘bivalent’—like Wittgenstein and others he restricted the application of logic to propositions which satisfied PB. So it's one thing to challenge PB and quite another thing to ‘put forth a three-valued logic’. Russell knew about three-valued logics (first developed in the 1920’s) and rejected them. It's safe to say that Buddha didn't know about them, didn't put one forth, and neither accepted (‘implicitly’) nor rejected them”.

To return to Uddyotakara, according to his interpretation the Buddha’s denial of the five aggregates as ātman implies his acceptance of some kind of ātman. Now, what is ātman? Naturally, following his own school—the Nyāya—Uddyotakara concludes that the ātman admitted by the Buddha is the “object of the notion of the Ego” (ahomākāra (ahomāpratayā)—viśaya), distinct from the aggregates.⁸ Here, however, Uddyotakara is rash: for nowhere in the texts is the Buddha found to admit such an ātman; on the contrary, it is the pudgala of the Buddhist heretics which is similar to this ātman—an individual soul which is an agent and the enjoyer of the fruits of its actions, good or bad and which transmigrates from one existence to another. This similarity was also pointed out by the two Buddhist Masters mentioned earlier, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalālā.⁹

It may also be noted that, just like the believers in the pudgala, Uddyotakara appeals to the Bhūrahāra-Sutta of the Sāmyutta-Nikāya.⁸ In this text, however, the Buddha, taking his stand on the popular belief, describes the five aggregates as the “burden” (bhūra) and the pudgala as the “burden-bearer” (bhūra-hāra): he does not support the ontological substantiality of the pudgala.⁹

Furthermore, an ātman-view similar to that of the Nyāya is found to be refuted by the Buddha in the Mahāmārāja-Sutta of the Dīgha-Nikāya.ⁱ⁰ First it is said that ātman is not sensation (vedāna)—one of the five aggregates: sensation is

subject to the vicissitudes peculiar to all empirical things: one does not find in it an invariable self. Is then ātman something apart from sensation? No, for, when there is no sensation, can I say “I am” (asmi)? At this point, someone propounds a theory which is akin to the Nyāya theory of later times: True, ātman is not sensation; but it is not devoid of sensation, it has sensation as its attribute (vedanā-dhamma). The Buddha, however, rejects this theory as well: When all sensations have come to an end, can I still say “I am”? One may compare here David Hume, who also said:

“For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception. When perceptions are removed for any time, as by sound sleep; so long am I insensible of myself, and may truly be said not to exist. And were all my perceptions removed by death, and could I neither think, nor feel, nor see, nor love, nor hate after the dissolution of my body, I should be entirely annihilated, nor do I conceive what is farther requisite to make me a perfect non-entity. If any one, upon serious and unprejudiced reflection, thinks he has a different notion of himself, I must confess I can reason no longer with him. All I can allow him is, that he may be in the right as well as I, and that we are essentially different in this particular. He may, perhaps, perceive something simple and continuous, which he calls himself; tho’ I am certain there is no such principle in me.

“But setting aside some metaphysicians of this kind, I may venture to affirm of the rest of mankind, that they are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an incomprehensible rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement.”

Thus, from whatever angle it may be envisioned, there is for the Buddha no individual ātman—a self or a soul.

There was not indeed, in ancient India, one theory of ātman. But, while the majority of the schools regard ātman as an individual substance, for the Upaniṣads it is the Universal Being (brahman), and the same in all beings. This point was already emphasized, in ancient times, by the great Vedanta philosopher, Śaṅkara, in Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya I, 1, 4.12: na hy ahampratyayasya varṇastavārthāya tattvānty ahaṁ tattvānty ātmanāt tattvānty ātmanāt, itaṁ ca kārṇaṁ kārṇaṁ pūruṣaḥ viśuddhaṁ tarkasaṁyā vā kenacit adhigataḥ sarvaśyātām.  


This being so, the ātman whose existence is indicated by the Buddha when he denies the five aggregates as ātman is, I believe, the Upaniṣadic ātman. And this view finds support from the numerous passages of the Pali Canon which identify, indeed, ātman, Dharma, Nirvāṇa or Buddha with brahman (neuter).

All these texts were studied in detail by the great Pali scholar Wilhelm Geiger in two works, Pali Dhamma (1920) and Dhamma und Brahman (1921), and recently by myself. 13

Geiger wanted to prove the following. It was with a view to substituting for brahman, connoting permanence, dharma (dhamma in Pali), that the Buddha frequently used the two words as synonyms. Dharma, however, connotes impermanence. True, the word is found used in the Upaniṣads themselves as a synonym of brahman; but, for the Buddha, it was but a venerable receptacle—so Geiger put it—that he filled up with new content („... das ewardige Geäs, das er mit neuem Inhalte fiillte). Consequently the word brahman itself, used in the Pali Canon as a synonym of dhamma, acquires “a peculiar coloration, a new illumination” (eine besondere Fährung, eine neue Beleuchtung). In the place of ātman, of course, thought Geiger, the Buddha professed anūtman (anattan in Pali; Nominative Singular anātā), that is, the negation of ātman. 14

Unfortunately, these ideas—which betray the influence of those generally received—cannot be substantiated from the Canon.

It is true that the Buddha, steering between the two extreme standpoints, eternality (sasvatavāda) on the one hand and nihilism (ucchedavāda) on the other. In other words, taking his stand upon the well-known Middle Path, condemned eternality. But what is meant by “eternity” in this context? As several canonical texts show, it is nothing but a supposedly endless duration in time, either in this world or in a higher world. To explain: according to the Buddha, all that is born must die, and all that is thus impermanent (anityavajīca) because of being in time is painful (duḥkhhidukkha). The timeless—the Absolute—alone is permanent, and thus happiness (sukha), because it is not born and, consequently, neither decays nor dies. We find, indeed, in the Pali Canon numerous expressions for Nirvāṇa (Pali Nibbāna) which signify “permanent” and “happiness.” 15 And the great

Theravāda writer Buddhaghosa also says in his Visuddhimagga that Nirvāṇa, not having an origination in time, does not decay, nor dies, and that, not being subject to birth, decay and death, it is permanent (niej). Statements of this kind are common in the Upaniṣads. For instance: The ātman “is never born; nor does he die at any time. He sprang from nothing and nothing sprang from him. He is unborn, abiding, primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain” (Kaṭha-Upaniṣad II, 18): “All that is different from the timeless ātman is painful” (ato nyād ātmanam: Bṛhadāraṇyaka III, 4, 2 : 5, 1 : 7, 23); “The Infinite is happiness. There is no happiness in anything small (finite).” Only the Infinite is happiness. Verily, the Infinite is the same as the Immortal, the finite is the same as the mortal” (Chīndogya VII, 23-24). It is self-contradictory to say that the temporal is eternal: this doctrine is also manifest in the Upaniṣads.

And we have seen that one who says anātman does not necessarily deny ātman. I shall return to the question in a little while.

Just as the ātman-brahman is described in negative terms in the Upaniṣads—we shall see later why.—so also the Nirvāṇa is described in negative terms in the Pali Canon.17

Not only that: just as the ātman-brahman is called “Consciousness” (vijñāna) in the Upaniṣads, so also, in two Pali texts, the Nirvāṇa is called “Consciousness” (vijñāna). It is not, of course, our individual, finite consciousness—one of the five aggregates,—but a consciousness in which the ordinary consciousness ceases to exist—a consciousness, universal and absolute, in which there is no phenomenon, no dichotomy of the empirical world, no individuality:

vijñāṇam anidassanām anantam sabbatopabhiṣam ettha āpya ca paṭṭhavi tejo vāyo na gādhitii |
ettha digaḥ ca rassāḥ ca eṣuṁ ṛhām subhāsabhiṣam |
ettha nāmaḥ ca rāpaḥ ca asēsas uparahjāti |
vijñāṇaśa niradaḥena etthi etum uparajāti [। । ।]

This passage is an echo of Upaniṣadic teachings, especially of the teaching of the great thinker Yājñavalkya to his wife Maitreyi in Bṛhadāraṇyaka II, 4, 12-13, and IV, 5, 13-15. There, after having stated that the ātman is “a homogeneous mass of consciousness, without inside, without outside” (anantarō bāhyo kṛṣṇaḥ praṇājanaghanaḥ [vijñānaghana] eva), he said: “After emancipation (i.e., from our contingent finitude, due to ignorance), there is no more consciousness”; and then, in order to dispel Maitreyi’s fear of the destruction of ātman—the true Self—which she identified with our finite consciousness, he taught:


“Where there is a semblance of duality (dvātām tv), there... one knows another. But when everything has become one’s self, then... by what and whom should one know? By what should one know that by which one knows all this? By what, my dear, should one knows all this? By what, my dear, should one know the knower?”—a passage to which I will have to return soon.19

The Pali passage just quoted, and the similar one, have, naturally, embarrassed the majority of the interpreters in modern times. Even the great Theravāda writer, Buddhaghosa, who recognizes that viññāna is a “name for Nirvāṇa” (ābhañassā nāmam) and that the consciousness which ceases there is the phenomenal consciousness, refuses to admit that Nirvāṇa is Consciousness and gives a fanciful etymology of the word viññāna. But the modern scholars, the great V. Trenckner and I. B. Horner included, have gone a step further: they attribute the words of the Buddha to his adversary and thus make the Omniscient appear as incapable of giving a proper answer.20

The idea of the “Consciousness without consciousness” will occur again, in later times, in Mahāyāna: not only in Vijñānavāda, but in the Prajñāpāramitā-Sūtras as well—where the Absolute is so described (cittam acittam, cittaṁ cittavinnikuttam).21

In Mahāyāna texts, the Upaniṣadic ātman is clearly recognised. Thus in the Suvairājyakāmamapariprakāsha-Prajñāpāramitāsūtra the “non-dual ātman” (advayā ātman) is said to be the ground of our authentic knowledge of all things in all spheres of existence.

By “non-dual” (advaya) in this context is meant “beyond the subject-object split” (grhaṇa-grāhakabhedā). It is, indeed, through such a knowledge, where the subject coincides with the object, that all things are known as they are. Our empirical knowledge, characterized by the subject-object split, is imperfect; it is otherwise called “ignorance” (avidya).

Now the ātman—the self—by its very nature is beyond the subject-object split. The self cannot be both subject and object of the same act of knowledge, any more than fire can burn itself or the eye can see itself.22 And the Upaniṣadic ātman is—as we have seen—universal. Therefore, when the ātman is known, everything is known. This is the Upaniṣadic doctrine, so brilliantly expressed by Yājñavalkya in the passage quoted a while ago:

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20. See ibid., p. 54, n. 2.
21. Ibid., p. 54, n. 1.
22. Ibid., p. 53, n. 4.
23. Cf. ibid., p. 52, n. 7.
and whom should one know? By what should one know that by which one knows all this? By what, my dear, should one know the knower (vijñātāram are kena viññāyati)?"

As it is beyond the subject-object split, the ātman can never, indeed, be known as an object. This is the reason why in two Pali texts the ātman or the Buddha is said to be "beyond apprehension" (anupalabhihamāna)anupalabhyyamāna).24

Similarly, a later text, the Sutaotakā Prajñāpāramitā—which, like one of these two Pali texts, identifies ātman and Buddha, says: Just as the ātman does not exist at all, is not apprehended (atytantato'na sqvāmyyate nopalabhyyate), so the Buddha also does not exist at all, is not apprehended.25

What is meant?

First, in the Buddha is not to be seen a psychophysical individual, but the Absolute, called by various names, brahman, ātman, dharma, dharmānāṃ dharmātā ("essential nature of things"), and so on. This is, of course, true of every individual; but the Buddha is the one who has realized this truth, who has made it "actual", by becoming what he really is. So, already in the Pali Canon, he is reported to have said: "The following are the Buddha's names: 'One who has the Dhamma as his body' (Dharmakāya), or 'One who has the brahman as his body' (brahmakāya); 'One who has become the Dharma' (Dharmabhihāra), or 'One who has become the brahman' (brahmabhūta). And further: "What do you gain by seeing this foul body? He who sees the Dhamma sees me, and he who sees me sees the Dhamma".26

Now the Absolute can never become an object for any body. As the Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā puts it, "One should see the Buddha as the Dharma. The essential nature of things—dharmatā—however cannot be known (dharmatā ca na viññāyā nasa lokāy viññāyā).27 In like manner, Nāgarjuna also says: "You are not said to be seen when one has seen your bodily form. You are well seen when the Dharma is seen. But the essential nature of things—dharmatā—is not seen" (dharmat dṛṣṭe sudṛṣṭa'si dharmatā na ca dṛṣṭaye).28

And this "non-apprehension" only indicates the non-existence of the ātman or the Buddha—if we view it from the empirical standpoint. From the standpoint of the absolute Truth, however, it is this non-existence which is its highest ("metaphysical") existence, it is this non-apprehension which is its highest apprehension:

yādviṣamānāt saiva paramā viṣamānāt
sarvathānupalamhā sa upalamhā pari mataḥ

(Mahāyāna-Sūtraṁkāra IX, 78).29

Surely the ātman is apprehended, but not as an object. Indeed, if the ātman—the self—could become an object, it would turn out to be an anātman—not-self. Therefore, he who thinks: "I have apprehended the ātman objectively" has not really apprehended it. The ātman is apprehended, beyond the subject-object split which governs our empirical thought, in the immediate consciousness: "It is" (asti cetasabhadhavyaṃ: Katha-Upāniṣad VI, 12-13). But, from the empirical standpoint, again, this apprehension is nothing but a non-apprehension, being devoid of an object and hence ineffable. So the Katha-Upāniṣad (II, 3) says: "Only to him who does not know it is it known; to him who knows it, is not known" avijñātām viññātām viññātām avijñātām. In the same vein, the Bhagavadgītā (II, 69) says: "What is night for all beings is the time of waking for the disciplined soul; and what is the time of waking for all beings is night for the sage who sees"—

yādviṣamānānāt tasyām jñātām samyamānāt
yasyām jñātāt bhūanti sā nāśa pāyaṇa mune

True, the non-existence of pudgala is sought to be proved on the same ground of non-apprehension.30 But one thing is the non-apprehension of pudgala, and quite another thing the non-apprehension of ātman. If the so-called pudgala—an individual substance—really existed, it would be an object of thought and hence apprehended.31 But, from whatever side it may be envisaged, it is never apprehended and remains wholly unintelligible. It is, therefore, concluded that it does not exist. The ātman, on the other hand, can never be an object of thought, as we have seen. Thus, by its very nature it is "beyond apprehension."32

Furthermore, in many Mahāyāna texts, the Absolute is said to be "beyond apprehension" (anupalabhī). The Vaiśeṣika Gāṇaṭāṭa, deeply influenced by Buddhist ideas, said the same thing.33

We may, therefore, not follow Pali scholasticism (Abhidhamma), or those great scholars of modern times, such as Louis de La Vallee Poussin, whose thoughts were shaped under its influence, when they assert that, just as the non-apprehension of pudgala proves its non-existence, so the non-apprehension of the ātman proves the latter's non-existence.34

24. Cf. ibid., p. 9, n. 4.
25. Ibid., p. 68.
26. Ibid., p. 82.
27. Cf. ibid., pp. 61-62.
28. See ibid., p. 124, n. 3.
29. Ibid., p. 124, n. 3.
30. Cf. ibid., p. 68.
31. Cf. ibid., p. 67, n. 3.
32. On "apprehension" (upalabdhi) cf. ibid., p. 68.
33. Cf. ibid., p. 68.
34. See ibid., p. 67, n. 3.
35. Cf. ibid., p. 67 n. 3.
It is precisely because the ātman cannot be an object of thought that the Buddha rejected all “theories” (vāda) about ātman. The Upaniṣads also had stated—e.g., “Whence words return along with thought, not having reached it” (yato vace vāca vairante apratya manastā saha: Taittiriya-Upaniṣad II, 4 & 9). It is, further, because the ātman cannot be apprehended as an object that the Upaniṣadic thinkers mostly indicate it in negative terms, by saying what it is not, rather than what it is. And the Sāptaṭakāṭi Prajñāpāramitā—already mentioned before—says the same about the ātman or the Buddha (the two are identified in this text, as we have seen): “Just as the ātman cannot be expressed by any empirical reality, so the Buddha also cannot be expressed by any empirical reality. Where there is no name, that is called the Buddha” (yatvāna kācitu sopkhyā sa ucyate Buddha iti). “It is the name of one who is beyond words (apado).”

Thus from the rejection of the theories about ātman it does not follow that the Buddha denied ātman as some modern scholars have thought. “A theory about the ātman is not itself the ātman” (nātmadeṣṭhil svayam ātmanokṣepsa), says the Mahāyāna-Sūtrālokaṇāra.

The Mahāyāna-Sūtrālokaṇāra, of course, clearly recognizes ātman. And this ātman called by various names, “Great Atman” (mahāātma), “Supreme Atman” (paramātman), “Succcess” (tathātā), “Void” (śūnya), “being devoid of self” (naśīrātmaḥ), is nothing else than the Upaniṣadic ātman. The Ratnagotrapipīṭaka-Mahāyānottaratattārakstra also has the same doctrine.

Indeed, already in the Taittiriya-Upaniṣad (II, 7) the term anātmya is applied to the brahman. Later, in the Maitri-Upaniṣad, the ātman will be described as “Void” (śūnya), “without” ātman (nirātman, nirātmaka).

Of these, the term “void” (śūnya) indicates that the ātman is beyond all objective determinations—like the neti neti “Not so, not so...” of Yājñavalkya. And, by describing the ātman as “devoid of ātman” (anātmya, etc.), the Upaniṣadic thinkers convey the idea that the ātman—the self—is distinct from the psycho-physical complex and thus deny the false identification of the self with this complex.

By the term tathātā “Succcess” is meant not being subject to change, to becoming in time—as the great Buddhist Masters, Vasubandhu, Candrakīrti and others, made it clear.

Likewise, the Sāptaṭakāṭi Prajñāpāramitā calls the ātman or the Buddha anatpada “non-origination.”

Thus, for the Upaniṣads—which in ancient India represent a great moment of metaphysical speculation,—the ātman—the self—is neither the psycho-physical complex, nor a privileged part of it (e.g., consciousness), nor any other kind of individual entity, “object of the notion of the Ego.” It is the Being in itself, one, all-encompassing, absolute. From the objective standpoint, as we have seen, it is a non-being. But it is this non-being which is the authentic Being, the ground of all beings.

The Upaniṣads, when they affirm this Being, do deny that psycho-physical being which people, in general, consider to be the self. Hence the apparently paradoxical expression “ātman devoid of ātman”. The paradox is resolved if we translate: “Self devoid of a self”. Conversely, it has appeared to us that the Buddha, when he denies this psycho-physical being as a self, does affirm the Being in itself as the Self.

The difference is merely a difference of accent. The Buddha’s aim, like that of the Upaniṣadic thinkers, was to lead mankind to emancipation—an emancipation from its contingent finitude due to ignorance, which is achieved through knowledge, or, rather, which is knowledge. But, unlike the Upaniṣadic thinkers, he did not so much speculate on the Goal: he showed the Way. His purpose was to be a saviour, not a philosopher. At the same time, however, he was philosophically aware of the danger run by speculation on Being—the danger of making the All-Encompassing an object, standing in relation, on the one hand, to the thinking subject, and on the other, to other objects. The Upaniṣadic philosophers themselves had not escaped that danger. More consistently, therefore, the Buddha followed the “right way”. He explained more clearly, in order that his hearers, by getting rid of all false notions of the ātman, might get an immediate knowledge of the ātman.

The same, indeed, will be said, centuries later, by the great Vedānta philosopher, Śāṅkara.

In Vedānta, the psycho-physical complex is called—as in Buddhism—“not-self” (anātman). The false conception of that non-self as the self (ātman) is said to be “ignorance” (avidyā). And, when this ignorance has at last come to an end, thanks to the intellectual and moral discipline pursued, it is through the negation of the ātman falsely conceived by ignorance that the true ātman is realized, in an

36. Ibid., p. 68.
37. Cf. ibid., p. 17 and n. 2.
38. Cf. ibid., p. 17, n. 2.
39. See ibid., pp. 3-7.
40. Cf. ibid., pp. 7 and 69-70.
41. Cf. ibid., p. 96, n. 5.
42. Cf. ibid., p. 4, n. 3.
43. Ibid., p. 124, n. 3.
44. Cf. ibid., p. 96.
45. Cf. ibid., pp. 71-72.
46. Cf. ibid., pp. 75 and 138-140.

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immediate experience. It is never apprehended as an object, as we have seen. Indeed, those who strive to apprehend the atman objectively will not attain it. So Šāṅkara says, at the end of a discussion on the atman’s “character of not being an object” (avipāyatva), in his commentary on Bhagavadgītā XVIII, 50: “One must not exert oneself to know the atman, but solely to make cease the notion of atman in what is not the atman”—jñāne yatna na kartavyah kim tv anātmanāt atmanabuddhiniśṭhāv eva.

I shall conclude with a statement of the great Buddhist Master Vasubandhu, author of the Viśārīkā with an auto-commentary, which perfectly elucidates the so-called “negation of atman” in Buddhism:

yo bālāśa dharmāṇāṃ svabhāvo grāhāgraḥokādibhiḥ parikalpitānāṃ kalpitānāṃ atmanā teṣām naiva vanāśyām na tv anabhilāpyaṃśānāṃ yo buddhāṇāṃ viṣayaḥ.

“ It is by virtue of that nature of things, consisting in subject and object, which the ignorant imagine, that the things are devoid of self, not by virtue of that ineffable Self which is the domain of the Enlightened Ones”.

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THE JAINA CONCEPT OF SELF

GOVINDAGOPAL MUKHOPADHYAYA

The search of philosophy, especially in India, is a search for the self or soul. Self or soul denotes consciousness and it is this wonderous phenomenon of consciousness that has engaged the attention of all thinking beings since the dawn of human civilisation. In India it was known as the Atmāvidyā, the science of the self, which was considered as the Paraśvidyā, the supreme science or highest knowledge as distinguished from Aparāvidyā, which was concerned with the knowledge of other material things.

Some may object that the search for the self was not universally accepted in India as the supreme object of enquiry as is evident from the existence of such systems as the Čārvaka, Baudha, Jaina etc., which are branded as heterodox as opposed to the orthodox systems, which had their roots in the Vedas. But we forget that even the Čārvaka, who are known as materialists, are engaged in explaining the fact of consciousness and this they do only in terms of the material body. They are only deha-vidyādhārī. The Buddhists, who are called nihilists because they do not admit the existence of anything permanent, much less of a permanent self, have still to engage themselves in finding out the nature of consciousness, which they ultimately consider to be of a fleeting nature. The flow of consciousness has still to be admitted by them and so there are viśītu-vidyālās. Even in reducing all existence to a zero or a void, they have to do it on the strength of the analysis of the fact of consciousness alone, which the Buddhists claim, proves the void to the hilt.

The position of the Jains in this matter stands on a unique footing. They not only affirm the existence of the self or soul but show its infinite varieties, which no other system of Indian philosophy has done with such details. The Jaina system of philosophy is, therefore, atma-vidyā to the core and its entire interest centres round this one concept of self or soul. It will be, therefore, fruitful to take note of this concept from the Jaina point of view.

Every philosophical system has some fundamental categories through which they have tried to explain the world of experience. The Jains consider them to be nine in number (navā tattva) and the very first of them is jiva, the soul, which shows that it occupies the very first and most important position among the tattvas.