

Non-Origination, Emptiness, Void and Self-No-Self

The following studies come from online research on this terminology. Modern Nichiren Doctrine and Shakyamuni's Lotus Sutra are important modifications to this idea that non-origination was first held to demonstrate the lack of free-will or agency in the karmic amalgam of which we are instantiated. **Nichiren** refers to this in his writings as an error and limitation by the early Hinayana thinking that karma is *immutable* or *not influenced* by our actions. This thinking led religions and philosophies in India to adopt the ideology of "*destiny*" and karma as an immutable "reality". As we read further in Nichiren's scholarship it becomes very clear that the method of the Lotus Sutra to awaken our 9th consciousness of Buddhahness, provides us with direct access to the entire amalgam of our karmic experience and momentum, and moment-to-moment instantiations. Due to this access, we can influence and fully engage with our karma (maintained in our lower 8 consciousnesses), providing us with agency and free-will to affect change and expression of potential.

From this study it can be understood that the long-standing thinking of non-origination is an incomplete understanding of manifestations of energy from formations due to differentiation. Energies forming into endless variations from potential create an environment of "**dependent-origination**" that perpetuate karma (the actions of formations to express energies into form) and the momentum of life. Non-origination leads one to the inevitable conclusion that all experience is a dream and non-substantial or "**void**". Whereas, to understand that form is a result of energies in a dance of amalgams and instantiations, provides a hugely fertile environment for the physical universe while also providing the duality that is the delusion of possession and ownership by Samsaric thoughts; in opposition to the observation of all manifestations as temporary and impermanent expressions like the sparks from a sparkler stick or bubbles in a soda water; in other words, "empty". From this we can also see that "void" and "empty" are not the same thinking. Void is a vacuum of nothingness, whereas **Emptiness** is the lack of substantiality or form.

Once again cultural and traditional biases muddy the proper transmission of the teachings of Shakyamuni. In the BDK translation of the Lotus Sutra, words and terms like Bhagavat, Arhat, and non-origination serve only to confuse, and do not

belong in Mahayana discourse, as they represent the earlier incomplete thoughts of Hinduism, Hinayana and Theravada et al.

For our purposes the idea of non-origination can be seen as a thought investigation into the nature of illusory attachments. But, this is only half the equation. Though there is value to a deeper dive into the mind's mechanisms of attachment etc. It must be pointed out that this early thinking was very much based on materialism.

A small but critical additional analysis, from the point of view that all "material" is firstly formed of "**energy**" in the formations of Quarks, Protons, Electrons and so on, to consider the realms of formation without the presence of humans or sentience at all. With this in mind (sorry about the pun) we add the dimension of processes acting upon one another ad-hock and without intent but amalgamating into tendencies and both creating and responding to conditions and still again more tendencies. This primordial soup is often described in the "**formations**" of this very cosmos we live in. Is this not the very essence of "dependent" origination? Where one action begets another and another in a rapid succession that evokes the term "Big Bang".

Some research:

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Chapter 3.3—Non-origination (Ajati)

Non-origination or Ajati is another major concept in Gaudapada's philosophy. T.M.P. Mahadevan says, "the non-originated nature of the self which is not the cause of origination, for there is nothing else besides it".

Thus the Atma-tattva is aja (unborn) and advaya (non-dual). What is born is born as something else which is an endless process of seeking causes.

Quoting Shankara he says, "what is real, birth through maya alone is intelligible, and not in reality".

We have to assume that real must be the only substance. All others are transformation or parinama. The original being into the world as an effect.

The world appears as nonexistent. It will not be true. It is an "illusory nature of the unborn. It is explained in the karika as an analogy of the dream and reality. It is mind that moves through maya".

It also explains, "creates the illusion of a world involving the distinctions of seer and seen, cause and effect etc. the pluralistic universe which is thus made to appear through maya is nondual. The absolute reality is the Atma-tattva which is unborn and nondual".

Shankara as representative of the quintessence of Advaita philosophy, Gaudapadiya-karika remains the only major example of a Pre-Shankarite formulation of Advaita.

For Advaita Vedanta, the primary cause of bondage is samsara, the worldly living. Due to ignorance or avidya one is inclined to the world of materiality. In order to free from the Samsara one should come out of the earthy elements due to desire and sense pleasures where gets attachment to cause and effect, so long it arises. When the attachment to cause and effect ceases there is no arising of cause and effect. As long as attachment remains so long as Samsara too continues. And when attachment ceases the man is freed. Because of avidya to the Samsara one gets into Samsara. Attachment to the self-generated motivations the individualized self is tended to worldly things. He is not aware of the universality of the other self. That is Brahman. Vedanta affirms the self and the higher self. The identity with the other self must be realized by the knowledge of the self. The tendency of objectify conception 'vikalpa' creates illusion of this world of experience. He is caught in the prapanca, the manifold world. This manifold world made up of boundaries and

distinctions are caused by personal attachment. Freedom from this illusory world is the aim of human life and sacrifice or Karma in the world of plurality as a means thereof. Attachment to an individualized self (jivatman) is an error. The aspirant must realize the self or jivatman is bounded in the material world.

Gaudapadiya-karika explicates that there is no explanation of creation. This leads one to the diction that the doctrine of non-origination or Ajativada is true. Self imagines itself by its maya.

Shankara's commentary goes, "the self luminous self by its own maya imagined in itself different forms. Just as a rope is cognized as a snake in the dim light. In the same manner self has illusion because of wrong perception. There is nothing else as the support of knowledge and memory (than the self). He imagines the jiva (individual self) and then he imagines various objects external and internal. As is a man's knowledge, so is his memory. In explaining this karika, he imagines the jiva of the nature of cause and effect possessed of such ideas as 'I do this', 'I have happiness and misery', this is like a snake imagined on a rope. Then for its 'jivas' sake he 'imagines' various objects, external and internal, such as prana and the rest, in different forms as action, its factors and result. From the knowledge of the imagination that serves as the cause, results the knowledge of the effect results again the memory and again follows the knowledge and result. In this continuity he imagines various objects, internal and external, which actually become the cause and effect.

It is said, "the self is imagined and infinite objects like prana etc. This is the maya of the luminous one by which itself is deluded. This luminous self illumines as maya. This is like a magician's play. He takes trees, flowers, leaves and other materials from the sky. So it is to be understood that this delusion of the world is a game or play of the illusory nature of the self or Atman or Brahman."

Gita says: "this maya of mine is hard to overcome".

Verily, this divine illusion of mine, constituted of the gunas, is difficult to cross over. Those who devote themselves to me alone, cross over this illusion.

Early Hindu philosophies to Madhyamaka Buddhism

Ajātivāda (अजातिवाद) is the fundamental philosophical doctrine of the Advaita Vedanta philosopher Gaudapada. According to Gaudapada, the Absolute is not subject to birth, change and death. The Absolute is aja, the unborn eternal. The empirical world of appearances is considered unreal, and not absolutely existent.

Gaudapada's perspective is based on the Māṇḍūkya Upanishad, applying the philosophical concept of "ajāta" to the inquiry of Brahman, showing that Brahman wholly transcends the conventional understanding of being and becoming. The concept is also found in Madhyamaka Buddhism, as the theory of non-origination.

Etymology

See also: Jāti (Buddhism)

Ajātivāda:

- "A" means "not", or "non" as in Ahimsa, non-harm
- "Jāti" means "birth", "creation", or "change"; it may refer to physical birth, but also to the origin or change of mental phenomena
- "Vāda" means "doctrine"

Taken together "ajātivāda" means "The Doctrine of no-change" or "the Doctrine of no-origination".

The term "ajāta" is similar to the term "anutpāda" from Madhyamika Buddhism, which means "having no origin", "not coming into existence", "not taking effect", "non-production". This has led some scholars to believe that the concept of Ajātivāda itself could have been borrowed from Madhyamika Buddhism. However, it notably diverges from the main tenets of Buddhism, viz. Kṣāṇikatva (momentariness) and Pratītyasamutpāda (dependent origination) which all schools of buddhist philosophy accept as foundational. This distinction is further confirmed by Gaudapada's rejection of Śūnyatā (non-self) in favor of Ātman (self).

Usage

Gaudapada

See also: Prajnaparamita and Rangtong-Shentong

"Ajātivāda" is the fundamental philosophical doctrine of Gaudapada. According to Gaudapada, the Absolute is not subject to birth, change and death. The Absolute is aja, the unborn eternal. The empirical world of appearances is considered Maya (unreal as it is transitory), and not absolutely existent.

According to Comans, Gaudapada's perspective is quite different from Madhyamika Buddhist philosophy. Gaudapada's perspective is based on the Māṇḍūkya Upanishad. In the Māṇḍūkya Karika, Gaudapada's commentary on the Māṇḍūkya Upanishad, Gaudapada sets forth his perspective. According to Gaudapada, Brahman cannot undergo alteration, so the phenomenal world cannot arise independently from Brahman. If the world cannot arise, yet is an empirical fact, then the world has to be an unreal (transitory) appearance of Brahman. And if the phenomenal world is a transitory appearance, then there is no real origination or destruction, only apparent origination or destruction. From the level of ultimate truth (paramārthatā) the phenomenal world is māyā, "illusion", apparently existing but ultimately not real.

In Gaudapada-Karika, chapter III, verses 46-48, he states that the quietened mind becomes one with Brahman and does not perceive of any origination:

When the mind does not lie low, and is not again tossed about, then that being without movement, and not presenting any appearance, culminates into Brahman. Resting in itself, calm, with Nirvana, indescribable, highest happiness, unborn and one with the unborn knowable, omniscient they say. No creature whatever is born, no origination of it exists or takes place. This is that highest truth where nothing whatever is born.

—Gaudapada Karika, 3.46-48, Translated by RD Karmarkar

Acknowledging the strong Buddhist influences, but arguing for the need of an "unchangeable permanent reality," Karmakar opinions that the ajātivāda of Gaudhapada has nothing in common with the Sūnyavāda concept in Buddhism. While the language of Gaudapada is undeniably similar to those found in Mahayana Buddhism, Coman states that their perspective is different because unlike Buddhism, Gaudapada is relying on the premise of "Brahman, Atman or Turiya" exists and is the nature of absolute reality.

Ramana Maharshi

Main article: Ramana Maharshi

Ramana Maharshi gave a translation in Tamil of Gaudapada's Māṇḍūkya Upanishad Karika, chapter two, verse thirty-two:

There is no creation, no destruction, no bondage, no longing to be freed from bondage, no striving to be free [from bondage], nor anyone who has attained [freedom from bondage]. Know that this is the ultimate truth.

According to David Godman, the ajata doctrine implies that since the world was never created, there are also no jivas within it who are striving for or attaining liberation. Ramana Maharshi regarded this as "the ultimate truth."

Levels of truth

See also: Two truths doctrine, Trikaya, and Essence-Function

Advaita took over from the Madhyamika the idea of levels of reality. Usually two levels are being mentioned, namely saṃvṛti-satya, "the empirical truth", and paramārtha-satya, "ultimate truth". According to Plott, "Ajativada is nothing but [an] extreme and exhaustive application of an extreme version of the distinction between the paramartha satya and the samvrtti satya."

The distinction between the two truths (satyadvayavibhāga) was fully expressed by the Madhyamaka-school. In Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā it is used to defend the identification of dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda) with emptiness (śūnyatā):

The Buddha's teaching of the Dharma is based on two truths: a truth of worldly convention and an ultimate truth. Those who do not understand the distinction drawn between these two truths do not understand the Buddha's profound truth.

Without a foundation in the conventional truth the significance of the ultimate cannot be taught. Without understanding the significance of the ultimate, liberation is not achieved.

Shankara uses sublation as the criterion to postulate an ontological hierarchy of three levels:

- Pāramārthika (paramartha, absolute), the absolute level, "which is absolutely real and into which both other reality levels can be resolved". This experience can't be sublated by any other experience.
- Vyāvahārika (vyavahara), or samvriti-saya (empirical or pragmatical), "our world of experience, the phenomenal world that we handle every day when we are awake". It is the level in which both jiva (living creatures or individual souls) and Iswara are true; here, the material world is also true.
- Prātibhāsika (pratibhasika, apparent reality, unreality), "reality based on imagination alone". It is the level in which appearances are actually false, like the illusion of a snake over a rope, or a dream.

It is at the level of the highest truth (paramārtha) that there is no origination. Gaudapada states that, from the absolute standpoint, not even "non-dual" exists. Advaita Vedanta and Madhyamaka Buddhism

Many scholars, states Richard King, designate Madhyamaka Buddhism as Ajativada. The concept Ajati, he adds, exists in both Vedanta and Buddhism, but they are different in the following way:

1. "There is no birth." (Madhyamaka), and
2. "There is an Unborn." (Advaita Vedānta.)

Ajativada in Madhyamaka refers to its doctrine that things neither originate nor is there cessation. This is also called the theory of non-origination of Madhyamaka.