



Research Article

Selflessness – one of the three Dharma seals

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ABSTRACT

In the current integration and development context, people face crises in terms of economy, morality, living environment, etc. These problems originated from the perception and actions of each of us. In order to contribute to adjusting behavior, perfecting personal morality, and social development, the Buddha gave prominence to the philosophy of Selflessness in Buddhism transmission. This doctrine is considered one of Buddhism’s three Dharma seals (Impermanent – Sô - Selflessness). By the method of textology, comparison, and logic, the article will raise the outstanding values of “selflessness” in building ethical standards of individual Buddhist disciples and people in general from the Buddha’s perspective.

Keywords: *The Three Dharma Seals; The Buddha; Selflessness; Buddhism; Ego*

1. INTRODUCTION

Looking back at the history of India about 26 centuries ago, with the heroic history of a multi-religion country, especially the strong growth of Brahminism, compared to other religions. They have a strong belief in God, in the interaction between Brahman and Atman, which are always blended in each other. With the thought of Atman, many people in the society at that time were trapped in the ego fortress, not daring to reach out from the vast universe. But with the light of the doctrine of Selflessness - one of the three seals of Buddhism: “everything is impermanent, dharmas are Selflessness, Nirvana is pure” has shattered all the thoughts of self-grasping, thoughts of great self or small self, etc...of each individual in particular and of other religions in general. The thought of Selflessness helps people see that all things in the universe and human beings are predestined origin, so there is nothing that is constant, not even God or Self.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. TEXTOLOGY

The research is written based on the ideas of numerous typical Buddhist texts such as Selflessnesslakkhana Sutra (the Discourse on the Selflessness Characteristic), Dighanakha Sutra (the Long Claw Sutra), and Brahmajala Sutra in Tripitaka of *Theravada Buddhism* (the Discourse On The All-Embracing Net of Views); The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Sutra, Lankavatara-sutra (the Discourse of the Descent into Lanka), the Madhyamika Sutra, etc. of Mahayana Buddhism to study the terminology and the differences in the views of



Buddhism in terms of Selflessness throughout the ups and downs of the history. Besides, several articles by domestic authors, as well as translators (Huynh Ngoc Chien, Thich Minh Chau, Thich Thien Sieu, Thich Tri Tinh, Thich Nhat Tu,...) and international ones (Ayya Khema, Walpolarahula,...), deeply clarify the view of self, the soul of Brahmanism; they also mentioned the Buddhist philosophy of Selflessness from both Southern Buddhism and Northern Buddhism's sources, from the views of many Indian and Chinese commentators, etc., contributing to a profound explanation of these Dharma seals for current and future practitioners, researchers, practicing Buddhists, etc.,

2.2. COMPARISON

The writer is comparing Brahmanism's view of the soul or Brahma with Selflessness from the Buddhist. Also, Buddhism went through many different historical periods, so it was divided into various kinds of sects with some divergent arguments, especially Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism, which have similarities and differences when it comes to the doctrine of Selflessness.

2.3. LOGIC

By searching with textology, comparing Buddhism and Brahminism, this article will analyze and synthesize the sources in an orderly and appropriate manner. The writer will use the case study methodology to select some typical scriptures in the Theravada and Mahayana to help readers and researchers approach and conceive the philosophy of Selflessness clearly. With understanding fully the practical value of the philosophy of Selflessness, practitioners in particular and people in general will apply them to their daily practice and activities, contributing to perfecting the morality of themselves, their families, and society; and also, making a contribution to solving the current global crisis phenomena in current society.

3. DEFINITION OF SELFLESSNESS

3.1. HINDUISM'S PERCEPTION

Hinduism, also called Brahmanism, is a religion that played an important historical, philosophical, and religious role around 1500 BC in India. This religion with the four Vedas (Rig-Veda, Sama-Veda, Yajur-Veda, Atharva-Veda) has promoted the self of a person or "Atman" (P. Atman, E. The Innermost Self) and exalts an absolute supernatural individual or "Brahman" (P. Brahman, E. The Ultimate Reality): "As I am Brahman, we also become one, so the ultimate goal is to realize that self is Brahman, this is the realization that brings liberation, the final liberation from samsara" (Duong Ngoc Dung, Ha Huu Nga, Nguyen Chi Hoan, 2000, p.204). If the Vedas in the age of Veda (Polytheism) and Brahman (Monotheism) focused too much on rituals of sacrifice, the age of Upanishad developed a new supernatural philosophy, especially the Atman and the Brahman. The Upanishad believed that human beings have a self or soul that does not arise or die, commonly known as the Atman. If this Atman does not merge with the Brahman, then humans will forever be in the cycle of birth and death. On the contrary, when the Atman and the Brahman harmonize with each other, the human being has been liberated and merged into the cosmic being. Otherwise, Buddhism advocates the philosophy of "selflessness".

3.2. THERAVADA BUDDHISM'S PERCEPTION

Selflessness, also known as “non-self” is the opposite of “self”, that is, no self-intention, no longer clinging to self “this is me, mine, is my property” to get rid of suffering. In life and peace on the path to realize liberation. No-self is divided into two types: Non-Self Cause (Self-empty) and Non-Self Dharma (Dharma emptiness). With regard to the Non-self, the meditator who contemplates himself in particular and sentient beings in general finds that this body is formed by the five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness), without any subject. Other. This was preached by the Buddha in the School of Sutras (the Great Law Sutra, the Sutra of the Great Law, the Sutra of the Great Recitation), the Sutra of the Middle School (the Sutra of the Great Menopause), the Sutra of the Sangha (the Sutra of Wisdom, the Chapter Eight of Dharma), the Sutra of the Samyutta Nikaya (the Eighth Sutra) Nirvana in chapter One, chapter 6: Contemplation of Brahma, volume 1: Heaven has shelves; Sutra of Burden in chapter Burden, chapter 1: Consociation of aggregates, volume 2: Heaven aggregates; Sutra With body, chapter 4: Correspondingly, Volume 4: Chapter six, ...), Minor Sutra (Nhalaka - Muni Sutra, chapter 6: chapter Six verses, volume 3: Elder Sangha verse, ...).

Regarding the Dharma of no-self, all dharmas are formed by causes and conditions: “If this exists, that exists; born of this, born of that. If one is not there, the other is not; due to the cessation of this, the cessation of the other”. This is what the Buddha preached in the Middle School Sutra (The Great Sutra of Loving Kindness, the Sutra of Good Life, the Sutra of Many Precepts, the Sutra of Many Precepts), the Anguttara Nikaya (the Sutra of Fear and Hatred in the male layman's section, chapter ten). Dharma), Samyutta Nikaya (Chapter Ten Forces, Chapter Not His, and Chapter Seventh Great Chapter 1: Consensus Causation, Volume 2: Heaven and Earth Condition; or Hate Sutra).

3.3. MAHAYANA BUDDHISM'S PERCEPTION

Mahayana Buddhism advocates “the cause of the two voids”, that is, the cause of no-self and the dharma of no-self. Long Tho Bodhisattva developed the term “No-self” into “Emptiness”; Said by Mr. Diane Morgan that: “Buddhism is a religion that values emptiness, but it has brought fulfillment to millions of people, it is a myth that people have no soul but come back again. with the truth that saves human souls” (Luu Van Hy, 2006, p.94). For example, in the Truthfulness of the Truth school, contemplating the five aggregates Capital has no true self, so it has changed the Theravada Buddhist way of calling “Human and non-self” to “Human not contemplating”. Similar to “Dharma of no-self, practitioners know that dharmas are constantly changing, there is no self-nature, so it is called “Dharma without contemplation”. Besides, based on the theory of three natures, the only school of consciousness has established the theory of three no-self, including 1/ No-self and no-sign for the variable of property-nature (Hope distinguishes generals); 2/ Monstrosity of Selflessness for depends on the place of origin of awareness (Human predestined generals); 3/ Self-image of no-self for Vien's sincere nature (First meaning, Truthfulness).

4. COMPARISON BETWEEN THE PHILOSOPHY OF SELFLESSNESS IN THERAVADA BUDDHISTS AND MAHAYANA BUDDISM'S SUTRA

4.1. SCRIPTURES IN THE PAI CANON

4.1.1. Selflessness Lakkhana Sutra (known as the Discourse on the Selflessness Characteristic)

After giving a lecture on The Moving the Wheel of Dharma Sutra to the five brothers Kieu Tran Nhu at Sarnath Deer Park, the Buddha gave a discourse on the Selflessness Lakkhana sutra. In this sutra, he taught that: "Underneath all the five aggregates there is no solid core, no permanent substance, and no permanent entity, the true nature of the aggregates and the self is emptiness. Selflessness refers to the emptiness of the self" Thus, the five aggregates (form, feelings and sensations, perception, mental formations, and consciousness) are Selflessness. Typically as the aggregate of formation, the Buddha taught that: "Let my form be thus, let my form be not thus." And since the form is selflessness, it leads to affliction, and none can have it of the form: "Let my form be thus, let my form be not thus. The form of selflessness was form self, then this form would not lead to affliction, and one could have it of form."

Let's specifically get his image on the way to becoming Kapilavastu from Prince Siddhartha. He wondered about the life of a human after walking around the four gates of the castle. With the ambition to seek the truth of liberation, he left the palace as well as his beautiful wife and children, left his home to seek and study himself. After years of asceticism that made his body and form shriveled, he realized the error of this practice. He received a bowl of milk from Sujata, determined to remain steadfast under the Mock Bodhi tree "Even though my flesh and bones are broken, I will not leave this place" along with contemplating the twelve causes and conditions, conquering inner and outer demons, attested to Buddhahood.

4.1.2. Dighanakha Sutra in Majjhima Nikaya (known as Sutra "Long Claw" in the Middle Sutra)

Sutra "Long Claw" is sutta number 74 of the 152 suttas of the Middle Sutra. This sutta is found in the Abhidhamma Sutta, No. 969. First, the Buddha taught the wandering ascetic Dighanakha to contemplate this body form "born of parents, nourished by rice porridge, impermanent, changing. destruction, destruction, cessation, destruction, to be observed as impermanent, suffering, like disease, like a dead end, like an arrow, like misfortune, like sickness, like an adversary, like destruction, is no, it's selfless." (Thich Minh Chau, Majjhima Nikaya, 2017, p.611-613). At that time, he abandoned craving and submitted to the body.

Mr. "Long Claw" is a Brahmin of the Extermination School, the grandson of the venerable Sāriputta. That is why, after the Blessed One preached about the three kinds of feelings: pleasant feelings, painful feelings, neither pleasant nor painful feelings, all "impermanent, conditioned, unconditioned, annihilated, destroyed, and destroyed, is annihilated", then he can enter the Dharma, remove doubts, become enlightened, believe in the Dharma, and take refuge in the Three Jewels. After that, Venerable Sariputra taught him "Long Claw" to develop wisdom and attain Arahantship. Awakening the basis of sentient beings, the Buddha taught only two factors of the five aggregates, namely the aggregate of form and

the aggregate of feeling, which had eliminated the annihilation of views, awakening the wandering wanderer Truong Cao to practice the Dharma.

4.1.3. Brahmajala Sutra in Digha Nikaya (known as the Discourse on the All-Embracing Net of Views in Long Sutra)

Brahmajala Sutra (known as The All-embracing Net of Views) is the first in the 34-sutra series in Digha Nikaya. The sutra derived from the contradiction of the Brahmin teachers and students: the teacher Supiya slandered the Triple Gems and the disciple praised the Triple Gems. Through this incident, the Buddha preached to his disciples about the elaboration of the Ten Precepts, the Middle Precepts, and the Great Precepts; as well as the harmful consequences of the 62 clinging beliefs (The common view of “clinging”, the view of “clinging to nothing”, the view of boundless friendship, the fallacious view, the view of no humanity,...) (Thich Minh Chau, Digha Nikaya, 2018, p.15-54) in order to eliminate craving, stay calm in mind when it comes to praise and criticize, let the six sense faculties (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, mind) not expose to the six sense bases (visible objects, sound, odor, taste, touch, and mental objects) that may lead to the feelings of joy or suffering which give an impact on accomplishing the practice of Selflessness.

4.2. SOME SCRIPTURES OF BRAHMAN BUDDHISM

4.2.1. The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Sutra

The Lotus Sutra is the canon that is most strongly promoted by the Chinese and Japanese Thien Thai sects. In Vietnam, the Chinese-translated version of Cuu Ma La Thap has been popularized by the Venerable Tri Tinh and recited in many Northern Buddhist pagodas. In the sutra, the Buddha taught three necessary conditions for Dharma Lotus practitioners: “That good man and good woman must enter the Tathagata’s house, wear the Tathagata’s robes, sit on the Tathagata’s throne, and then should speak this sutra for the sake of the four groups. The Tathagata’s house is a great compassion for all of the livings; the robe of the Tathagata is gentleness and patience; the throne of the Tathagata is the necessity of the dharma of emptiness” (Thich Tri Tinh, 2017, p.336).

In the Lotus Sutra, there are many Bodhisattvas who practiced and saved sentient beings with the spirit of selflessness, such as Manjushri Bodhisattvas, Maitreya, Beautiful Bodhisattvas, and Medicine Buddha. including Never-Despise Bodhisattva. With true faith, sincerity, patience, and non-contempt behavior, he reminded the practitioners of that time to return to the knowledge of the Buddha’s discourses himself, “I dare not despise him, you will become a Buddha”. He took on the five aggregates himself to devote for practicing Selflessness, lighted up the fire of love, and planted good seeds in the land of sentient beings” minds.

4.2.2. Lankavatara-sutra (known as Discourse of the Descent into Lanka)

The philosophy of Selflessness mentioned in Lankavatara-sutra (known as Discourse of the Descent into Lanka) consists of Pudgala-nairatmya (the non-existence of the individual soul) and Dharma-nairatmya (the non-self nature of Dharma). In terms of Pudgala-nairatmya, the Buddha encouraged his disciples to eliminate self-grasping and realize the change of all things: from rivers to wind and clouds, from the human body to the world of sentient beings, etc. In terms of Dharma-nairatmy, the practitioners need to realize the

error in reflecting the discriminating mind to the world of existence, well know the facts and phenomena that are selflessness, dependently arisen, separated from the three natures of nature... In the period of practicing Human and Dharma without self, that person will eliminate craving and clinging, and turn consciousness into wisdom on the path to study the Buddhadharma.

4.2.3. Mulamadhyamakakarika (Fundamentals of the Middle Way):

Based on the Buddha's theory of Dependent Origination in order to destroy the wrong view of "three worlds are real" (the dharmas are real) of Sarvastivada (it was one of the early Buddhist schools established around the reign of Ashoka), Patriarch Long Tho wrote the Madhyamika by "relativism" to explain the solutions that are not inherently, ie "the real generals of all dharmas have no self-nature". This treatise consists of 27 chapters with about 446 verses as follows: the first two chapters give an overview of the essay, the next three chapters contemplate worldly suffering, the next 11 chapters contemplate the world, and nine more chapters contemplate the cessation of the world, and the last two articles contemplate the destruction of the world. Thereby, Mr. Long Tho wants to encourage practitioners to strive to practice to realize the Buddha's doctrine of Dependent Origination, to leave the two extremes of "being" and "not" to practice the middle path and realize liberation.

He criticized Early Buddhist schools, especially Sarvastivada, with the idea that "Using an analytical method to establish Realism, is the result of observing the second truth, not taking the truth of the first truth as a premise" (Thich Quang Do, 2012, p.96). Mr. Long Tho advises each practitioner to practice "emptiness" to attain Nirvana. It is believed that all dharmas have Selflessness-nature, but because of that, it exists. People outside grasping to have self-nature, then how can children become grown-ups, orange seeds sprout into orange trees, colds turn healthiness. Due to self-grasping, not understanding the reason for impermanence, and not knowing the nature of Selflessness, practitioners in particular, and people in general, get confused, and then identify "emptiness" as "nothingness". Therefore, he summarized the thought of the Middle Way through the following verse:

"Whatever is dependently co-arisen
That is explained to be emptiness.
That, being a dependent designation,
Is itself the middle way."

Venerable Thich Thien Sieu commented that: "That dharma belongs to cause and conditions, so it has no intrinsic nature because it has no intrinsic nature, it is empty. Neither is nor is it, just because of leading living beings, should borrow the name to say (so it is also a fake name); leave both sides yes, no, so it is called "Middle Way" (Thich Thien Sieu, 2001, p.275). No, Fake, and Middle are the three truths that form the philosophy of the Three Emperors and Consciousnesses of Thien Thai School and admit that: "Everything is unreal, so everything is not. In fact, they exist in the midst of this life. They are the means, the middle way, that is, the true form or the suchness." (Thich Tue Sy, 2018, p.202).

4.3. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

4.3.1. Similarities

Both Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism believe that people are “it is this craving which leads to renewed existence, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there. That is craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, craving for extermination” (Thich Minh Chau, *Samyutta Nikaya* (vol.1), 2018, p.783). When people realize the harmful sequences of self-grasping, the body of the five aggregates is samsara forever within the twelve causes and conditions ((1) ignorance, (2) actions, (3) consciousness, (4) name and form, (5) the six sense organs, (6) contact, (7) sensation, (8) craving, (9) grasping, (10) becoming, (11) birth, and (12) old age and death), all dharmas are illusory dreams. That is the Buddhist philosophy of Selflessness.

4.3.2. Differences

Unlike Hinduism, which advocates the Atman and the Brahman, Buddhism directs people to realize the true suffering in self-grasping and dharma, creating an egalitarian, selfless, selfless lifestyle. After the Buddha passed away, the disciples gathered the five Nikayas together, but unfortunately at that time, it was only oral transmission, not recorded in writing. Experiencing three times of assembly with the division in various differences in sects as well as ideas, especially Sarvastivada with the policy of “Triple is real, dharma is eternal” showing self-grasping “being”. Later, Bodhisattva Mr. Long Tho gave the view of “No” through Fundamentals of the Middle Way to destroy the “being” of Sarvastivada’s perception.

Mahayana Buddhism has developed the term “selflessness” into “sunyata” (Truly Emptiness) which is somewhat more profound. Sunyata is dependent on origination and the middle way, neither permanent nor annihilated, cannot be conveyed by concepts or languages, and can only be realized through meditation and practice. Typically, the image of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara practicing the perfection of wisdom has “clearly seen the five aggregates as emptiness, overcoming all suffering and yoke” in saving sentient beings.

5. THE APPLICATION OF SELFLESSNESS THEORY IN THE CURRENT SOCIAL LIFE

5.1. BUILDING PERSONAL MORALITY

Deva said:

“Give up thoughts of people and self Stay alone,
practice loving-kindness, Eliminate lust, uncleanness,
Born as Deva” (Dighagama, 1991, p.255).

If the meditator only thinks of his own benefits, indifference to the plight of others, being antagonistic, envious, angry, criticizing this and that when he sees others practice and do a lot of good deeds, then do it. How can he promote love for people. Thus, after transforming at the Sarnath Deep Park, the Sakya Muni Buddha encouraged the five Kieu-tran-nhu brothers like that: “Go, bhikkhus, for the happiness of the populace, the welfare of the populace, out of compassion for the world, for the happiness, for the benefit, and for

the well-being of humans and gods. Don't stay with another person at the same place. Bhikkhus, teach the true Dharma, good in beginning, good in the middle, good in the end, completely in meaning and perfectly in writing." (Thich Minh Chau, Digha Nikaya, 2018, p.257).

That love is so vast and widespread that not distinguishes us from others or this from that. It is considered as the noble love (Thich Chuc Phu, 2018, p.231) and difficult to be harmed by non-human beings (Thich Minh Chau, Samyutta Nikaya (vol.2), 2018, p.608). At the same time, it makes the hatred dissipate (Ekottara Agama (vol.3), 1992, p.255). Any anger that has already arisen will be destroyed and the anger that has not yet arisen will not be allowed to arise. In the Dhammapada of the Minor, it is also said that it is impossible to destroy hatred by hatred, because hatred will never end. Only by taking no anger (compassion), anger from the heart can only dissipate hatred (Thich Minh Chau, Khuddaka Nikaya (vol.1), 2018, pp.41-42).

5.2. HARMONY IN COLLECTIVE LIFE

Heartbroken at the disputation in the Ni Kien Tu group, their discord in maintaining the precepts and their teachings in Buddhism, etc., causing the internal religion to argue that "water cannot be mixed with milk" and not can develop strongly. Therefore, each meditator in particular and everyone in general need to stop eliminating self-grasping and law-abiding and live in harmony with other people (harmony, peace of mind, peace of mind, peace of mind, peace, harmony) from family to the organization, country, and world. A family that lives in harmony will be warm and happy. Collectives such as dormitories, companies, monasteries, etc., live in harmony, then that collective unites and sticks to a solid and powerful block. With the nation and people living together in harmony, the nation is rich, strong, civilized and advanced, and foreign invaders come to disturb and make it difficult to usurp. Nations live together in harmony, respect each other's independence and sovereignty, which makes wars not break out. Share and develop together and establish the peaceful realm of the Holy King.

5.3. SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF THE GLOBAL CRISIS

Currently, the world has been facing crises of ethics, beliefs, environment, economy, etc., causing disturbances in human life, deadly epidemics, poverty and diseases, etc., plunder, corruption, enmity, war, natural disasters, floods, animal extinction, etc (Vien Tri, 2014, pp.84-85). During Vesak Day 2014, the 17th Karmapa of India said: "Crisis caused by conflict or war in the world come from the negative thoughts or actions of people. However, such thoughts and actions can be erased if we practice compassion and love." (Thich Nhat Tu and Thich Duc Thien, 2014, p.112).

Therefore, it is necessary to make efforts to practice and praise the merits of compassion (Saṃyuktāgama (vol.4), 1992, p.369) to respond to the program of planting trees, setting the living beings free, cleaning the surrounding environment, organizing a course of meditation practice, etc. now. United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also affirmed that in the Vesak 2009 message: "We can all learn from the compassionate spirit of the Buddha. The timeless wisdom teachings of the Buddha can help us solve many of the global problems we face today." (Thich Nhat Tu and Thich Duc Thien, 2014, p.357).

6. CONCLUSION

Self and No-Self are a pair of philosophical categories that awaken people to either suffering in the cycle of birth and death, or enlightenment free from bondage afflictions. Realizing that value, Buddhist practitioners in particular, and everyone, in general, are aware of the harmful effects of self-grasping, learning, and practicing the doctrine of No-self to experience in daily practice life, to liberate each part of suffering in this life. Therefore, people live together in harmony, equality, and love. They always strive to perfect their own morality and build a happy family, a strong collective, a prosperous country, a peaceful world in the present, and equipped for the way to liberation from samsara in the future.

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