An Approach to Sattva in the Mahāyanā*

By Kanji Nakajima

Preface

Yu-ch'ing is the Chinese for the Sanskrit, *Sattva*——the living or sentient being, while on the other hand, there is a synonym, Ch'üng-shêng, which is the Chinese for the Sanskrit, *jantu*——the living being or *jagat*——that which moves or is alive.

According to Annotation on the *Abhidharmakośaśāstra*, "Ch'üng-shêng is another name of Yu-ch'ing, the former being the Chinese for *jagat*. Although they are of different names, one is synonymous with the other."

On several occasions, however, *sattva* is also put into Ch'üng-shêng, e. g. in the Mahāprajñā-pāramitōpadeśa, we find *sattva* named Ch'üng-shêng, so that, by their original words, we are unable to make a rigid distinction between Yu-ch'ing and Ch'üng-shêng, which are taken in the same sense of any living being.

I Kinds and Classification of Yu-ch'ing

By Yu-ch'ing we mean any living being, and it need scarcely be said that the word points to ordinary forms of life, that is, all kinds of animals and plants. Buddhist view of Yu-ch'ing, however, is by far beyond the scope of ordinary forms of life, being mythological. It includes even the imaginary being we never go through in reality, and so there are great many kinds of Yu-ch'ing, which are divided into several classes.

Its basic classification is from the view-points of the world the living

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* The writer is not a student of Buddhism but of English Literature, so he asks the reader's understanding that, in writing the article, he is most indebted to the late Dr. Sokuo Yeto, XIV President of Komazawa University.

being lives in and of the world where it is to be born in days to come. In other words, from such points of view, all living beings belong to either *Triloka* of *Kāmadhātu, Rūpadhātu* and *Arūpadhātu* or to the Six Directions of Reincarnation, that is the Six Ways of Sentient Existence. Living beings in *Triloka* and the Six Directions of Reincarnation are respectively called 'the three kinds of *bhava*' and 'the six kinds of *bhava*,' which will be referred to afterwards. Thus, all living or sentient beings belong either to one or to the other. From the view-point of Buddhism, man is no more than a living being among the six kinds of *bhava.*

Buddhist view of Yu-ch'ing even includes the mythological being. It was with a view to informing man of the place where he *did* exist and *does* exist as well as of his living conditions that such a narration was created. Hence, in Buddhism, man is the core of all living or sentient beings.

II. The Sentient Being and the Non-sentient Object

Being referred to all living beings, Yu-ch'ing, in a narrow sense, is a general term for those endowed with sensation and perception, while those that have neither sensation nor perception such as grass, wood, earth and stone belonging to the non-sentient object are distinguished from Yu-ch'ing or the sentient being.

In the *Abhidharmaniyāyānusāra* we find there are two kinds of *nidāna* ——one is the *nidāna* of Yu-ch'ing and the other, of the non-sentient object. In the system there is drawn a line of demarcation between the sentient being and the non-sentient object.

In Buddhism, however, especially in the *Mahāyāna* or Northern Buddhism, such a sharp distinction having got loose, those grass, wood, earth and stone that have neither sensation nor perception have come to be looked upon as Yu-ch'ing or *sattva.* Consequently Yu-ch'ing is taken for everything in a broad sense. In Northern Buddhism everything being looked upon as the living being, there is no distinction between Yu-ch'ing and the non-sentient object. This, however, is the case when Yu-ch'ing or *sattva* is taken in the broadest sense of the word. Usually there is a distinction

between Yu-ch'ing endowed with sensation and perception and the non-sentient object without them.

III. The Enlightenment and Illusion of Yu-ch'ing

In a narrow sense, Yu-ch'ing or *sattva* is distinguished from the non-sentient object. According to the distinction, those who, rejecting the illusion of the transmigrational world, enter into Nirvāṇa-enlightenment, that is, those who are entitled to attain Buddhood are limited to Yu-ch'ing or *sattva*, while the non-sentient object which is endowed with neither sensation nor perception is not entitled to.

From the view-point of Northern Buddhism, however, where there is no distinction between *sattva* and the non-sentient object, hence everything is looked upon as Yu-ch'ing or *sattva*, so-called non-sentient objects such as grass, wood, earth and stone are not entitled to attain Buddhahood, by which Northern Buddhism does not mean those non-sentient objects are able to become Buddhas by themselves but its lofty ideal that one's enlightenment is not one's own but ought to be directed towards promoting purification of all circumstances as well as of all human beings.

IV. Classes of Sattva

Sattva or Yu-ch'ing is divided into various classes according to the real world *sattva* lives in and the world where Yu-ch'ing is to be born in future. Buddhist view of *sattva* combined with the old mythologies of India such as the view of *Triloka* (the Brahmanic cosmological *Bhuvanatraya*), and with that of the Six Directions of Reincarnation or the Six Ways of Sentient Existence, and later on it came to be looked upon as the view of *sattva* peculiar to Buddhism.

Triloka or *Trailokya* are the imaginary three realms of objective existence respectively centering on one of the three elements of spirit, form and sensuous desire man is composed of. In other words, *Kāmadhātu* is the realm of desire for sex and food, and its inhabitants are called *Kāmabhava* or Existence in the Realm of Sensuous Desire. *Rūpadhātu*, that is, *Rūpāva-*

cara or *Rūpaloka* considered to be above *Kāmadhātu*, is the realm of form rising above the desire for sex and food, and its inhabitants are called *Rūpabhava* or Material Existence. Further above *Rūpadhatu*, there is *Arūpadhātu* or *Arūpaloka*——*Ārūpyadhātu* that is the formless, immaterial realm of pure spirit, and its inhabitants are named *Arūpabhava* or Existence in the Formless Realm.

It was considered that *Arūpadhātu*, *Rūpadhātu* and *Kāmadhātu* excelled in order. But so long as *sattva* existed in *Triloka*, Yu-ch'ing or *sattva* was existence in the realm of illusion, and so by rejecting the illusion of the transmigrational world and entering into *Nirvāṇa*-enlightenment, *sattva* was able to transcend *Triloka*.

The view of *Triloha* was combined with the Six Ways of Sentient Existence or the Six Directions of Reincarnation as the realms of *sattva's* being born in days to come, which are mythological worlds where man is to be born in return for his deeds good or evil. They are *Naraka-gati* of hells, *Preta-gati* of hungry ghosts, *Tiryagyoni-gati* of animals, *Asura-gati* of malevolent nature spirits, *Manuṣya-gati* of human existence and *Deva-gati* of deities, each of the Six Ways of Sentient Existence is alloted to.

Among these the first four of *Naraka-gati*, *Preta-gati*, *Tiryagyoni-gati* and *Asura-gati* are full of suffering and pain, while *Manuṣya-gati* is the realm of pleasure and pain half and half, and *Deva-gati* is full of pleasure. From the view-point of Buddhism, those six realms of *Deva-gati*, *Manuṣya-gati*, *Asura-gati*, *Tiryagyoni-gati*, *Preta-gati* and *Naraka-gati* excelled in order, but, so long as sentient beings existed in those realms, they were existence in the world of illusion, so that by rejecting the illusion of the transmigrational world and entering into *Nirvāṇa*-enlightenment, they were able to get rid of the existence.

Those views of *Triloka* and the Six Ways of Sentient Existence or the Six Directions of Reincarnation were further classified and elucidated in detail. But those classified realms were no more than the realms of reasoning and imagination, which, from the essential view-point of Buddhism, were based on the borrowed mythologies with a view to explaining the realms

human beings live in as well as their conditions.

V. Sattva as Ch'ün-shêng or All the Living

(1) Views of the Meaning of Sattva

The word *sattva* or Yu-ch'ing is a generic term for all the living, but accepting it in a narrow sense, by *sattva* we mean the living being that has sensation and perception. If we put a broad construction upon it, it includes the non-sentient object such as grass, wood, earth and stone. Hence the meaning varies with a narrow or broad construction upon the word.

On the other hand, there is a view that draws a line between Yu-ch'ing or *sattva* and Ch'üng-shêng or *jagat*. The former is taken, in a narrow sense, for the living being having sensation and perception, while the latter, in a broad sense, for all the being including those that have neither sensation nor perception.

According to Annotation on the *Vidyāmatrasiddhi-Śāstra*, "*Sattva* is put into the Chinese, Yu-ch'hng since it has sensation and perception. And now the reason why it is also rendered into the Chinese, Ch'üng-shêng is that the latter is considered to have sensation and perception, too……But calling *sattva* in the name of Ch'üng-shêng is inadequate, because grass and wood are called Ch'üng-shêng in spite of their having neither sensation nor perception."

Drawing a line between Yu-ch'ing and Ch'üng-shêng, the text puts a narrow construction upon the former and interprets the latter in a broad sense.

On the other hand, there is a view that does not discriminate one from the other. Annotation on the *Abhidharmakośa-śāstra* says, "Ch'üng-shêng is another name of Yu-ch'ing. The Sanskrit, *sattva* is put into Yu-ch'ing while *jagat* is rendered into Ch'üng-shêng. Althongh the two are of different names, they are at one. So it is a mistaken view that, since Ch'üng-shêng includes the non-sentient object, some Buddhist scholars hold the living or sentient being should be called Yu-ch'ing."

It is accepted that Yu-ch'ing and Ch'üng-shêng are in the same sense.

But the view of Annotation on the *Abhidharmakośa-śāstra* depending upon the distinction between the original words of *sattva* and *jajat* is not correct in the strict sense of the words, since we have another interpretation in the Chinese text of *Mahāprajñāpāramitōpadeśa*, "*Sattva* is named Ch'üng-shêng."

So Yu-ch'ing and Ch'üng-shêng are in the same sense, and we come to the conclusion that, accepted in a narrow sense, by them we mean the living being that has sensation and perception, while in a broad sense, all the being including both the sentient being and the non-sentient object.

(2) Catur-Yoni or the Four Forms of Birth

According to the conditions or circumstances of Yu-ch'ing being born, all the being is divided into the four forms of birth, that is, *aṇḍaja*, *jarāyuja*, *saṁsvedaja* and *aupapāduka*. By *aṇḍaja* we mean oviparous as with birds, by *jarāyuja*, viviparous as with human species, by *saṁsvedaja*, moisture or water-born as with worms, and by *aupapāduka*, metamorphic as in the hell or the first beings in a newly evolved world, upon which in ancient India all the being was considered to be born.

(3) Catur-bhava or the Fowr Forms of Existence

It was in India where all the being was considered to be born, live and die, then born again, live again and die again, and ever be subjected to reincarnation.

This ever recurring *saṁsāra* or transmigration was classified into the four forms of existence, that is, the birth-existence, the present body and mind or existence, the death-existence and the intermediate-existence. By the birth-existence we mean the very first moment or *kṣaṇa* of being born; by the present-existence, a lifetime from birth to death; by the death-existence, the moment of death; by the intermediate-existence, the existence between death and transmigration, which is invisible to the naked eye, but looked upon as a spiritual exisience or an unsettled being that freely moves about in search of a new habitat or reincarnation, and whose period is said to be indefinite or 49 days at the longest.

(4) The Living Conditions of Yu-ch'ing

From the View-point of Buddhism Yu-ch'ing or all the being is born, lives, dies and transmigrates coming and going *Triloka* and making the rounds of the Six Directions of Reincarnation or the Six Ways of Sentient Existence, and is subjected to suffering and pain. The living conditions of beings, however, are different from one another according to the kinds of Yu-ch'ing. Man as well as deva, because of a retribution for the virtuous deeds in the previous existence is able to be born in the better worlds among the Six Ways of Sentient Existence or the Six Directions of Reincarnation.

As for man, from the view-point of Buddhism, his lifetime from conception to death is divided into the interior and exterior of the womb, and subdivided into five periods respectively. The five periods of the interior of the womb are those from the first moment of conception to child-birth, during which the flesh is formed by degrees, whose average number of days are 38 weeks or 266 days. On the other hand, those of the exterior of the womb are classified into babyhood (from child-birth to 6), childhood (7—15), youth (16—30), the prime of manhood (31—40) and old age (41—). Although one's span of life is indefinite, it is generally accepted that the average measure of life allotted to one is 50.

From Buddhist point of view, where man is reborn after death is determined by his merits and demerits or sins in *Manuṣya-loka* of human existence. In Buddhism, however, the best existence is not *Deva-loka* for *deva* is still looked upon as Yu-ch'ing of illusion. The ideal of Buddhism is in rejecting the illusion of transmigrational existence and entering into *Nirvāṇa*-enlightenment, that is, in becoming Buddha, who, transcending both *Triloka* and the Six Directions of Reincarnation, is the existence rising above Yu-ch'ing subjected to birth, life, death and reincarnation.

VI. Ch'üng-shêng in a Religious Sense

(1) Ch'üng-shêng and Buddha

(a) The Meaning of Wu-shêng-wu-mieh or Non-birth, Immortality

Althongh Yu-ch'ing or all the being is subjected to birth, life, death and reincarnation, Buddha transcends *Triloka* and the Six Directions of Reincarnation, being the existence rising above all the being subjected to reincarnation. This is why Buddha, as the existence of transcending life and death, differs from Ch'üng-shêng.

From the view-point of Buddhism, however, also in Ch'üng-shêng there is the meaning of transcending life and death. In the Wang-shêng-lun-chu, "Wu-shêng-wu-mieh or non-birth, immortality is the true meaning of Ch'üng-shêng," by which we mean recognizing Chung-shêng is within the bounds of capabilility of attaining Buddhood, that is, to accept the intrinsic nature of all the being endowed with the potentiality of becoming Buddha.

(b) The Mind, Buddha and Ch'üng-shêng

Ch'üng-shêng or all the being is subjected to birth, life, death and reincarnation, while Buddha transcending life and death is quite different from the former. On the other hand both all the being and Buddha are identical in substance because of the mind linking them close together. In other words, one who has rejected the illusion of transmigrational existence and entered into *Nirvāṇa*-enlightenment is no other than Buddha, while one who is not awakened from illusion yet and still unable to enter into *Nirvāṇa*-enlightenment is called in the name of Ch'üng-shêng. The illusion or enlightenment depends upon the attitude of mind, which is expounded in the *Condradīpa-samādhi* as the following:——

"Ch'üng-shêng is the mind. The mind is *Tathāgata* or Buddha, or Buddha is revealed in the mind."

Hence we see no difference among these three, that is, Ch'üng-shêng, the mind and Buddha are of the same order, which is why Northern Buddhism makes it the fountain-head to inquire into the mind.

(c) Ch'üng-shêng and Buddha are one

It is the mind that brings Ch'üng-shêng and Buddha into closer relations with each other. If the mind is awakened from illusion, and pure, it is no other than Buddha, while so far as the mind is led into the illusion of transmigrational existence and defiled, it remains Ch'üng-shêng, which tells

Buddha and Ch'üng-shêng are one and the same in substance.

In the *Maha-prjñāpāramitōpadśa* we read, "Buddha is the very first among Ch'üng-shêng or all living beings," which proves Buddha is the ideal aspect of Ch'üng-shêng, while the latter is the actual form of the former. According to the Pu-tsêng-pu-chien-ching, "The world of Ch'üng-shêng is that of Buddha and vice versa with the relative. Oh! *Śāriputra*, both worlds of Ch'üng-shêng and Buddha are one and the same in the meaning, although they are of different names."

Each school or sect of Northern Buddhism meets on the common ground that Ch'üng-shêng and Buddha are one and the same in substance.

(2) Ch'üng-shêng as the Being of Illusion

Although, in substance, Ch'üng-shêng is endowed with the character of Buddha transcending life and death, *jagat* or *sattva*, in the actual state of form, is the being full of suffering and pain, that is, subjected to birth, life, death and reincarnation. We are told there are a lot of *kleśa* or the delusions, trials, temptations of passions and of ignorance that disturb and distress the mind of the human being, among which the very fountain-head is *avidyā* or being ignorant of the proper nature of things. The being covered with a cloud of *avidyā* is called an ordinary mind. So the specific character of Ch'üng-shêng——*jagat* or *sattva*——lies in the fact that *sattva* is an ordinary mind. But we have to bear it in mind that *jagat* or *sattva* is not a mere being of illusion but one endowed with the specific character of Buddha in substance.

Man is, in fact, the being of such contradictions. The point of Buddhist view of Ch'üng-shêng, in the final analysis, arrives at man. Buddhism has nothing whatever to do with the deliverance or *mukti* of any other beings than man. Then there is a question——where we should find the key to the solution of contradictions that, although man is endowed with the specific character of Buddha, he is, in reality, led into illusion. In reply to this, Buddhism expounds the contradictions can never be solved by theory but by cultivating himself in right, pious practice. Here is the very standpoint of Buddhism as a religion.