

Interpretation of Sūnyatā in China – from ‘Ben wu’ to ‘Xing kong’

(1) Historical background

Just as the teaching on Anatta put forward by the Buddha in the 6th century B.C. created a great stir in the religious scene of the time, the teaching on Suñña, specially when systematically propounded by Ācārya Nāgārjuna, gave rise to much enthusiasm debate and even confusion. Ever since then, there has been a continuous interest shown by many on both the concepts. Some have spoken in their favor, upholding the concept as presenting the real essence of the Dhamma, others have spoken critically of them, and attempted to show that these are misconceptions about the true nature of reality. Whatever is the position taken up by scholars regarding these two major concepts Anatta and Suñña, there is no doubt about the fact that both these concepts were instrumental in provoking much philosophical debate and spurring the development of Buddhist thought throughout the ages. This development of Buddhist thought is now seen in the appearance of new interpretations that are presented to these concepts.

The Anatta doctrine of early Buddhism was misunderstood by the Buddha’s own disciples. For example, as seen in the Mahātaḥāsaṅkhaya Sutta of the *Majjhimanikāya* (1) a monk called Sāti insisted on holding the mind to be similar to the Ātman, put forward by the upanishadic teachers. In many a Sutta the Buddha had explained clearly to the monks that all five aggregates (Pañcakkhandha) are impermanent. In Suttas such as Anattalakkhana (2) the second Sutta, preached to the five ascetic monks, Poṭṭhapāda Sutta in the *Dīghanikāya* (3) etc, the Buddha has taken up each aggregate and shown that there is no permanency in any of them, and then he has explained that such an impermanent aggregate or a collection of such impermanent aggregates cannot possess any permanency.(4).

Besides, the Buddha adopted various methods of analysis to explain clearly that the belief in a soul is a misconception based on a metaphysical belief. However, this

no-soul view, which was further upheld by The Pāli Abhidhamma (5) tradition, as well as certain other developments created new problems in Buddhist thought. Senior Buddhist monks had to face problems from among their colleagues as well as from other religionists, regarding the explanation of kamma, rebirth and such other fundamental teachings. The question raised was, if there is no soul, if there is no permanent entity or substance that go from life to life, how can Kamma and Vipāka, (consequences), doctrine of rebirth be reasonably explained.

Thus, the no-soul teaching became the source of these new problems. Different groups of monks presented different explanations. Based on the explanations presented by them, gradually the Saṅgha community got divided into numerous sects or schools. One such early school is called Puggalavāda, those who accepted the view that a person' (Puggala) exists besides the five aggregates. Many rejected this as a clear soul-view, and attempted to present new explanations. The Sarvāstivādins came up with the new idea of a 'Svabhāva' (own-nature) that persist in past, present and future. This, too, was rejected by some other groups. Another group, who tried to remain faithful to early Buddhist sutras, put forward the idea that there is one aggregate that remains unchanged when transmigrating. This they called the "Eka-rasa-skhandha". This is the view put forward by the school called Sautrāntika.

In this way, one can see how Anatta doctrine led to the formation of new schools with new concepts. Many criticized these views as different forms of soul-views. The earliest opposition to these views can be seen in the Prajñāpāramitā -sūtras which are highly philosophical sutras, specially explaining the Prajñāpāramitā, the perfection of wisdom. This Prajñāpāramitā, according to these Sūtras, represents the knowledge of śūnyatā or emptiness of all phenomena. Perhaps, earliest of these is the Aśāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā. This sutra clearly emphasized that emptiness (śūnyatā) of everything, even including the Buddha himself. It is said that the Buddha cannot be recognized by the thirty-two characteristics of great person (Mahāpuruṣa-lakṣaṇa), because even these thirty-two characteristics are also truly non-characteristics and, therefore, śūnya. However it was Ācārya Nāgārjuna who systematically presented this doctrine of śūnyatā.

In all probability this was a reaction against the Buddhist schools, that put forward either a realist (Sautrāntika) or substantialists (Sarvāstivāda) view point. Thus, Ācārya Nāgārjuna's new philosophy that became popular under the name. Madhyamaka is a direct assault on both the Sautrāntikas and Sarvāstivādins, specially on the "Svabhāva" theory of the Sarvāstivāda. While the Sarvāstivāda held that all Dharmas (elements comprising all existence) have an underlying Svabhāva (own nature), that persists in all three periods of time (past-present-future), Ācārya Nāgārjuna explicitly rejected this and pointed out that everything is devoid or empty of a Svabhāva, and therefore, everything is Nisvabhāva; without a Svabhāva, a own nature.

Just as Anatta doctrine was both misconceived and misrepresented, leading to the rise of new schools of thought, the Sūnyā doctrine of Madhyamaka was also misconceived and misrepresented by many. The *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* (hereafter, *Kārikā*) itself show this. Sūnyatā of Madhyamaka has been understood by some as a kind of Nihilism or Uccedevāda. This is why Ācārya Nāgārjuna in his *Kārika* (6) had to openly say that, Sūnyatā is not nihilism (| ūnyatā na cocceda |)

Sūnyatā doctrine was so much misunderstood that Ācārya Nāgārjuna had to say that if others misunderstood it, it is not his fault and that others are attributing their own errors to him (7). He goes further and warns that those who wrongly grasp this teaching would be destroyed by the wrong grasping itself, like a man who catches a snake in the wrong way gets destroyed by the snake itself. (8).

Madhyamaka caught the interest of the philosophers of the time. Therefore, commentaries began to appear interpreting Ācārya Nāgārjuna's teaching in different ways. Two of the main exponents were even. Ven Buddhapālita and Ven Bhāvaviveka. Their expositions resulted in two traditions of interpretation namely, Prāsāṅgika. School of interpretation started by Buddhapālita and Svatantrika school of interpretation started by Bhāvaviveka. Of these, the former became very popular, specially due to the work of Ven: Candrakirti .

As time passed by, | ūnyatā was raised to the level of an Absolute Reality , and hence only | ūnyatā (emptiness) was considered to be real. This, along with other factors, reasonably appears to be the cause of the rise of Yogācāra . When | ūnyatā was

considered the reality, there rose the idea that if everything is void, everything is nothing, everything is empty, then it is a kind of nihilism. To a certain extent it is against this view that the Vijñaptimātra-mind only- teaching was put forward by Yogācāra. Teachers like Ācārya Asaṅga and Ācārya Vasubandhus, while admitting that everything is empty, put forward the new idea that mind is real. This gave rise to the Ālayavijñāna concept.

Thus, it is seen that the śūnyatā doctrine, just as the Anatta doctrine, created a great stir among the Buddhists of the time, encouraging them to think afresh. It made them examine the early Buddhist teachings in a new perspective. Not only new interpretations, but even a new school of Buddhist taught (Yogācāra) arose as a result of these examination. śūnyatā doctrine exerted great influence on later Buddhist thought and, specially on Mahāyāna. In fact śūnyatā is one of the two pillars of Yogācāra tradition. Though Madhyamaka itself, as a distinct school of philosophy, lost its significance, it lives through Mahayana, for śūnyatā was adopted by Mahāyāna as its fundamental teaching.

Though śūnyatā concept and its main exponent Ācārya Nāgārjuna as well as his *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* faded away from India, mainly due to the absorbing of śūnyatā concept by Mahāyāna, it continued to survive very vibrantly in China and Tibet. The doctrine of śūnyatā along with Madhyamaka school went to China as early as the 4th century A.D. just within two centuries after its origin in India as a concept. Master Kumārajīva (344-413 A.D.), the great Buddhist savant, who tirelessly worked to spread Buddhism in China, is considered to have introduced this teaching to China. Master Kumārajīva, perhaps, is the greatest of all translators. Though it is not possible to ascertain with certainty the exact number of his translations, there is no doubt with regard to the fact the his main focus was the rendering of Sanskrit texts, dealing with the śūnyatā concept including Ācārya Nagarjuna's Kārikā. His services were further continued with much vigor and enthusiasm by his eminent disciples such as Seng-zhao who helped Master Kumārajīva in his translation work.

In fact, in Tibet, it developed with new vigor, and on new lines. Perhaps, the greatest Tibetan teacher of Madhyamaka philosophy was Zong-ka-ba (1357-1419) who,

though basically follower of the Prāsāṅgika school, tried to present a smooth blend of both Prāsāṅgika and Svātāntrika views. In fact even at present the Ge-luk-ba sect adopts Madhyamaka as its main philosophy.

Chinese Interpretation

At the very beginning, Buddhism and its concepts were introduced to China through the translations of the Sanskrit Buddhist books. Notable mistake happened at the hands of first Chinese translators, because the use of traditional Chinese terms for the original Buddhist terms. Chinese scholars explain this situation by the name of “Ge yi fo jiao” (格义佛教) which means, Buddhism in Chinese terms. When Buddhism arrived to China there were two main cultural and philosophical traditions established in the Chinese soil. They were Confucianism (儒学) and Daoism (道教). Therefore, we can see that a lot of Chinese Buddhist terms have been taken from these two main streams of Chinese culture. As examples; the term for the Buddhist Nibbāna- “Wu wei” (无为) was one of the terms for a fundamental concept of Daoism, that could be found in the authoritative book of *Dao De Jing* which had been written by Lao -zi himself. This term “Wu wei” literally means ‘**action for nothing**’. Conceptually it means ‘**don’t violate the nature, let nature to flow as it is**’ etc, Buddhist term for perfection or Pāramitā- “Dao xing” was adopted from the Daoist concept of “Xing wu dao de” (行无道德), Buddhist term “Wu jie” (五戒) for five precepts is considered as being formed based on the Confucius term “Wu chang” (五常) etc. Use of this language system was started and continued from the period of Han and, later it was imitated even by the Daoist followers. For example; Wang -bi, the greatest commentator of the Daoist tradition and also the highlighted the metaphysical teachings of Daoism and established a new tradition called “Xuan xue” (玄学) during the period of Wei and Jin, put forward a new concept of “Yi wu wei ben” (义无为本). which is considered as having a connection to Buddhist concept of |ūnyatā and the term “Ben wu” (本无). The first Chinese study of |ūnyatā can be found in the Chinese translations of Sanskrit Prajñāpāramitā-sūtrās. In these translations the word |ūnyatā was translated in to Chinese as ‘Ben wu’ (本无). The first Chinese translator of Mahāyāna Prajñāpāramitā-sūtrās, Zhi Lou jia Cheng (short

name- Zhi Chen, Sanskrit name- Lokakṣema) in his translation of Aśāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra, translated |ūnyatā as ‘Ben wu’ (本无) (9). Zhi Cheng’s student’s Zhi Qian, too, in his translation of the Mahāparajñāpāramitā-sūtra, used this term -“Ben wu” (本无) for the Sanskrit |ūnyatā.(10). Prof Paul Williams says that the early translator Chih-Chien (=Zhi Cheng-third century), for example, chose to translate ‘|ūnya’, ‘|ūnyatā’, ‘tatathā’, (suchness/ thusness; the ultimate way of things) by using the term, which means ‘Pen wu’-original non-existence -a term used by the Taoist commentator Wang Bi.(11). Though we can agree with the first part of Paul William’s view, it is not possible to agree with his second view: that this term ‘Ben wu’ which both Zhi-cheng and Zhi-qian used or adopted is the same term which had been used by Wang Bi, in his commentary to the great book of Daoism, the *Dao de jing*. How would this happen because there is a big time gap between Zhi-qian and Wang-bi. Wang-bi lived from 226 A.D to 249 A.D, during the period of Wei Dynasty, which started right after the Han Dynasty(12). Our great translator, Zhi-cheng lived in between 178 A.D to 189 A.D., during the end of Han Dynasty.(13). Prof Ren-ji-yu says that Zhi-chen and Anshi-gao belonged to the same period. So, It is clear that Wang-bi lived after Zhi-cheng, and therefore, it is not logical to conclude that Zhi-cheng used Wang-bi’s term. Here, the more plausible view is that both these teachers, Zhi-cheng and Wang-bi tried to explain their own two fundamental concepts, -|ūnyatā and Dao according to the original two texts- Aśāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra and *Dao De Jing*. The meaning of the term ‘Ben wu’ can be interpreted in two different ways as follows: **I. Initially or originally non-existence.** **II. Really non-existence.** The concept which holds that things came into existence from non-existence (Wu 无), or the world originated from the nothing was not new for the Chinese culture. This concept can be found in one of the early Chinese books - *Zhou Yi*, and also in ‘Dao Jiao’ school. According to ancient Chinese understanding the five elements and ‘Yin yang’ are sources for creation of the world but before them Wu(nothing 无) was prevailing. ‘Dao Jia’ school mentioned it as “无为天地之始” which means that, the earth and heaven (the world) originated from the nothingness (Wu wei 无为). It was developed by the Lao-zi in his book -*Dao De Jing*. Lao-zi tried to give a positive state to this negative concept in Chinese tradition by

introducing the concept of Dao through his book, *Dao De Jing*. It is clear, when we examine the stanza (chapter) 42 of *Dao De Jing*, that it can be clearly understood that every thing in the world originated from the Dao. It is “*Dao gives birth to one, one gives birth to two, two give birth to three. three give birth to everything*”(14). According to the stanza 1 of *Dao De Jing*, this Dao is only nameless (无名), but it doesn't mean that Dao is emptiness or nothingness.(15).So its commentary clearly depicts that everything in the world originated from the position that cannot be named and formed. So it is recorded in the text as namelessness and formlessness((无名无形天地之始). It is again very clearly explained in the stanza 21 of the *Dao De Jing* in a positive senses such as Dao has form, thing, reality, and it can be explained by the words. (有象, 有物。有精; 有信).(16). But some scholars are of the view that Lao -zi too, with his concept of Dao tried to bring out the same idea of nothingness (Wu-无) found in the former Chinese tradition. For example; Wang -ming says that Lao -zi too, in his work explains the negative position (Wu) before the positive position in the world. But some scholars like Ren -ji -yu says that Lao -zi tried to offer the positive meaning for the negative meaning or ‘Wu’, using the concept of Dao in his book-*Dao De Jing*, as below:

“Lao-zi describes Tao to some degree, but failed to explain it's character exactly: hence his description of Tao usually relies on some negative terms such as “non-existence” “the formless” “nothing” “the shapeless” etc. The appearance of the category “non-existence” which was first treated as the negative concept of the root of all things in the history of Chinese philosophy marks great progress in cognition. It returns to a state with no shape or image. This is called the shapeless shape, bodiless image, etc.”(17).

Prof. Chen -gu -ying, too put forward the same views in his book, named *Lao Zi Ping Zhuang* (18). The views concerning initially or originally non-existence can be compared with the concept of ‘Sat’-(existence) which arose from the ‘Asat’-(non-existence) occurring in the Indian philosophical tradition. Later on Indians too, reinterpreted the ‘Asat’ (non-existence) in the positive sense. It means that it is not really non-existence but denotes the sense that it cannot explained in words.(19)Wang -bi, the great commentator on *Dao De Jing*, tried to explain the world as originated from

the non-existence (originally non –existence) by creating a new conceptual term ‘Yi wu wei ben’ (义无为本). So, this was the Daoist background of the terms ‘Wu’ (无) and ‘Ben wu.’ (本无). When Buddhism came to China, the first translators of Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras, chose the term ‘Ben wu’ to express the meaning of | ūnyatā. This led to how misunderstanding of the concept of | ūnyatā. We can suggest the following reasons for the misinterpretation.

- I. The first translators used ‘Ben wu’ for | ūnyatā because they did not have right knowledge of the meaning of | ūnyatā that was revealed by Nāgārjuna in his book, *Mūlamadhyamakakārika*(166-196 A.D.)
- II. The first translators may have understood the real meaning of Sanskrit | ūnyatā of the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras but they failed to understand whether the term ‘Ben wu’ conveys the real meaning.
- III. May be the first translators wanted to show that Buddhist teachings are similar to Chinese indigenous teachings, therefore, to facilitate the introduction of Buddhist ideas they used Chinese terms for Buddhist concepts.

Nāgārjuna is the teacher who through his *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* highlighted | ūnyatā’s real meaning (**selflessness of the things**) as expounded by the Buddha. So we can surmise that before Nāgārjuna this word (| ūnyatā) had been often mis-connoting nihilism or nothingness (Wu). Based on this premise, we can conclude that the first translators would not have known the real meaning of | ūnyatā and, so they translated it in the sense of really non-existence, using the term ‘Ben wu’. On the other hand, the first translators may have thought that ‘Ben wu’ was the closest term for the Sanskrit | ūnyatā to convey it’s real meaning. It does not mean that they had misunderstood | ūnyatā in the sense of really non –existence and used this term ‘Ben wu’. Hence it is reasonable to come to the conclusion that the first translators used ‘Ben wu’ for | ūnyatā under the influence of the traditional Chinese philosophy, specially, the school of Dao.

As we know after | ūnyatā was translated in to Chinese as ‘Be wu’ there arose many interpretations around it, and as a result many schools grew around this concept. Those schools were named ‘Liu Jia Qi Zong’(六家七宗). These schools are:1 **School of Ben**

Wu(本无) 2. School of Ben Wu Yi (本无异) (1 and 2 are considered as one school). 4 School of Ji Si (即色) 5 School of Shi Han (识含) 6 School of Huan Hua (幻化) 7 School of Xin Wu (心无) 8 School of Yuan Hui (缘会). Teaching of these schools can be classified into three main groups. Master Seng -zhao explained these three schools in his book, *Bu Zheng Kong Lun*, (不真空论) and it means he too, admits that all these ideas can be discussed within these three main schools, which are as follows: **I. Xin Wu Zong (心无者) II. Ji Ze Zong (即色者) , III. Ben Wu Zong (本无者)**

(1) Xin Wu Zong

The founder of this school is ‘Zhi –min-du’. It is considered that he was very familiar with the Sūtras like Prajñāpāramitā, Vimalakirtinirdeśa etc. The ideas of this school was explained by Seng -zhao in his book as follows: “ ***The theory of mental non-existence depicts that the mind is on matter, therefore, the matter is not non-exist. The voidness of matter can be known by meditation***” (19) According to this explanation the mind does not exist on the matter and it does not mean that matter is nothing or empty. This school only says that the mind is nothing or void. Therefore, its main idea can be expressed brief as follows: “***Wu xin, se you***”(心无色有) “***The mind is non-existent, but the matter exists***”. This view of the school of ‘Xin wu zong’ is explained again in *Zhao Lun Shu*, written by Yuan -kan during the Tang period. According to Yuan -kan’s explanation this ‘Xin wu zhong’ school says: “***neither mind exists on matter nor non-exist out of matter***” .(20) So it is clear that this school deny the idea that all is empty. Qi -zang’s *Zhong Lun Shu* too, describes the ideas of this school as follows: “**The emptiness understood by the school of ‘Xin Wu’ is that the mind is only empty, but not matter. So, they accept only the internal emptiness, reject the external emptiness**” (不空外物) 。 (21) According to this too, it is clear that the school of ‘Xin Wu’ understands that it is only the mind that is empty, and they did not say that the outside matter or body is empty. It means that they only talk about inside emptiness but no the outside emptiness.

(II) Ji Se Zong

Qi -zhang's *Zhong Guan Lun Shu* (commentary to *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*) divided this school in to two as follows: **I. Guan Nei Ji Ze Yi, II. Zhi Dao Lin Ji Se Yi**

In An -cheng's *Zhong Lun Shu ji* the views of the school of 'Guan Nei Ji se Yi' are explained as follows: *"Though matter is no matter, it can be realized because it has been given rise by causes, but element of matters cannot be known. It is empty though it looks like existence, it is not true; it is false"* (22)The Views of the school of 'Zhi Dao Lin Ji Se Yi' are as follows. *" matter arises according to the dependant origination, matter can be explained relatively. Therefore, though matter is empty, arises on dependent origination, it can be explained relatively, it is not empty".* (23)

According to An -cheng's above mentioned sub- commentary professor Lai-yong -hai gives a outline of the school of 'Zhi Dao Lin'. He says that the 'view of empty' put forward by the School of 'Zhi Dao Lin' is that matter does not independently exist, hence, there is emptiness. He further added that according to An -cheng this view can be compared with the saying that there is no really emptiness as presented, in Seng -zhao's book *Bu Zhen Kong Lun* (24). In the book named *Miao Guan Pian* it is explained as *" Matter does not posses of itself as matter, so it is matter, yet non- matter, it is empty".* (25)

According to this passage matter is non matter itself, therefore, it is non -matter (empty), though it is matter. Seng -zhao, too brings out the teaching of this school as follows. *" The theory of matter in itself, holds that the matter does not posses itself as matter, so, it is matter yet non-matter"*(26). According to him, this school holds that matter does not posses itself as matter,(matter is not independently existing (即色"者) therefore, **it is matter but, it is non-matter**, because it is arisen from cause and relativity . So matter is empty. Seng -zhao explains this further saying that the matter is matter, at the same time it is called matter, so no need to wait for it to be arisen from causes and relatively; **therefore matter is non -matter (empty), at the same time it is called matter.** (但当色即色-'dang dang se ji se'). Therefore, this school does not hold that the matter is really non- matter (empty) .

(III) Ben Wu Zong

This school is divided in to two as follows: i. Ben Wu Zong. li. . Ben Wu Yi.

The leader of the ‘**Ben Wu Yi**’ was Zhu -fa -sheng. His idea is that “Wu” (无) was before the “you” (有), “You” (有) was arisen from “Wu” (无) (*无在有先*) *Wu zai you xian*, *从无生有* *cong wu sheng you*). This idea is quite different from the sense of Buddhist concept of |ūnyatā, and it is similar to “Wu(无), and “Dao” (道) concepts in China which have been already shown in above. Dao An is considered as the leader of this school of ‘**Ben Wu Zong**’. Teaching of the school of ‘Ben wu’ is very much similar to |ūnyatā concept in Prajñāpāramitā-sūtrās. But professor Ren -ji -yu says that it is not totally similar to it or loyal to it, because, if it is so Seng -zhao had no need to criticize it again in his book *Bu Zhen Kong Lun*. (27). It appears that Professor, Ren -ji -yu, perhaps, is of the view that the Dao -an’s concept of ‘Ben wu’ is not loyal to the explanation of |ūnyatā put forward by Ācārya Nāgārjuna in his book named *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*). However, when we observe Seng -zhao’s idea in this regard, we can find the reason clearly that Seng -zhao rejects this ‘Ben wu’ concept which means ‘**nihilism**’ or Dao -an’s school emphasizes strongly emptiness in the sense of nothingness, through the concept of ‘Ben wu’. some attribute the part of neither existence nor non existence (非无非真无耳) to Buddhist Sutras while some attribute this to school of ‘Ben Wu Zong’. But my understanding is that this is presented by Seng -zhao as the part of Buddhist Sūtras. (28). Then Seng -zhao questions about the statement occurring in this Buddhist Sutras which raises the question: Is **non existence really non existence? Does this mean nihilism?. (29)**. Therefore he wants to point out that the Buddhist concept of |ūnyatā does not mean merely nothingness or nihilism. So he tries to reveal the real meaning of |ūnyatā and did this is by usually *Bu Zheng Kong Lun* which means Unreal Voidness. We can say that his aim was to depict the difference between the concept of ‘Ben wu’ of the school of ‘Ben wu’ and the Buddhist concept of ‘|ūnyatā’. The real meaning of |ūnyatā is the meaning which was revealed by Ācārya Nāgārjuna in his book named *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. This real meaning of |ūnyatā was known by Chinese after Master Kumārjīva’s translation of *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and other books which belonged to Madhyamaka tradition, They are as follows: I. *Zhong Lun*, II. *Bai Lun*, III. *Shi Er Men Lun*, IV. *Da Zhi Du Lun*. On the basis of three of these texts that the Madhyamaka tradition was called “**San Lun**” in China, and also as all these four

books, belonged to Madhyamaka tradition, was is called “**Si Lun**”. Another name was “**Zhong Guang Pai**” which means The Madhyamaka school. According to preface of the books called *Bora Wu Zhe Lun* and *Gao Seng Zhuang* Master Kumārjīva translated these two books after he was brought to China as a prisoner in 401 A.D. and living in ‘Cao Chang’ temple in the ancient city of Chang -an in China. (Modern Xi’an in Sha’anxi province).

It was the Master Kumārjīva who introduced the correct meaning of the concept of |ūnyatā with his translations specially, the *Zhong Lun* the Chinese translation of *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. When we compare Master Kumārjīva’s translations with early Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras in China, the term ‘**Xing kong**’ (性空) which connotes empty of self –nature the meaning seems to be very precise and in accordance Ācārya Nāgārjuna’s view ‘empty of self-nature(Sva-bhāva♣ūnyatā). Masterv Kumārjīva very rightly introduced this most apt term into the Chinese Buddhist tradition. Seng –zhao, his pupil and contemporary further strengthened and established this theoretical interpretation.

End Notes

- 1). *Majjhimanikāya*, 1, 259f, Mahāta\hāsa=khaya Sutta..
- 2). *Vinaya*, 1, 13f.

- 3). *Dīghanikāya*, 1, 178 f.(Pali Texts Society-England)
- 4). These major analyses are: i. nāma-rūpa, (name and form or mind and matter)
- ii. Pañcakkhandha (five aggregates; namely Rūpa (form), Vedanā(feeling) Sañña(perception), Saṅkhāra(mental formation) Viññāṇa(consciousness) or mind),
- iii. Cha dhātu (six elements, i.e. Paṭhavī(earth), Āpo(water), Tejo(heat) Vāyo (wind)Ākāsa(space), and Viññāṇa(consciousness).
- iv. Dvādasāyatana (12 sensory avenues, i.e. six sense organs and their corresponding objects)
- v. Aṣṭhārasa-dhātu (18 elements-these are six sense organs, six sense objects and six sense conscious).
- 5) Abhidhamma is the teaching in the 3rd piṭaka. It is an attempt to present the fundamental doctrines of | ūnyatā in a systematic
- 6) *Mūlamadhyamakakārika*, chapter 17, stanza 20.
- “ | ūnyatā ca na coccheda | –saṃsāras ca na sāsavataṃ Karma)o’vipra)ā a a ca – dharmo buddhena de ita |.”
- 7) *Mūlamadhyamakakārika*, Chapter, 24, Stanza 15.
- “ Sa tvaṃ do ānātmanīyā-nasmāsu paripātayan a vamevābhiruḍa | san- na vamevāsi vi m ta |”
- 8) *Mūlamadhyamakakārika*, Chapter, 24, Stanza 11.
- “ Vinā ayati durd ā- ūnyatā mandamedhasaṃ sarpo yathā durg hito- vidyā vādu prasādhitā”
- 9) # Abstracted from *Aśasahasrikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, translated into Chinese by Zhi -chen, Da Zheng Zang, 8 Juan, No: 0225, p 0478.

《道行般若经》第五《照明品》解释“本无”说：

怛萨阿竭知色之本无。如知色本无。痛痒思想生死识亦尔。何谓知识。知识之本无。何所是本无。是欲有所得者。是亦本无。怛萨阿竭亦本无因慧如住。何谓所本

无。世间亦是本无。何所是本无者。一切诸法亦本无。如诸法本无。须陀洹道亦本无。斯陀含道亦本无。阿那含道亦本无。阿罗汉道辟支佛道亦本无。怛萨阿竭亦复本无。一本无无有异。无所不入。悉知一切。是者须菩提。般若波罗蜜即是本无。怛萨阿竭因般若波罗蜜。自致成阿耨多罗三耶三佛。照明持世间。是为示现。怛萨阿竭因般若波罗蜜。悉知世间本无无有异。如是须菩提。怛萨阿竭悉知本无。

10) # Abstracted from *Aśāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, translated into Chinese by Zhi-qian, *Da Zheng Zang*, 8 Juan, No; 0224, p 0425.

在三国时期支谦所译《大明度經》中也是如此：

如本无五阴亦尔，如来五阴何等为知。如本无五阴本无。如来本无。作是见本无。五阴本无。世本无。诸法亦本无。沟港频来不还应仪缘一觉本无。如来亦本无。一本无无异无所往无所止无想无尽。如是本无无异如来。

11). Williams, Paul., *Mahayana Buddhism*, (England : Routledge,1996), p 74.

12) # Wang Xiao yi, *A Critical Biography of Wang Bi*, (Nanjing: Nanjing Daxue Chuban Shi, , 1990) 363.

13) # Ren -ji -yu, *Zhongguo Fojiao Shi*, (Beijing: Zhongguo Shihui Ke xue Zhuban Shi, 1997), I, 314.

14) # *Lao-zi (Dao De Jing)*, trans: Liang Hai Ming, (Shanxi, Shanxi Gudian Chuban shi, 1999),Stanza, (Chapter) 42, 第四十二章：

道生一，一生二，二生三，三生万物。

万物负阴而抱阳，中气以为和。

天下之所恶，唯孤、寡、不谷，而王公以自名也。

物或损之而益，或益之而损。

人之所教，我亦教之。故强梁者不得死，我将以为学父。

15) # *Lao -zi (Dao De Jing)*, trans: Liang Hai Ming, (Shanxi, Shanxi Gudian Chuban shi, 1999), Stanza, (Chapter) 01, 第一章：

道可道也，非恒道也。名可名也，非恒名也。

无名，天地之始也；有名，万物之母也。

故恒无欲也，以观其眇；恒有欲也，以观其徼。

两者同出，异名同谓。玄之又玄，众眇之门。

16) # Lao-zi (*Dao De Jing*), (Shanxi, Shanxi Gudian Chuban shi, 1999), Stanza, (Chapter) 21, 第二十一章：孔德之容，惟道是从。道之为物，惟恍惟惚。

惚兮恍兮，其中有象；恍兮惚兮，其中有物。

窈兮冥兮，其中有精；其精甚真，其中有信。

自今及古，其名不去，以阅众甫。

吾何以知众甫之状哉？以此。

17). # Wang -min, *Daojia yu Daojiao Shixiang Yanjiu*, , (Beijing: Zhongguo Shi hui Kexue Chu Banshi, 1982), 15

18) # Chen -gu -ying, *Lao Zi Ping Zhuang* (Nanjing, Nanjing da xue chu ban shi, 2001) 117.

19) Jayatilaka, K.N., *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarisidass, 1953), 34.

20) *Three Thesis of Seng Zhao*, (*Zhao Lun*) trans, Hsu Fan-Cheng, (Beijing: Chinese Social Science Publishing House, 1985), 25. “心无”者，无心于万物，万物为尝无。此得在于禅静，现在于万物。

21) # Lai -yong -hai, *Zhongguo Fojiao Bai ke Chuan Shu*, , (Shanghai: Shanghai Gujing Chu ban Shi, No Year), *Zhong Pai Lei* 11.

22) Ibid..... 11.

23) Ibid .12 “但知色非色，因缘而成；不知色本是空，犹在假有也”。

24) Ibid .12 “ 后者认为，“色”由“因缘”和合而成；或相对而言“色”， 故“色”是空，而“因缘”与相对物不空。

25) - Ibid- 13, “安澄认为，支道林 “色不自有，虽色而空”思想，“即同于不真空也”。

26) - *Ibid* - 13, “未色之性也，不自有色。色不自有，虽色而空。故曰：色即为空，色复异空”。

27) *Three Thesis of Seng Zhao, (Zhao Lun)* trans., Hsu Fan-Cheng, p 25.

“即色”者，明色不色，故虽色而非色也。未言色者，但当色即色，岂得色色而后为色，此真悟色不自色，未领色之非色也。

28) Ren -ji -yu, *A Taoist Classic – The Book of Lao Zi*, (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1993),p 5.

29) *Three Thesis of Seng -zhao, (Zhao Lun)* trans., Hsu Fan-Cheng, p25. “ 寻夫立文之

本旨者，直以非有非真有，非无非真无耳。何必非有无此有，非无无彼无？此直好无之谈，岂谓顺通事实，即物之情哉？”。