

Chinese Interpretation of Sunyata and Seng Zhao's Thesis - *Unreal Voidness (Bu Zheng Kong Lun)*

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The main focus of this paper would be to show how and when the Sunyata concept was introduced to China and how this concept was interpreted in Chinese Buddhism, specially by Seng Zhao in his thesis, *Unreal Voidness (Bu Zheng Kong Lun)*. The paper will examine how *Sunyata* came to China with the translation of *Prajnaparamitasutras* and how it was translated into Chinese language by using the traditional Chinese term 'ben wu'. This usage was a cause for much misunderstanding of the original concept of *sunyata*.

After the term *sunyata* was translated in to Chinese as 'ben wu', lots of interpretations arose around it, and as a result, many schools grew having this as the central concept. Those schools were named 'Liu Jia Qi Zong'. This is a development of *sunyata* that is peculiar to China.

The real original meaning of the word *sunyata* is the meaning revealed by Nagarjuna in his book *Mulamadhyamakakarika*. This original meaning of *sunyata* became known in China only after Kumarjiva's translation of *Mulamadhyamakakarika* and other books which belonged to Madhyamaka tradition. When we compare Kumarjiva's translations with the translation of early translators in China, there are special characteristics that can be found in Kumarjiva's works. Some such special characteristics are: 1. Kumarjiva used the word 'kong' instead of 'wu' or *sunya*. 2. Kumarjiva used the word 'xing' instead of 'ben', for *sunyata*. Similarly, he used 'xing kong' which means the emptiness of self nature (*sva-bhavasunyata*). In this paper, an attempt will be made to critically examine why the term 'ben wu' was changed to 'xing kong' to bring out the meaning of *sunyata*. Seng Zhao was one of the main teachers to propagate the concept of *sunyata* in China.

He has written many books and articles. But among them, *Bu Zheng Kong Lun* is prominent. Deep and thorough attention will be paid to this work of Seng Zhao and its main topic - Emptiness. An attempt will be made to compare Seng Zhao's interpretation with the Indian interpretation, specially that of Acarya Nagarjuna and Early Buddhism