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“Intra-Buddhist Dialogue – Patriarch Hui Neng’s Concept of Non-thinking and Bhikkhu Buddhadasa’s Concept of Sunyata as an Example”

(Sub-theme: “Works and Legacy of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu” – 25 May 2017)

Abstract

Gift of dhamma excels all gifts because dhamma can solve the root of sufferings and samsara. Among the various Buddha dhammas, anatta or sunyata is the gist which underlines the three learnings of sila, samadhi, and panna.

Master Hui Neng (638-713), the Sixth Patriarch of Chinese Ch’an School, based on the ideal of self-nature to promote the practice methodology of non-thinking, non-phenomenon, and non-abiding. His followers developed into the Ch’an School which flourished until today, and influenced greatly China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and even the world culture.

On the other hand, the Thai Bhikkhu Buddhadasa (1906-1993) was regarded as one of the greatest thinkers on earth, and the greatest figure since Buddhaghosa of the fifth century in Theravadin world. He delved into the Tipitaka, and interpreted Buddha dhamma with plain modern language. He unveiled the renaissance movement in modern Thailand. His unparalleled concept of sunyata renders the only amrita to all human problems. People of all livings and ranks can be freed of sufferings by applying his idea in all moments including daily life, work, family, interpersonal relation, emergency, and even death.

These two great masters were the milestones in the history of Chinese and Theravadin Buddhism with a time lag of twelve and half centuries, and a spatial distance of thousand miles. Their thoughts and practice still guided people today.

This paper tries to present the similarity and diversity of their ideas on non-thinking and sunyata.

About the speaker

Prof. Cheng-huang Cheng is Dean of Mahayana Buddhism, Cheng Chueh Buddhist Sangha University, Vice president of Lay Buddhists Association ROC, and Deputy Rector of Buddhist Viriya College. He promotes Lay Bodhisattva Path and the modernization, internationalization, academicism and daily practice of Buddhism. He conducts lectures, seminars, and meditation retreats both in and outside Taiwan.

He has published more than 50 books including translations of Theravada and Tibetan Buddhism into Chinese such as, by Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu: *Heart-Wood from the Bo Tree*, *Buddha-Dhamma for Students*, *Anapanasati : Mindfulness of Breathing*, *Why Were We Born*, and *No Religion*. He also authored: *Ajahn Buddhadasa: the First One in Theravadin Buddhism*.