

Buddha had just blown everyones minds, it was only his second sermon since becoming the 'Buddha' and his disciples and followers had gathered at the Deer Park to hear him speak and as they listened to his words they were filled with more questions than answers.

'Anatma' means that which is not ( an ) the soul ( atma ) and this was seen by Buddha as the five aggregates known as 'Rupa' meaning 'body' and 'Vedana' meaning 'feelings' and 'Sanjna' meaning 'perception' and 'Samskrta' meaning 'deep psychology'.

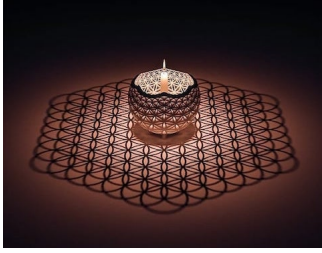
The 5th aggregate is known as 'Vijnana' meaning 'consciousness' and it was this which caused such confusion amongst his followers and would cause confusion throughout the history of Buddhism as it seemed that Buddha was declaring that 'consciousness' was an aggregate which perished with the body.



When the time came and the great 'Buddha' departed this world his disciples and followers soon created some 18 schools of Buddhism, many disagreeing with each other over doctrine and it usually centred around this confusion caused by what became known as 'the sermon on the non existence of the soul'.

How can there be a wheel of samsara if nothing revolves, how can there be reincarnation if nothing reincarnates, how can you become a bodhisattva if there is nothing to perfect, how can there be karma if the one who created the karma no longer exists.

Confusion was the order of the day and what was once a simple understanding which differentiates matter from spirit and could be easily understood and explained by the perception and presence of 'consciousness' became lost in a quagmire of what seems to be pseudo spiritual psycho babble.



According to many the confusion around the 'sermon on the non existence of the soul' is not so much philosophical as linguistic as it seems that Buddha did not say the soul did not exist, he simply said that 'Vijnana' which he described as an 'aggregate' was also temporary.

As previously mentioned the Buddha spoke of five aggregates which he categorised as 'Anatma' meaning that which is not ( an ) the soul ( atma ) as in 'Rupa' meaning 'body' and 'Vedana' meaning 'feelings' and 'Sanjna' meaning 'perception' and 'Samskara' meaning 'deep psychology' and finally 'Vijnana' meaning 'discernment'.

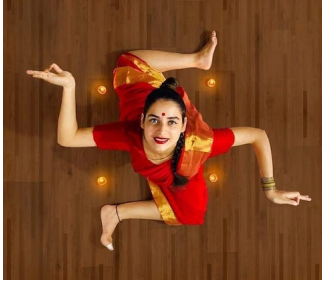
Why his students understood this as simply 'consciousness' is bewildering as its a word within the language of Sanskrit meaning to know ( jnana ) things separately ( vi ) as in to 'distinguish' to 'discern' to 'discriminate' its only related to 'consciousness' in the sense that it expresses a 'state' of consciousness.



'Vijnana' is seen within the pre Buddhist Upanisads such as the 'Aiteraya Upanisads' where it also mentions 'Sanjna' and these are described as the 'Skandhas' the 'Aggregates' the temporary 'coverings' of the soul and these teachings existed long before Buddha appeared.

'Vijnana' is also seen within the 'Taittiriya Upanisads' where it describes 'Vijnana' as a perception of this world which needs to be transcended, hence these five aggregates mentioned by Buddha express a terminology found within the Vedic scriptures long before Buddha appeared.

'Vijnana' is composed of 'Jnana' a word from Sanskrit meaning 'knowledge' and we can add various prefixes which describes various states of 'knowledge' various states of 'consciousness' such as 'Prajnana' or 'Prajna' meaning one who is 'wise' an important word within Buddhism meaning 'wisdom' yet none of these words mean consciousness perse, they simply describe 'states' of consciousness.



The basic requirement within any spiritual tradition is the acceptance of a part of our existence which survives and continues after bodily death and the idea that Buddha has appeared and attained enlightenment simply to inform us that at the time of death everything is finished is beyond stupidity.

Buddha himself is seen as a 'Bodhisattva' whose meaning is said to be one whose essence (sattva) is perfect knowledge (bodhi) and within the 'Jataka' it describes his many lives as he progresses within each life until he attains perfection as a 'Bodhisattva' all of which expresses a reality which survives bodily death.

Nirvana which is described as the highest existence within Buddhism is not an 'unconscious state' how can one experience Nirvana if there is no 'consciousness' hence we can easily see a misunderstanding within this second sermon of the Buddha, a pinprick which became a gaping chasm once the Buddha departed.



Why did this misunderstanding continue to develop after the departure of the Buddha and create that which is known as 'Nihilism' was it simply the human condition where Buddhists were determined to be different than everyone else, especially the Vedic culture which it rejected.

Buddhism rejected the sacrifices, it rejected the social orders, it rejected the worship of the gods, it even rejected the sacred language 'Sanskrit' choosing instead its dialect known as 'Pali' hence one must consider if the original teachings of Buddha was compromised by a desire to reject and be different.

Buddha did not bring 'ontology' he brought 'psychology' and despite the many claims that Buddha said this and Buddha said that the fact is Buddha avoided questions on the soul preferring to concentrate on higher states of consciousness and only Buddha knows the reason for this which then opened the door to the subsequent non philosophy of nihilism.

## Hare Krishna Centre - Leicester, UK - Trouble in Nirvana

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