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**SECTION 30. Philosophy** 

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# FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE'S ATTITUDE TO BUDDHISM

Abstract: The fact that Nietzsche saw superiority in Buddhism. It is namely in here one can gain ideal of being free from truth. Since the content of this ideal differs from Buddhism. However, acting based on this is similar in form: struggling with conscience and the uniqueness of imaginary "I". The metaphoric specific style related to this has aphoristic and metaphoric peculiarity. Reassessing values could be compared to certain extent both in Buddhism and Nietzsche. This sort of reassessment in Buddhism will lead to going out of the boundaries of life and death. In Nietzsche, based on this experience, one could observe the complete victory of "life", but it will be equal to madness.

**Key words**: Buddhism, Christianity, Humanness, God is dead, slave morality and master morality, Zarathustra, overman, philosophy of life, nihilism.

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# Introduction

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) had not much interest in the East. He talks about Buddhism in his work entitled as "The Antichrist". This had happened because of an issue relating to Christianity. The philosopher studies the two religions in comparison and gives superiority to Buddhism. There are reasons for that. According to Nietzsche, one of the highest values in his observations was health, but Buddhism was not in his unhealthy aspirations. Nietzshe's goal was "revolt against all painful processes", this includes "humanness" from Richard Wagner to Arthur Schopenhauer (By "Humanness" Nietzsche means promoting sympathy in Christianity). [1.526]. This is why Nietzsche approaches Buddhism in a mild way. This was repeated in relation to Wagner and Schopenhauer, as well as to Christianity, because they were Nietzsche's teachers and because Nietzsche was also brought up in the spirit of Christianity".

# **Materials and Methods**

Nietzsche's understanding of Buddhism developed based on secondary sources, through Schopenhauer and Paul Deussen. The philosopher regarded them as the first experts of Indian philosophy in Europe. Commentators also recognized Hermann Oldenberg's book entitled "Buddha, his life, his doctrine, his order" as a source.

However, biographers hint that he was familiar with the English translation of "Sutta Nipata" as the primary source. For Nietzsche, who was "not affected" by Buddhism, "life" which he protected with passion was not so dangerous. The philosopher was more concerned about the fate of European people's fate. He was busy with fighting against the forms of nihilism which is peculiar to these people. This is why he is worried about Buddhism as it could "possibly" be an illness for a European. Thus, according to him, democratic movement's similarity with Christianity is seen not in sufferings, but in anger. This threatens Europe in the form of "new Buddhism". In every nihilistic instinct, he blames Wagner and this is equal to Buddhism instinct in Nietzsche's way.

Thus, how Buddhism is seen in Nietzsche's interpretation? Initially he Christianity and Buddhism for being from nihilist religions, because he sees their serious differences. "By blaming Christianity, I cannot be unfair towards Buddhism," says Nietzsche. He thinks that Buddhism "is a hundred times as realistic as Christianity", "a hundred times cool, just and fair" and it is "the only genuinely positive religion to be encountered in history" [2.640]. Why does Buddhism attract Nietzsche's attention more than Christianity?

First, because the thinker rejected the concept of "God" and declared it in his works, that is to say,



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"God is dead!", this is why he liked it very much. Second, "struggle against sin" is replaced by "struggle against suffering". According to Nietzsche, Buddhism "does not look at its sufferings and defects differently and interpret them as sin, it openly recognizes what is in itself by saying: "I'm suffering" [2.645]. He places Buddhism, which rejected self-deceiving moral concepts, "to the other side of good and evil" and it was the highest praise expressed by Nietzsche. Third, denying the idea of rejecting the worldly life, "as the requirement of being healthy, promoting good deed and good wish". Nietzsche thought that Buddhism is more pleasant Christianity. Fourth, the existence opportunity to reject forcefulness and leave the society of monks; the fact that Buddhism is against taking revenge, "it does not require fighting against those who think differently". Finally, the turning of egoism into obligation: "One thing is necessary: it is the way of getting rid of suffering" - this state manages and limits the entire enlightenment and spirituality" [2.646]. This thesis has definitely attracted the philosopher, because he thought that it reflects egoism and the spirit of a selected clergy.

From this sort of classification of Buddhism, it is seen that it interested Nietzsche not for nothing, because it is seen from the last thesis that Nietzsche did not differentiate the Hinayana (Small vehicle) and Mahayana (Great vehicle) trends of Buddhism. The supporters of Hinayana aspired for ideals of achieving Nirvana individually, it is the ideal of Arhatship, it is being related to elite and monk Buddhism, and it was called as "selfish". The supporters of Mahayana, based on the Bodhisattva ideal, invited the broad public to the Buddhism ideology, they did not have to follow the ranks of monks. They thought that the promotion of boundless good deed would lead to enlightenment, in the practice of monks this was interpretation of yoga. "This opened broad way to religious ideals of Buddhism and besides the layer of the population, who had the opportunity to get traditional education, it was possible for those who were in the lowest layer of the Brahman system of division" [3.352].

Nietzsche differentiated "slave morality" and "master morality". In line with his classification, in Christian morality, poverty in Buddhism is a temporary phenomenon: "the aforementioned, the educated people made the hotbed of this movement"; the democratic rules of the supporters of Mahayana did not interest Nietzsche, he puts them aside. In Christianity, according to Nietzsche, only the lowest layer of the population aspires for being liberators, for this reason "Christianity needed the concepts of invasion, because it was important rule over ignorance". Buddhism, according to Nietzsche, is the religion of "civilization", it is a religion for the end and fatigue, "it is a religion of good deeds and those who have achieved the highest peak of spirituality"

[2.647-648]. In this sense, according to estimation of Nietzsche, Buddhism is superior than Christianity.

Nietzsche mentions two physiological facts upon which Buddhism grounds itself and upon which it bestows its chief attention are: first, an excessive sensitiveness to sensation, which manifests itself as a refined susceptibility to pain, and secondly, an extraordinary spirituality, a too protracted concern with concepts and logical procedures, under the influence of which the instinct of personality has yielded to a notion of the "impersonal." These physiological states produced a depression. The state of being in depression derives from the thesis that "everything consists of suffering" [2.645]. Nietzsche talks about what he fought against and what he had tried to come over in himself in a surprising way. "An excessive sensitiveness to sensation" which has emerged as a result of an illness led to loneliness, these are favorable climate and others. Being under the influence of Schopenhauer's philosophy of pessimism "for a long time" could lead to the loss of the instinct of personality.

According to Nietzsche, Buddhism has produced solution to these issues. In reality, the solution to problems in Buddhism is rejecting the concept of personality and "I", it is not about the instinct of personality. It is not about returning back to life for those who have lost the hope. It is difficult to agree with this thesis of Nietzsche. The concept of being liberator in Buddhism is different. If Nietzsche calls for being cheerful, Buddhism calls for calmness of the "spirit". The smile of Buddha does not mean accepting life in a cheerful manner. This is why, "returning back to the world" is done through the repentance of Buddha in a specific way, this means returning back to self, getting rid of the burden of doubt, it might seem like a paradox - this will take place by rejecting self.

Nietzsche is not consistent in this issue. In a different case, he says: "...The clearness of spirit, calmness, denunciation of wishes are the highest goals – in Buddhism people aspire for and achieve them" [2.646]. This mainly means the superiority of Buddhism over Christianity. According to Nietzsche, this is not only aspiration towards perfection, but it is mastering this feature as well. "Buddhism does not promise, it delivers, while Christianity gives hope, but it does not deliver" [2.666], this is Nietzsche's conclusion.

The issue of superiority of one religion over another religion is quite disputable, it is very hard to solve it, it is almost impossible to solve it. If Nietzsche, as a Western person and brought up in Christian atmosphere resolves the issue in favor of the religion of the East, this will only happen because of temptation of polemics. This way, Nietzsche reveals Christianity, the latest Christianity. This Christianity is far from truth. He wants to restore the essence of initial Christianity.

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Nietzsche shows contradiction between Jesus, "who advocates in mountains, spaces and rivers", and "the astonishment in the emergence of Buddha" [2.657]. This example was demonstrated by the Christian group and the purpose was either promotion or struggle. Nietzsche thinks that there is common-to-all-mankind content hidden in the person of Jesus: "Indians say it is Sankhe, Chinese people call it as Lao Tzu, but there is no difference" [2.658].

By comparing Jesus with Buddha, Nietzsche continues to say: "Now it has become clear, what has the death on the cross shown: a new specific Buddhist calmness, truthfulness are not hallucination, it is for happiness on the Earth" [2.666]. This means authentic Christianity is being Christian for oneself. There was one Christian and he died on the cross. This is an example of Buddhism in its European form, it is the continuation of Nietzsche's thoughts. Thus, Buddhism is used by Nietzsche as means of polemics and addressing it is a must to increase criticizing Christianity. This approach is clearly seen in the latest works of Nietzsche: similar comparisons are given in "Twilight of the idols" and "The Antichrist": "Christian morality is put against Indian-Brahman morality". Nietzsche was familiar with L. Jaqualo's book entitled "Creators of religious laws: Manu - Moses - Muhammad". As a result of these comparisons, superiority is given to the East: "One draws a breath of relief when coming out of the Christian hospital and dungeon atmosphere into this healthier, higher and wider world. How paltry the 'New Testament' is compared with Manu, how ill it smells!" [4.586].

Like in Buddhism, there are two types of attitude towards "The Code of Manu". On the one hand, protecting oneself from Indian morality, fighting against measures and chandalas directed towards "average person", according to him, is alien to "our feelings", but what feelings are they? Spirituality? Justice? — "My demand upon the philosopher is known, that he take his stand beyond good and evil and leave the illusion of moral judgment beneath himself" [4.585]. On the other hand, in them Nietzsche sees "Odian humanness". Christianity emerges as opposite to Odia religion, as the victory of Chandala values, that is "ignored, not implemented and discussed", in the end, again a negative state.

Nietzsche could have seen this "Odian humanness" within the boundaries of his aristocratic teaching. According to him, "one should feel himself not as a function, but as a content and highest form of an existing structure", in this case the exploitation of the lower layer will be imperfect, there will be no sign of the structure of ordinary society, "it will be in communication with the essence of all living being" and "this will turn into the result of the wish of superiority" [5.380-381]. However, Nietzsche does not do this, finally he draws a parallel between the

two moralities - Christian and Indian. Those means used to make human being moral, now have become immoral. This objection, of course, would hardly fit in the rules suggested by Nietzsche in the field of morality. Precisely, "in order to create moral, one needs will which is contrary to defiance" [4.588]. In "The Antichrist" assessments given to "The Code of Manu" are mixed. It is different in the "Twilight of the idols". It demonstrates the highest morale, with the help of this the higher class, philosophers and military keep control over the masses. It rejects the immorality of deception. However, the stress here falls on the goal of deception, "Christianity lacks sacred goal, whereas high values prevail in Indian morality" [2.683]. The order of castes and hirearchy, according to Nietzsche, form the highest law of life.

Thus, three types of classification order emerges in Nietzsche's teaching: Christianity – lower level, Indian morality or Buddhism – middle ring, Nietzsche's aristocracy, love to life – higher level.

Let us go back to Nietzsche's Buddhism. Thus, Buddhism is the middle level of the hierarchy. It is higher than Christianity because it is directed towards the masses, but to some extent it is close to Christianity, because it is presented in the form of imperfect nihilism and pessimism. Regarding religion, Nietzsche sees only one approval: it is the opportunity of giving ordinary people, the majority, the feeling of satisfaction with their state. "Maybe there is no anything worth respecting in Christianity and Buddhism, but they have the art of teaching uneducated person illusive highest order. It is very difficult for him, but this difficulty is a need!" [5.288]. This shows the practical character of religion, in the hands of philosophers it plays the role of education. If it starts acting independently, according to Nietzsche, it would lead to tragedy: "independent religions are the main reason for the fact that "human being" is still in the lowest limit; they have preserved things which face tragedy in themselves" (Cooks make competition in religion: «Through bad cooks - through the entire lack of reason in the kitchen – the development mankind has been longest retarded and most interfered with..." p. 355.) [5.289].

In this sense, the tragic poet's art is equal to the victory of life and will. Despite sufferings, Zarathustra, with its promotion of an "overman" is superior to Christianity and Buddhism.

The shortcoming of Buddhism is seen in depression and rejection of life. The first impression is clearly seen here. Here, Nietzsche was under the influence of Schopenhauer, through the views of Schopenhauer he criticizes Buddhism. Schopenhauer, by "retreating" from philosophy (that it, by retreating and relying on it at the same time), tries to think about Nietzsche's state of depression "as deeply as possible". He looks at him "in Asian and outside Asian way", "by staying beyond good



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and evil, beyond the reign of morality and confusions, like Buddha and Schopenhauer". It appears in the form of thought in front of depression and view, "every opportunity through existing images of thought ignores the world". However, morality is the position of those who ignore, it creates another contrary ideal: "the ideal person is the one who is fully excited about life, who can declare about himself to the world, he learned not only to feel satisfied and pleased, but he is ready to go through them again for centuries..." [5.284]. In front of our eyes, he enters into dispute with "the last follower of Dionysus", "teacher of eternal return" "foretellers of death".

Nietzsche separates one topic from Buddha and says: "Here, vigil hearts: before they are born, they aspire for death, they miss the ignorance of being tired and taught. If they come across with a sick person, an old person or dead body, they would say straight away: "the life has passed!" However, they themselves are ignored, their eyes see the entire existence" [6.32].

Thus, for Nietzsche, the teaching about eternal return would lead to being excited about life and experience of life. This state is superior to relations existing in the world ("I myself belong to the reasons of eternal return"). This is against Buddhism, this is not the path of being non-existent, but it is ignoring life. This is a sort of defiance against Dionysusian "Yes" and Buddhist "No", Dionysus is against Buddha [6.32]. If we express this using the words of Nietzsche, "Dionysus is against the one who was crossed". However, is that so? What is the meaning of Buddhist No and Buddhist ignoring? Did Nietzsche understand it? Did he understand "Yes", to what extent?

The last question has almost been answered. When Nietzsche criticizes Buddhism, he constantly compares it with his philosophical rival Schopenhauer's "helpless depression", as if he puts it against "depression of force". This is the peculiarity of Nietzsche. However, in another article Andrey Beliy says: "In a number of cases he speaks against Darwin, at the same time, he uses him. However, he treats him like a stick on the road, which he came across by accident, he wants to destroy scholastics which has emerged from under his feet... For him, everything becomes means of destruction when need emerges for that. Here he builds an ambush against Catholics with the help of Bouclair, Milley and Darwin, in another case he throws iezuit under the feet of honored scholars" [7.68]. Continuing this thought, we can say that Nietzsche used Buddhism as a weapon in the struggle against Christianity. If the logic of struggle against Schopenhauer was against it, he would have turned it down without hesitation as well.

However, for Nietzsche Buddhism is not a stick found by accident. By observing "surprising internal

unity of Indian, Greek and German philosophical thinking", he concludes that this similarity is because of the closeness of the language. The philosophy of grammar is that when there is a need "it can create the ground for their single and orderly progress and the consistency of philosophical structures" [24.256].

declared: "All this, Nietzsche Besides Europeans, who lived, who are living - Platon, Walter, Goethe - I have a wide range heart. It depends on condition. This condition does not depend on me, it proceeds "from the essence of things", - I could of course be Europe's Buddha, it could have been Indian Buddhism's antipode" [8.35]. This type of comparison in most of the cases takes place in a symptomatic way, it does not pay any attention to contradictions. Another call: "Do not confuse me with others!" We can say in the spirit of Nietzsche that there are grounds for Nietzsche to be the Buddha of Europe, since he did not want to be similar with the historically existing Buddha.

Not only in Nietzsche, in Buddhism too human's existential difficulties is important as the point of movement, because he became miserable as a result of his thoughts and passions. The main goal could be seen in both of them – it is helping human being to become free from condition, since one should gain freedom independently: both Buddha and Nietzsche could point it out. Here, suffering is reviewed as a peculiarity of the process, it looks like a closed circle, like a trap which reinforces itself further. Suffering appeared as a result of losing ontological direction. One could gain freedom by moving to stability from dependence. This could be seen in human's fundamental identity and reality. This identity is of course not the same. Getting rid of all the lies of the chains of "I" is the end of Buddhist ideal, "it constantly transcendences itself, in a hyperbolic way opens its own internal opportunities and comes out of itself" [9.143]. This fits the example of Nietzsche's overman.

Nietzsche could not assess the sensitive sides of Buddhist ignoring enough. The peculiarity of any metaphysic state is ignored in Buddhism, the opportunity is created for human for becoming united with the reality. In the end, this sort of ignoring cannot be something negative. It creates the opportunity to chose the middle path by freeing from the limits of good and evil, optimism and pessimism. By essence, like in Buddha, Nietzsche avoids any sort of metaphysic speculation, they are of course interpreted in a distorted way. Nietzsche's aphoristic style, the fact it is fragmentary, it helps the reader to reach the path of freedom. This looks like the style of Buddhist sutras. He chooses the style of pushing people to find the truth in a logical way, not by expressing it after having learnt it by heart. Both and Nietzsche influenced Buddha contemporaries and generations strongly. If for the people of East Buddha's nirvana has positive



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content, nirvana does not mean death, but it is an example of ideal model. Buddha has saved the nature. As regards Nietzsche's "philosophy of life", it leads European people to the impression of hesitation. Here, we shall discuss Nietzsche's attitude towards Buddha ideal: for him nirvana means abandoning life, denying it in nihilistic way is equal to committing suicide. If we ignore the position of healthy way of thinking and show Nietzsche's practice of getting mad, this freedom would not lead to becoming mad, but it would push towards being mad [10.28]. In this case Nietzsche's words about him becoming Europe's Buddha prove themselves. Nietzsche's philosophy had practical significance for himself.

Nietzsche looks for spiritual and divine state of freedom, this is related to the necessity of denying the technique of social adaptation. Culture, to say it more precisely, traditional Christian culture, is seen by the philosopher as a destructive mechanism. According to Nietzsche, the content of life is not felt in thought, thought has atomic structure, it cannot be the ground for the integrity of "I". The joining of the atoms of thought in conscience is constant report before the motives of behavior. It is ensuring the integrity of "I"'s hegerogenious movements, by nature it has a spontaneous peculiarity. This sector of conscience is aggressive and it always expands, threatens life. This is why we should call will for action. This will lead to becoming healthy from conscience. Those achievements gained on the level of conscience, by nature, go through radical changes. This sort of action of will is the destruction of destruction. The initial destruction takes place due to culture - it will destroy spontaneity of physical forces, leads life to the integrity of cognitive acts. Nietzsche does not suggest destroying the secondly marked reality and initial communication, the games of body and will, spontaneity of life.

Direction of the body is ways of metaphor. Turning to this practice requires the technique of keeping silence, dance, "in a mad way". According to Nietzsche, metaphysic text is not constructed, but it is emanated. It is constantly related to the state of being ill and in a state of ecstasy. Thus, "Nietzsche's struggle against conscience, language, own body and illness is carried out for the intensive level of existence. To say this in the modern language of culture, this means unconsciousness and being mad. If one looks at it from the point of view of the one who is carrying out the experience, it will be seen as rare experience of "rendering oneself more healthy" [11.151].

Metaphoric views, as peculiar means of psychotherapy treatment, show that "for Nietzsche the sick part of the body is circumstance, "it is not being isolated from me" – it wanders around as if it is lost. Being existent means universal illusion of being specific, it is the centralization of "I"'s function of will in the world" [11.201].

According to Nietzsche, there is a need for the experiment of a new language. It should form the activeness of the body as the trend of psycho-somatic flow of events. However, it should not be significant like a single language and the content of universally accepted word. It should be related to madness and strained state: "aphoristic latter is the exercise of chaos" [11.226].

#### Conclusion

Thus, the fact that Nietzsche saw superiority in Buddhism is not for nothing. It is namely in here one can gain ideal of being free from truth; since the content of this ideal differs from Buddhism. However, acting based on this is similar in form: struggling with conscience and the uniqueness of imaginary "I". The metaphoric specific style related to this has aphoristic and metaphoric peculiarity. Reassessing values could be compared to certain extent both in Buddhism and Nietzsche. This sort of reassessment in Buddhism will lead to going out of the boundaries of life and death. In Nietzsche, based on this experience, one could observe the complete victory of "life", but it will be equal to madness.

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