

Hua-yen Buddhism in the Lines of Selected Poetry

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Abstract

The Hua-yen School of Mahayana Buddhism is much respected in the modern world owing to its teachings and practices. Hua-yen thrived in Tang dynasty (618–907 CE) in China and influenced other schools of Mahayana such as Zen or Chan Buddhism in China, Hwaecom in Korea and Kegon in Japan. One of the most important ways of transmitting the teachings of any religion is the inclusion of them in literature, especially in the form of poetry. On the other hand, in many Buddhist traditions, the enthusiasm of understanding certain phenomena is recorded by many Buddhist monks in the form of poetry or verse. The present paper expects to analyze some poetry written by Buddhist monks of the Hua-yen, Zen and Kegon traditions and discuss the Buddhist teachings included in them. According to Venerable Qijǐ, a Chinese Buddhist monk, “Poetry is meditation for Confucians” 詩為儒者禪, meaning poetry is similar to meditation. This line further indicates the concentration, continuous practice, visualization, pleasure, etc., related to both meditation and writing/enjoying poetry. Looking back at the Chinese Buddhist history, a group of monks cum poets known as “poet-monks” could be seen, and the present research is an attempt to study their poems with especial reference to Hua-yen tradition of Buddhism. The “poet-monks” were not very popular as poets but a small recognition of their poetic talents came late with the translations of them in English. Most of the Zen Buddhist poems remain anonymous, but the content of them proves that the authors might have been Buddhist monks. The themes of poems discussed in the present paper are detachment, impermanence, suffering of the world, emptiness, and understanding yourself. The study on these selected poetry proves that even if the poems are usually short, they present some basic teachings of the Hua-yen Buddhist teachings quite effectively. For instance, the anonymous Chinese poem translated into English as,

Entering the forest,
he does not disturb a blade of grass

Entering the water,
he does not make a ripple

clearly brings in the Hua-yen teaching of emptiness and the Bodhisatva-path as described in the Daśabhūmika Sūtra. The Chinese monks were into a lot of travelling and associated with nature a lot that their poetry always had associations to them. The above poem is symbolical of the affectionate, disciplined and the concentrated view and behavior of a Bodhisatva who does not even harm the peace of nature. An emptiness pervades throughout the poem created by the melancholic tone of it and it refers to the emptiness and the well-concentrated view of the practitioners of Buddhism. The poem is rich in visual imagery and the brevity of the poem by following the tradition of Haiku, the message conveyed in the poem can easily be transferred to the reader.

Parting is beauty's creation.
Parting's beauty is not in the substanceless gold of morning
nor in the woodless black silk of night nor in deathless immortal life,
nor is it in the unfading blue flower of heaven.
Love, if it were not for parting I would not be able to live again in a
smile having once died in tears.
Oh, parting.
Beauty is parting's creation. (Parting is Beauty's Creation)

The above poem by Manhae Han Yong-un a great Buddhist monk in Korea of the Hua-yen Buddhism addresses the themes of suffering, separation, impermanence and the understanding of the suffering. The understanding of the separation has strengthened the poet to look at it in a different perspective.

A similar poem written by him on the same theme of separation makes the reader understand love is not selfish and it is focused on one person. In the "Silence of Love"; one of the most popular poems by the poet, he says,

As we dread parting when we meet, so,
we promise to meet again when we part.
Though my love is gone, I am not parted from love;
an untiring love-song envelops the silence of love.

The sadness of separation is concealed by the deeper understanding of universal love and the feeling is not restricted to sexual love focusing on an individual.

The following poem, by a Zen Buddhism monk brings out the teachings of impermanence and metaphorically brings out that teaching by presenting the settlement of dew which is soon gone to oblivion.

when the dew settles there
 (not just on the blossoms,
 not just in spring and fall,
 but always)—sooner or later,
 isn't it bitter, doesn't it grieve?

The diverse experiences that the poet-monks of the Hua-yen thought have brought to light through these poems, necessarily leads one to an array of experiences and to look at them in a Buddhist point of view and with a compassionate heart.

Through the study, the researcher expects to bring to notice that these poems can be introduced to high school literature syllabi around the world as the poems are abundant in meaning as well as literary techniques. The study also promotes, “Buddhist literary criticism” in reading poems with a Buddhist message. These poems, with their deep philosophical meanings and figurative language can be compared with the mainstream literary work popular around the world. As the methodology of the present research, qualitative approach was used and the poems were selected based on a random search for the Hua-yen Buddhist poems and a poem by an anonymous poet (Entering the forest), two poems by Manhae Han Yong-un (1879-1944) (Parting is Beauty's Creation and As we dread parting when we meet) , one poem by each of the following poets: Lingche (746-816) (At Dong Lin Monastery: in Answer to Governor Wei Dan), Qiji (864-937) (White Hair) and Lingyi (727-762) (Poem Inscribed in a Monks' Lodge on Leaving Yifeng Monastery) were used for the present study. The poets belong to different eras but they all have focused on Hua-yen Buddhist philosophy in its various forms in Zen and Kegon Buddhism. The texts related to the Hua-yen Buddhism were also read in order to understand the philosophy in the lines of these poems. Moreover, web articles, research articles and blogs were referred to in collecting data for the research.

Keywords: Hua-yen, Buddhism, poetry, themes, philosophy, poet-monks

Introduction

Hua-yen Buddhism has been emerged to be one of the most influential form of Buddhism in the present world. It was first developed during the China's Sui T'ang dynasty (618–907 CE) as a branch of Mahayana Buddhism, and was soon popular in Korea and Japan and even today the Hua-yen practice and beliefs of Buddhism are apparent in the said countries as well as some other East Asian countries. This has been introduced when Chinese Buddhism was at its peak with other Buddhist schools such as San-lun (Mādhyamika), Fa-hsiang (Yogācāra), Ch'an (meditative practice), T'ien-t'ai (*Lotus Sūtra* sect), Pure Land and Hua-yen (Avatamsaka-Sūtra sect) (Odin, 1982 p 9).

The major teachings of Mahayana such as emptiness, concept of bodhisattva, and representation only have so well been intermingled with some fundamental Chinese beliefs such as cosmic harmony, the essential rightness of the natural world, and the intrinsic goodness of human nature in developing Hua-yen Buddhism. In China, this syncretic harmonization between pattern characteristic of Hua-yen speculative philosophy climaxed in the work of Fa-tsang (643-712), the Third Patriarch and grand systematizer of the Hua-yen sect as well as its true founder in the view of many scholars (*ibid.* p9). In Hua-yen Buddhism, everything is interrelated and it “represents a microcosmic–macrocosmic model of reality wherein each dharma or event becomes a living mirror of the totality, reflecting all other dharmas - past, present and future alike” (*ibid.* p 16). This is explained through a series of similes and metaphors, among which the most popular is the “Celestial Lord Indra's Net”. The metaphor depicts that the *dharmadhātu* or “the non-obstructed dharma-field of all-merging suchness, a cosmic web of interrelationships or universal matrix of intercausation” to the colossal net altogether covering the Lord Indra's Palace and the entire universe. The jewels in each intersection of the net reflects each and every other jewel there, thus emphasizing the interconnectivity.

Kegon which means the “Flower Ornament” in Japanese is a translation from Sanskrit avatamsaka. The sect took its name after the main text of the School, Avatamsaka Sutra which is preserved both in Tibet and China and deals with the Buddha Vairocana. It was introduced to Japan from China during the Nara period in 710 – 784. It has become a part and parcel of Hua-yen Buddhism and thus no longer considered a separate Buddhist school practicing a different doctrine. Kegon Buddhism was brought to Japan by two pupils of Fa-tsang named Chen-hsiang and Tao-hsüan and

a Southern Indian called Bodhisena. The doctrine of Kegon Buddhism identifies the harmony of all beings and the interdependence of everything (Britannica, 1998).

Zen Buddhist history emphasizes that the founder of Zen was none other than Sākyamuni Buddha himself who spread his message through 28 patriarchs from India to South East Asia in an unbroken line. The 28th Indian patriarch known as Bodhidharma is believed to have brought the “Awakened Mind” to China and became the first Ch’sn patriarch by transmitting it through a further unbroken line of disciples (Dumoulin, 2005 p xiii). The teachings, “reality is all One: everything is Buddha and the manyness of reality” (Glassman, 2003 p xi) are considered core in Zen. These two ways of looking at reality are essential in understanding the utmost reality and attaining the Buddhahood.

Just as the Gauthama Buddha and his contemporary disciples who attained the ultimate bliss of *Nibbana* have expressed their joys in the lines of poetry, the practitioners of Hua-yen, Kegon and Zen Buddhism have also come up with beautiful and simple poetry in expressing their understanding of the philosophy. The present paper is an attempt to analyze some selected poetry of these three traditions in a Buddhist literary perspective with the main objective of exposing them as master work of literature to a wider readership of the world who is interested in both literature and philosophy.

Research Problem

The present paper intends to analyze the poetry written by the Hua-yen, Zen and Kegon poet monks to explore the Buddhist teachings included in them and their use of poetic techniques. The paper also would analyze these poetry in order to evaluate the applicability of their themes and imagery to the entire readership of the world. The analysis is done using the Buddhist critical theory by looking at the poems in a Buddhist perspective. The research expects to prove or disprove whether these poems could be included in the mainstream literature throughout the world.

The research objectives are to study on the Hua-yen Buddhism and its main teachings, how they have been incorporated in the poetry written by Hua-yen, Zen and Kegon Buddhist poet monks, study the poems written by such poet monks with their themes and techniques used, analyze the poems in Buddhist critical approach, evaluate the poems to see whether they can be included in the mainstream literature of the world today.

The present research proves to be novel in its approach as a published work dealt with an analysis of poetry written by the Hua-yen, Kegon and Zen poet monks could not be found.

Methodology

The current research falls under the category of qualitative research that it is based on the library research in finding data. Books, web articles and journals were used as the main sources of collecting information.

Literature Review

One interesting feature with the Hua-yen Buddhist School is that most of the monks have written poems based on the Buddhist teachings and their understanding of the world according to such teachings. Buddhist literature has not been lack of poetry and even the Buddha as well as the *arahant* monks and nuns have preached verses of jubilation in various occasions. The verses carry similar themes and imagery drawn from nature. Even if they are generally short, upon analysis, references to in depth Buddhist teachings could unmistakably be found in them. The monks practicing Hua-yen tradition have also produced poems on various occasions based on various themes in accord with the Buddhist teachings and most of them have now been translated into English. These poems have gained their popularity only after the translations were done as the readership of the whole world including the Buddhists as well as non-Buddhist now have access to them.

On the other hand, in the mainstream English literature, too the ideas related to Hua-yen tradition could be seen. For instance, William Blake the pre-Romantic poet writes,

The world of imagination is the world of Eternity; it is the divine bosom into which we shall go after death of the vegetable body. This world of Imagination is infinite and eternal, whereas the world of generation is finite and temporal. There exist in that eternal world the permanent realities of everything which we see reflected in the vegetable glass of nature. All things are comprehended in their Eternal Forms in...the vine of eternity, the Human Imagination (1970 p 639).

Blake here explains the “true source of the atemporal envisagement in the archetypal imagination, i.e., the creative and purposeful image-making faculty of the

transpersonal unconscious at the depths of the psyche” (Odin, 1982 p 182). Blake’s views find similarities with the Ocean-Seal-Samādhi explained in the Hua-yen Buddhism when to which the Buddhas absorbed, see all *dharmas* both near and far of the past, present and future without obstruction” (*ibid.* p xiv). Thus writes Blake in “Auguries of Innocence”,

To see a World in a Grain of Sand,
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,
And Eternity in an Hour!

“Buddhist poetry” is not a very popular topic for students learning English literature as most of the English poems are related to Christianity. As the name suggests, Buddhist poetry deals with the doctrine preached by the Buddha, and the authors range from the monks to the lay devotees. The first composition of Buddhist poetry dates back to the Great Enlightenment of the Buddha and they could be found in the scriptures such as the Dhammapada.

Verse 153: I, who have been seeking the builder of this house (body), failing to attain Enlightenment (*Bodhi nana* or *Sabbannuta nana*) which would enable me to find him, have wandered through innumerable births in *samsara*. To be born again and again is, indeed, *dukkha*!

Verse 154: Oh house-builder! You are seen, you shall build no house (for me) again. All your rafters are broken, your roof-tree is destroyed. My mind has reached the unconditioned (i.e., *Nibbana*); the end of craving (*Arahatta Phala*) has been attained¹.

¹ *Anekajatisamsaram - sandhavisam anibbisam
gahakaram gavesanto- dukkha jati punappunam*

*Gahakaraka ditthosi - puna geham na kahasi
sabba te phasuka bhagga - gahakotam visankhatam
visankharagatam cittam - tanhanam khayamajjhaga.*

The *suttas* in Buddhist literature which are mostly in the form of prose, carry certain verses briefing the gist of the *sutra* and that has served as a memory device for the Dhamma preachers and students in remembering the themes of the particular *suttas*. In the context of Theravada Buddhism, it was written only in the first century BC and until then it was passed down to generations from memory. Other than the verses in the Dhammapada, the Thēra - Thērī *gātā* in the Pali canon are well embraced by the Buddhists all over the world not only for their beauty in the simple lines, but also for the great Buddhist philosophy included in them. Buddhist poetry written in Sanskrit have been popular in the Buddhist world owing to the inspiring imagery used in them. Asvagosa is one of the well-known Sanskrit poets who wrote Buddhist poems in Sanskrit and some of his work is translated to Chinese too (Nariman et al, 1972 p 40). His verses were simple, inspiring and enlightening as many key Buddhist teachings are included in them such as impermanence, non-self, isolation, etc.

In the modern world, the genre of Buddhist poetry could be seen thorough out the world in the Buddhist countries or where Buddhism is popular. For instance, in countries like Japan, China, Tibet, and Korea monks are into writing Buddhist poetry as a way of expression.

Discussion

The common imagery shared in the poems of the poet monks belonging to the Hua-yen, Zen and Kegon traditions include crooked pines, clouds, mountain pinnacles, willows with sentiments, moonlight, wooden boats, etc., which are so common in the Chinese and Japanese landscape. The poet monks have been so close to nature that almost all the imagery used in their poems are drawn from nature. Buddhism is a religion or a philosophy that is close to nature and the Gauthama Buddha himself has appreciated life close to nature. The similes and metaphors drawn from nature are immense in the Buddhist *suttas* so are they in the paeans of the *arahant* monks and nuns who were contemporary to the Gauthama Buddha. Likewise, the poet monks whose poems have been the content of this research paper have widely used the imagery from nature showing their appreciation of it and the life close to nature. The poems show the extremely inspiring literary talent of the poet monks who led simple lives with fundamental needs in accord with the teachings of the Buddha. These poets have been recognized much only after their poems were translated into English much later in the 19th century or the early 20th century.

A collection of poems recorded in “A Full Load of Moonlight” translated by Mary M. Y. Fung and David Lunde (2014) is worthy to be studied here. The poems are said to have been written by both Zen monks and Chinese Buddhist lay poets. The poems are important for their brevity and the mastery of the poets to present Buddhist teachings through such a small poem. For instance the following poem is said to have been written by Lingyi (727-762), a Zen monk upon leaving his monastery. Outwardly, the poem is simple and written with similes taken from nature which is an incorporative teaching of Zen Buddhism. The analysis of the poem shows how various key Buddhist teachings are wonderfully included in the poem.

The lotus in the pond can't choose when to open;
 mountain streams ebb and flow by chance.
 If I am supposed to determine my own comings and goings,
 can I return when it's not returning time?

The poem is significant in another way, that it uses similes from nature and which are also recurrent in Buddhist literature. Lotus is a significant simile in almost all the Buddhist traditions around the world and it is probably the most significant and commonest simile for the Enlightenment in all the Buddhist traditions. Theravada Buddhist literature records that the Buddha saw the world as a pond of lotus when He first looked at it just after His attainment of the Buddhahood. Some lotuses are mature enough to be blossomed but sans sunshine, they will not blossom and just like that even if there were people who were mature enough in their merit to understand the Dhamma, until the Buddha preaches the Dhamma their merit is not fruitful. Being grown in muddy water, the lotus stands out of it symbolizing the purity of the enlightened mind and also breaking free from the sufferings of *samsāra*. Further, it is symbolical of the non-attachment to the worldly factors. *The "Great Sutra of the Lotus of the Wonderful Law"* which is also known as the *Maha Saddharma-pundarika Sutra* is perhaps more than enough to understand the significance the lotus flower bears in Buddhism in relation to the key teachings of the Buddha. The metaphor in the first line of this poem brings this memory of the Buddhist literature to us and also it brings out the teaching of the *anatta* (non-self) in Buddhism. Likewise, the mountain streams are also beyond their control as they flow ‘By chance’” Then the poet turns towards himself and contemplates on the non-self-nature of his own life and convinces himself that he cannot decide his “own comings and goings” so he cannot return when it is not the time to return. Here,

the reference to “comings and goings” is ambiguous that it means the worldly journeys as well as the cyclic *samsāric* births of the beings. The poet is referring to the Law of Cause and Effect too and shows his non-self-nature in deciding his births to come. Moreover, the interconnectedness of Hua-yen Buddhism is presented here with the comparison of the natural phenomena to the conditions of the poet’s life too.

Another Zen monk named Decheng (? - 860) writes in his poem titled, “Boatman Monk” about his quenched self by taking wonderful metaphors.

A thousand-foot fishing line hangs straight down.
 One wave moves, ten thousand follow.
 The night is still, the water cold, the bait untouched.
 The empty boat carries home a full load of moonlight.

The fishing lines are the challenges the humans have to overcome in their journey towards *Nibbana* or they are the defilements of our mind. The waves that flow in their thousands could be the endless and the dangerous *samsāra*. This particular night is quiet, soothing and the baits have not attracted a single fish so he is safe. The baits here could be the grasping of the *Māra* and the poet monk has not been foolish in being a victim. The empty boat is metaphoric of his mind that is devoid of *kleshas* or the emptiness that he experiences and the full load of moonlight is metaphoric of the ultimate bliss of *nibbana*. The poem bears similarities to the verses of the Elder Monks and Nuns on their jubilation over the attainment of *Nibbana*. In *Āsivisopama Sutta*, *Alagaddūpama* (Water Snake Simile) *Suttas* of the Majjhima Nikaya in the Theravada tradition, the Diamond *Suttas* in Mahayana and in many other *suttas* the Buddha has taken the simile of a raft to refer to the Dhamma and explains that the Dhamma is for the purpose of crossing over, and not for the purpose of holding onto. Here, the poet monk has been influenced by this simile of the Buddha and uses the same to refer to his mind that is free from clinging.

Another Zen Buddhist poet, Qiji (864-937) contemplates a gray hair in his poem titles, “White Hair” and advises the readership not to be saddened by the strand of white hair as growing old is a natural phenomenon. Thus, the poet refers to the Buddhist teaching on the *Dukka*, the first noble truth of the Four Noble Truths preached by the Buddha.

Do not dye or pluck it—
 let it cover your head.
 Although there's no remedy for its turning white,
 black can withstand autumn no better.
 Pillowed on it, one quietly listens to cicadas;
 letting it down, idly one watches the flowing stream.
 Growing old is unavoidable in this floating life,
 but most people grieve because of you, white hair.

This poem bears similarities to the popular English poem “Finding a Long Gray Hair²” by Jane Kenyon when she understands the nature of life and old age. The poet takes the role of a maid and contemplates that old age is common to everyone when she finds her own gray hair in the pail and thinks she too was added to many a woman who had previously lived in the same house. Thus, a more or less the same idea has been presented by the two poets taking a similar metaphor for the old age. On the other hand, the poem contains a great Hua-yen Buddhist message of interconnectedness of everything in the world.

Lingche’s (746-816) poem “At Dong Lin Monastery: in Answer to Governor Wei Dan³” also deals with the old age and the poet has included a great Hua-yen philosophy in the few lines of poetry with rich sarcasm. The first line exposes the high standard of mental power the poet monk has achieved and the carefree life he spends in the woods in his old age. He says his “mind is not bothered by worldly affairs” and he only needs a

I scrub the long floorboards
 in the kitchen, repeating
 the motions of other women
 who have lived in this house.
 And when I find a long gray hair
 floating in the pail,
 I feel my life added to theirs.

³ In old age my mind is not bothered by worldly affairs.

A hempen robe and sitting mat will do for me.
 Everyone I meet praises retirement from office,
 but do you see any of them down here in the woods?

“hempen robe and sitting mat”. The basic requirements of the forest monk vividly brings out his “*alpecca*” (moderate) life which is a key teaching of the Hua-yen Buddhism. The poet monk is sarcastic in the final two lines when he says “everyone” he meets appreciates spending a life of freedom from worldly affairs but he cannot see anyone who has actually come to the woods in search of that freedom. The poem celebrates the beauty of the life of a monk in the forest with fundamentals and it also expresses the satisfaction of the poet of his life. On the other hand, it is a social criticism that even if people talk about having freedom which is a key teaching in Buddhism to be happy, they are not actually practicing the teaching. Thus, they are fated to work like machines in the competitive world. The poem reminds the reader of “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” written by the American poet Robert Frost and this is a poem that has been mostly anthologized around the world in English literary studies. There the speaker of the poem, bewitched by the natural beauty he happens to see on his way back home from a long journey yearns to enjoy beauty but his responsibilities and obligations make him quicken his journey. Thus he ends the poem,

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

The poem expresses the sad situation of the modern man that he has become a victim in the modern rat race despite his want of getting rid of the competitiveness. The same idea is expressed by Lingche in the above poem discussed.

The following anonymous Chinese poem too presents the Buddhist teachings in a gist.

Entering the forest,
he does not disturb a blade of grass
Entering the water,
he does not make a ripple

This clearly brings in the Hua-yen teaching of emptiness and the Bodhisatva-path as mainly described in the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra*. The Chinese monks were into a lot of travelling and associated with nature a lot that their poetry always had associations to

them. The above poem is symbolical of the affectionate, disciplined and the concentrated view and behavior of a Bodhisatva who does not even harm the peace of nature. An emptiness pervades throughout the poem created by the melancholic tone of it and it refers to the emptiness and the well-concentrated view of the practitioners of Buddhism. The poem is rich in visual imagery and the brevity of the poem by following the tradition of Haiku, the message conveyed in the poem can easily be transferred to the reader.

Nature is a core teaching in Hua-yen Buddhism with its acceptance if one strand (of Indra's net) of the interdependence is disturbed, the entire web is shaken. This ecological worldview of Kegon and Hua-yen Buddhism is discussed by Francis H. Cook in his essay "The Jewel Net of Indra" (qtd in Callicott and McRae, 2014 p 255).

Only very recently has the word "ecology" begun to appear in our discussion, reflecting the arising of a remarkable new consciousness of how all things live in inter-dependence...The ecological approach...views existence as a vast web of interdependencies in which if one strand is disturbed, the whole web is shaken.

Cook thus furthers his discussion on the relationship between humans and nature in the "cosmic ecology" of Hua-yen Buddhism. The metaphor of "Indra's Net" depicts a "cosmic web of dynamic causal interrelationships" where at every joint in the lattice work there is a sparkling jewel reflecting all the other jewels in the net, countless in number. "In the pattern of interconnectivity depicted by Indra's Net, each and every event in nature arises through an interfusion of the many and the one, thus being likened to a shining jewel that both contains and pervades the whole universe as a microcosmic of the macrocosm" (*ibid.* p255). This interconnection which has been compared to the Enlightenment or the complete understanding of the Buddha-nature too by certain Zen masters such as Dogen Kigen Zenshi (1200-1253):

The real aspect [dharmatd] is all things. . .this wind and this rain, this sequence of daily living. . .this study and practice, this evergreen pine and ever unbreakable bamboo." (Shob.-Shohd-jisso) (Narain, 1985)

The frequent references to nature by the Hua-yen, Kegon and Zen monks show that nature and its religious value were always connected to their minds. The poems written by them thus show how they have expressed the philosophy in connection with natural objects thereby radicalizing their ordinary meanings.

Monkey's cries from the
mountaintops,
Echoing mysteriously in the
valley:
I listen only to the preaching of this sutra.

Here, Dogen has compared the monkey's cries to the *sutras* in the Dhamma with many implications. Monkey is a part of nature and his "mysterious" cry letting the monk know the sound goes beyond its meaning. The intermittent sound of the monkeys, according to a critic (p123) is a remembrance for him of the "Buddha-nature which is eternally rising and perishing, moment-by-moment". The reference to echo also is indicative of the emptiness and extreme quietness of the surrounding. The echo is a result of the contact of ear, sound, *viññana* and surface and this phenomena reminds us of the dependent co-arising, which is another key Buddhist teaching. Thus, the *sutra* the monk is listening to through the shout of the monkey is about the interdependence of nature, impermanence, and the dependent co-arising.

The interdependence of nature and the beings is also presented in another poem by Dagon:

As I listened,
I became
The sound of rain
On the eaves.

The poet says he himself is the rain by the end and this experience goes beyond the mere aesthetic appreciation. He has achieved a deep concentration on the rain to the extreme of understanding he himself is rain, and this experience is akin to understand the Buddha-nature within his own self. This poems bear a direct similarity between the nature poetry abundant in English literature, especially the ones by the Romantics. William Wordsworth (1770 –1850), the father of Romantics once talks about an experience,

A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought

What wealth the show to me had brought:
bringing out the sameness of himself and nature.

Parting is beauty's creation.
Parting's beauty is not in the substanceless gold of morning
nor in the woodless black silk of night nor in deathless immortal life,
nor is it in the unfading blue flower of heaven.
Love, if it were not for parting I would not be able to live again in a
smile having once died in tears.
Oh, parting.
Beauty is parting's creation. (Parting is Beauty's Creation)

The above poem by Manhae Han Yong-un, a great Buddhist monk in Korea of the Hua-yen Buddhism addresses the themes of suffering, separation, impermanence and the understanding of the suffering. The understanding of the separation has strengthened the poet to look at it in a different perspective. A similar poem written by him on the same theme of separation makes the reader understand love is not selfish and it is focused on one person. In the "Silence of Love"; one of the most popular poems by the poet, he says,

As we dread parting when we meet, so,
we promise to meet again when we part.
Though my love is gone, I am not parted from love;
an untiring love-song envelops the silence of love.

The sadness of separation is concealed by the deeper understanding of universal love and the feeling is not restricted to sexual love focusing on an individual.

The following poem, by a Zen Buddhism monk brings out the teachings of impermanence and metaphorically brings out that teaching by presenting the settlement of dew which is soon gone to oblivion.

when the dew settles there
(not just on the blossoms,
not just in spring and fall,
but always)—sooner or later,
isn't it bitter, doesn't it grieve?

The diverse experiences that the poet-monks of the Hua-yen thought have brought to light through these poems, necessarily leads one to an array of experiences and to look at them in a Buddhist point of view and with a compassionate heart.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion, it is evident that the monks and the practitioners of Hua-yen, Kegon and Zen have been fond of presenting the philosophy they believe in through poetry. The beauty of the emptiness or the quenching nature of their minds are thus apparent through the beautiful and simple poetry they have composed, yet the simplicity of them have been drowned out by the deep philosophy ingrained in them. The impermanence, dependent co-arising, emptiness, interconnection of the entire universe are some key themes recurrently employed in the poems discussed. Most of the poems bear similarities to the popular English poetry that has recurrently been used in the poetry anthologies around the world. Moreover, the themes that the poet monks have dealt with are quite common in English poems written in many countries. The analyses in the discussion section evidence that just as the Buddhist critical approach could be employed in analyzing the above poems, that could be applied in analyzing the popular English poems that carry themes that are relevant to Buddhist teachings such as impermanence, tranquility, nature, interconnectivity, brotherhood, freedom and happiness of mind, etc. In examining the poems, the poet monks have employed the techniques of similes, metaphors, symbols and sound techniques to match the idea presented. Thus, the discussed poems as well as many other such poems composed by the Hua-yen, Kegon and Zen practitioners can be well included in the mainstream English literary journals as poetry with deep philosophies.

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