

A Study of Hanshan's Beings Protection Thoughts and Snyder's Holism*

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The Chinese poet monk Hanshan (寒山) advocated ahimsa, beings protection and vegetarian diet etc., aiming to spread beings protection doctrines of Buddhism through his poetry. The contemporary American poet Gary Snyder is influenced deeply by Hanshan's works and his life style, and Snyder develops his holism on environment protection, which is rightly based on Hanshan's beings protection thoughts combining Indians' nature worship tradition.

Keywords: Hanshan (寒山), Gary Snyder, beings protection, nature worship, holism

I. Introduction

The contemporary American poet Gary Snyder (1930-) mentioned not only once, that how shocked he was when he saw Chinese landscape painting the first time, which representing the lively nature exactly. "This confirmation of nature by Chinese landscape paintings struck the very roots of his entire later lifestyle and art style" (Takahashi, 2002, p. 321). From then on, Snyder began to be attached to Chinese culture, and late he learnt Chinese, and translated 24 poems of Hanshan (寒山), a monk poet in Tang Dynasty, and even went to Japan to learn Zen for three years. Therefore, it is safely to say the encounter with Chinese painting in the museum which made Snyder know Hanshan (寒山), and gradually Buddhism, and gradually ecological concerns in Buddhism. Snyder is especially impressed by Buddhist ecological views, such as ahimsa or no killing, unity, vegetarian, etc. Based on his interpretation on Buddhist ecological value and the nature worship in Indian civilization, Snyder develops his own holism on ecological environment protection.

When he knows more about Buddhism, Snyder realized that Christians ecological value is basically different from that of Buddhist. In the case of how dealing with animals, according to the *Bible*, human beings are at the top of the hierarchy of creatures, thus men are privileged to kill or harm animals. On the contrary, Buddhism advocates equality among all creatures, since "all living creatures have Buddha-nature" (宋先伟, 2004, p. 435). All living creatures include the inanimate such as mountains, rivers, grass, trees, and the animate such as birds and beasts. "All living creatures originally have Buddha nature, no difference from Buddha, yet their Buddha nature has been stained by secular concerns, so if they can practice Buddha doctrines in everyday life, their Buddha nature can be rediscovered and restored. As Hanshan (寒山) said, "unless your mind's

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impartial/no sages will appear/fools and sages are the same/end your attachment to form” (Pine, 2000, p. 207). The premise of Buddha's enlightenment is equality, the so called equality means everything unites within the universe, even though everything seems different from each other, which is only the form, the exterior part. Behind different forms, everything is the same in essence. As long as men realize the consistency between men and other things, there will be no maltreatment and abuse toward other things. According to the *Nirvana Sutra*, “all living beings is presented in different forms.” Hanshan (寒山) advised to find the consistency of all things behind different forms, whether it's the form of people or the form of things. As a monk and a poet, to spread and teach Buddhists' beings protection doctrines become the theme of Hanshan's (寒山) poetry.

II. Ahimsa, Beings Protection and Vegetarian Diet

All living things have Buddha nature, six samsara, no killing, and vegetarian diet, which together construct Buddhist's view on protecting beings, furthermore, the theory of protecting beings and ecological environment. *The Sutra* tells lots of stories about how birds and animals are free from the bitter sea (the hell) because they are enlightened by Buddha. Ananda, the Buddhist disciple, said with emotion: “Dharma comes into the world, and it's really wonderful, and to moisten all things in the worldwide. As well as birds, they also listen to the voice of the Dharma and receive blessings” (杜斗城, 1994, p. 304). When birds' Buddha nature is waken, they will be blessed. Meanwhile, if human beings rebel Buddha nature, they will be punished definitely. Buddhists believe blessings and punishment are closely related to the concept of samsara. During the process of samsara, after death, living creatures can fall into one of the six domains, i.e. heaven, man, Asura, beast, hungry ghost and hell.

According to Buddhism, “within the six domains, a life transforms from one form to another following certain rules, and the transform never stops. Since all beings have reincarnation, people and animals can also transform between each other: if a person abandons evil and becomes good, he can leave the bitter sea of suffering, continue to be a man, even surpass reincarnation and become a Buddha; if a person does evil, he may fall into the three evil domains of animal, hungry ghost and hell after death” (曹文斌, 2011, p. 13). Hanshan (寒山) said, “There is no limit to changes/births and deaths never cease/a bird body on a lesser path/a dragon-fish on a great peak/in a chaotic world a mountain sheep/in peaceful times a fine horse/last time around a rich man/this time through a poor clerk” (Pine, 2000, p. 113). In other words, in this world, you are a man, but in afterworld, you might not be a man; likewise, in this world, it is an animal, but in afterworld, it might not be an animal again. To all men in this world, how one lives his life will decide how he suffers or enjoys in afterworld.

According to Buddhism, no killing and vegetarian diet is the basic requirements for human beings to acquire a better afterworld life. What a pity, when the monk Hanshan (寒山) looked around, there are so many meat eaters, in the market customers “buy meat with blood still dripping/buy fish flapping and flipping” (Pine, 2000, p. 163), in the restaurant guests “can't stop eating fish/and never grows tired of meat” (Pine, 2000, p. 89). In the *Shurangama Sutra*, it is said: “if people eat sheep, sheep will be human beings afterworld. All creatures are like this, death and life, eat and be eaten; thus evils are born, and there is no end forever... You take my life in this world, and you will pay my life afterworld. This is the fate. Through thousands of calamities, the change of life and death never stops, so forever in pain, forever in struggling” (赖永海, 2010, p. 136). Hanshan (寒山) said more frankly, “Pigs devour dead human flesh/humans savor dead pig guts/pigs don't mind human

stink/humans say pork smells fine/throw dead pigs in the river/bury human bodies deep/if they ever stop eating each other/lotuses will bloom in boiling soup” (Pine, 2000, p. 85). When men eat pigs, and pigs will eat men also, thus samsara starts and pain starts. So, no killing and vegetarian is not only for the sake of animals, but also for human beings own sake. As Hanshan (寒山) suggested, “Haggling over fish and meat/carrying it home to feed your family/why do you take the lives of others/to make sure you survive/this isn’t heaven-bound karma/more like ballast for hell/when Hsu Liu says to dig/you’ll know it wasn’t right” (Pine, 2000, p. 101).

Buddhism says no killing and vegetarian establishes the relationship of reason and effect. Eating meat causes killing, in other words, eating no meat is no killing. According to the *Nirvana*, “a man who eats meat will be cut off from great kindness” (宋先伟, 2004, p. 207). Buddha warned his disciples, “Ananda, if all six beings in the world do not kill each other, they will not follow samsara, free from endless life and death.” If you practice samadhi, you are supposed to escape from samsara. If you have intention of killing, you will not get out of the samsara. You should know that the carnivore seem like samadhi, actually all of them are big devils. Finally, they will sink into the sea of life and death and they are not real Buddhist disciples” (赖永海, 2010, pp. 238-239). Therefore, Hanshan (寒山) repeatedly warned, “Here’s some advice for meat-eating people/who eat without reflecting/living things were formerly seeds/the future depends on current deeds/seizing present joys/unafraid of sorrows to come” (Pine, 2000, p. 225). Meanwhile, Hanshan (寒山) believed it is sick to establish one’s happiness on the basis of other’s pain, which is the disease of greed, “The unfortunate human disorder/a palate that never wearies/of steamed baby pig in garlic/of roast duck with pepper and salt/of deboned raw fish mince/of unskinned fried pork cheek/unaware of the bitterness of others’ lives/as long as their own are sweet” (Pine, 2000, p. 173).

III. One Is Many, and Many Is One

Snyder is influenced by Buddhism doctrines deeply. Ayako Takahashi in the article “The Shaping of Gary Snyder’s Ecological Consciousness” stressed “Robert Kern has shown Hua-yen Buddhism, especially Avatamsaka and ‘the jeweled net,’ has a prominent place in Snyder’s ecological consciousness” (Takahashi, 2002, p. 314). The so called jeweled net is the Indra net in the Huayan Sutra, which is a hanging pearl net made of precious stones hung in Sakka’s palace. Snyder also used this jeweled net to explain his ecological views, and he said “the universe is considered to be a vast web of many-sided and highly polished jewels, each one acting to be a multiple mirror... when we look at a jewel, we see nothing but the reflections of other jewels, which themselves are reflections of other jewels, and so on in an endless system of mirroring. Thus in each jewel is the image of the entire net” (Snyder, 1995, p. 67). Obviously, “a Huayen Buddhism provides a picture of ecology in a more profound, pervasive, and complicated sense than what contemporary ecologists have depicted” (Takahashi, 2002, pp. 323-324). So, if we look at the relationship between man and nature from the Buddhist world view, we will naturally come to the conclusion of ecocentrism instead of anthropocentrism.

Nature is a unity, and human beings are just a part of it, but human beings habitually ignore such an obvious fact. In this regard, Snyder pointed out “the single mind of a single particle of dust comprises the mind-nature of all sentient beings and Buddhist” and “The man who is all round perfection knows from beginning to end that truth is not dual and that no objects exist apart from mind, who then is, is ‘animate’ and who ‘inanimate’? Within the assembly of the Lotus, all are present without division?” (Snyder, 1999, pp. 289-290). Like his mentor

Hanshan, Snyder sees the consistency behind different things. What's more, Snyder tries to speak for natural beings, for those silent and inanimate beings, for example, this poem, "The Uses of Light":

It warms my bones/say the stones/I take it into me and grow/Say the trees/Leaves above/Roots below/A vast vague white/Draws me out of the night/Says the moth in his flight—/Some things I smell/Some things I hear/And I see things move/Says the deer—/A high tower/If you climb up/One floor/You'll see a thousand miles more. (Snyder, 1974, p. 39)

The same earth, the same sun, on behalf of these trees, moths, deer, even the inanimate like stones, the poet shows the gratitude to the sun, reminding human beings sunshine is shared by all. What is impressive, the last two lines of the poem mimics the Chinese Tang poet (Snyder usually uses the expression Tang poet instead of the poet in Tang Dynasty) Wang Zhihuan's "Climbing the Yellow Crane Tower", the last two lines of Wang Zhihuan's poem is "You can enjoy a great sight by climbing to a greater height". Here the poet's intention is obvious. If you want to transcend the narrowness of anthropocentrism, understand the feelings of all living beings in the world, and view all things with an empathic attitude, you need to stand on a higher platform.

Confronting more and more serious ecological crisis, Snyder reflects Christian civilization, he believes this culture "alienates itself from the very ground of its own being—from the wilderness outside (that is to say, wild nature, the wild, self-contained, self-informing ecosystems) and from that other wilderness, the wilderness within—is doomed to a very destructive behavior, ultimately perhaps self-destructive behavior" (Snyder, 1974, p. 106). Snyder finds in the east, far away from Christian world, fortunately there is civilization represented by Buddhism, and also nearby American Indians' primitive civilization. Neither Buddhist civilization nor Indian's primitive civilization separates human beings from nature, and human beings are never above all things in nature. In these two civilizations, human beings and the nature live together harmoniously, just like the poem "Prayer for the Great Family", Snyder sings a Psalm to the Earth Mother, and he follows the format of Indian's prayer. In the poem, the earth is all creatures' big family, and there is neither subject nor object, no "say" or "be said", no conqueror nor the conquered, all creature equally enjoy the land, air, rivers, sunshine, all creatures love each other, since all of them are the children of the Earth Mother, and they live in the same great family:

Gratitude to Mother Earth, sailing through night and day—/and to her soil: rich, rare, and sweet/*in our minds so be it.*/Gratitude to Plants, the sun-facing light-changing leaf/and fine root-hairs; standing still through wind/and rain; their dance is in the flowing spiral grain/*in our minds so be it.*/Gratitude to Air, bearing the soaring Swift and the silent/Owl at dawn. Breath of our song/clear spirit breeze/*in our minds so be it.*/Gratitude to Wild Beings, our brothers, teaching secrets/freedoms, and ways; who share with us their milk/self-complete, brave, and aware/*in our minds so be it.*/Gratitude to Water: clouds, lakes, rivers, glaciers/holding or releasing; streaming through all/our bodies salty seas/*in our minds so be it.*/Gratitude to the Sun: blinding pulsing light through/trunks of trees, through mists, warming caves where/bears and snakes sleep—he who wakes us—/*in our minds so be it.*/Gratitude to the Great Sky/who holds billions of stars—and goes yet beyond that—/beyond all powers, and thoughts/and yet is within us—/Grandfather Space./The Mind is his Wife./*so be it.* (Snyder, 1974, p. 24)

VI. Conclusion

"The Avatamsaka ('Flower Wreath') jeweled-net-interpenetration-ecological-systems-emptiness-consciousness tells us, no self-realization without the Whole Self, and the whole self is the whole thing. Thus, knowing who and where are intimately linked. There are no limits to the possibilities of the study of who and where, if you want to go 'beyond limits,' there is plenty of open mind-space to go out into" (Snyder, 1969, p. 129). Snyder believes the

monk poet Hanshan (寒山) is the perfect example of the open mind-space. Hanshan (寒山), as a monk, he experiences religious awakening, and he has a sense of earth and land, and he never loses his connection with the wildness. In some sense, Hanshan (寒山) had been immersed in his wildness so deeply that it becomes hard to tell what is the mountain and what is Hanshan (寒山), since the border between man and nature disappears. Perhaps, Hanshan (寒山) is both the man and the mountain at the same time. As the man, the mountain is all his world, as the mountain, man is a part of itself. If Hanshan (寒山) and the mountain can harmonize as a unity, then why not all creatures in this world, either the animate or the inanimate? Maybe, Hanshan (寒山) is neither a mountain nor a man, it is just a “mental state—it is the perfect being who can think of paths, trails, gorges, creeks, grass, moss, rain, pines, and wind as being at the same level” (Takahashi, 2002, p. 323).

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