

# **Śūnyatā from Madhyamaka to Early Yogācāra Philosophy**

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate school in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts at the International Buddhist College, Thailand

March, 2015

## Abstract

The variety of philosophical and psychological teaching in Mahāyāna Buddhism leads to a difficulty of finding out what it in fact declares, especially in its two great Schools, Early Madhyamaka and Early Yogācāra in Indian Buddhism. Thereby, Mahāyāna Buddhist thought is sometimes even seen as contradictory in itself. It has been tended to view the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra Schools as divergent and radically opposed movements. In order to avert the growing of this argument, this dissertation examines the system of thought of both these philosophies. It investigates closely the relation between them, focusing on the fundamental doctrine of Mahāyāna Buddhism – emptiness (*śūnyatā*, Pāli: *suññatā*). It paves the way for the both Madhyamaka and Yogācāra philosophies, and functions as a vital link which connects the whole of Mahāyāna Buddhist doctrinal thought.

In thorough investigation of the doctrine of emptiness in Madhyamaka and Yogācāra Schools, the latter does not reject the doctrine of the former. The two Schools even should be viewed as a complementary continuity rather than contradictory. The Madhyamaka philosophy focuses on the philosophy of absolute emptiness which is a natural outcome of the doctrine of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), empty of self nature of all phenomena. This notion, however, was brought to completion by the Yogācāra with various positive theories such as the theory of consciousness-only (*cittamātra*), the three-nature theory (*trisvabhāva*), etc. In addressing the philosophy regarding the relation between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra the thesis focuses on two doctrines which are closely associated with the two schools respectively: the two truths and the three natures. The Yogācāra doctrine of three natures does not negate or correct the Madhyamaka notion of two truths, but be in accord with and complementary to the two truths. They only argue the same doctrine of emptiness through their own terminologies. The thesis finally indicates the importance of right understanding of emptiness in progressing insight meditation on emptiness for attaining the highest enlightenment, Buddhahood.

## **Acknowledgements**

The successful completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the kind guidance, assistance and criticism of the following individuals and organizations.

Firstly, I want to express my gratitude to the International Buddhist College. It gave me the opportunities not only to study the Dharma of the Buddha, but also to study intensively and relatively free of financial worries.

I want to thank Prof. Kapila Abhayawansa for his excellent lectures on Buddhism in all aspects, and also for his guidance and feedback during the period of writing this thesis.

I want to thank Prof. Tilak Kariyawasam for recommending and providing valuable Buddhist literature. It helped me a lot to make my research work easier and to deepen my knowledge of Buddhism.

I want to thank Dr. Dhammanandi for providing me with documents relevant to my research; thanks to Dr. Krishna Ghosh Della Santina for her valuable suggestions regarding the contents and philosophical terminologies; thanks to Dr. Fa Qing for recommending all research formulations. Additionally, I would like to thank my friends, Bhikṣu Nhuan Thinh, Bhikṣu Hue Phat, Ms. Margot Jarrett and Mr. Ben Goldstein, for spending their time to read, correct and suggest good ideas on my thesis.

For the last two years I enjoyed working in the IBC library. Special thanks to the library staff for helping me out with books and providing me a place where I could work concentrated and quietly.

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## Abbreviations

A.D.	Anno Domini
AN	Aṅguttara-nikāya (figures: number of sutta)
BC	Before Christ
BCAP	Bodhicaryāvatārapañjikā by Prajñākaramati
ca.	circa
CE	Common Era
Dhp	Dhammapada (figures: number of verse)
DN	Dīgha-nikāya (figures: number of sutta)
etc.	et cetera
i.e.	id est (that is)
ibid.	Ibidem (the same)
MMK	Mūlamadhyamakakārikā (“MMK VI. 8” means chapter 6, verse 8)
MN	Majjhima-nikāya (figures: number of sutta)
MSg	Mahāyāna-saṃgraha (“MSg I.17” means chapter 1, verse 17)
MV	Madhyānta-vibhāga (“MV I.1” means chapter 1, verse 1)
Mvb	Madhyānta-vibhāga-bhāṣya (“Mvb I. 10c” means chapter 1, verse 10c)
MVK	Madhyānta-vibhāga-kārikā (“MVK I. 14” means chapter 1, verse 14)
MVKB	Madhyānta-vibhāga-kārikā-bhāṣya (“MVKB I.3” means chapter 1, verse 3)
p.	page number
pp.	pages number
PP	Mūlamadhyamakavṛtti prasannapadā
Skt	Sanskrit

SN	Samyutta Nikāya (SN 54:9 means samyuttas 54, sutta 9.)
ŚS	Śūnyatāsaptati (figures: number of verse)
T	Taishō Chinese Tripiṭaka (大正新修大藏經 figures: number of volume, for example, “T25, no.1509, 691b15” means the Taishō Tripiṭaka Vol 25, Number 1509, page 691, col. b, line 15).
TSN	Trisvabhāva-Nirdeśa (figures: number of verse)
trans.	translation
YŚ	Yuktiṣaṣṭikā (figures: number of verse)

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

When observing the history of Buddhist Philosophies of early Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, the twofold basis that became prominent is Madhyamaka founded by Nāgārjuna and Yogācāra or Vijñānavāda by Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubhandu. They progress during the first four centuries of the Common Era. The fundamental treatise of the Madhyamaka system emphasizes the important doctrine of the supreme reality as emptiness (*śūnyatā*). *Śūnyatā* is a specific system of philosophy of Buddhism during the developmental period of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Meanwhile, Yogācāra is considered as the Mind-only School focusing principally on analysis of the system of consciousness. Finally, Yogācāra is firmly on the side of Mahāyāna, having absorbed the basic Mahāyāna teaching of *śūnyatā*.<sup>1</sup> Thus, it seems difficult to define the relationship between both these Mahāyāna traditions exactly. So, a legitimate question as to whether that theory of *śūnyatā* in Madhyamaka and Yogācāra is same or different could easily arise.

Some scholars such as Gadjin Nagao, Ian Charles Harris, Richard King, Elena Hanson, etc. argue regarding the close relationship between these two schools in terms of the notion *śūnyatā* and many others doctrines as well. Nagao states the Mādhyamika thought of *śūnyatā* was extended within the Yogācāra by their system of the three-nature theory that dependent upon the logic of convertibility.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, this dissertation attempts to elaborate the role and functions of the *śūnyatā* teaching as the core doctrine in both philosophies as well as the relational nature between them. Through this thesis, a right understanding of the *śūnyatā* doctrine of Mahāyāna Buddhism, in particular of Madhyamaka and Yogācāra, is on the one hand comprehended. On the other, the view that the Madhyamaka and the Yogācāra present two radically opposed sets of doctrines must probably be rejected. It is important to discover that the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition as a unity supports the stance taken by both the Madhyamaka and the Yogācāra. The terms ‘Madhyamaka’ and ‘Yogācāra’ throughout this thesis refer to the early Madhyamaka and the early Yogācāra in early Indian Buddhism.

This thesis will examine the doctrine of *śūnyatā* which paved the way for Madhyamaka and Yogācāra philosophies and functioned as a vital link between them. In

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Kritzer, *Vasubandhu and Yogācārabhūmi: Yogācāra Elements in the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 2005), p. xi.

<sup>2</sup> Gadjin M. Nagao, *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra: A Study of Mahāyāna Philosophies* (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1992), p.1.



order to investigate it, Chapter 1 shows, in brief, the Madhyamaka School secured by an explanation on the doctrine *śūnyatā* and its nature, place and function in Madhyamaka philosophy. *Śūnyatā* here is elaborated in relation to Dependent Origination (*pratītyasamupāda*), concept depending upon (*upādāyaprajñapti*) and Middle Path (*madhyamā-pratipad*). All characteristics of self-nature (*svabhāva*), *dharmatā*, the two truths and Nāgārjuna's dialectical method are therein expressed. Chapter 2 introduces, in short, the Yogācāra School coming along with concentration on how the doctrine of *śūnyatā* is underlined in Yogācāra philosophy. They emphasize the structure of consciousness, especially the storehouse consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*). Therefore, *ālayavijñāna* in accordance with *pratītyasamutpāda* which is the central teaching of early Buddhism and also in Madhyamaka is stated. The three nature doctrine (*trisvabhāva*) in relation to the notion *śūnyatā*, and the Middle Path as neither void nor non-void will be discussed in this part. The chapter closes with an introduction to the emptiness concept of Yogācāra School relating to Early Buddhism. Chapter 3 emphasizes the *śūnyatā* doctrine as a vital connection between Madhyamaka and Yogācāra philosophies. Their relationship from both historical and philosophical aspects is investigated. In the latter, it explains the concept of *vijñāna* which is also accepted by Nāgārjuna. The correspondence between the two truths and the three nature theory will be mentioned and finally the equivalent explanation of the *śūnyatā* doctrine is indicated in the typical works of Madhyamaka and Yogācāra. Chapter 4 mentions the practice of *śūnyatā* in Madhyamaka and Yogācāra insight meditation. Initially, the meditator must realize the right understanding of emptiness. He subsequently penetrates into the meditation stages, meditation on non-self, on mind and on absolute emptiness, for the sake of the highest enlightenment, Buddhahood.

## Chapter 2

### *Śūnyatā* Concept in Madhyamaka Philosophy

#### 2.1 A Brief Introduction of Madhyamaka School

The Madhyamaka as a systematic philosophy arose only in the second century C.E. with the figure of the great scholar and saint *Ācārya* Nāgārjuna.<sup>3</sup> It has had a continuous history of development from the time of its formulation to the total disappearance of Buddhism from India (the 11<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>4</sup> It is possible to distinguish four main stages in the development of the school. The first is the stage of systematic formulation by Nāgārjuna and his disciple Āryadeva. In the second stage, Madhyamaka is divided into two schools – the Prāsangika represented by Buddhapālita and Svātantrika by Bhāvaviveka. The third stage includes Candrakīrti and Śāntideva who bring Madhyamaka to its rigorous, orthodox form and also follow the Prāsangika. The last stage is a syncretism of the Yogācāra and the Madhyamaka represented by Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla.<sup>5</sup>

Nāgārjuna is believed to have lived in South India during the later part of the second century and the early part of the third century (ca. 150-250 A.D.).<sup>6</sup> He is sometimes referred as ‘the second Buddha’.<sup>7</sup> His considerable corpus includes texts addressed to lay audiences, letters of advice to kings, and a set of metaphysical and epistemological treatises that represent the skeptical and dialectical approach of Madhyamaka philosophy; most important and principal of these is his best work as the ‘*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*’ (literally ‘*Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way*’).<sup>8</sup> Madhyamaka philosophy of Nāgārjuna has sometimes been called the central philosophy of the Mahāyāna tradition, and even the central philosophy of Buddhism in general.<sup>9</sup> T.R.V. Murti mentions the Madhyamaka does justice to

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Della Santina, *Madhyamaka Schools in India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1995), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> T.R.V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism: A Study of Mādhyamika System* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1998), p. 87. Cesare Rizzi states “the school of the ‘Middle Way’ lived in India for about eight centuries, from the third to the tenth centuries A.D.”. Cesare Rizzi, *Candrakīrti* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 87-103.

<sup>6</sup> David J. Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy: Continuities and Discontinuities* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1994), p. 160.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2005), p. 63.

<sup>8</sup> *Nāgārjuna’s Mūlamadhyamakakārikā: The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*, Jay L. Garfield (trans.), (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 87.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Della Santina, *The Tree of Enlightenment* (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1997), p. 156.

the importance of the central philosophy of Buddhism<sup>10</sup> because of representing the quintessence of the teaching of the Buddha.<sup>11</sup> Thereby, Madhyamaka philosophy or the philosophy of the Middle Way came to its widespread influence not only in India but also in Tibet, China and Japan.<sup>12</sup>

The essentials of Madhyamaka are in complete agreement with the utterances of the Buddha recorded in the *Pāli Canon*.<sup>13</sup> For instance in the ‘*Mahāli Sutta*’<sup>14</sup>, in the ‘*Poṭṭhapāda Sutta*’<sup>15</sup>, in the ‘*Mahānidāna Sutta*’<sup>16</sup>, in the ‘*Cūḷamāluṅkya Sutta*’<sup>17</sup>, in the ‘*Aggivacchagotta Sutta*’<sup>18</sup>, in the ‘*Vacchagotta Sutta*’<sup>19</sup>, and in the ‘*Avyākata Sutta*’<sup>20</sup> the Buddha also speaks about ‘emptiness’ (*śūnyatā*)—the central topic of Madhyamaka—in the highest terms.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the tetralemma (*Catuṣkoṭi*) which will be discussed later is so characteristic of Madhyamaka and is introduced within the *Pāli Canon*.<sup>22</sup> The *Majjhima Nikāya* states “dependent on the oil and the wick” (the Buddha declared) “does light in the lamp burn; it is neither in the one nor in the other, nor anything in itself; phenomena are, likewise, nothing in themselves. All things are unreal; they are deceptions; Nibbāna is the only truth”.<sup>23</sup>

Additionally, the direct precursors of the Madhyamaka philosophy were the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*.<sup>24</sup> The philosophical content of the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature is the doctrine of *śūnyatā*, which was systematically expounded by the Madhyamaka.<sup>25</sup> The Madhyamaka is thereby known as the doctrine of emptiness (*śūnyatā*), functioning as a critique against the idea of the concept of self-nature (*svabhāva*), which has been developed by *Abhidharma* scholars from the *Sarvāstivāda* school, and which can be regarded as a notion

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<sup>10</sup>. T.R.V. Murti, p. I.

<sup>11</sup>. Santina, *Madhyamaka Schools in India*, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup>. Santina, *The Tree of Enlightenment*, p. 156.

<sup>13</sup>. Santina, *Madhyamaka Schools in India*, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup>. DN 6, Maurice Walshe (trans.), *The Long Discourses of the Buddha* (Massachusetts: Wisdom Publications, 1996), p. 143.

<sup>15</sup>. DN 9, p. 159.

<sup>16</sup>. DN 15, p. 223.

<sup>17</sup>. MN 63, Bhikkhu Nāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (trans.), *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* (Massachusetts: Wisdom Publications, 2005), p. 533.

<sup>18</sup>. MN 72, p. 590.

<sup>19</sup>. SN 44.8, Bhikkhu Bodhi (trans.), *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha* (Somerville MA: Wisdom Publications, 2000), p. 1390.

<sup>20</sup>. AN 7.54, Bhikkhu Bodhi (trans.), *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012), p. 1046.

<sup>21</sup>. Peter Della Santina, *The Madhyamaka Philosophy*, *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 15, 1987, p. 173.

<sup>22</sup>. Santina, *Madhyamaka Schools in India*, p.1.

<sup>23</sup>. T.R.V. Murti, p. 50.

<sup>24</sup>. Santina, *Madhyamaka Schools in India*, p.1.

<sup>25</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

of permanent existence.<sup>26</sup> This doctrine of emptiness is not avoiding the two alternatives of existence and non-existence, but a philosophically critical attitude.<sup>27</sup> Nāgārjuna has declared in *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (hereafter, MMK) XIII.8 that

“The Victorious Ones have announced that emptiness is the relinquishing of all views. Those who are possessed of the view of emptiness are said to be incorrigible”.<sup>28</sup>

## 2.2 *Śūnyatā* as the Central Doctrine of Madhyamaka

Central to the Mahāyāna movement was a spirit of negation that broke through the dharma-theory according to which the term ‘emptiness’ (Skt: *śūnyatā*, Pāli: *suññatā*).<sup>29</sup> The Sanskrit ‘*śūnya*’ seems to derive from the root ‘*śvi*’ meaning ‘to swell’. *Śūnya* mean literally ‘relating to the swollen’ while the root *śvi* seems to have expressed the idea that something which looks ‘swollen’ from the outside is ‘hollow’ inside.<sup>30</sup> Buddhist usage of the term expresses strong negation as well as positive connotation of ultimate reality, an affirmation that has passed through negation of relativity.<sup>31</sup>

It was Nāgārjuna who consolidated ideas of *śūnyatā* found in sutras into a philosophical system. He linked the idea of *śūnyatā* to the idea of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) that had been the core of Buddhism.<sup>32</sup> He indicated this standpoint of emptiness in MMK XXIV.18

“We state that whatever is dependent arising, that is emptiness. That is dependent upon convention. That itself is the middle path”.<sup>33</sup>

It can be seen, in this verse, that the four key terms *śūnyatā* (emptiness), *pratītyasamutpāda* (dependent origination), *upādāya-prajñapti* (designation or derived name) and *madhyamā-pratipad* (Middle Path) are expressly declared as synonyms.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>. *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā of Nāgārjuna: The Philosophy of the Middle Way*, David J. Kalupahana (trans.), (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1999), pp. 101-3.

<sup>27</sup>. Santina, *Madhyamaka Schools in India*, p. 14.

<sup>28</sup>. MMK XIII.8, p. 223. “*Śūnyatā sarvadr̥ṣṭīnām proktā niḥsaraṇam jinaiḥ, yeṣāṃ tu śūnyatādr̥ṣṭis tām asādhyaṇ babhāṣire.*”

<sup>29</sup>. Gadgin M.Nagao, *Madhyamaka and Yogācāra: A Study of Mahāyāna Philosophies* (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1992), p. 168.

<sup>30</sup>. Edward Conze, *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1999), p. 130.

<sup>31</sup>. Nagao, *Madhyamaka and Yogācāra*, p. 209.

<sup>32</sup>. Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>33</sup>. MMK XXIV.18, p. 339. “*yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatām tām pracakṣmahe, sā prajñaptir upādāya pratipat saiva madhyamā*”.

It is Dependent Origination that is the truth of the world realized by the Buddha in his enlightenment.<sup>35</sup> The essential teaching of *Prajñāpāramitā* literature is that all entities which originate dependently are ultimately unoriginated, unextinguished and empty<sup>36</sup> as expressed in *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* “the *Bodhisattva* who understands conditioned coproduction (*pratītyasamutpāda*) as non-production; and this wisdom as non-extinction as the rays of the sun freed from the covering of the clouds; so he has dispelled the covering of ignorance”.<sup>37</sup> The *Prajñāpāramitā* puts it as, “all putative elements of existence are void, because they lack self-existence”.<sup>38</sup> T.R.V Murti states Dependent Origination is not the temporal sequence of entities but their essential dependence<sup>39</sup>, characterized by emptiness, non-existence and negation.<sup>40</sup> For this process, Candrakīrti as well as Buddhapālita and Bhāvaviveka also affirm, “because it is devoid of self-being (*niḥsvabhāva*) it is empty”.<sup>41</sup> Nāgārjuna also writes, in the *Śūnyatāsaptati*, “It is because the inherent existence of all phenomena is not to be found in causes, conditions, aggregations or individualities. Thus all phenomena are devoid of inherent existence and are empty”.<sup>42</sup> He, moreover, indeed rejects the reality of the aggregates (*skandhas*) in the fourth chapter of *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*.<sup>43</sup> It is stated in *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* “the *Bodhisattva* finds that all these dharmas are entirely empty... not course in form, in feeling, or perception, in will or consciousness, but wanders without home, remaining unaware of coursing firm in wisdom, His thoughts on non-production - then the best of all the calming trances cleaves to him.”<sup>44</sup>

<sup>34</sup>. K. Venkata Ramanan, *Nāgārjuna's Philosophy as presented in the Mahā-Prajñāpāramitā-Śāstra* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998), p. 41.

<sup>35</sup>. *Kaccānagotta Sutta*, SN 12.15, p. 544.

<sup>36</sup>. Santina, *Madhyamaka Schools in India*, p. 13.

<sup>37</sup>. *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra: The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and Its Verse Summary*, Edward Conze (trans.), chater XXVIII.7 (California: Four Seasons Foundation, 1975), p. 62.

<sup>38</sup>. *Lucid Exposition of the Middle Way: The Essential Chapters from the Prasannapadā of Candrakīrti*, Mervyn Sprung, T. R. V. Murti and U. S. Vyas (trans.), (Boulder: Prajia Press, 1979), p. 235.

<sup>39</sup>. T.R.V. Murti, p. 86.

<sup>40</sup>. Nagao, *Madhyamaka and Yogācāra*, p. 191.

<sup>41</sup>. Louis de La Vallee Pousin, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās de Nāgārjuna* (Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1992), p. 500. “*yasmāt pratītyasamutpannam hi duḥkham bhavati nāpratītyasamutpannam.*” Candrakīrti also explains “because it is precisely what arises in dependence that constitutes unregenerate existence, not what does not arise in dependence. What arises in dependence, because not self-existent, is devoid of being” in *Lucid Exposition of the Middle Way: The Essential Chapters from the Prasannapadā of Candrakīrti*, p. 236.

<sup>42</sup>. *Śūnyatāsaptati (ŚS) 3: Nāgārjuna's Seventy Stanzas: A Buddhist Psychology of Emptiness*, David Ross Komito (trans.), (New York: Snow Lion Publication, 1987), p. 79. “*hetupratyayasāmagrayām sarvasyām vā prthak prthak /sarvabhāvasvabhāvo na tasmācchūnyam hi vidyate*”.

<sup>43</sup>. MMK IV, *Skandha-parīkṣā*, pp. 140-6.

<sup>44</sup>. *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, chater I. 8-10, p. 10.

*Śūnyatā* in this text is *upādāya-prajñapti* translated as a designation based upon some material. Candrakīrti states ‘*pratītyasamutpāda....is given the name upādāya-prajñapti*’.<sup>45</sup> Nagao explains any names or designations are conventional and cannot represent the ultimate reality, which remains silent (*tūṣṇīm-bhāva*) and beyond all grasping (*anupalabdhi, anabhilāpya*).<sup>46</sup> The doctrine of elements or dharmas can be without difficulty subordinated to the doctrine of emptiness, the reverse is not possible.<sup>47</sup> The Buddha compares “the *dharmas* to a raft, being for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of grasping”.<sup>48</sup> The Buddha speaks of emptiness and of the non-reality of all *dharmas* that cannot be understood in any other way than the ultimate teaching. Nāgārjuna states “the teaching of the *dharma* by the Buddhas is based upon two truths: worldly convention and ultimate fruit. Those who do not understand the distinction between these two truths do not understand the profound truth embodied in the Buddha's message”.<sup>49</sup> Thus Madhyamaka suggests the division of the truth into the conventional truth (*saṃvṛti-satya*) referring to *upādāya-prajñapti* for *saṃvṛti* and *prajñapti* as synonyms is intended by the Buddha himself<sup>50</sup> and the ultimate truth (*paramārtha satya*) to *śūnyatā*.<sup>51</sup> A similar distinction is suggested with respect to the canonical scriptures as of expedient import (*neyārtha*) and of direct import (*nītārtha*).<sup>52</sup> Otherwise, this division into two truths is also suggested in the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature.<sup>53</sup> The *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* states “as mere talk he (*Bodhisattva*) cognizes all these dharmas which the Buddha has demonstrated, practised and revealed. Though he may teach for many *niyutas* of *kotis* of aeons, yet the *Dharma*-element does not get exhausted nor does it increase”.<sup>54</sup>

*Śūnyatā* itself is the *Middle Path* which is dialectical, moving from affirmation to negation and again to affirmation; and not a point between two extremes nihilism (*ucchedadiṭṭhi*), eternalism (*saśastadiṭṭhi*).<sup>55</sup> The Middle Way passing beyond the two

<sup>45</sup>. La Vallee Poussin, pp.214-215. “*evamātmano bhāvānām ca satattvaṃ ye varṇyanti n ate parama gambhīrasya pratītyasamutpādasya śāśvatocchedarahitasopādāyaprajñāgavyabhīdhānasya tattvaṃ paprayanti*.”

<sup>46</sup>. Nagao, *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*, p. 192.

<sup>47</sup>. T R V Murti, p. 53.

<sup>48</sup>. *Alagaddupama Sutta*, MN 22, p. 229.

<sup>49</sup>. MMK XXIV.8-9, pp. 331-3. “*Dve stāye samupāśrītya buddhānām dharma deśanā, loka saṃvṛti satyaṃ ca satyaṃ ca paramathataḥ , Ye ‘nāyora na vijānanti vibhāgaṃ satyayadvayoḥ, te tattvaṃ na vijānanti gambhīraṃ budha-śāsane*”.

<sup>50</sup>. *Āṭānāṭiya Sutta*, DN 32, p. 476.

<sup>51</sup>. Santina, *Madhyamaka Schools in India*, p. 7.

<sup>52</sup>. *Ibid.*, p.8.

<sup>53</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>54</sup>. *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, chapter XVIII.7, p. 42.

<sup>55</sup>. Nagao, *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*, p. 194.

extremes of eternalism and nihilism taught by the Buddha<sup>56</sup> has been expounded essentially by Nāgārjuna “the teacher has spoken of relinquishing both becoming and other-becoming. Therefore, it is proper to assume that freedom is neither existence nor non-existence.”<sup>57</sup> Thereby, *śūnyatā* affirms ‘*saṃsāra* is identical to *nirvāṇa*’ that passing beyond negation of both affliction and liberation.<sup>58</sup> This ‘identical’ process is exemplified by the *Catuṣkoṭi* of Nāgārjuna that consists of any four alternative propositions such as ‘existence’, ‘non-existence’, both ‘existence’ and ‘non-existence’, neither ‘existence’ nor ‘non-existence’.<sup>59</sup> The dialectical analysis is evident in the presentation of the fourteen inexpressibles (*avyākṛta*) found in the *Pāli* canon<sup>60</sup> as mentioned above. For instance, the Buddha rejected the views that “the world is not eternal; the world is finite; infinite; the soul and the body are the same; the soul is one thing and the body another; after death a *Tathāgata* exists; after death a *Tathāgata* does not exist; after death a *Tathāgata* both exists and does not exist; after death a *Tathāgata* neither exists nor does not exist”<sup>61</sup> that is also stated in MMK XXV.17-18.<sup>62</sup> This non-differentiation and identity, in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*, is also mentioned that form is not different from emptiness; emptiness is not different from form in the verse “the space-element in the eastern direction, and in the southern, and so in the western and northern directions is boundless; above and below, in the ten directions, as far as it goes; there is no multiplicity, and no difference is attained. Past Suchness, future Suchness, Present Suchness, the Suchness of the *Arhats*, the Suchness of all *dharma*s, the Suchness of the *Jinas*; all that is the *Dharma-suchness*, and no difference is attained.”<sup>63</sup>

The Buddha has regarded the doctrine of emptiness as the real essence of his teaching in the *Pāli* canon. In the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, the Buddha spoke of the monks of the future period who “won’t listen when discourses that are words of the *Tathāgata* — deep, deep in their meaning, transcendent, connected with emptiness (*suññatā paṭisaṃyuttā*)— are being recited”.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, the doctrine of emptiness of Madhyamaka comes from the real heart of the teaching of *Śākyamuni*. The direct precursor of the Madhyamaka philosophy as

<sup>56</sup>. *Brahmajāla Sutta*, DN 1, p.73.

<sup>57</sup>. MMK XXV. 10, p. 361. “*Parhāṇaṃ cābravīc chasā bhavasya vibhavasya ca, tasmān na bhāvo nābhāvo nirvāṇaṃ iti yujyate.*”

<sup>58</sup>. Nagao, *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*, p. 177.

<sup>59</sup>. MMK XXV.15-16, pp. 364-5.

<sup>60</sup>. Santina, *Madhyamaka Schools in India*, p. 2.

<sup>61</sup>. *Aggivacchagotta Sutta*, MN 72, pp. 591-2.

<sup>62</sup>. MMK XXV. 17-18, p. 365.

<sup>63</sup>. *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, chapter XVI. 1-2, p.38.

<sup>64</sup>. *Āṇi Sutta*, SN 20.7, p.708. “*Ye te suttantā Tathāgatabhāsītā gambhīrā gambhiratthā lokuttarā suññatapāṭisaṃyuttā, tesu bhaññamānesu na sussūsissanti, na sotam odahissanti, na aññā-cittam upaṭṭhāpessanti, na ca te dhamme uggahetabbam pariyāpuṇitabbam maññissanti.*”

mentioned above was the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*. The Mādhyamika system is the systematised form of śūnyatā doctrine of the *Prajñāpāramitā* treatises. Candrakīrti says Nāgārjuna had deeply realized the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature “*ācārya-Nāgārjunasya viditāvīparītaprajñāpāramitā-nīteḥ*”. The *Prajñāpāramitā* revolutionised Buddhism, in all aspects of its philosophy and religion, through the basic concept of śūnyatā of all empirical notions and speculative theories.<sup>65</sup> The *Prajñāpāramitā* and the literature of Madhyamaka reiterated the one basic idea that the real is neither one, neither many, neither *ātman* nor *anātman*; it is as it is always, Murti proved.<sup>66</sup>

### 2.3 Śūnyatā and Pratītyasamutpāda

*Paṭiccasamuppāda* ( Skt. *Pratītyasamutpāda*) is often translated as ‘dependent arising’ or ‘dependent origination’<sup>67</sup> referring to the nature of existence declared by the Buddha.<sup>68</sup> The *Paṭicca-samuppāda-vibhaṅga Sutta* (SN 12.2) continues to define each of the twelve links of dependent origination systematically.<sup>69</sup> Its law is described as “When this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that

<sup>65</sup>. T.R.V. Murti, p. 83.

<sup>66</sup>. Ibid., p. 86. Peter Della Santina also mentions this idea “ according to the doctrine of *Prajñāpāramitā* literature and the Madhyamaka, phenomena and ultimate reality are essentially non-differentiated and identical” in *Madhyamaka Schools in India*, p. 13.

<sup>67</sup>. *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Lindsay Jones, vol. 11, (Farmington: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), p. 7363.

<sup>68</sup>. *Aññatitthiya Sutta*, SN 12.24, p. 558. Referring to the Buddha’s explanation of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, Venerable Ānanda says ‘*acchariyam bhante, abhutam bhante. Yatra hi nāma ekena padena sabbo attho vutto bhavissati.*’ (‘It is wonderful, venerable sir! It is amazing, venerable sir! How the entire meaning can be stated by a single phrase!).

<sup>69</sup>. (1) **Ignorance**: Not knowing suffering (*dukkha*), not knowing the origin of suffering, not knowing the cessation of suffering, not knowing the way leading to the cessation of suffering. (2) **Volitional formations**: There are these three kinds of volitional formations: the bodily volitional formation, the verbal volitional formation, the mental volitional formation. (3) **Consciousness**: There are these six classes of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, mind-consciousness. (4) **Name-and-form**: Feeling, perception, volition, contact, attention: this is called name. The four great elements and the form derived from the four great elements: this is called form. (5) **Six sense bases**: The eye base, the ear base, the nose base, the tongue base, the body base, the mind base. (6) **Contact**: There are these six classes of contact: eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, mind-contact. (7) **Feeling**: There are these six classes of feeling: feeling born of eye-contact, feeling born of ear-contact, feeling born of nose contact, feeling born of tongue-contact, feeling born of body-contact, feeling born of mind-contact. (8) **Craving**: There are these six classes of craving: craving for forms, craving for sounds, craving for odors, craving for tastes, craving for tactile objects, craving for mental phenomena. (9) **Clinging**: There are these four kinds of clinging: clinging to sensual pleasures, clinging to views, clinging to rules and vows, clinging to a doctrine of self. (10) **Existence**: There are these three kinds of existence: sense-sphere existence, form-sphere existence, formless-sphere existence. (11) **Birth**: The birth of the various beings into the various orders of beings, their being born, descent [into the womb], production, the manifestation of the aggregates, the obtaining of the sense bases. (12) **Aging-and-death**: The aging of the various beings in the various orders of beings, their growing old, brokenness of teeth, greyness of hair, wrinkling of skin, decline of vitality, degeneration of the faculties: this is called aging. The passing away of the various beings from the various orders of beings, their perishing, breakup, disappearance, mortality, death, completion of time, the breakup of the aggregates, the laying down of the carcass: this is called death.



does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases”.<sup>70</sup> This theory is formulated on the basis of the existence of ‘dependently arisen phenomena’ (*paṭiccasamuppanna dhamma*, Skt: *Pratītyasamutpannatva dharma*).<sup>71</sup> The meaning of *paṭiccasamuppāda* is best elucidated by clarifying the implications of *paṭiccasamuppanna*.<sup>72</sup> In other words, a thing can originate neither out of itself nor out of other nor out of both nor out of neither.<sup>73</sup> An abstraction noun *dhammatā* (Skt: *dharmatā*) meaning the ‘nature of phenomena’ without *svabhāva* is applied to describe *paṭiccasamuppāda*.<sup>74</sup>

Mādhyamika retained this primitive notion of *paṭiccasamuppāda* which is reclaimed as a doctrine of emptiness by Nāgārjuna.<sup>75</sup> In Madhyamaka philosophy, *paṭiccasamuppāda* itself is referred to as *idappaccayatā* (Skt. *idaṃ pratyayatā*), ‘dependent on this’ or ‘conditionality’<sup>76</sup>, for example, the production of a sprout involves the coming together of an array of contributory factors such as soil, the correct degree of moisture and warmth, etc.<sup>77</sup> While *Paṭiccasamuppanna* is referred to as a *upādāya-prajñapti*, ‘designation having recourse’.<sup>78</sup> Throughout Nāgārjuna’s works<sup>79</sup>, the basic philosophical position is that entities (*bhāva*) are empty of self-nature (*niḥsvabhāva*). Entities exist, it is true, but they exist and arise only in dependence upon conditions.<sup>80</sup> ‘Those who are wise in regard to entities see that entities are impermanent, deceptive factors, pithless, empty, insubstantial and wholly vacuous’ (*Yuktiṣaṣṭikā* 25).<sup>81</sup> In the ultimate truth (*paramārthasatya*) Nāgārjuna states all entities are empty without *svabhāva*. They are, in other words, dependently arisen (*pratītyasamutpannatva*):

<sup>70</sup> *Bahudhātuka Sutta*, MN 115, p. 927.

<sup>71</sup> *Paccaya Sutta*, SN 12.20, p. 550. “*Paṭiccasamuppādañca vo, bhikkhave, desessāmi paṭiccasamuppanne ca dhamme.*”

<sup>72</sup> David J. Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy: Continuity and Discontinuity* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1994), p. 53.

<sup>73</sup> MMK I.1, p. 105. “*Na svato nāpi parato na dvābhyāṃ nāpy ahetutaḥ, utpannā jātu vidyante bhāvāḥ kvacana kecana.*”

<sup>74</sup> Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy: Continuity and Discontinuity*, p. 54.

<sup>75</sup> Gadgin Nagao, *The Foundational Standpoint of Mādhyamika Philosophy* (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1990), p. 5.

<sup>76</sup> This characteristic is the most important of the four main ones attributing to the principle of dependent arising which is described by the Buddha. “*Iti kho, bhikkhave, yā tatra tathatā avitathatā anaññathatā idappaccayatā—ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, paṭiccasamuppādo.*” in *Paccaya Sutta*, SN 12.20. Kalupahana also states ‘this term *idappaccayatā* is used not merely as one of features of the principle of dependence, but also as a synonym for it’ in *A History of Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 56.

<sup>77</sup> Lobsang Gyatso, *The Harmony of Emptiness and Dependent-Arising* (Delhi: Indraprastha Press, 1992), p. 61.

<sup>78</sup> Gadgin Nagao, *The Foundational Standpoint of Mādhyamika Philosophy*, p. 5.

<sup>79</sup> See the works YS 25, ŚS 3, *Vigrahavyāvartanī* 21-22, , *Lokātītastava* 24, *Acintyastava* 18.

<sup>80</sup> David Burton, *Emptiness Appraised: A Critical Study of Nāgārjuna’s Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2001), p. 87.

<sup>81</sup> *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā* 25 in Peter Della Santina, *Causality and Emptiness: The Wisdom of Nagarjuna* (Singapore: Buddhist Research Society, 2002), p. 79.

“Because all things are empty of inherent existence (svabhāva) the Peerless Tathāgata has shown the emptiness of inherent existence of dependent arising as the reality of all things.”<sup>82</sup>

Nāgārjuna also basing on the Buddha’s declaration “an oil-lamp burns in dependence on oil and wick; it is neither in the one nor in the other, nor anything in itself...all things are of a deceptive nature, unreal, but only *Nibbāna* which has an undeceptive nature is the supreme noble truth”<sup>83</sup> says the Lord which means *śūnyatā* is the dependence of things which is deceptive and delusive.<sup>84</sup> Candrakīrti comments on Nāgārjuna’s MMK XV. 2<sup>85</sup> and affirms that the true nature of all entities is *śūnyatā* which is the state of absence of *svabhāva* (*niḥsvabhāva* or *naiḥsvābhāvya*)<sup>86</sup>, “*śūnyatā* does neither arise nor die as all these things are devoid of their self-characters”.<sup>87</sup> *Śūnyatā* then appears to mean both that entities are dependently arisen (*pratītyasamutpannatva*), and that they do not have foundational existence (*dravyasat*) but conceptually constructed existence (*prajñaptisat*).<sup>88</sup> Here Nāgārjuna proclaims the absence of self-nature of beings and thereby declares all descriptions of dependent origination as empty of substance, too.<sup>89</sup> In other words, the dependently arisen does not originate with *svabhāva*.<sup>90</sup> *Pratītyasamutpāda* is thus equated with *śūnyatā* by Nāgārjuna<sup>91</sup> because of lacking a nature of its own (*niḥsvabhāva*).<sup>92</sup> However, one must not lean to either side to elevate one or the other to a position of superiority. If one loses sight of emptiness and claims that the principle of Buddhism is dependent origination, one has departed from Mahāyāna. Likewise, if one overemphasizes emptiness, one will fall into dogmatism, i.e. to evade the conventionality of being in the world. Emptiness and dependent origination must thus be understood together as an identity of absolute contradictories.<sup>93</sup> Being interdependent, they are empty. When all phenomena, the birth-death cycle itself is empty, there is nothing that exists permanently as its own essence, i.e. all functions of beings

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<sup>82</sup>. ŚS 68, p. 94.

<sup>83</sup>. *Dhātuvibhanga Sutta*, MN 140, p. 1093.

<sup>84</sup>. MMK XIII.2, p. 220. “*Tan mṛṣā moṣa-dharma yad yadi kiṃ tatra muṣyate, etat tūktam bhagavatā Śūnyatā-paridīpakam.*”

<sup>85</sup>. MMK XV.2, p. 229. “*Svabhāvaḥ kṛtako nāma bhaviṣyati punaḥ katham, akṛtrimaḥ svabhāvo hi nirapekṣaḥ paratra ca.*”

<sup>86</sup>. David Burton, pp. 213-4.

<sup>87</sup>. *Buddhagāma-Saṅgraha*, chapter 7, v. 28 quoted in N.A. Sastri, “*Sunyata and its significance in Buddhism*”, pp. 6-7. Mon. 10 Nov. 2014

<[http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/bot/pdf/bot\\_12\\_02\\_01.pdf](http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/bot/pdf/bot_12_02_01.pdf)>.

<sup>88</sup>. David Burton, pp. 35-6.

<sup>89</sup>. Nagao, *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra: A Study of Mahāyāna Philosophies*, p. 212.

<sup>90</sup>. YŚ 48c-d, p. 82. “*pratītyajātaṃ cājātamāha tattvaividāṃ varaḥ.*”

<sup>91</sup>. MMK XXIV, 18, p. 339. “*yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatām tāṃ pracakṣmahe.*”

<sup>92</sup>. T.R.V. Murti, p. 209.

<sup>93</sup>. Nagao, *The Foundational Standpoint of Mādhyamika Philosophy*, p. 10.

depend upon others; then dependent origination is emptiness and emptiness is dependent origination.<sup>94</sup>

This identity is particularly clear in MMK XXIV. 18 mentioned above as well as at the very beginning verse of MMK in which Nāgārjuna gives his famous eight negation as *pratītyasamutpāda*'s characteristic declared by the Buddha. From the absolute standpoint there is non-extinction (*anīrodham*), non-origination (*anutpādam*), non-destruction (*anucchedam*), non-permanence (*aśāśvataṃ*), non-identity (*anekārtham*), non-differentiation (*anānārtham*), non-coming into being (*anāgamam*) and non-going out of being (*anirgamam*); withdrawal of all fabrication (*prapañcopaśamaṃ*) of dependent origination.<sup>95</sup> The doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda* without origination and without destruction<sup>96</sup> thus is boldly expounded by Nāgārjuna, i.e. never and nowhere can anything be produced.<sup>97</sup> Dependent origination thereby manifests the nature of phenomena (*dharmatā*)<sup>98</sup> which is non-origination and non-cessation (*anutpannāniruddhā*); empty of *svabhāva*<sup>99</sup> that all are seen to be synonymous with emptiness. T.R.V. Murti states *pratītyasamutpāda* is not the principle of temporal sequence, but of the essential dependence of things on each other, i.e. the unreality of separate elements (*naiḥsvābhāvyā*, *dharma-nairātmya*). The entire Mādhyamika system is a re-interpretation of *Pratītyasamutpāda*.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, Kalupahana says this is the easy route to the belief in the so-called 'non-conceptual' (*nirvikalpa*) ultimate reality (*paramārtha*).<sup>101</sup> Nāgārjuna once again affirms that 'a thing that is not dependently arisen is not evident; for that reason, a thing that is non-empty is indeed not evident'.<sup>102</sup> Candrakīrti, moreover, quotes with approval the

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<sup>94</sup>. Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>95</sup>. MMK, p. 101. "Anīrodham anutpādam anucchedam aśāśvataṃ | anekārtham anānārtham anāgamam anirgamam | yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaṃ prapañcopaśamaṃ śivaṃ | deśayāmāsa sambuddhas taṃ vande vadaṭāṃ varaṃ |"

<sup>96</sup>. This doctrine declared by the Buddha is also stated in the invocational stanza of *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā*: 'I offer obeisance to the Lord of the Sages who proclaimed Interdependent Origination, and who thereby avoided origination and destruction' quoted in Peter Della Santina, *Causality and Emptiness: The Wisdom of Nagarjuna*, p. 76.

<sup>97</sup>. Chandradhar Sharma, *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1997, p. 90.

<sup>98</sup>. Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 54. This statement also is mentioned in Gadjin Nagao *The Foundational Standpoint of Mādhyamika Philosophy*, p. 11.

<sup>99</sup>. MMK XVIII.7, p. 268. "Nivṛttam abhidhātavyaṃ nivṛtte citta-gocare | anutpannāniruddhā hi nirvāṇam iva dharmatā".

<sup>100</sup>. T.R.V. Murti, p. 7.

<sup>101</sup>. MMK, p. 268.

<sup>102</sup>. MMK XXIV. 19, p. 341. "Apratītsamutpanno dharmah kaścin na vidhyate | yasmāt tasmād aśūnyo di dharmah kaścin na vidhyate".

canonical statement to the effect that ‘the Buddhas who know the true nature (*dharmatā*, 法性) may either arise or not arise but the *dharmatā* remains’.<sup>103</sup>

## 2.4 *Śūnyatā* and *Upādāya-prajñapti*

The world of convention is the network of concepts and conventional entities (Pāli: *paññatti*, Skt. *prajñapti*, Chinese: 波羅攝提)<sup>104</sup> with its original form *prajñaptirupādāya*<sup>105</sup> or it is usually expressed *upādāyaprajñapti* (Pāli: *upādāyapaññatti* or *upādāpaññatti*) as ‘concept depending upon’.<sup>106</sup> The Buddha reveals the true nature of all things by means of *nāma* and *lakṣaṇa* (以名字相) in order for all to understand the truth of things.<sup>107</sup> The complex of the five aggregates, ‘man’ or ‘woman’ is the *nāma* (name, 名); the bodily features by means of which the person can be distinguished as man or woman constitute the *lakṣaṇa* (sign, 相). *Lakṣaṇa* then is the root and *nāma* is the branch.<sup>108</sup> Here, *nāma* as the name or concept, *lakṣaṇa* as the content or self-characteristic, *nirmāṇa* (化) as creation, *saṃvṛti* as the veil of the truth of things, *vyavahāra* (世間) as empirical validity, *prapañca* (戲論) as an elaboration through *prajñapti* are considered as synonyms with *prajñapti*.<sup>109</sup> As mentioned above Kalupahana and Burton also took *saṃvṛti*, *vyavahāra* and *prajñapti* as synonyms, as was intended by the Buddha himself in DN iii.202.<sup>110</sup> Nāgārjuna uses the terms *saṃvṛti* and *vyavahāra* which have the same meaning with *prajñapti* in MMK XVII.24<sup>111</sup> and MMK XXIV.6, 8.<sup>112</sup> They are equivalents not only in the verbal expression, the ‘name’ that stands for the thing, but also the concept that the word conveys. It is in this way that *prajñapti* is used in ‘*upādāya-prajñapti*’ which is not only the names but also the entities they designate and translated as ‘derived name’, 假名 in Chinese.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>103</sup>. PP 40 quoted in David Burton, *Emptiness Appraised*, p. 68.

<sup>104</sup>. K. Venkata Ramanan, *Nāgārjuna's Philosophy as Presented in the Mahā-Prajñāpāramitā-Śāstra*, p. 72.

<sup>105</sup>. MMK XXIV. 18, p. 339.

<sup>106</sup>. Burton, p. 101.

<sup>107</sup>. Kumārajīva, <大智度論> *The Mahā-prajñāpāramitā-śāstra of Nāgārjuna*. 《大智度論》卷84〈70 三惠品〉：「以名字相故示諸法，欲令眾生解；佛不壞諸法法相」(CBETA, T25, no. 1509, 646, a25-26).

<sup>108</sup>. 《大智度論》卷89〈79 善達品〉：「先見男女貌，然後名為男、女——「相」為本，「名」為末」(CBETA, T25, no. 1509, p. 691, b15-16).

<sup>109</sup>. K. Venkata Ramanan, pp. 73-4, 349-50, 407.

<sup>110</sup>. MMK, p. 340. Also Burton, *Emptiness Appraised*, p. 97.

<sup>111</sup>. MMK XVII.24, p. 256. “*Vyavahāra virudhyante sarva eva na saṃśayaḥ*”.

<sup>112</sup>. MMK XXIV.6, p. 330. “*Śūnyatām phala-sadbhāvam adharmam dharmam eva ca/ sarva-saṃvyavahārāṃś ca laukikān pratibādhasē*”. MMK XXIV.8, p. 331. “*Dve satye samupāsṛitya buddhānām dharma deśanā/ loka-saṃvṛti-satyam ca satyam ca paramārthaḥ*”.

<sup>113</sup>. Ramanan, p. 350.

There are three kinds of *prajñapti* as *dharma-prajñapti* (法波羅攝提), *avavāda-prajñapti* (受波羅攝提) and *nāmasaṅketa-prajñapti* (名字波羅攝提). *Dharma-prajñapti* is the subtle elements like the five *skandhas*, the twelve *āyatana*s and the eighteen *dhātus*. *Avavāda-prajñapti* is the complex entity constituted of these subtle elements. When the subtle things such as ‘roots’, ‘branches’, ‘leaves’ and ‘flowers’ combine, there is ‘individual’ which is a derived name, a ‘tree’. It is then called *avavāda-prajñapti* because here ‘*nāma rūpa*’ are seized. Through these two *prajñapti*, the composite entity called the ego is constituted. At the end of many names, yet other names arise, e.g. at the end of the names ‘roots’, ‘branches’, ‘leaves’ and ‘flowers’, there arises yet another name, ‘tree’. This is *nāmasaṅketa-prajñapti*.<sup>114</sup> *Prajñaptirupādāya* in MMK is *avavāda-prajñapti* in *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* which is explained in ‘*The Mahā-prajñāpāramitā-sāstra of Nāgārjuna*’ (大智度論).<sup>115</sup> Nāgārjuna means that an entity is a *prajñaptirupādāya* which is a concept (*prajñapti*) depending on its parts (*upādāya*). The term *prajñaptirupādāya* is used to denote conceptually constructed existents (*prajñaptisat*) by Nāgārjuna.<sup>116</sup> These are really accounts of conventional truth (*saṃvṛtisatya*) of being meant to be of help to one in giving up one’s false imaginations about the true nature of things, i.e. the emptiness (*śūnyatā*) of all entities in the ultimate truth (*paramārthasatya*).<sup>117</sup> *Samvṛti satya* (Pāli: *sammuti sacca*, Chinese: 世俗) is defined as (1) one covering up entirely the real nature of things and making them appear; (2) as the mutual dependence of things – their relativity; (3) as conventional nature (*saṃvṛti saṃketa*) depending as it does on what is usually accepted by the common folk (*loka-vyavahāraḥ*) according to Candrakīrti.<sup>118</sup> *Paramārtha satya* (Pāli: *paramattha sacca*, Chinese: 勝義) in which its *parama* meaning ‘ultimate, 勝’ while *artha* ‘meaning, 義’<sup>119</sup> is the ultimate truth as the knowledge of the real without any distortion (*akṛtrinam vastu-*

<sup>114</sup>. T 25, no.1509, 358b-c.

<sup>115</sup>. Yin Shun (印順), 《空之探究》[A Study of Emptiness]. Taiwan: Zhengwen Chubanshe, 1986. pp. 237, 241. <『中論』的空假中偈，在緣起即空下說：「亦為是假名」。這裡的假名，原文為，正是『般若經』所說的「受假施設」> <龍樹說「空假中」，以「受假」為一切假有的通義，成為『中論』的特色。>

<sup>116</sup>. Burton, pp. 101-3.

<sup>117</sup>. Ramanan, p. 84.

<sup>118</sup>. *Mādhyamikakārikāvṛtti* (Candrakīrti) 1.10-12, p. 492 quoted in Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, pp. 244-5.

<sup>119</sup>. Nagao, *The Foundational Standpoint of Mādhyamika Philosophy*, p. 39.

*rūpam*)<sup>120</sup>; without the function of *saṃvṛti*; beyond the scope of discursive thought, language and empirical activity; and as the unutterable, the unthinkable, the unteachable, etc.<sup>121</sup>

The Buddha's teaching of the dharma is based upon two truths, *saṃvṛtisatya* and *paramārthasatya*.<sup>122</sup> He says "these are (teachings) merely names, expressions, turns of speech, designations in common use in the world (*saṃvṛti*), which the *Tathāgata* uses without misapprehending them".<sup>123</sup> *Paramārthasatya*, Nāgārjuna says, is the ultimate truth about the various entities constituting the world. These entities are conceptual constructs or conventions (*prajñapti*), but the ultimate truth can only be taught in dependence upon conventions (*prajñapti*), i.e. the conventional truth. *Nirvāṇa* is achieved only when one comprehends the nature of all entities, i.e. *prajñapti*<sup>124</sup> which is emptiness as stated above in their ultimate truth because of their dependently arising without *svabhāva*. Candrakīrti also argues 'without assenting to ordinary conventions, it is simply not possible to teach the ultimate truth; and without realizing the ultimate truth, it is not possible to realize *nirvāṇa*'.<sup>125</sup> According to Nāgārjuna, "those who do not understand the distinction between these two truths do not understand the profound truth embodied in the Buddha's message."<sup>126</sup>

In conclusion, the complex entities constructed out of the *svabhāva* endowed the ultimate truth have conceptually constructed (*prajñapti*) and are the conventional truth (*saṃvṛtisatya*) which arise from causes and conditions and is dependent.<sup>127</sup> Candrakīrti states "[those foolish people] do not see the truth of *pratītyasamutpāda* which is free from [the

<sup>120</sup>. *Bodhicaryāvatārapañjikā* by *Prajñākaramati* (BCAP), p. 354 quoted in Murti, p. 244. "Parama uttamo 'rthaḥ paramārthaḥ. akṛtrimam vasturūpam, sarva dharmāṇām niḥsvabhāvatā."

<sup>121</sup>. BCAP, p. 367 in Murti, p.244. "yaḥ punaḥ paramārthaḥ so 'nabhilāpyaḥ, anājñeyaḥ aparijñeyaḥ, avijñeyaḥ, adeśitaḥ, aprakāśitaḥ."

<sup>122</sup>. MMK XXIV.8, p. 331. Kalupahana indicates the Buddha's teaching relating to the two truths in *Sutta-nipāta*. The Buddha realized that views about good (*kusala*) and bad (*akusala*) are in most cases relative conventions (Sn 878-894) depending upon contexts (*sammutiyo puthujjā* Sn 897). These are the ways of the world often characterized as *sammuti*, Skt. *saṃvṛti* (DN iii.232) or *paññatti*, Skt. *prajñapti* (SN 4. 39-40). Having defined the good as the fruitful, the Buddha characterized the ultimate good as the ultimately fruitful. The term *paramattha* was thus used to the 'ultimate fruit'. *Paramattha* then becomes the moral ideal as reflected in the Buddha's own attainment of freedom and happiness.

T.R.V. Murti mentions the Buddha distinction between *Nirvāṇa* as the absolutely real and the phenomena as conventional real in *Mādhyamikakārikā*vṛtti, pp.41 and 237. Also in MN 140, p. 1093. 'etaṃ hi bhikkhu paramam ariyasaccam yad idam amosadhammam nibbānam'.

<sup>123</sup>. *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta*, DN 9, p. 169.

<sup>124</sup>. MMK XXIV. 10, p. 333. "Vyavahāram anāśritya paramārtho na deśyate| paramārtham anāgamyā nirvāṇam nādhigamyate."

<sup>125</sup>. PP 494 quoted in Burton, *Emptiness Appraised*, p. 60.

<sup>126</sup>. MMK XXIV.9, p. 333. "Ye 'nayo na vijānanti vibhāgam satyadvayoḥ, te tattvaṃ na vijānanti gambhīram buddha-śāsane."

<sup>127</sup>. *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* VI.4 (Vasubandhu) quoted in Burton, p. 91.

wrong views of] eternalism and nihilism; and being given the name *upādāya-prajñapti*.”<sup>128</sup> He even suggests that *śūnyatā* and *upādāyaprajñapti* are different names (*viśeṣasaṃjñā*) for *pratītyasamutpāda*. He takes the example of the chariot, that its *prajñapti*, which occurs depending on (*upādāya*) the parts of chariot such as wheels, axle, chassis, yoke, etc. is not produced with *svabhāva*. Non-production with *svabhāva*, Candrakīrti says, is emptiness (*śūnyatā*).<sup>129</sup> Knowledge in the *saṃvṛti* could be different on two principle grounds as the difference of objects or of the cognizing agent. Since both these differences are absent in the *paramārtha*, however, it is of one uniform, undifferentiated nature. Therefore, all things are one and vice versa, i.e. *śūnyatā*, *prajñapti*, *pratītyasamutpāda*, *dharmatā*, *tathatā*, *saṃsāra*, *nirvāṇa*, etc. are the same in the *paramārthasatya* and empty (*śūnya*) of *svabhāva*.<sup>130</sup> Thus, Nāgārjuna asserts “The Victorious Ones have announced that emptiness is the relinquishing of all views. Those who are possessed of the view of emptiness are said to be incorrigible”.<sup>131</sup>

## 2.5 Śūnyatā and Madhyamā-pratipad

*Madhyamā-pratipad* in its early original Pāli form ‘*Majjhimā paṭipadā*’ can be justifiably rendered into English as ‘Middle Way’ or ‘Middle Path’ and ‘for the Buddha himself used the term ‘*magga*’ as a synonym for the term ‘*paṭipadā*’.<sup>132</sup> *Majjhimā paṭipadā* is identified with the last of the Four Noble Truths, *Dukkhanorodhagāminā paṭipadā* by the Buddha, i.e. identified with the Noble Eightfold Path (*Ariyo aṭṭhangiko maggo*) in the *Dhamma-cakkappavattana Sutta*.<sup>133</sup> This way leading to the cessation of suffering is said to be middle since it avoids the two religious extremes, self-indulgence (*kāma-sukhallikānuyoga*) and self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*).<sup>134</sup> It should be kept in mind that the middle way of the Eightfold Path is not just a teaching but a practice for the cessation of suffering. It is the statement by the Buddha himself with the thought, “this is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering, and this way has to be developed’, there arose in the *Tathāgata*, *bhikkhus*, vision, knowledge, insight, wisdom, light, concerning

<sup>128</sup>. Louis de La Vallee Pousin, *Mulamadhyamakakārikās de Nāgārjuna*, p. 214-215.

<sup>129</sup>. PP 504 quoted in Burton, *Emptiness Appraised*, p. 103.

<sup>130</sup>. Murti, p. 246.

<sup>131</sup>. MMK XIII.8, p. 223. “*śūnyatā sarva-dṛṣṭināṃ proktā niḥsaraṇaṃ jinaiḥ/ yeṣāṃ tu śūnyatā-dṛṣṭis tān asādhyaṇ babhāṣire.*”

<sup>132</sup>. *Tiracchānakathā Sutta*, SN 56.10, p. 1844.

<sup>133</sup>. Ibid. “*Katamā ca bhikkhave majjhimā paṭipadā ayameva ariyo aṭṭhangiko maggo.*”

<sup>134</sup>. *Araṇavibhaṅga Sutta*, MN 139, p. 1080. “*Na kāmasukhamanuyuñjeyya hīnaṃ gammaṃ pothujjanikaṃ anariyaṃ anattasaṃhitāṃ, na ca attakilamathānuyogamanuyuñjeyya dukkhaṃ anariyaṃ anattasaṃhitāṃ. Ete kho, bhikkhave, ubho ante anupagamma majjhimā paṭipadā tathāgatena abhisambuddhā, cakkhukaraṇī ñāṇakaraṇī upasamāya abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya saṃvattati.*”

things unknown before”.<sup>135</sup> On the other hand, *paṭipadā* is referred as to be practiced, trained such as the phrase ‘*anupubba-paṭipadā*’ (gradual practice)<sup>136</sup> and ‘*sekha-paṭipadā* (practice for the trainer).<sup>137</sup> *Majjhimā paṭipadā* as Noble Eightfold Path is emphasized as the practical aspect of Buddhism.

The Buddha presents, however, not only the practical aspect but also the doctrinal aspect in terms of *majjhimāpaṭipadā* to explain the reality of things. *Nagara Sutta* states that the Buddha discovered the ancient path which is nothing but the middle way of Eightfold Path. On the strength of this, the Buddha realizes both aspects of *samudaya* and *nirodha*<sup>138</sup> which refer to *micchā-paṭipadā*, meaning the mode of emergence, and *sammā-paṭipadā*, meaning the mode of cessation, in the twelve linked formula of *paṭiccasamuppāda*.<sup>139</sup> *Paṭiccasamuppāda* thereby has to be realized by practicing the middle path. The Buddha further presents *paṭiccasamuppāda* as a teaching in the middle way and right view as well as rejecting two doctrinal extremes in *Kaccāyana-gotta Sutta* of *Samyutta-nikāya*.<sup>140</sup> In this sutta, the Buddha teaches the *dhamma* is *paṭiccasamuppāda* without veering to the two extremist wrong views<sup>141</sup> while he in *Dhamma-cakkappavattana Sutta* explains what he himself has awaken to without veering to the two extremes.<sup>142</sup> They are eternalism (*sassata diṭṭhi*), meaning everything exists (*sabbaṃ atthi*), and nihilism (*uccheda diṭṭhi*), meaning everything does not exist (*sabbaṃ natthi*).<sup>143</sup> Consequently, conditionality or *Paṭiccasamuppāda*, as the reality of the world, is a doctrine following the middle path realized by the Buddha.<sup>144</sup> Therefore, the doctrine of *paṭiccasamuppāda* as the objective reality becomes the middle path (*Majjhimā paṭipadā*) as not the path (belonging to practical

<sup>135</sup>. *Tathāgata Sutta*, SN 56.12, p. 1847. “*Taṃ kho pan’idaṃ dukkhanirodhagāminī paṭipadā ariyasaccaṃ bhāvitā’ti, bhikkhave, tathāgatānaṃ pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu cakkhuṃ udapādi, ñāṇaṃ udapādi, paññā udapādi, vijjā udapādi, āloko udapādi.*”

<sup>136</sup>. *Pahārāda Sutta*, AN 8.19, p. 1142.

<sup>137</sup>. *Sikkha Sutta*, AN 3.89, p. 321.

<sup>138</sup>. *Nagara Sutta*, SN 12.65, p. 603.

<sup>139</sup>. *Paṭipadā Sutta*, SN 12.3, p. 536. “*Katamā ca, bhikkhave, micchāpaṭipadā? Avijjāpaccayā, bhikkhave, saṅkhārā; saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇaṃ ... pe ... evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti. Ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, micchāpaṭipadā. Katamā ca, bhikkhave, sammāpaṭipadā? Avijjāya tveva asesavirāgaṇirodhā saṅkhāraṇirodho; saṅkhāraṇirodhā viññāṇaṇirodho ... pe ... evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hoti. Ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, sammāpaṭipadā’ti.*”

<sup>140</sup>. *Kaccānagotta Sutta*, SN 12.15, p. 544. “*Sabbaṃ atthi’ti kho, kaccāna, ayameko anto. ‘Sabbaṃ natthi’ti ayaṃ dutiyo anto. Ete te, kaccāna, ubho ante anupagamma majjhena tathāgato Dhammaṃ deseti- ‘avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā; saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇaṃ...pe... evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti. Avijjāya tveva asesavirāgaṇirodhā saṅkhāraṇirodho; saṅkhāraṇirodhā viññāṇaṇirodho...pe... evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hoti’ti.*”

<sup>141</sup>. Ibid. “*Ete te kaccāyana ubho ante anupagamma majjhen tathāgato dhammam deseti*”.

<sup>142</sup>. *Dhamma-cakkappavattana Sutta*, SN 56.11, p. 1844. “*Ete te ubo ante anupagamma majjhimā paṭipadā tathāgaten abhisambuddhā.*”

<sup>143</sup>. *Brahmajāla sutta*, DN 1, p. 74.

<sup>144</sup>. *Nagara Sutta*, SN 12.65, p. 601.



aspect) but right view of the reality of the world (belonging to doctrinal aspect, *majjhimā desanā*).<sup>145</sup>

Nāgārjuna emphasizes his main attention to the doctrinal aspect of *pañiccasamuppāda* as the ultimate reality that is quite evident even from the first stanza of his MMK:

“Anirodham anutpādam anucchedam aśāśvataṃ  
anekārtham anānārtham anāgamam anirgamam  
yaḥ praṭītyasamutpādam prapañcopaśamaṃ śivaṃ  
desyāmāsa sambuddhaḥ taṃ vande vadatāṃ varam.”

(I salute him, the fully enlightened, the best of speakers, who preached the non-ceasing and the non-arising, the non-annihilation and the non-permanence, the non-identity and the non-difference, the non-appearance and the non-disappearance, the depending arising, the appeasement of obsessions and the auspicious)<sup>146</sup>

These eight negatives used to denote *praṭītyasamutpāda* possess two implications. The first is the truth of the phenomena, which is not the path itself but should be realized through the successful completion of the path. The second is the right view about the truth.<sup>147</sup>

Nāgārjuna, however, still identifies *praṭītyasamutpāda* with *madhyamā-pratipad* (middle path), i.e. to identify those two different concepts, the doctrinal and the practical, knowledge and insight that is provided in MMK XXIV.18 ‘yaḥ praṭītyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatāṃ tām pracakṣmahe, sā prajñaptir upādāya pratipat saiva madhyamā’. Kenneth K. Inada supports this statement by connecting two religious extremes rejected in *majjhimā paṭipadā*, *kāma-sukhallikānuyoga* and *attakilamathānuyoga*, to two doctrinal extremes in *pañiccasamuppāda*, *sassata diṭṭhi* and *uccheda diṭṭhi* respectively.<sup>148</sup> The scholars T.R.V.

<sup>145</sup>. *Kaccānagotta Sutta*, SN 12.15, p. 544. The Buddha mentions that the *Tathāgata* preaches the *dhamma* (*pañiccasamuppāda*) in the middle (*majjhena tathāgato dhammam deseti*).

<sup>146</sup>. MMK, David J. Kalupahana (trans.), p. 101.

<sup>147</sup>. Kapila Abhayawansa, *The ‘Middle Path’ and the ‘Middle Doctrine’ in Buddhism* (Pakthongchai: International Buddhist College, 2014).

<sup>148</sup>. Kenneth K. Inada, *A translation of his Mulamadhyamakakarika with an Introductory Essay* (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publication, 1993), p. 21. “The middle path, as initially discoursed in the Buddhist foundation sutra indicates that it is realized by the avoidance of the two extremes. What extremes? The extremes of the realism of activities relative to luxury and asceticism. One side engenders the quest for affluent matters and things which are of the nature of permanency and eternity (*śāśvata-vāda*) while the other the quest for total self-abnegation, self-effacement and of the nature of impermanence, nihilism and annihilationism (*uccheda-vāda*). In both instances there arise the root evil forces of objectifying or entifying either the elements related to wealth or riches on the one hand or “elements” related to non-entity, nihility, or negativity on the other...”

Murti and Kalupahana also follow the identification of *pratītyasamutpāda* with *madhyamā pratipad* by Nāgārjuna.<sup>149</sup>

*Madhyamā pratipad* can be analyzed by none of the four alternatives as implicitly pointed out by the Buddha<sup>150</sup> and explicitly by Nāgārjuna ‘no existents whatsoever are evident anywhere that are arisen from themselves, from another, from both, or from a non-cause’.<sup>151</sup> The formulation of four extremes (*catuskoṭis*) may be noted that there are two or three ways as [i] existence (*asti*, *bhāva*, *sat*), non-existence (*nāsti*, *abhāva*, *asat*), both (*sadasat*, *bhāvābhava*), and neither-nor (*naivāsti*, *na ca nāsti*); [ii] self (*sva*), other (*para*), both (*ubhaya*) and neither-nor (*anubhaya*); one (*eka*), many (*nānā*), both (*ubhaya*) and neither-nor (*anubhaya*); identical (*tat*), different (*anyat*), both (*ubhaya*) and neither-nor (*anubhaya*); [iii] self (*sva*), other (*para*), both (*ubhaya*), and chance or devoid of reason (*ahetuka*).<sup>152</sup> What *catuskoṭis* deny and what their rejection reveals is the conditioned origination of things.<sup>153</sup> Professor Murti remarks that the four sets of views are schema for classifying all systems of philosophy.<sup>154</sup>

The first alternative affirms existence, permanence, identity, and substantiality, which constitutes the doctrine of eternalism (*śaśvatavāda*); in other words its implication of the identity of cause and effect (*satkāryavāda*) which is advocated by *Sāṅkhya*.<sup>155</sup> It validates the theory of self-becoming, self-manifestation and self-duplication; i.e. things are produced out of themselves (*svatautpannā bhāvāḥ*).<sup>156</sup> Nāgārjuna refutes this saying ‘how can this non-arisen arising produce itself? If it is the arisen that produces, then being born, what is it that is

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<sup>149</sup>. This statement indicated middle path is only another expression for the middle position by using these two terms as mutually convertible concepts as “The *Kaccāyanagotta-sutta*, quoted by almost all the major schools of Buddhism, deals with the philosophical “middle path” placed against the backdrop two absolutistic theories in Indian philosophy, namely, permanent existence (*atthita*) propounded in early *Upanisads* and nihilistic non-existence (*natthita*) suggested by the materialists. The middle position is explained as “dependent arising” (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) which, when utilized to explain the nature of the human personality and the world of experience, appears in a formula consisting of twelve factors (*dvādasāṅga*)” in *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā of Nāgārjuna*, David J. Kalupahana (trans.), p. 1. Also “the middle path is the non-acceptance of the two extremes – the affirmative and the negative (the *sat* and *ast*) views, of all views” in Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, p. 8.

<sup>150</sup>. *Acelakassapa Sutta*, SN 12.17, p. 546.

<sup>151</sup>. MMK I.1, p. 105. “*na svato nāpi parato na dvābhyāṃ nāpy ahethaḥ, utpannā jātu vidhyante bhāvāḥ kvacana kecana.*”

<sup>152</sup>. T25, no. 1509, 708b.

<sup>153</sup>. Ramanan, p. 155.

<sup>154</sup>. Murti, p. 130.

<sup>155</sup>. Santina, *Madhyamaka Schools in India*, p. 130.

<sup>156</sup>. Murti, p. 133.

produced again?’<sup>157</sup>; ‘if there were to be identity of cause and effect, then there would be oneness of producer and the produce’.<sup>158</sup> Also ‘if the effect exists in the harmony of cause and conditions, it should be grasped in the harmony. However, it is in fact not apprehended in the harmony’.<sup>159</sup> Entities that exist in their own substantiality, Buddhapālita argues, do not require another origination and if even though they exist, they nonetheless originate. In that case never so long as they exist, will they fail to originate.<sup>160</sup> Candrakīrti and Śāntideva rely upon the *reductio ad absurdum* against the notion of pre-existent effect.<sup>161</sup>

The second alternative, on the contrary, the doctrine of existence from other emphasizes the ultimate differences of cause and effect (*asatkāryavāda*) and even the dispersal of causes. It affirms difference and impermanence absolutely that presents the doctrine of nihilism (*ucchedavāda*), which is advocated by the Buddhist Realists.<sup>162</sup> Professor Della Santina indicates Nāgārjuna’s criticism proceeds along two factors. On the one hand, because all entities do not exist in reality by being empty of self-existence, they cannot function as the cause of other entities as well as originate from conditions, i.e. other existence or other entities also do not exist. Nāgārjuna says “the self-nature of existents is not evident in the conditions (*pratyaya* including *hetu*, *ālambana*, *samanantara*, *adhipati*), etc. in the absence of self-nature, other-nature too is not evident”.<sup>163</sup> On the other hand, if the cause and effect are considered as disassociation, they cannot be related to each other as cause and effect since relationship presupposes some sort of co-presence. This is impossible, so Nāgārjuna states, “The difference between cause and effect is indeed not appropriate”<sup>164</sup> because “if there were to be difference between cause and effect, then the cause would be equal to a non-cause”.<sup>165</sup>

The third is simply the conjunctive affirmation of the two above alternatives, i.e. both existence and non-existence or both identity and difference that is held by *Jaina* philosophy. Nāgārjuna claims “neither the arising of an existent nor the arising of a non-existent is

<sup>157</sup>. MMK VII.13, p. 166. “*Anutpanno ‘yam utpādaḥ svātmānaṃ janayet katham | athotpanno janayate jāte kiṃ janyate punaḥ.*”

<sup>158</sup>. MMK XX.20, p. 289. “*Ekatve phala-hetvoḥ syād aikyaṃ janaka-janyayoḥ.*”

<sup>159</sup>. MMK XX.3, p. 281. “*Hetoś ca pratyayānāṃ ca sāmagryāṃ asati cet phalaṃ, grhyeta nanu sāmagryāṃ sāmagryāṃ ca a grhyate.*”

<sup>160</sup>. Santina, *Madhyamaka Schools in India*, p. 133.

<sup>161</sup>. Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>162</sup>. Murti, p. 170.

<sup>163</sup>. MMK I.3, p. 105.

<sup>164</sup>. MMK XX.19, p. 288.

<sup>165</sup>. MMK XX.20, p. 289.

proper. Even so is the arising of that which is both existent and non-existent”.<sup>166</sup> Madhyamaka says existence and non-existence cannot exist together or co-present since existence and non-existence at one time and in one object are impossible. However, they are not disassociated from each other because disassociated from non-existence, existence is not obtained and vice versa; disassociated from existence, there is no non-existence.<sup>167</sup> Thereby, how does both existence and non-existence originate? Thus, the conjunctive affirmation of both existence and non-existence, or self-origination and origination from other is unacceptable.

The Madhyamaka explicitly rejects the fourth alternative expressed as neither existence nor non-existence; that phenomena arise without cause. The Madhyamaka relies upon the distinction between the two truths, conventional and ultimate that the ordinary pragmatic interpretation of causality current in the world is from the conventional standpoints, i.e. dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*). Nāgārjuna affirms that ‘it is known by the way of the world (relating to the conventional truth) that this arises in dependence on that; such statements are not refuted’.<sup>168</sup> Candrakīrti and Buddhapālita elicit the undesirable consequence of the notion of origination without cause which results in a universe totally devoid of properties not be apprehended by consciousness in order to be against the fourth alternative.<sup>169</sup> The Madhyamaka’s criticism means this alternative as a total denial of the possibility of all statements, all ascriptions, even of all relative description. There would then be no scope for any knowledge of anything, i.e. no definite and certain knowledge of anything that which is unacceptable. It further amounts to mistaking the distinction between two truths. The Madhyamaka here intends to the apparent recognition of the distinction of appearance and reality or the conventional and ultimate truth. Clinging to *śūnyatā* as a total negation is error since this is to deny even the possibility of relative judgement and vice versa, clinging to the conventional one ends in eternalism; even not to divide each other. This is called the Middle Way (*Madhyamā pratipad*) which is non-contentious precisely because it is non-clinging. It is not a denial of anything, to assert this but only a rejection of the dogmatic and exclusive views.<sup>170</sup> It is also free from seizing duality meaning clinging to the divisions, i.e. non-clinging.<sup>171</sup> The Middle Path is considered as the

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<sup>166</sup> MMK VII. 20, p. 170.

<sup>167</sup> Santina, *Madhyamaka Schools in India*, p. 129.

<sup>168</sup> ŚS 71, p. 95.

<sup>169</sup> Santina, *Madhyamaka Schools in India*, pp. 196-8.

<sup>170</sup> Ramanan, pp. 158-60.

<sup>171</sup> T25, no.1509, 642b.

standpoint of *śūnyatā* which has no standpoint of its own.<sup>172</sup> For *śūnyatā* means also the fundamental attitude of non-clinging, *anupalambha* (不可得or無所得), even *anupalambha-śūnyatā* (不可得空).<sup>173</sup>

The Middle Way is taught as the remedy to dogmatism that *śūnyatā* as criticism has sense; and *śūnyatā* as criticism is the Middle Way.<sup>174</sup> The primary meaning of *śūnyatā* is voidness which is a direct reference to the truth of things, mundane and ultimate; but it refers also to the method of criticism that is brought to light, i.e. by rejecting the imagination of ultimacy and absoluteness in regard to what is only relative and non-ultimate. *Śūnyatā* as the conventional truth is conditioned becoming that is brought to light by rejecting the supposed ultimacy of conceptual systems. *Śūnyatā* as the ultimate truth is the unconditioned that is brought to light by rejecting through criticism the imagination of the ultimacy of the conditionedness of the conditioned and consequently, of the division between the conditioned and the unconditioned.<sup>175</sup> In this sense, thus, *Śūnyatā* is a synonym of *madhyamā pratipad* which sees things as they are.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>172</sup>. Nagao, *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*, p. 214.

<sup>173</sup>. T25, no. 1509, 375b.

<sup>174</sup>. Ramanan, p. 162.

<sup>175</sup>. Ibid., pp. 172-3.

<sup>176</sup>. Ibid., p. 339.

## Chapter 3

### Śūnyatā Concept in Yogācāra Philosophy

#### 3.1 A Brief Introduction to the Yogācāra School

The Yogācāra School, whose name is taken from one of its foundational texts – the *Yogācārabhūmi* (*Stages of Yoga Practice*)<sup>177</sup>, arose as an independent and identifiable philosophical tradition in the fourth century C.E.<sup>178</sup> focusing on a critical and reflective understanding of mind, and was founded by the two brothers Asaṅga and Vasubandhu<sup>179</sup> who were born in Northwest India in what is now Pakistan.<sup>180</sup> They played a central role in its formulation and popularization. Yogācāra indicates originally a particular interest in the data of meditation experience (*yoga*) or perhaps *Vijñānavāda* (school affirming consciousness), *Vijñaptimātra* or *Cittamātra* (school affirming Mind Only).<sup>181</sup> This is called the school of Mind-only.

Asaṅga and Vasubandhu contributed to a large number of works defining, categorizing and setting forth the Mind-only philosophy. Asaṅga is famous for his *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (*Stages of the Bodhisattva Path*), *Abhidharmasamuccaya* (*Compendium of the Abhidharma*) – a work specifically establishing Yogācāra Abhidharma, and the *Yogācārabhūmi* sometimes is also attributed to Asaṅga. He himself wrote commentaries on a number of important texts of Yogācāra Mahāyāna attributed to the Buddha Maitreya.<sup>182</sup> Those which are attributed to him include *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* (*Ornament for the Realisations*), *Madhyāntavibhāga* (*the Discrimination of the Middle from the Extremes*), *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* (*the Discrimination of dharmas and their True Nature*), *Mahāyānasūtralaṃkāra* (*Ornament for the Mahāyāna Sūtras*) and *Ratnagotravibhāga*. Vasubandhu is renowned for his *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa* (*A Treatise on the Three Natures*), *Triṃśatikā* (*A Treatise in Thirty Satnzas*) and *Viṃśatikā* (*A Treatise in Twenty Satnzas*) and

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<sup>177</sup>. Robert E. Buswell (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, Vol.2, (USA: Macmillan Reference, 2004), p. 914.

<sup>178</sup>. Della Santina, *The Tree of Enlightenment*, p. 167.

<sup>179</sup>. John P. Keenan, *Yogācāra* in Takeuchi Yoshinori, *Buddhist Spirituality: Indian, SoutheastAsian, Tibetan, and Early Chinese* (New Delhi: Shri Jainendra Press, 1995), p. 203.

<sup>180</sup>. Della Santina, *The Tree of Enlightenment*, p. 167.

<sup>181</sup>. Paul Williams, *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), p. 154.

<sup>182</sup>. Della Santina, *The Tree of Enlightenment*, pp. 167-8.

other texts containing commentaries on some of the above works of Maitreya such as *Madhyāntavibhāgākārikābhāṣya*.<sup>183</sup>

Almost all modern scholars have followed Dharmapāla's ideas and considered Yogācāra as 'idealism' that strays from the original ideas of Vasubandhu.<sup>184</sup> Janice Willis says assessments which claim to characterize the whole of Yogācāra thought as being uniformly "idealistic" take little notice of the fact that historically—and according to the texts themselves – there existed at least two varying streams of Yogācāra thought, viz., (1) what may be called an "original" thread propounded by Maitreya, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, and Sthiramati; and (2) a "later" thread, which found expression notably through such authors as Dharmapāla, and Hsuan-tsang. Both "streams" were introduced into China – the earlier by Paramārtha and the later by Hsuan-tsang – and later transmitted to Japan. Moreover, while there is clear evidence that the later stream of thought, as expounded by Dharmapāla and others is "idealistic" in character, the same cannot and should not be assumed for the earlier "thread," though, in fact, this has generally been the case.<sup>185</sup>

The Yogācāra philosophy – cognition theory of mind – has its origin in the earliest tradition of Buddhism.<sup>186</sup> For instance, the Buddha claims mind of both deluded and pure is the creator of all things. This is mentioned in many places of the Pāli canon such as in the first two verses of Yamaka Vagga of the *Dhammapada* "Mind is the forerunner of all states. Mind is chief; mind-made are they..."<sup>187</sup> and in the *Sampasādanīya Sutta* (DN 28). The *Laṅkāvatāra* belonging to Mahāyāna sutras deals at some length with the central principles of the Mind Only philosophy.<sup>188</sup> Nevertheless, Yogācāra attempted to ground insight into emptiness in its philosophy – a critical understanding of the mind or cognition theory – in dependently co-arisen structure of understanding, in particular, and to sketch a path toward the realization of 'the conversion of support', that is, of consciousness from illusion to awakening.<sup>189</sup> In addition, as foundation for the cognition theory, the three-nature theory founded by this school has carried on the tradition of the emptiness of thought of the earlier

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<sup>183</sup> Paul Williams, *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition*, pp. 155-6.

<sup>184</sup> Yoshifumi Ueda, *Two Main Streams of Thought in Yogācāra Philosophy*, Philosophy East and West, Vol. 17, (USA: University of Hawaii Press, 1967), pp. 155-165.

<sup>185</sup> Janice Dean Willis, *On Knowing Reality: The Tattvārtha Chapter of Asaṅga's Bodhisattvabhūmi* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 2002), p. 21.

<sup>186</sup> Della Santina, *The Tree of Enlightenment*, p. 168.

<sup>187</sup> *The Dhammapada*, K.Sri Dhammananda (trans.), (Kuala Lumpur: Sasana Abhiwurdhi Wardhana Society, 1992), pp. 41-2.

<sup>188</sup> Della Santina, *The Tree of Enlightenment*, p. 168.

<sup>189</sup> John P. Keenan, *Yogācāra* in Takeuchi Yoshinori, *Buddhist Spirituality: Indian, SoutheastAsian, Tibetan, and Early Chinese*, p. 204.

period.<sup>190</sup> Thus, the Yogācāra School is a reflective spirituality, i.e. while affirming the conventional validity of dependently co-arisen insight and doctrinal formulation; it maintains the centrality of ultimately meaningful emptiness.<sup>191</sup>

### 3.2 *Ālaya-vijñāna* in accordance with *Pratītyasamutpāda*

The Yogācāra analysis of the structure of consciousness centers on two themes: (i) the container consciousness (*ālaya-vijñāna*) in its constant interplay with the active consciousness (*pravṛtti-vijñānas*) of thinking (*manas*) and perception; and (ii) the three natures (*trisvabhāva*) of its functioning.<sup>192</sup>

The *ālaya-vijñāna* is the place in which are contained the impressions (*vāsanā*) of any *karma* whatsoever, good, bad or indifferent. All *dharma*s ensue from it as its effects. It is called therefore *sarvabījaka*, being the cause of everything empirical. It is *vipāka-vijñāna* since any kind of *karma* done by the individual in any sphere of existence leaves its trace in the *ālaya*. Thus, the *ālaya* serves two functions in the cosmic process (i) it is the receptum of the impressions of past *vijñānas*, (ii) in its own turn it gives rise to further *vijñānas* by maturing those impressions.<sup>193</sup>

*Mahāyāna-saṃgraha* (hereafter, MSg) claims that the *ālaya-vijñāna* is necessary to fully explain the dynamic, circular causality depicted in the series of dependent arising both diachronically and synchronically. The associated activities of the *pravṛtti-vijñānas* perpetuate the resultant *ālaya-vijñāna*, which will eventually be reborn again conditioned by karmic formations (*saṃskārā*) at the beginning of the formula of dependent origination. Yogācāra explicitly states that what we see is that the formula of dependent origination depicts a diachronically reciprocal relationship between two distinct forms of *vijñāna*.<sup>194</sup> This relationship is in brief mentioned in the *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra* as below:<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>190</sup>. Gadgin M. Nagao, *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*, p. 182.

<sup>191</sup>. John P. Keenan, *Yogācāra*, p. 205.

<sup>192</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>193</sup>. Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, *The Yogācāra Idealism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1999), p. 88.

<sup>194</sup>. William S. Waldron, *The Buddhist Unconscious: The Ālaya-vijñāna in the context of Indian Buddhist Thought* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon Taylor and Francis Group, 2003), p. 133.

<sup>195</sup>. Ibid., p. 98.



***First step: Depending upon:***

Appropriation of material sense faculties +	}	<i>ālaya-vijñāna</i> grows and increases
Appropriation of predispositions, etc.		

***Second step: Depending upon:***

<i>Ālaya-vijñāna</i> (with two appropriations) +	}	manifest cognitive awareness ( <i>pravṛtti-vijñāna</i> ) arises
Sense object + attention		

***Third step: Depending upon:***

Manifest cognitive awareness	→	seeds heap up, accumulate in citta ( <i>ālaya-vijñāna</i> )
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***Fourth step: Depending upon:***

<i>Ālaya-vijñāna</i> with accumulated (seeds) and	}	cognitive awareness ( <i>pravṛtti-vijñāna</i> ) arises
Two appropriations + sense object + attention		

***Whole cycle: Depending upon:***

<i>Ālaya-vijñāna</i> with seeds and	→	cognitive awareness arises, which in turn heaps up and accumulates (seeds) in the <i>ālaya-vijñāna</i> . <i>Ālaya-vijñāna</i> is reborn with all the seeds, two appropriations, and so on.
two appropriations + Sense object		

In terms of *pratītyasamutpāda*, *saṃskārā* conditions (*ālaya-*) *vijñāna* that is a precondition for development of mind and body. Mind and body appropriated by *ālaya-vijñāna* gives rise to manifest cognitive processes or active consciousness (*pravṛtti-vijñānas*), which heaps up and accumulates in the *ālaya-vijñāna*. *Ālaya-vijñāna* with all the seeds is reborn.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>196</sup>. William S. Waldron, p. 98.

The MSg I.17 expresses “just as the *ālaya-vijñāna* is the cause of the defiled dharmas, so the defiled dharmas are established as the causal-condition (*hetu-pratyaya*) of the *ālaya-vijñāna*”.<sup>197</sup> This ‘first dependent arising’ indicates the simultaneous and reciprocal conditionality (*sahabhāva*-, *anyonya*-, *pratyayatā-pravṛtti*) between these two distinct forms of *vijñāna*. Since causes are represented by the concept of seeds or impression (*vāsanā*), discussion about causes and causal conditions is couched in terms of planting seeds, infusing impression and their finally coming into fruition. In other words, discussing about the relationship between the *ālaya-vijñāna* and *pravṛtti-vijñānas* is a way of discussing karmic theory that how cause and effect might operate within and between various kinds of mental processes. The *vāsanā* is defined as ‘that which, based upon arising and ceasing simultaneously with a *dharma*, is the cause of its arising (*utpāda-nimitta*) [in the future]’. Here, playing off the etymology of the term *vāsanā* as ‘perfume’, the statement illustrates this first by the example of a sesame seed in MSg I.15 “when a sesame seed is perfumed by a flower, while the flower arises and ceases simultaneously with the sesame seed, the sesame seed [later] arises as the cause of the arising of another odor of that flower. Also, while the predisposition of sensual desire, etc. (*rāgādivāsanā*) of those who are engaged in sensual desire, etc., mind [later] arises as the cause (*nimitta*) of that (desire)...The *ālaya-vijñāna* should be understood in the same way.”<sup>198</sup> MSg I.14 further states that “the *ālaya-vijñāna* is the result of past karmic activity for its arising is based upon the impression since beginningless time of those very defiled dharmas (i.e. the processes associated with the *pravṛtti-vijñānas*); and the cause for the *pravṛtti* to arise (because the *ālaya-vijñāna* which has all the seeds *sarvabījaka* is present at all times)”.<sup>199</sup> Similarly, the *pravṛtti-vijñānas* which result from the seeds of the *ālaya-vijñāna* are in turn conjoined with the very mental factors of enjoying, discerning, stimulating that are essential for causing new karmic activities. These, in turn, perpetuate the future arising of the *ālaya-vijñāna*. The *ālaya-vijñāna* is then regarded as both the result and the cause of the *pravṛtti-vijñānas*; as even the synchronic, reciprocal relations exist between them. This process thus is a crucial distinction, which points to a notion of causality of synchronic dependent arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*) – when this is, that arises.<sup>200</sup> The *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* states that *Pratītyasamutpāda* is the mark of reality. This functions between the various moments of the system of consciousness

<sup>197</sup>. MSg I.17 quoted in William S. Waldron, *The Buddhist Unconscious: The Ālaya-vijñāna in the context of Indian Buddhist Thought*, p. 133.

<sup>198</sup>. MSg I.15, p. 136.

<sup>199</sup>. MSg I.14 quoted in William S. Waldron, *The Buddhist Unconscious: The Ālaya-vijñāna in the context of Indian Buddhist Thought*, p. 134.

<sup>200</sup>. William S. Waldron, pp. 133-6.

themselves.<sup>201</sup> This might best be illustrated by the imagery of waves in a stream. The stream is not independent of the arising of the wave, but their arising simultaneously, for the wave is part and parcel of the stream itself. Consequently, whatever affects the waves affects the stream at the same time, so it is not a separate process. Similarly, sensual desire is part of the stream of mind itself. One thereby cannot occur without the other being simultaneously affected, since these are ultimately not separate entities, nor are their arising ultimately separate processes.<sup>202</sup>

### 3.3 The Three Natures (*Trisvabhāva*) in Relation to *Śūnyatā*

For Asaṅga the three-nature doctrine derives its scriptural authority through the *Vaipulyasūtra*, the *Abhidharmasūtra* and the *Ghanavyūha*. It receives more thorough treatment however in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, the *Mahāyānasamgraha*, and the *Madhyāntavibhaṅga* by Asaṅga, and the *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa* and the *Triṃśikā*, both ascribed to Vasubandhu.<sup>203</sup> Vasubandhu describes the three natures in the first stanza of his *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa* (TSN) as “the imagined (*parikalpita-svabhāva*), the other-dependent (*paratantra-svabhāva*), and the absolutely accomplished (*pariṇiṣpanna-svabhāva*): These are the three natures, which should be thoroughly known by the wise.”<sup>204</sup> He argues the world of subjectivity and objectivity is characterized as only the imagined nature for its reality is depending on others in ‘that which appears is the other-dependent, for it depends on causal conditions; the form in which it appears is the imagined, for it is merely an imagination’.<sup>205</sup> The absolutely accomplished nature is the absence of the imagination of unreal forms (*abhūta-parikalpa*) as well as the very non-duality of subjectivity and objectivity that is mentioned in the stanzas (3) “the perceptual absence of the form in which the other-dependent appears, is to be understood as the absolutely accomplished nature, for it is never otherwise”<sup>206</sup>; and (4) “what is it that appears? It is the imagination of the non-existent. How does it appear? In the form of duality. What will result from its non-existence? There will be

<sup>201</sup> . Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, *The Yogācāra Idealism*, p. 151.

<sup>202</sup> . William S. Waldron, p. 137.

<sup>203</sup> . *Mahāyānasamgraha* II.26ff, Lamotte (ed. and trans.), 1938 quoted in Harris, *The Continuity of Madhyamaka and Yogācāra in Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), p. 123.

<sup>204</sup> . TSN 1 in *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārin*, Thomas A. Kochumuttom (trans.), (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1999), p. 92. “*Kalpitaḥ paratantraś ca pariṇiṣpanna eva ca/ trayāḥ svabhāva dhīrāṇām gambhīra-jñeyam-iṣyate.*”

<sup>205</sup> . TSN 2, p.93. “*Yat-khyāti paratantraḥ sa yathā khyāti sa kalpitaḥ/ pratyaya-adhīna-vṛttivāt-kalpanā-mātra-bhāvataḥ.*”

<sup>206</sup> . TSN 3, ibid. “*Tasya khyātur-yathā-ākhyānam yā sadā-avidyamānatā/ jñeyāḥ sa pariṇiṣpanna-svabhāvo nanyathātvataḥ.*”

the state of non-duality”.<sup>207</sup> The other-dependent (*paratantra*) nature represents a dependently origination of things and is identified with the *citta* by Vasubandhu in the stanza (5) “what is meant by the imagination of the non-existent? It is thought, for by it (the subject-object duality) is imagined. The form in which it imagines a thing, never at all exists as such.”<sup>208</sup> This other-dependent signifies none other than the world of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpada*) taught by the Buddha.<sup>209</sup> The *Mahāyānasamgraha* gives nine essential meanings of *paratantra-svabhāva* as (i) the base for the appearance of entities (*sarvadharmapratibhāṣāśraya*), (ii) dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), (iii) representation only (*vijñaptimātratā*), (iv) neither different nor non-different (from the other two *svabhāvas*) (*na bhinno nāpy abhinnaḥ*), (v) like magical illusion, etc. (*māyādivat*), (vi) pertaining to suffering and cleansing (*samkleśāṃśikavyavadānāṃśikaś ca*), (vii) the object apprehended by the knowledge realised in succession (to the wisdom) (*ālambanam prṣṭhaladhyajñānasya*), (viii) *Nirvāṇa* without any fixed abode (*apraṭiṣṭhitānirvāṇa*), (ix) the Buddha's body constituting entities (*dharmakāya*).<sup>210</sup> The *Vijñaptimātratāsidhi* says it is called *paratantra* because it is caused by causes and conditions. Causality operates on the subjective side. An idea is not produced by any external cause but by a previous idea. It is *pratītyasamutpāda* which functions between the very moments of consciousness themselves. One idea generates another idea due to its own dynamism. The moments of consciousness thereby are causally efficient and so become real (*pratītyasamutpannatvād vastusat*). Thus, *paratantra* is not an uncaused freak but is the dependence on condition (*pratyayādhīna*). It contains the whole of phenomenal reality (*cittacaittās traidhātukāḥ*) and denotes all eight *vijñānas* – *ālaya*, *manas* and six *pravṛttivijñānas*. It is a real diversification (*pariṇāma*) of the willing consciousness, while also called *abhūta-parikalpa* (the imagination of the unreal)<sup>211</sup> as the seat of the creative imagination projecting the unreal object. *Abhūta-parikalpa* is simply the human mind as the faculty of imagination (*parikalpa*) that is the “real creator of

<sup>207</sup>. TSN 4, ibid. “*Tatra kim khyāti-asatkalpaḥ katham khyāti dvayātmanā| tasya kā nāstitā tena yā tatra dvayadharmatā.*”

<sup>208</sup>. TSN 5, p. 93. “*Asat-kalpo 'tra kaś-cittam yatas-tena hi kalpyate| yathā ca kalpayati-artham tathā-atyantam na vidyate.*”

<sup>209</sup>. Gadgin M. Nagao, *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*, p. 183.

<sup>210</sup>. Ian Charles Harris, p. 23.

<sup>211</sup>. This statement is also suggested in TSN 6 and 8 respectively. TSN 6 “The *citta* takes on two modes, as cause and effect. It is then respectively called the store-consciousness and the active consciousness, the latter being seven-fold” and TSN 8 “Collectively (i.e. as a collection of store-consciousness and seven active consciousness). It is the imagination of the unreal (forms of subjectivity and objectivity); that, too, is said to be three-fold: maturing, caused and phenomenal.” in *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārin*, Thomas A. Kochumuttom (trans.), pp. 94-5.

the unreal”, i.e. of all phenomena.<sup>212</sup> However, consciousness itself as the basis of that imagination is real from the conventional view, and this is *paratantra*. The constructive imagination is finally only the transcendental category of objectification that stirs consciousness into disruption.<sup>213</sup>

This *paratantra* nature is pivotal of the three, even in the Mind Only philosophy, insofar as it is the basis for the arising of all pair concepts such as liberation and bondage, purity and defilement, self and non-self, *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra*, *paramārtha* and *saṃvṛti*, etc. It has, on the one hand, the potential to produce the illusory prison of *saṃsāra* and, on the other, the potential for the liberation of *nirvāṇa*. If played upon by discrimination and false imagination, coming into the imagined nature it becomes illusion, *saṃsāra*; if played upon by the knowledge of abandonment of duality, coming into the absolutely accomplished it becomes *nirvāṇa*. Thus, the other-dependent nature supplies the potential for the emanation of all phenomenalizing activity of the enlightened beings.<sup>214</sup> Asaṅga puts these notions in MSg “the dependent (*paratantra*) is on occasion the dependent, on occasion the same is the imagined; and on occasion the same as the accomplished”.<sup>215</sup> This nature, in this manner, meditates between the illusion of subject-object duality and the awakened state of subject-object non-duality. It is the place in which the meaning of identical *parikalpita-svabhāva* or *saṃsāra* with *pariniṣpanna-svabhāva* or *nirvāṇa* can be established which is mentioned in TSN 15 “the other-dependent nature is said to be dual as well as unitary, for, it appears in dual form, while it has an illusory unity as well”.<sup>216</sup>

Likewise, Vasubandhu’s commentary is suggested on “there exists the imagination of the unreal (*abhūta-parikalpa*), namely the discrimination (*vikalpa*) between the graspable or object (*grāhya*) and the grasper or subject (*grāhaka*). However, there is no pair (*dvaya*), such as the graspable and the grasper. There is instead emptiness (*śūnyatā*), which means that state of imagination of the unreal, which is lacking in the form of being graspable or grasper. Even in such emptiness there exists the imagination of the unreal. Thus, when something is absent in a container, the latter is then perceived as such; also, what is left over there, namely the

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<sup>212</sup>. *Madhyānta-Vibhaṅga: Discourse on Discrimination between Middle and Extremes* ascribed Bodhisattva Maitreya commented by Vasubandhu and Sthiramati, Stcherbatsky (trans.), (Indian Studies Past and Present), p. 39.

<sup>213</sup>. Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, pp. 151-2.

<sup>214</sup>. Della Santina, *The Tree of Enlightenment*, pp. 173-4.

<sup>215</sup>. Harris, p. 126.

<sup>216</sup>. TSN 15 in *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārin*, Thomas A. Kochumuttom (trans.), p. 101.

container, is then recognized as such, namely, as uncontradictably existing there: this indeed is the defining characteristic of emptiness”.<sup>217</sup> Here, Vasubandhu argues a thing in its absolute state of existence is devoid (*śūnya*) of subject-object duality, at the same time interprets *śūnyatā* with reference to *abhūta-parikalpa* ‘which is lacking in the form of being graspable or grasper’.<sup>218</sup> *Śūnyatā* thereby ultimately means the state of existence that is empty of the imagination of unreal and of the consequent subject-object distinction.<sup>219</sup> Therefore, with reference to *abhūta-parikalpa* or *paratantra-svabhāva* the *śūnyatā* is expressed as ‘neither [total] assertion (because of existing the negation of the pair of subject and object) nor [total] negation’ (because of having the assertion of the negation of that pair); ‘neither different (from the *abhūta-parikalpa*) nor identical (with *abhūta-parikalpa*)’ in MVK I.14. *Śūnyatā* then stands to *abhūta-parikalpa* just as *dharmatā* stands to *dharma*, or *anityatā* and *anityadharma*. They are not quite different (*na-prthak*) nor identical (*na-eka*), but just two different modes of existence of the same individual. *Śūnyatā* refers to one’s mode of existence in the state of *nirvāṇa*, while *abhūta-parikalpa* refers to one’s mode of existence in the state of *saṃsāra*.<sup>220</sup> This is the true sense of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) in the Yogācāra system.

The overall context of three natures is found in the *Madhyāntavibhāṅgabhāṣya* is rather plain as<sup>221</sup>

	<b>Mvb I.1</b>	<b>Mvb I.5</b>
The imagined nature	objects	Duality
The dependent nature	imagination	imagination
The consummated nature	absence of duality	emptiness

Furthermore, Asaṅga in his *Compendium of Ascertainment* says the adherence to other-dependent nature and absolutely accomplished nature as imagined nature is an ‘extreme

<sup>217</sup> . MVK I.2 and MVKB I.2 in *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārin*, Thomas A. Kochumuttom (trans.), p.31.

<sup>218</sup> . This statement still expresses in TSN 3, 16 and 18 in *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārin*, Thomas A. Kochumuttom (trans.), pp. 93, 101, 104.

<sup>219</sup> . Thomas A. Kochumuttom, pp.32-3.

<sup>220</sup> . MVK I. 14 in *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārin*, Thomas A. Kochumuttom (trans.), p. 73-4.

<sup>221</sup> . Ake Boquist, *A Study of the Development of the Three-nature-theory in Yogācāra Buddhism* (Lund: University of Lund, 1993), p. 72.

of superimposition'; and 'the extreme of deprecation' is deprecation of own character [by holding] that other-dependent nature and absolutely accomplished nature do not exist [by way of their own character], whereas they [actually] do. One should understand thoroughly the mode of the meaning of suchness in the manner of abandoning those two extremes, i.e. emptiness is manifested by the defection of them.<sup>222</sup> The *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra* III. 48 says for ultimately *svabhāvas* as "there is no self-nature, no thought construction, no reality, no *ālaya*; these indeed are so many discriminations cherished by the ignorant who like a corpse are bad logicians".<sup>223</sup> Kambala as well as Lindtner thereby argue that the knowledge of the three natures leads to the realization of *vijñaptimātra*. This is nothing than the realization of emptiness. "It is the limit of the real, it is thusness, it is emptiness, it is sameness, it is liberation, it is the state of representation only".<sup>224</sup>

The *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra* (Chinese: 解深密經, English: "Unfurling the Real Meaning," or "Unraveling the Bonds") is one of the most important Mahāyāna sūtras, especially for the Yogācāra school<sup>225</sup> explains the first nature as "determination by means of names and conventional terms (*nāma saṃketavyavasthāpanam*) of self-nature (*svabhāva*) and specifications (*viśeṣa*) in the sign of something conditioned (*saṃskāranimitta*) in speaking of form (*rūpa*), etc."<sup>226</sup> For this *sūtra* the dependent (*paratantra*) appears to be the dharmic world itself, although this world is not comprised of individual dharmas possessing self-nature (*svabhāva*) as believed by the ignorant, but a plenum of mutually conditioned things in a constant state of flux.<sup>227</sup> The *pariniṣpanna* is simply stated as the middle aspect (i.e. *paratantra*) eternally devoid of the first aspect (i.e. *parikalpita*) which is itself devoid of self-nature (*niḥsvabhāva*) and consequently without correspondence to anything absolute (*apariniṣpanna*).<sup>228</sup> This *sūtra* in chapter VII verses 3-6, in particular expresses the doctrine

<sup>222</sup>. Jeffrey Hopkins, *Emptiness in the Mind-Only School of Buddhism* (California: University of California Press, 1999), p. 154.

<sup>223</sup>. Harris, p. 127. "na svabhāvo na vijñaptir na vastu na ca ālaya balairvikalpatā hyete śvabhūtaih kuṭārkkikaih."

<sup>224</sup>. Chr. Lindtner (ed.), "A Treatise on Buddhist Idealism: Kambala's Ālokaṃālā" in *Indiske Studier 5: Miscellanea Buddhica*, Copenhagen (1985), p. 125. "bhutakoṭiś ca sā saiva tathatā saiva śūnyatā samatā saiva muktīḥ saiva vijñaptimātratā."

<sup>225</sup>. Robert E. Buswell and Donald S. Lopez (eds.), *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014).

<sup>226</sup>. *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra* VII. 25-27 quoted in Ian Charles Harris, *The Continuity of Madhyamaka and Yogācāra in Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p. 105.

<sup>227</sup>. Harris, p. 106.

<sup>228</sup>. *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra* VI. 6-10 quoted in Harris, *The Continuity of Madhyamaka and Yogācāra in Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p. 107. Also *Triṃśikā* 21b in *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārin*, Thomas A. Kochumuttom (trans.), p. 257. "niṣpannaś tasya pūrveṇa sadā rahitatā tu yā"

of emptiness of all phenomena in reference to the three emptinesses (*niḥsvabhāvatā*) relevant to these three natures. (3) All phenomena are declared empty (*niḥsvabhāva*) by reference to the threefold emptiness (*niḥsvabhāvatā*) which is emptiness regarding identity (*lakṣaṇa*), arising (*utpatti*) and the ultimate (*paramārtha*). (4) The emptiness regarding identity (*lakṣaṇaniḥsvabhāvatā*) is the imagined nature, since it is established by names (*nāma*) and conventional symbols (*saṃketa*) and not by itself. (5) The emptiness regarding arising (*utpattiniḥsvabhāvatā*) is the dependent nature, since it arises from the force of other conditions (*parapratyaya*) and not by itself (*na svatas*). (6) The emptiness regarding the ultimate (*paramārthaniḥsvabhāvatā*) is the dependently originated phenomena (*dharmāḥ pratītyasamutpannāḥ*), which are empty by virtue of the emptiness regarding arising and also by virtue of the emptiness regarding the ultimate. The pure object (*viśuddhālambana*) in phenomena is the ultimate and since it is not the dependent nature it is called the emptiness regarding the ultimate. The consummated nature is also called emptiness regarding the ultimate, because of the selflessness (*dharmanairātmya*) of phenomena. Since the ultimate is manifested by the emptiness of all phenomena, it is called emptiness regarding the ultimate.<sup>229</sup> As a result, all phenomena (*dharma*) are empty (*śūnya*) of own being (*svabhāva*) since they depend on other phenomena for their being and hence they do not exist by virtue of themselves. For emptiness regarding the ultimate is manifested by the selflessness of phenomena, they are unborn, undestroyed, originally calm and essentially extinguished. It is always (*nityakāla*) and eternally (*śāśvatakāla*) persistent. To the extent that it is the essence of phenomena (*dharmadharmatā*), which is unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*) and exempt from defilements (*vigatakleśa*), i.e. empty in its origination.<sup>230</sup>

### 3.4 The Middle Path as neither Void nor Non-void

All things that can be said with reference to any individual in the state of *samsāra* can be reduced to two extremes as (i) an assertion of the imagination of the unreal and of the absolute state of emptiness, (ii) a negation of subjectivity and objectivity. To understand any individual these two statements, one affirmation and the other negation have to be put together. Nothing is exclusively void nor exclusively non-void is stated in MVKB I.3 ‘*sarvam na ekāntena śūnyam na ekāntena aśūnyam*’. It is in avoiding these two extremes that

<sup>229</sup>. *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra* in Ake Boquist, *A Study of the Development of the Three-nature-theory in Yogācāra Buddhism*, p. 29.

<sup>230</sup>. Ake Boquist, p. 43.



Yogācārins claim to be holding the middle way<sup>231</sup> as mentioned in MVK I.3 “neither void (*śūnya*) nor non-void (*aśūnya*): so is everything described, that indeed is the middle path, for there is existence as well as non-existence, and again existence”.<sup>232</sup> *Śūnya* evidently refers to the absence of subject-object duality, while *aśūnya* means that the same thing, although devoid of such characterizations, still exists. The conditioned (*saṃskṛta*) exists as *abhūta-parikalpa* including everything that is called *citta* and *caitta* under the influence of which one finds oneself in the state of *saṃsāra*, and which cease to operate at the attainment of *nirvāṇa*. It is therefore those *citta-caittas* which are described as *saṃskṛta-dhammas*, as *abhūta-parikalpa* and finally as both *śūnya* as well as *aśūnya*. Thus, everything whether *saṃskṛta* under the aspect of *abhūta-parikalpa* or *asaṃskṛta* under the aspect of *śūnyatā* is rightly described as ‘neither void nor non-void’ or the middle path.<sup>233</sup> In particular, Vasubandhu states in MVKB I.3 “that indeed is the middle path, for, on the one hand, there is the existence of emptiness within the imagination of the unreal, and on the other, the existence of the imagination of the unreal within emptiness”.<sup>234</sup> In other words, an individual undergoing the state of *saṃsāra* combines in himself *abhūta-parikalpa* and *śūnyatā*, *saṃskṛta* and *asaṃskṛta dharma*s, *saṅkleśa* and *vyavadāna*, *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*.<sup>235</sup> Yogācāra develops the thought of the Middle Path through three reasons ‘existence’, ‘non-existence’ and ‘again existence’. The first two are obviously paradoxical and on the same level represent affirmation and negation respectively. The third reason ‘again existence’ understood to transcend the former two is different from the first in spite of the same word. Its meaning is the existence both of *śūnyatā* and of *abhūta-parikalpa*.<sup>236</sup>

Furthermore, Yogācāra considers through *Madhyāntavibhāga* (*Discrimination of the Middle from the Extremes*) the process of everyday consciousness (*viññāna*) in its dependently co-arising character. The duality of subject and object always appearing within that process is then denied. The meaning of emptiness is finally expressed through this negation. The activity of consciousness nevertheless undeniably exists in the midst of that emptiness. This whole process, from the affirmation of dependent arising to the negation of dichotomy as well as the recovering or reaffirmation of consciousness as reality, is called the

<sup>231</sup> Thomas A. Kochumuttom, p. 41.

<sup>232</sup> MVK I.3 in *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārin*, Thomas A. Kochumuttom (trans.), p. 42. “*Na śūnyam na-apti ca aśūnyam tasmāt sarvaṃ vidhīyate | Sattvād-asattāt sattvac-ca madhyamā pratipac-ca sā.*”

<sup>233</sup> Thomas A. Kochumuttom, pp. 43-4.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>236</sup> Gadjin M. Nagao, *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*, p. 198.

‘Middle Path’.<sup>237</sup> Thereby, emptiness is expounded as “the absence (*abhāva*) of duality, which is the presence of an absence (*abhāvasya bhāvaḥ*)”.<sup>238</sup> This assertion that emptiness is not merely ‘non-being’, but also the ‘being of non-being’ became the special feature of Yogācāra School that is related to the definition of emptiness in *Cūḷasuññata Sutta*.<sup>239</sup>

This idea is also found in chapter 6 of the *Āryadeśanā-vikhyāpana* (顯揚聖教論頌) only surviving in Chinese as “when [it is realized that] nothing exists here, and yet something of it remains – then the non-duality of emptiness is explained in accordance with twofold reasoning”. The twofold reasoning (*yukti*) is expressed as (i) the two kinds of selfhood (*ātman*) of person (*pudgala-ātman*) and of things (*dharma-ātman*) not existing; (ii) the two kinds of nonself (*nairātmya*) existing. Emptiness thus is suggested as neither eternally existing nor eternally non-existing that is completely identical with the notion of ‘non-being and being of non-being’.<sup>240</sup> With its character, emptiness is the principle as ‘defilement is identical with Bodhi’, ‘*saṃsāra* is equal to *nirvāṇa*’.<sup>241</sup>

Nevertheless, Dignāga comments on how the two extremes mentioned above are abandoned in agreement with Asaṅga’s *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha* (*Summary of the Great Vehicle*, 攝大乘論) that all phenomena do not inherently exist – that is, do not exist by way of their own character – require interpretation in that they were made in consideration of imagined nature. Dharmakīrti also says in *Commentary on Dignāga’s ‘Compilation of Prime Cognition’* (*Pramāṇa varttika*) that the emptiness of apprehended-object and apprehending-subject as other substantial entities is the suchness of other-dependent nature. He argues the distinction of a thing’s production as being different is not a mere self-cognizing consciousness but just by a consciousness perceiving dualistically. All things through dualistic appearance is polluted and also false and imagined. In the aspects of apprehended-object and of apprehending-subject there are no defining characters that are factually other,

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>238</sup> Mvb I.13 in Ake Boquist, *A Study of the Development of the Three-nature-theory in Yogācāra Buddhism*, p. 73. “*dvayābhavo hy abhāvasya bhāvaḥ śūnyasya lakṣaṇam...*”

<sup>239</sup> Gadgin M. Nagao, *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*, p. 215.

<sup>240</sup> Gadgin M. Nagao, “What Remains” in *Śūnyatā: A Yogācāra Interpretation of Emptiness* in Minoru Kiyota, *Mahāyāna Buddhist Meditation: Theory and Practice* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers PVT. LID, 1991), pp. 72-3.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

and furthermore defining characters that appear dualistically do not exist in accordance with how they appear. Therefore, it is explained that phenomena are without an inherent nature.<sup>242</sup>

### 3.5 *Śūnyatā* Concept of Yogācāra School in relation to Early Buddhism

Gadjin M. Nagao states that a special significance in the treatises of Yogācāra School, i.e. emptiness of both being and non-being discussed above has been attracted by the *Cūḷasuññata Sutta* (the Lesser Discourse on Emptiness) of MN 121. The Buddha in this sutta says “Now, as well as before, ‘I remain fully in a dwelling of emptiness’. A monk is ‘not attending to the perception of village’, ‘not attending to the perception of human being’ — attends to the singleness based on the perception of wilderness. His mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, settles, and indulges in its perception of wilderness. He discerns then that ‘whatever disturbances that would exist based on the perception of village are not present. Whatever disturbances that would exist based on the perception of human being are not present. There is only this modicum of disturbance: the singleness based on the perception of wilderness.’ He discerns that ‘this mode of perception is empty of the perception of village. This mode of perception is empty of the perception of human being. There is only this non-emptiness: the singleness based on the perception of wilderness.’ Thus he regards it as empty of whatever is not there. Whatever remains, he discerns as present: ‘There is this.’ And so this, his entry into emptiness, accords with actuality, is undistorted in meaning, and pure”.<sup>243</sup> By recourse to such meditation and negation, the monk travels through a number of stages. Including the highest stage of trance in the ‘formless world’, to reach, finally, ‘the concentration of the mind that is signless’ (*animittaṃ cetosamādhīṃ*). In this final stage, he is freed from every canker of ‘outflowing impurities’ (*āsava*) and obtains *Arhatship*; and yet there remains the disturbance (*daratha*) of the six sensory fields that, conditioned by life, are grounded in this body itself. Thus, his corporeal being, which even the *Arhat* can never nullify, is his ultimate disturbance.<sup>244</sup>

The statement “it is empty of whatever is not there. Whatever remains, he discerns as present: ‘There is this.’ And so this, his entry into emptiness, accords with actuality, is undistorted in meaning, and pure” repeated eight times emphasizes the doctrine of emptiness. Emptiness is non-being but undoubtedly in it something remains which, being reality, cannot

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<sup>242</sup>. Jeffrey Hopkins, pp. 190-1.

<sup>243</sup>. *Cūḷasuññata Sutta*, MN 121, p. 965.

<sup>244</sup>. Gadjin M. Nagao, “What Remains” in *Śūnyatā: A Yogācāra Interpretation of Emptiness* in Minoru Kiyota, *Mahāyāna Buddhist Meditation: Theory and Practice*, p. 68.

be negated. Thus, emptiness is considered as including both being and non-being, both negation and affirmation.<sup>245</sup>

Reality can be understood as emptiness in terms of existence and non-existence. It is empty, luminous, and pure. Reality is beyond existence because all existence is relative and dependent. It is beyond non-existence because, despite its emptiness and transience, reality does appear and is experienced. This statement is equivalently set forth in the assertion of *Heart Sutra* (*Prajñāpāramitāhṛdayasūtra*, 般若波羅蜜多心經) of the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature that ‘emptiness is form, and form is emptiness (色即是空, 空即是色)’. Reality is not only empty: it is also form; it is also luminous, bright with the potential for appearance. This luminosity – this potential inherent in the real state of things – manifests itself to the impure, afflicted consciousness as *saṃsāra*. However, it manifests itself to the purified consciousness as the pure universe of the exalted *Buddhas* and *Bodhisattvas*, i.e. on the strength of this potential appearance of reality, the manifestation of the celestial *Buddhas* and *Bodhisattvas* like Amitabha, Akshobhya, Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri, and the rest is achieved. They are luminous, pure, and the bright manifestation of reality – that reality which is simultaneously emptiness and luminosity, emptiness and purity.<sup>246</sup> John P. Keenan states that Asaṅga and Vasubandhu as well as the semi-legendary Maitreya, who is reported to have been Asaṅga’s mentor, were deeply influenced by the *Prajñāpāramitā* scriptures and accepted their notion of emptiness – that all things are empty.<sup>247</sup> Additionally, Tsong-kha-pa draws parallels between the three aspect doctrine of the *Prajñāpāramitā* and a similar notion to be found in the *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*.<sup>248</sup> Paramārtha<sup>249</sup> records that Asaṅga first learned the doctrine of emptiness as taught by the Hīnayāna, but was not satisfied until he learned the Mahāyāna doctrine of emptiness. Thus, the early Yogācāra writers were present throughout the early Mahāyāna scriptures.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>245</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>246</sup>. Peter Della Santina, *The Tree of Enlightenment*, pp. 183-4.

<sup>247</sup>. John P. Keenan, *Yogācāra* in Takeuchi Yoshinori, *Buddhist Spirituality: Indian, Southeast Asian, Tibetan, and Early Chinese*, pp. 203-4.

<sup>248</sup>. Harris, p. 105.

<sup>249</sup>. Paramārtha (499–569 C.E.) is the translator of Buddhist classic texts into Chinese and founder of the *Shelun* school.

<sup>250</sup>. Elena France Hanson, *Early Yogācāra and its Relation to Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka: Change and Continuity in the History of Mahāyāna Buddhist Thought* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Cambridge, 1998), p. 137.

## Chapter 4

### Madhyamaka and Yogācāra Schools in Relation

Richard King says the comprehensive explication of the notion of ‘emptiness’ in the Madhyamaka’s philosophical *śāstras* provides a “doctrinal key” to unlock the abstruse meanings of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*; while Yogācāra developed as a response to the insights of those same *sūtras*. He continues “both Madhyamaka and Yogācāra Schools still focus on the validity of the notions of *pratītyasamutpāda*, *puḍgala-nairātmya*, *dharma-nairātmya*, the four *āryasatyas*, the *bodhisattva* ideal, and *śūnyatā*, etc. With such a level of doctrinal unanimity, these two schools can hardly be said to be in great conflict with each other”.<sup>251</sup>

#### 4.1 The Historical Relationship

D.T. Suzuki advises “most Buddhist scholars are often too ready to make a sharp distinction between the Mādhyamika and the Yogācāra schools, taking the one as exclusively advocating the theory of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) while the other is bent single-mindedly on an idealistic interpretation of the universe. They thus further assume that the idea of emptiness is not at all traceable in the Yogācāra and that idealism is absent in the Mādhyamika. This is not exact as a matter of historical fact”.<sup>252</sup> Actually, the historical development of the two schools is difficult to be separated from each other. Madhyamaka is seen as the precursor to Yogācāra, or Yogācāra is presented as a fulfillment of Nāgārjuna's philosophy – a working out of what was left undone by Nāgārjuna and his Mādhyamika followers. However, some scholars argue that Yogācāra as a development occurred in response and opposition to the Madhyamaka.<sup>253</sup> Richard King again concludes, “although the works of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu do show a marked development of ideas in the delineation and analysis of the yogic path when compared to their Mādhyamika predecessors. This should not necessarily be seen as characteristic of an antithetical attitude toward the earlier exposition of Mahāyāna philosophy”.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>251</sup>. Richard King, *Early Yogācāra and its Relationship with the Madhyamaka School*, *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 44, No. 4, University of Hawaii Press (1994), p. 661.

<sup>252</sup>. Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *Studies in the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1998), p. 170.

<sup>253</sup>. Elena France Hanson, *Early Yogācāra and its Relation to Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka: Change and Continuity in the History of Mahāyāna Buddhist Thought*, p. 13.

<sup>254</sup>. Richard King, p. 660.

The early Yogācāra's relation to the Madhyamaka from an historical perspective has been rarely mentioned. This relationship is examined after having determined Asaṅga and Vasubandhu's relative position within the chronology of Madhyamaka and Yogācāra thought. Then, the question of whether the early Yogācāra writers put themselves forward as a Buddhist philosophical school in opposition to Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka has to be addressed. Therefore, investigation of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu's own writings can provide some indication of the historical relation between the early Yogācāra writings and those of Nāgārjuna.<sup>255</sup> Three types of religious conflict can be found in all the biographical sources: (1) between Buddhists and non-Buddhists, (2) between factions of the Hīnayāna, and (3) between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna. The conflict between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna is particularly evident in the accounts of Paramārtha and Hsuan-tsang – those which are chronologically closest to Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. The conflict is manifest in the brothers' own changing religious affiliations from Hīnayāna to Mahāyāna. Additionally, a Chinese Buddhist monk – Fa-hsien (399-418 CE), who traveled to India during the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu affirms that at that time there was a clear differentiation between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna as well as divisions within the Hīnayāna. However, both Fa-hsien and Paramārtha still state Mahāyāna does not appear to be fully emergent and widespread during the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.<sup>256</sup> I-ching (635-713 CE) – a Chinese Buddhist provides the earliest historical account of the division within the Mahāyāna as “there are but two kinds of the so-called Mahāyāna. First, the Mādhyamika; second, the *Yoga*. The former professes that what is commonly called existence is in reality non-existence, and every object is but an empty show, like an illusion, whereas the latter affirms that there exists no outer things in reality, but only inward thoughts, and all things exist only in the mind (lit. all things are but our mind)”.<sup>257</sup> Post-dating Asaṅga and Vasubandhu by at least one generation, and possibly up to two hundred years, however there was clearly the existence of a conflict between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools. The Madhyamaka scholar, Bhāvaviveka (ca. 490-570 CE) is one of the primary scholars whose writings attest to such a conflict. Bhāvaviveka's counterpart Dharmapāla (ca. 530-561 CE) provided responses to Madhyamaka critiques of the Yogācāra, as well as counter-critiques of the Madhyamaka. It

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<sup>255</sup> .Hanson, p. 66.

<sup>256</sup> .Hanson, pp. 82-93.

<sup>257</sup> .*A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practiced in India and the Malay Archipelago (AD. 671-695) by I-Tsing*, Junjiro Takakusu (trans.), (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), p. 15.

does not, however, imply that Asaṅga and Vasubandhu were involved in such a conflict as Fa-hsien, Paramārtha and Hsuan-tsang assert.<sup>258</sup>

The question of whether the early Yogācāra writers put themselves forward as a Buddhist philosophical school in opposition to Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka has been examined directly through searching the early Yogācāra texts themselves for indications of classification regarding their own positioning of themselves within the history of Buddhist thought. Firstly, the early Yogācāra writers resemble Nāgārjuna both in their general defensive stance regarding the Mahāyāna and in particular issues of the Mahāyāna such as its novelty, its orthodoxy, and its teaching of emptiness. They present as one of vigorous opposition from the Hīnayāna.<sup>259</sup> Jeffrey Samuels suggests Asaṅga and Nāgārjuna as two of the primary writers who propound the dichotomy of Hīnayāna as the vehicle of *Śrāvakas* and the Mahāyāna as the vehicle of *Bodhisattvas*. Both Asaṅga and Nāgārjuna agree the superiority of the *Bodhisattva* over the *Śrāvaka* is proof of the Mahāyāna's superiority.<sup>260</sup> Asaṅga equates the Mahāyāna with the *Bodhisattvayāna* and even Nāgārjuna makes a similar association in his *Ratnāvalī* as

“Since all the aspirations, deeds and  
Dedications of Bodhisattvas  
Were not explained in the Hearers’ vehicle, how then  
Could one become a Bodhisattva through its path?”<sup>261</sup>

Moreover, although Asaṅga implicitly equates the *Bodhisattvayāna* with the one true vehicle (*ekayāna*) that leads to *Buddhahood*, the early Yogācāra writers never deny the legitimacy of *Śrāvakayāna* and *Pratyekabuddhayāna*. Vasubandhu states that “having been a *Śrāvaka*, he becomes a *Pratyekabuddha*, and finally he becomes a Buddha”.<sup>262</sup> Asaṅga explains *ekayāna* by asserting that all three vehicles are the same in terms of the reality *dharmadhātu* to which they refer, their teaching of selflessness, and the liberation to which they lead.<sup>263</sup> This statement imitates a verse in a hymn by Nāgārjuna entitled

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<sup>258</sup> Hanson, p. 103.

<sup>259</sup> Hanson, p. 130.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>261</sup> *Ratnāvalī* v. 390 in *The Precious Garland and the Song of the Four Mindfulnesses*: Nāgārjuna and the Seventh Dalai Lama, Jeffrey Hopkins and Lati Rimpoche (trans.), London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1975, p. 75. “*na bodhisattvaprañidhirna caryāpariṇāmanā| uktāḥ śrāvakayāne smād bodhisattvaḥ kutas tataḥ.*”

<sup>262</sup> *Mahāyānasūtrālamkārahāṣya* 11:59 by Vasubandhu quoted in Hanson, p. 144. “*śrāvako bhūtvā pratyekabuddho bhavati punaś ca buddha iti.*”

<sup>263</sup> *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* 11:53 quoted in Hanson, p. 146. “*dharmānair ātmyamuktīnām tulyatvāt gotrabhedataḥ|dvyāśayāpteś ca nirmāṇāt paryantād ekayānatā.*”

*Niraupamyastava*.<sup>264</sup> Nāgārjuna in this hymn asserts that the non-differentiation of the *dharmadhātu* attests to the non-differentiation of the vehicles, and thus establishes the one vehicle *ekayāna*.<sup>265</sup> He still appeals to this doctrine in *Ratnāvalī* as part of his defense of the Mahāyāna.

“What the Tathāgata taught with a special  
Intention is not easy to understand.  
Because he taught one as well as three vehicles  
You should therefore protect yourself through indifference”.<sup>266</sup>

Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers elaborate their hermeneutical stance in terms of a distinction between two levels of interpretation of the Buddha's word. The first level sticks to the literal meaning or the "letter" (*vyañjana*) of the text, while the second level uncovers the text's deeper meaning (*artha*).<sup>267</sup> Asaṅga states “the *Dharma* has two aspects, and the meaning which should be known is not the literal one”.<sup>268</sup> He also warns “when one construes the meaning (of the Buddha's teaching) literally, self-conceited understanding leads to the ruin of intelligence. One rejects the well taught, suffers a loss, and is misled by resentment with regard to the Teachings”.<sup>269</sup> For the inexpressible nature of reality, furthermore, Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers also argue that the Buddha's teachings were limited by the intellectual capacities of his audience. The Buddha applying his teachings to fit all abilities of beings is expressed in verse 394-396 of *Ratnāvalī* by Nāgārjuna.<sup>270</sup>

“Just as a grammarian [first] makes  
His students read the alphabet,  
So Buddha taught his trainees  
The doctrines which they could bear.

To some he taught doctrines  
To discourage sinning.  
To some, doctrines for achieving merit,  
To others, doctrines based on duality.

<sup>264</sup> . *Niraupamyastava*, “Hymn to the Peerless One” is one of the four hymns (*Catuḥstava*) of Nāgārjuna. The other three hymns are the *Lokātītastava*, the *Acintyastava*, and the *Paramārthastava*.’ in Robert E. Buswell Jr. and Donald S. Lopez Jr., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 2014.

<sup>265</sup> . Hanson, p. 146.

<sup>266</sup> . *Ratnāvalī* v.388, p. 75. “*tathāgatābhisamdhyaoktānyasukhaṃ jñātum ityataḥ| ekayānatriyānuktād ātmā rakṣya upekṣayā.*”

<sup>267</sup> . Hanson, p. 140.

<sup>268</sup> . *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* 1:4 quoted in Hanson, p. 140. “*āghrāyamāṇakāṭukaṃ svādurasam yathauṣadham tad vat| dharmadvayavyavasthā vyañjanato ‘rtho na ca jñāyāḥ.*”

<sup>269</sup> . *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* 1:20 quoted in Hanson, p. 141. “*yathārute ‘rthe parikalpyamāne svapratyayo hānimupaiti buddheḥ| svākhyātātāṃ ca kṣipati kṣatīm ca prāpnoti dharma pratighāvatīva.*”

<sup>270</sup> . Hanson, p. 142.



To some he taught doctrines based on non-duality, to some  
He taught what is profound and frightening to the fearful,  
Having an essence of emptiness and compassion,  
The means of achieving [the highest] enlightenment”.<sup>271</sup>

The hierarchy between audiences of lesser and greater abilities; between the literal and deeper meaning of the Buddha's teachings, corresponds, in the view of Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers, to that between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna.<sup>272</sup> Finally, both Asaṅga and Nāgārjuna appeal to the authority of the scriptures of the Hīnayāna for the sake of establishing the explicit orthodoxy of the Mahāyāna teachings. Paramārtha records that Asaṅga first learned the doctrine of emptiness taught by the Hīnayāna, but was not satisfied until he discovered the doctrine of emptiness of Mahāyāna.<sup>273</sup> Indeed, the early Yogācāra writings even appeal to the Hīnayāna scriptures to validate certain teachings, which are associated specifically with the Yogācāra. For instance, Asaṅga defends the authenticity of the concept of the *ālayavijñāna* by asserting that the Buddha presented this teaching in the *Śrāvakayāna* through synonyms (*paryāya*). Asaṅga cites a number of passages from the *Āgamas* of schools such as the *Mahāsāṃghikas* and *Mahīśāsakas* where, he says, the *ālayavijñāna* is referred to through synonyms such as substrate consciousness (*mūlavijñāna*), or aggregate, which endures throughout saṃsāra (*āsaṃsārikaskandha*).<sup>274</sup> In his *Ratnāvalī*, Nāgārjuna defends the authenticity of the Mahāyāna notion of the six perfections by asserting that

“The aims of benefiting oneself and others and the meaning  
Of liberation as briefly taught [in the Hīnayāna]  
By Buddha are contained in the six perfections,  
Therefore the Mahāyāna is the word of Buddha.”<sup>275</sup>

In short, all the above concerns that defend the orthodoxy and the distinctiveness of the Mahāyāna place that the early Yogācāra writings are in close accord with the writings of Nāgārjuna. Elena France Hanson concludes, furthermore, the early Yogācāra writers not only shared this concern with Nāgārjuna but were closely connected with him in their method of

<sup>271</sup>. *Ratnāvalī* v. 394-396, p. 76.

“yathaiva vaiyākaraṇo mātṛkāṃ api pāṭhayet| buddho vadattathā dharmam vineyānām yathākṣamam.”  
“keṣāṃcid avadaddharmaṃ pāpebhyo vinivṛttaye| keṣāṃcit puṇyasiddhyartham keṣāṃcid dvayānīśritam.”  
“dvayānīśritam ekeṣāṃ bambhīraṃ bhīrūbhīṣaṇam|śūnyatākaruṇāgarbham ekeṣāṃ bodhisāddhanam.”

<sup>272</sup>. Hanson, p. 143.

<sup>273</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>274</sup>. MSg I. 11-13 quoted in Hanson, p. 138.

<sup>275</sup>. *Ratnāvalī* v. 382, p. 74. “parātmahita mokṣārthāḥ saṃkṣepād buddhaśāsanam| te śatpāramitāgarbhās tasmād bauddham idaṃ vacaḥ.”

addressing this concern, and in their textual grounding of their positions. In other words, the early Yogācāra authors were writing neither in opposition to Madhyamaka School nor with the intent to establish and systematize the Yogācāra as a separate Buddhist school.<sup>276</sup> Rahula argues that the philosophies of Nāgārjuna and of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu are not contradictory, but complementary to each other. He claims the two systems known as Madhyamaka and Yogācāra “... explain and expound, in different ways with different arguments, the very same doctrines of *nairātmya*, *śūnyatā*, *tathatā*, *pratītyasamutpāda*, but are not a philosophy of their own that can properly be called Nāgārjuna's or Asaṅga's or Vasubandhu's philosophy. We can only say that they are Nāgārjuna's or Asaṅga's or Vasubandhu's explanations, arguments and theories, postulated to prove and establish the Canonical teaching of *śūnyatā*, *cittamātra* or *nairātmya*. If any differences of opinion exist between them, these are only with regard to their own arguments and theories, advanced to establish the old fundamental Canonical teaching, but not with regard to the teaching itself.”<sup>277</sup>

## 4.2 The Philosophical Relationship

### 4.2.1 The Concept of *Vijñāna* in Madhyamaka

Nāgārjuna coming to a specific criticism of consciousness is his demonstration that *vijñāna*, as a member of the group of *skandhas*, is dependent and hence empty. However *vijñāna* in this treatment is always considered as a thing dependent on internal and external sense fields (*āyatana*) and cannot be equated with the notion of an abiding consciousness such as the *bhavaṅga* put forward in the *Pāli* texts and was subsequently elaborated by the Yogācāra. The *Vijñānavādins* also adopt such a position that the six evolved consciousnesses (*pravṛttivijñāna*), since they arise in dependence, must from the ultimate point of view be considered to be empty (*śūnya*).<sup>278</sup> This seems to be what Nāgārjuna means when he says:

“Dependent upon the inner and outer sense spheres (*āyatana*), consciousness (*vijñāna*) originates. Thus there is no consciousness. It is empty (*śūnya*), like mirages and illusions (*marīcimāyāvat*). Consciousness originates dependent upon an object of consciousness, therefore it is non-existent. Without cognition and an object of consciousness, there is consequently no subject of consciousness at all.”<sup>279</sup>

<sup>276</sup>. Hanson, pp. 166-7.

<sup>277</sup>. Walpola Rahula, “*Vijñaptimātratā Philosophy in the Yogācāra System and Some Wrong Notions*”, *Maha Bodhi*, 80 (1972), pp. 326-7.

<sup>278</sup>. Harris, p. 10.

<sup>279</sup>. ŚS 56, 57 quoted in Santina, *Causality and Emptiness: The Wisdom of Nāgārjuna*, p. 154.

Both consciousness and the external object then are dependent and consequently devoid of own-being (*svabhāva*). As *Bodhicittavivaraṇa*<sup>280</sup> states “Mind (*citta*) is but a name (*nāmamātra*). It is nothing apart from (its) name. Consciousness must be regarded as but a name. The name has no own-being (*svabhāva*).<sup>281</sup>

Nāgārjuna implicitly accepts a distinction between the two consciousness states of the high level, the enlightened represented by *prajñā*; and of the mundane form, the unenlightened corresponding to *viññāna*. When someone has developed the correct knowledge (*samyagjñāna*), then reality (*tattva*) is seen clearly and ignorance (*avidyā*) is destroyed. In the twelve chains of dependent origination (*dvādasāṅgika-pratītyasamutpāda*), since *avidyā* is the first link as the cause of *viññāna* (the third member in the series), which arises dependent on ignorance (*avidyā*). When *avidyā* is destroyed by *jñāna* then, so too, is *viññāna*.<sup>282</sup> Apart from being seen to be conditioned by the *pratītyasamutpāda* process, *viññāna* is brought to a halt until Nāgārjuna brings to light “just as the birth of a son is said to be dependent upon the mother and the father, even so, the arising of (visual) consciousness is said to be dependent upon eye and material form”.<sup>283</sup> The concept of *citta* in the state of *nirvāṇa*, particularly expressing the overlap between early Buddhism and Nāgārjuna, is treated in the *Majjhimanikāya*. *Citta* is associated with emptiness. In a state of *nirvāṇa*, the mind (*citta*) is said to be free from the obsessions of sensuality (*kāma*), becoming (*bhāva*) and ignorance (*avijjā*), and the monk comes to understand that such a conscious state represents an emptiness of the obsessions (*āsava*).<sup>284</sup> Nāgārjuna also asserts the same position of *viññāna*, which is said to be uprooted once *nirvāṇa* is attained as “with the cessation of these, those other factors [of the twelvefold formula] would not proceed. In this way, this

<sup>280</sup>. *Bodhicittavivaraṇa*, “Exposition of the Mind of Enlightenment” is a work traditionally ascribed to Nāgārjuna, although the text is not cited by Nāgārjuna’s commentators Buddhapālita, Candrakīrti, or Bhāvaviveka. This absence, together with apparently tantric elements in the text and the fact that it contains a sustained critique of *Viññānavāda*, have led some scholars to conclude that it is not the work of the same Nāgārjuna who authored the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. Nonetheless, the work is widely cited in later Indian Mahāyāna literature and is important in Tibet. The text consists of 112 stanzas, preceded by a brief section in prose. It is essentially a compendium of Mahāyāna theory and practice, intended for bodhisattvas, both monastic and lay, organized around the theme of Bodhicitta, both in its conventional aspect (*Samvṛtibodhicitta*) as the aspiration to Buddhahood out of compassion for all sentient beings, and in its ultimate aspect (*Paramārthabodhicitta*) as the insight into emptiness (*Śūnyatā*). In addition to the refutation of *Viññānavāda*, the text refutes the self as understood by the Tīrthikas and the skandhas as understood by the Śrāvakas.” in Robert E. Buswell Jr. and Donald S. Lopez Jr., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 2014.

<sup>281</sup>. *Bodhicittavivaraṇa* v. 28 quoted in Harris, p. 11.

<sup>282</sup>. Harris, p. 14.

<sup>283</sup>. MMK III.7, p. 136. “*Pratīya matā-pitarau yathoktaḥ putra-sambhavaḥ. Cakṣu-rūpe pratīyaivam ukto viññāna-sambhavaḥ.*”

<sup>284</sup>. *Culasuññatā Sutta*, MN 121, p. 965.

entire mass of suffering ceases completely.”<sup>285</sup> The *Sutta Nipāta* 734 says this emptiness is associated with a permanent state of mind, equivalent to *nirvāṇa*, and deriving from the cessation of *vijñāna*. For Nāgārjuna, emptiness (*śūnyatā*) then is a state of consciousness in which dichotomous thought (*prapañca*) no longer holds sway. It is a state of mind dehabituated from its ignorant tendency to distort.<sup>286</sup> He states “on the waning of defilements of action (*karmakleśa*), there is release (*mokṣa*). Defilements of action belong to one who discriminates, and these in turn result from obsession (*prapañca*). Obsession, in its turn, ceases within the context of emptiness.”<sup>287</sup>

#### 4.2.2 The Two Truths and the Three Natures

Nāgārjuna has explained the two truths (*satyadvaya*) initiated by the Buddhas as “the teaching of the doctrine by the *Buddhas* is based upon two truths: truth relating to worldly convention (*saṃvṛtisatya*) and truth in terms of ultimate fruit (*paramārthasatya*)”.<sup>288</sup> He clearly indicates the ineffability of ultimate truth as “independently realized, peaceful, unobsessed by obsessions, without discriminations and a variety of meanings: such is the characteristic of truth”.<sup>289</sup> It is stated, “no existents whatsoever are evident anywhere that are arisen from themselves, from another, from both, or from a non-cause”.<sup>290</sup> All things are actually conventional existence and provisional designations (*prajñapti*) only; even the teaching itself of the Buddha is made up of conventional words and concepts that are mentioned in *Pāli* canon. Nāgārjuna says in MMK XXIV. 10 that the conventional truth is the basis for the ultimate truth, that “without relying upon convention, the ultimate fruit is not taught”, and “without understanding the ultimate fruit, freedom is not attained”.<sup>291</sup> These two truths follow directly upon the establishment of the doctrine of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) since his critique, before indicating the doctrine of two truths, maintain “we say that you do not comprehend the purpose of emptiness. As such, you are tormented by emptiness and the

<sup>285</sup> .MMK XXVI. 12, p. 376. “*Tasya tasya nirodhena tat tan nābhipravartate, duḥkha-skandhaḥ kevalo 'yam evaṃ samyag nirudhyate.*”

<sup>286</sup> .Harris, p. 55.

<sup>287</sup> .MMK XVIII.5, p. 266. “*karma-kleśa-kṣayān mokṣa karma-kleśā vikalpataḥ, te prapañcat prapañcas tu śūnyatāyān nirudhyate.*”

<sup>288</sup> .MMK XXIV.8, p. 331. “*Dve satye samupāśritya buddhānāṃ deśanā, loka-saṃvṛti-satyam ca satyam ca paramārthataḥ.*”

<sup>289</sup> .MMK XVIII.9, p. 270. “*Apara-pratyayaṃ śāntaṃ prapañcāir aprapañcitaṃ, nirvikalpam anānārtham etat tattvasya lakṣaṇam.*”

<sup>290</sup> .MMK I.1, p. 105. “*Na svato nāpi parato na dvābhyāṃ nāpy ahetutaḥ, utpannā jātu vidyante bhāvāḥ kvacana kecana.*”

<sup>291</sup> .MMK XXIV.10, p. 333. “*Vyavahāram anāśritya paramārtho na deśyate, paramārtham anāgamyā nirvāṇaṃ nādhigamyate.*”

meaning of emptiness.”<sup>292</sup> He asserts the emptiness of *dharma*s from the ultimate point of view, but he cautions against reifying the notion of emptiness itself. To grasp onto emptiness as anything more than a conventional designation is just as much an error as to grasp onto the idea of ultimate existence.<sup>293</sup>

Elena France Hanson mentions that the early Yogācārins adhere to both the doctrine of two truths and that of three natures. In order to come to the conclusion that the three-nature doctrine is compatible with Nāgārjuna's teaching of two truths, it is necessary to prove the Yogācāra presentation of the two truths concurs with that of Nāgārjuna. The distinction between the conventional and ultimate truths is also stated throughout the works of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. Asaṅga says that it is through the *Bodhisattva*'s great effort to seek the essence (*dharmatā*) of the conventional and ultimate truths that he becomes a support (*pratiśaraṇa*) for all creatures.<sup>294</sup> The early Yogācāra writers along with Nāgārjuna apply the model of two truths predominantly in reference to the Buddha's teachings. It is emphasized for assessing the true reality of all statements as well as for communicating the limitation of languages. This idea is mentioned in Nāgārjuna's MMK XXIV.8, 9 and Asaṅga's MSg II.31.<sup>295</sup> Yogācāra moreover agrees with Nāgārjuna's conception of the ultimate truth as an ineffable thing from the conventional point of view. Asaṅga states “neither being nor non-being, neither thus nor otherwise, it does not arise nor does it cease, it does not diminish nor does it increase, it is neither purified nor not purified. This is the characteristic of *paramārtha*.”<sup>296</sup> He states that the *pariṇiṣpanna* is beyond the range of discursive thought, since it is free of verbalization (*prapañca*).<sup>297</sup> For both Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācārins, the transcendence of the ultimate is analyzed by the problem of verbalization. Since the ultimate truth is utterly transcendent, all doctrines, all statements and all conceptualizations fall under the category of conventional truth, i.e. the reference of all *dharma*s conceptualized through names and objects does not truly exist in the ultimate sense. Nāgārjuna asserts “neither names nor objects exist, name does not imply existence for us, because we do not even say that name exists”.<sup>298</sup> Asaṅga likewise denies the existence of both name and object

<sup>292</sup>. MMK XXIV.7, p. 330. “*atra brūmaḥ śūnyatāyāṃ na tvaṃ vetsy prajojanaṃ, śūnyatāyāṃ śūnyatārthaṃ ca tata evaṃ viḥanyase.*”

<sup>293</sup> Hanson, pp. 173-4.

<sup>294</sup>. *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* 11:78 quoted in Hanson, p. 175.

<sup>295</sup>. Hanson, p. 236.

<sup>296</sup>. *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* 6:1 quoted in Hanson, p. 176. “*na sanna cāsanna tathā na cānyathā na jāyate vyeti na cāvahīyate| na vardhate nāpi viśudhyate punar viśudhyate tat paramārthalakṣaṇaṃ.*”

<sup>297</sup>. *Mahāyānasūtrālamkārabhāṣya* 11:41 quoted in Hanson, p. 240. “*avikalpā ca vikalpāgocaratvāt niṣprapañcatayā.*”

<sup>298</sup>. *Vigrahavyāvartanī* 57 quoted in Hanson, p. 180.

as “the intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*) and specifications (*viśeṣa*) which are attributed to name or object, he says, are nothing but provisional designations (*prajñapti*); name and objects are merely mental talk (*manojalpa*)”.<sup>299</sup>

The three nature doctrine of Yogācāra implicates the world as imagined (*parikalpita*), devoid of any self-nature (*svabhāva*) or substantiality. *Pariniṣpanna* must be an absence of *parikalpita*, which establishes the subject-object dichotomy. *Pariniṣpanna* is said to be devoid of this duality (*dvayābhāva*). This is consistent with the two truth doctrine of Nāgārjuna. For Nāgārjuna the unenlightened world coincides with the conventional truth (*saṃvṛtisatya*), which is equated with *saṃsāra*. This is quite clearly the first or imagined nature (*parikalpitasvabhāva*). The enlightened world is the ultimate truth (*paramārtha*), a non-dual gnosis that equates perfectly with *pariniṣpannasvabhāva*. This is *nirvāṇa*.<sup>300</sup> In his TSN, Vasubandhu defines the imagined nature as conventional truth itself<sup>301</sup> and the ultimate truth is to be known as the one accomplished nature only.<sup>302</sup> In the model of three natures, however, there is a middle element, the dependent nature (*paratantrasvabhāva*) as a bridge between *parikalpita* and *pariniṣpanna*; while the two truths have no intermediary as such. Ashok Chatterjee argues the Yogācāra hold a more positive view of conventional truth which consists of its two aspects as the imagined and dependent natures. He says “the whole of empirical experience is therefore not equally despicable. In phenomena themselves there are two aspects – the one utterly unreal, and the other real, though infected by the former. *Samvṛti* must be split into two, the subject and the object...There are thus three, and not merely two, Truths.”<sup>303</sup> Anacker also indicates that Yogācāra maintains a more positive interpretation of the conventional truth as a small difference between the two truths and the three natures. He states that whereas Nāgārjuna wishes to demonstrate the inadequacy of all conventional statements (and all statements are, by necessity, conventional), Vasubandhu is interested in showing a path, conceived in conventional terms, which leads to the abandonment of all mental constructions...In emphasizing the existence of the construction of that which was not *abhūtaparikalpa*, Maitreyanātha and Vasubandhu affirm that there is a force in interdependent events that gives rise to constructions and afflictions. Thus, there is a

<sup>299</sup>. MSg III.7 quoted in Hanson, p. 180.

<sup>300</sup>. Harris, p. 124.

<sup>301</sup>. TSN 23 in *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārin*, p. 251.

<sup>302</sup>. Mvb III.10c in *Seven Works of Vasubandhu: the Buddhist Psychological Doctor*, Stefan Anacker (ed. and trans.), (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2002), p. 236.

<sup>303</sup>. Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, p. 147-8.

reality given to suffering which does not arise with Nāgārjuna's dialectical denials of any existent contrasts or causalities.<sup>304</sup> Hanson comments that Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, Stefan Anacker and some scholars in analyzing the two models do not take into consideration the context in which these models are presented, or the scope to which they refer. It is actually dependent origination – the first item of Nāgārjuna's list of things that become possible through emptiness – which is the bridge between these two truths. It is equated with both the conventional realm of being and the ultimate realm of emptiness. Therefore, only through dependent origination we can see that both extremes are, in the end, the same.<sup>305</sup> Anacker acknowledges that even for Vasubandhu, the path between the conventional and ultimate realms is 'self-dissolving', since for Vasubandhu, just as for Nāgārjuna, all constructions are, in the end, empty.<sup>306</sup>

According to Yogācāra, *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, *parikalpita* and *pariniṣpanna* are as two aspects of *paratantrasvabhāva*. Asaṅga remarks “*saṃsāra* is the *paratantra-svabhāva* in its aspect of defilement (i.e. the *parikalpita svabhāva*). *Nirvāṇa* is the same in its aspect of purity (i.e. the *pariniṣpanna svabhāva*). The basis (*āśraya*) is the dependent nature in that it partakes of both aspects at the same time (*tadubhayabhāgapatita*).”<sup>307</sup> Thus, *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* as well as *parikalpita* and *pariniṣpanna* are the same but they are identical with the dependent nature *paratantra*. The identity of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* is still proclaimed by Nāgārjuna in MMK “the life-process (*saṃsāra*) has no thing that distinguishes it from freedom (*nirvāṇa*). Freedom has no thing that distinguishes it from the life-process. Whatever is the extremity of freedom and the extremity of the life-process, between them not even a subtle something is evident.”<sup>308</sup> More precisely, Kalupahana commented it is the absolute distinction between *saṃvṛti* and *paramārtha* that is denied.

Nāgārjuna affirms as analyzed above that all things lacking of their own nature in fact exist in dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) which arise in the everyday world from the conventional point of view. He equates this doctrine with the notion emptiness (*śūnyatā*) from the ultimate point of view in MMK XXIV.18 at the same time. Besides, “convention (*saṃvṛti*) arises from causes and conditions and is relative (*paratantra*). Thus, the relative has

<sup>304</sup>. *Seven Works of Vasubandhu: the Buddhist Psychological Doctor*, Stefan Anacker (ed.and trans.), p. 273.

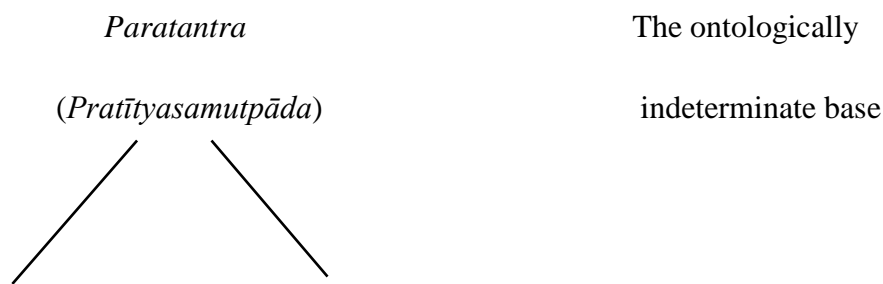
<sup>305</sup>. Hanson, pp. 235-6, 249.

<sup>306</sup>. Ibid., p. 234.

<sup>307</sup>. MSg II.28 quoted in Hanson, p. 241.

<sup>308</sup>. MMK XXV. 19-20, pp. 365-7. “*Na saṃsārasya nirvāṇāt kiṃcid asti viśeṣaṇaṃ, na nirvāṇasya saṃsārāt kiṃcid asti viśeṣaṇaṃ.*”  
“*Nirvāṇasya cay ā koṭiḥ koṭiḥ saṃsārasya ca, na tayoṛ antaraṃ kiṃcit susūkṣmaṃ api vidyate.*”

been spoken of. The ultimate meaning, however is absolute (*akṛtrima*).<sup>309</sup> Likewise, for Yogācāra the dependent nature *paratantra*, which is identical with *parikalpita* on the one hand and *pariniṣpanna* on the other, is in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* and *Mahāyānasamgraha* defined simply as the dependent origination of phenomena. As to the doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda*, the early Yogācāra writers develop the notion *paratantra* in direct opposition to the notion of *svatantra*, which means self-dependent, or independent, and hence absolute.<sup>310</sup> Whereas, the dependent nature corresponds to the doctrine of dependent origination, the perfected nature corresponds with the notion of emptiness.<sup>311</sup> Consequently, the relation between the dependent and accomplished natures in early Yogācāra thought is close to that of dependent origination and emptiness in Madhyamaka. Additionally, Nāgārjuna asserts “the dependent nature of things is called emptiness, because the dependent nature is what it is to have no intrinsic nature.”<sup>312</sup> The equation of dependent origination and emptiness in Madhyamaka and of the dependent and accomplished natures in Yogācāra explain how the conventional realm can come into being, even though it does not exist in fact. These equations allow for the manifestation of the conventional realm out of the ultimate, and for a path out of the conventional and up to the ultimate.<sup>313</sup> More importantly, in the model of three natures the Yogācāra systematized the Madhyamaka’s thought of the two truths into one coherent scheme. Furthermore, Nāgārjuna’s use of the term relative (*paratantra*) for *pratītyasamutpāda* allows us to speculate that there may be a great deal more of a connection between his two-fold truth formulation and the three nature doctrine of the Yogācāra than is generally recognized.<sup>314</sup> The below diagram will clarify the connection.<sup>315</sup>



<sup>309</sup>. *Catuhstava III.44* in Harris, p. 23. “*hetupratyayasambhūtā paratantrā ca saṃvṛtiḥ, paratantra iti proktaḥ paramārthas tv akṛtmaḥ.*”

<sup>310</sup>. Hanson, p. 245.

<sup>311</sup>. Mvb III.7a in *Seven Works of Vasubandhu: the Buddhist Psychological Doctor*, Stefan Anacker (ed. and trans.), p. 234.

<sup>312</sup>. *Vigrahavyāvartanī* 22 quoted in Hanson, p. 247. “*yaśca pratītyabhāvo bhāvānām śūnyateti sā proktā, yaśca pratītyabhāvo bhavati hi tasyāsvabhāvatam.*”

<sup>313</sup>. Hanson, p. 249-250.

<sup>314</sup>. Harris, p. 24.

<sup>315</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 4.



<i>Parikalpita</i>	<i>Pariniṣpanna</i>	The two orientations
<i>Samvṛti</i>	<i>Paramārtha</i>	
Defilement	Purification	
DIFFERENCE	IDENTITY	

#### 4.2.3 In Terms of the Notion of *Śūnyatā*

Both Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools emphasize the doctrine of *śūnyatā*, but their interpretation of the terminology has been different. MMK XXIV.18, the root verse elaborating the Madhyamaka, analyzes the notion of *śūnyatā* as *pratītyasamutpāda*, *upādāya-prajñapti* and also *madhyamā-pratipad*, as explained above. While the characteristics of the first two verses of *Madhyāntavibhāga* (hereafter, MV) which is a treatise of Yogācāra, are similar to those in verse MMK XXIV.18. These two verses elucidate *śūnyatā* as *abhūta-parikalpa* and *madhyamā-pratipad*. This expresses the development of Buddhist philosophy as well as the continuity of Madhyamaka and Yogācāra.<sup>316</sup> Murti argues *śūnyatā* is accepted in the Vijñānavāda but with a modification. The formula is that which appears (i.e. *vijñāna*) is real while the form of its appearance (the duality of subject and object) is unreal.<sup>317</sup>

The two verses of MV I.1 and I.2 respectively read:

“There exists unreal imagination; duality does not exist therein  
Emptiness, however, exists in it, and also the former exists in the later.”  
“Therefore it is stated that all entities are neither empty nor non-empty  
Because of existence, because of non-existence, and again because of existence. And  
this is the Middle Path.”<sup>318</sup>

The imagination (*parikalpa*) refers to cognitive function or consciousness (*vijñāna*) which is characterized by the Yogācāra as ‘dependent-on-other’ (*paratantra*), that is, *pratītyasamutpāda*. The world therefore is constituted by *vijñāna*. For Vasubandhu, when the mind is at work in an ordinary person a transformation takes place such that the distinction between being conscious of something (*vijñāna*) and that something of which one is

<sup>316</sup> Nagao, *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*, p. 190.

<sup>317</sup> Murti, p. 8. This argument is in TSN 4 “*Tatra kim khyāti-asatkalpaḥ katham khyāti dvayātmanā| tasya kā nāstitā tena yā tatra dvayadharmatā.*”

<sup>318</sup> MV I.1 “*abhūtaparikalpo ‘sti, dvayaṃ tatra na vidyate| śūnyatā vidhyate tvatra, tasyām api sa vidyate.*” MV I.2 “*na śūnyaṃ nāpi cāśūnyaṃ tasmāt sarvaṃ vidhīyate| sattvād asattvāt sattāc ca, madhyamā pratipac ca sā.*” quoted in Nagao, *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*, p. 195.

conscious arises (*viññeya*). This process is called representation (*viññapti*). Of course this does not mean that the *viññapti* is caused by *viññāna*. On the contrary, from the *viññapti* proceeds the *viññāna/viññeya* combination which in turn produces the idea of subjects and objects (*grāhya-grāhaka*). This is the meaning of the Vijñānavādin doctrine that everything is representation only (*viññaptimātra*).<sup>319</sup> For Vasubandhu reality is observed through the subject and object dichotomy “the transformation of *viññāna* (a false construct) is the distinction (between subject and object); what is thus distinguished does not exist. Therefore this is all mere representation of consciousness (*viññaptimātra*).<sup>320</sup> The world is in fact the unreal imagination (*abhūta-parikalpa*) which exists neither in the grasped object nor in the grasping subject from the ultimate point of view. This negation of duality is called *śūnyatā*, i.e. *abhūta-parikalpa* equals to *śūnyatā* itself that is similar to the equation *pratītyasamutpāda* equals *śūnyatā* in the MMK. ‘The former (unreal imagination) exists in the later (emptiness)’ expresses the important meaning as the revival of unreal imagination (or *pratītyasamutpāda* or *viññaptimātra*) which corresponds to *upādāya-prajñapti* of the MMK.<sup>321</sup> Yogācāra inherited and then continued to develop the ideas of emptiness from Madhyamaka which can be charted as follows<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>319</sup>. Harris, p. 15.

<sup>320</sup>. *Triṃśatikā* 17 “*Vijñāna-pariṇāmo’yam vikalpo yad-vikalpyate/ Tena tan-nāsti tena-idam sarvam viññaptimātrakam.*” quoted in *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārin*, Thomas A. Kochumuttom (trans.), p. 146.

<sup>321</sup>. Nagao, *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*, pp. 195-6.

<sup>322</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 197.

a: *pratīyasamutpāda* — I.1a: *abhūta-parikalpa* — I.2c: *sattvāt*

(dependent  
origination)

(unreal imagination  
exists)

(because of  
existence)

— I.2a: *na śūnyam*

b: *śūnyatā*  
(emptiness)

[

I.1b: *dvayaṃ na  
vidyate* (duality  
does not exist)

— I.2c: *asattvāt*  
(because of  
non-existence)

(neither empty)

I.2b: *sarvam*  
(all entities)

I.2a: *na cāśūnyam*

(nor non-empty)

I.1c: *śūnyatā vidyate*  
(emptiness exists)

I.2c: *sattvāt*

c: *upādāya-prajñapti*

(designation  
based upon)

I.1d: *tasyām api*

*sa vidyate* (unreal  
imagination exists)

(because of existence)

d: *madhyamā pratipad*

(middle path)

I.2d: *madhyamā pratipad*

(middle path)

The doctrine of emptiness, abstractedly expressed by Madhyamaka, refers to the terms as *citta*, *vijñāna*, and *abhūta-parikalpa*, which are more concrete, practical and related to everyday life situations by Yogācāra. The Yogācārins stress that the range of ‘fictive’ perceptions that does occur, although not corresponding to an independently existing world of subjects and objects, nevertheless occur. This particular emphasis in the use of the notion of emptiness is a specific feature of the Yogācāra explanation of the term, since even in

emptiness there is an ‘existent’, viz. the *abhūta-parikalpa*.<sup>323</sup> In addition, since awareness of the contradiction of original *śūnyatā*, i.e. ‘existence of *śūnyatā*’ characterized by negation and non-being is itself a contradiction, Yogācāra dares to define *śūnyatā* as “non-existence of the duality and existence of (that) non-existence” (MV I.13), so *śūnyatā* is non-existence as well as existence.<sup>324</sup> In defining emptiness in this way, the Yogācārins are actually considered as ‘tidying up’ the earlier work of the Madhyamaka School which suggests *śūnyatā* as ‘a swollen head is an empty head’ (i.e. things in the phenomenal world appear to be real and substantial outside, but they are actually empty within). This view is supported throughout the long and varied Buddhist history, even by modern Western scholars like Janice Willis, Stefan Anacker, Gadgin Nagao, Charles Harris.<sup>325</sup>

T .R. V. Murti states that “the Idealism of the Yogācāra School has to be understood as a significant modification of the Mādhyamika *śūnyatā* on a constructive basis”.<sup>326</sup> He says “the Vijñānavādin maintains two contentions: *vijñāna* is real, not apparent; *vijñāna* alone is real, not the object. The first is against the Mādhyamika, for whom both the knowing consciousness and the object known are relative to each other, and are nothing in themselves, i.e. unreal. The second is against the realist (*Ābhidharmika*) who accepts the object as real on a par with *vijñāna*. The Vijñānavāda steers a middle position between these two.”<sup>327</sup> Likewise, Stcherbatsky writes in his translation of the *Madhyāntavibhāga* “the whole chapter V of the first part of the treatise is devoted to the elucidation of the Yogācāra concept of this term (*śūnyatā*) as contrasted with the Mādhyamika view of it. There it is most clearly and emphatically stated that, for the Yogācāras, it means (1) *grāhya-grāhaka-abhāva* and (2) *tasya ca svabhāva*, i.e. (1) the (ultimate) non-reality of the relation of subject to object and (2) the (ultimate) reality of their Absolute.”<sup>328</sup> Thus, accepting the *śūnyatā* of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, the Yogācāra modifies the *śūnyatā* of the Mādhyamika as well as gives

<sup>323</sup> Richard King, p. 665.

<sup>324</sup> Nagao, *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*, p.198.

<sup>325</sup> Janice Dean Willis, pp. 13-36. Stefan Anacker (ed. and trans.), *Seven Works of Vasubandhu: The Buddhist Psychological Doctor*. Nagao, pp. 189-199. Ian Charles Harris, pp. 63-83, 102-175.

<sup>326</sup> T.R.V. Murti, p. 104.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>328</sup> *Madhyānta-Vibhāṅga* ascribed Bodhisattva Maitreya commented by Vasubandhu and Sthiramati, Stcherbatsky (trans.), p.4.

substance to the *śūnya* by identifying it with Pure Consciousness (*viññaptimātratā*) that is devoid of duality (*dvaya-śūnyatā*). They adopt the middle of both Nihilism and Realism.<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>329</sup>. *Mādhyānta-vibhāga Sūtra Bhāṣya Tīkā* of Sthiramati quoted in Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, p. 107. “*na śūnyaṃ nāpi cāśūnyaṃ sarvaṃ vidhīyate Prajāpāramitādiṣu sattvāditi, asattvād iti...madhyamā pratipac ca seti ... sarvāstīve sarvanāstīve vānta eva syān na madhyamā pratipat.*”

## Chapter 5

### Practice of *Śūnyatā* in Madhyamaka and Yogācāra

#### Insight Meditation

##### 5.1 Right View of *Śūnyatā*

Right view (Skt: *samyagdr̥ṣṭi*, Pāli: *sammādiṭṭhi*) is placed at the very beginning of the Noble Eightfold Path (*āryāṣṭāṅgamārga*) by the Buddha. Elsewhere in the *suttas* the Buddha calls right view the forerunner of the path (*pubbaṅgama*), which gives direction and efficacy to the reality of all phenomena.<sup>330</sup> In AN, right view is considered as the correct view of the three characteristics of conditioned phenomena which are arising, vanishing and its alteration while it persists.<sup>331</sup> In other words, it is an understanding of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and non-self (*anattā*) as the Buddha says in the *Dhammapada* “though one should live a hundred years without comprehending how all things rise and pass away, yet better, indeed, is a single day’s life of one who comprehends how all things rise and pass away”.<sup>332</sup> In particular, it is an understanding of dependent arising and the Four Noble Truths as mentioned in many places in *Sutta Piṭaka*. Once the Buddha said to the monks that, “Bhikkhus, this is the forerunner and precursor of the rising of the sun, that is, the dawn. So too, bhikkhus, for a bhikkhu this is the forerunner and precursor of the breakthrough to the Four Noble Truths as they really are, that is, right view. It is to be expected that a bhikkhu with right view will understand as it really is: ‘This is suffering.’... ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.’”<sup>333</sup> With comprehensive knowledge of the Four Noble Truths one view is called Mundane right view (Skt. *laukika samyagdr̥ṣṭi*, Pāli. *lokiya sammādiṭṭhi*) and the other is called Supra-mundane or Transcendent right view (Skt: *lokuttara samyagdr̥ṣṭi*, Pāli: *lokottara sammādiṭṭhi*). This is the twofold right view explained in *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta* of MN 117. The nature of the former is the correct way for

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<sup>330</sup>. *The Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta and its Commentary*, Bhikkhu Bodhi (ed.), (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1991), p. 4.

<sup>331</sup>. AN 3.47, p. 246. “*Tiṇimāni, bhikkhave, saṅkhatassa saṅkhatalakkhaṇāni. Katamāni tiṇi? Uppādo paññāyati, vayo paññāyati, ṭhitassa aññathattaṃ paññāyati.*”

<sup>332</sup>. Dhṛp. 113, Narada Thera (trans.), (Dehiwela: Systematic Print (Pvt) Ltd., 2000), p. 106. “*Yo ca vassasataṃ jīve. Apassam udayavyayam. Ekāhaṃ jīvitaṃ seyyo. Passato udayavyayam.*”

<sup>333</sup>. *Suriyūpama*, SN 56. 37, p. 1861. “*Suriyassa bhikkhave, udayato etaṃ pubbaṅgamaṃ etaṃ pubbanimittaṃ yadidaṃ aruṇaggaṃ. Evameva kho bhikkhave, bhikkhuno catunnaṃ ariyasaccānaṃ yathābhūtaṃ abhisamayāya etaṃ pubbaṅgamaṃ etaṃ pubbanimittaṃ yadidaṃ sammādiṭṭhi. Sammādiṭṭhikassetam bhikkhave, bhikkhuno pāṭikaṅkhaṃ "idaṃ dukkhanti yathābhūtaṃ pajānissati ayaṃ dukkhasamudayoti yathābhūtaṃ pajānissati ayaṃ dukkhanirodhoti yathābhūtaṃ pajānissati ayaṃ dukkhanirodhagāminī paṭipadāti yathābhūtaṃ pajānissati.*”

conventional life along with the natural order; so it enhances development of the path through supporting the arising of its other factors. Although all such understanding is still accompanied by the taints (*āsrava*), it can also be a factor for the arising of the supra-mundane right view. The latter is considered as the ultimate understanding of the world as things really are. It is stated as “the wisdom, the faculty of wisdom, the power of wisdom, the investigation of states enlightenment factor, the path factor of right view in one whose mind is noble, whose mind is taintless, who possesses the noble path and is developing the noble path: this is right view that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor of the path”.<sup>334</sup> It is the right view which leads to the mind becoming totally empty of self-attachment, empty of the two extremes, thus attaining the highest peaceful state (*nirvāṇa*), completely empty of affliction.<sup>335</sup> The *Questions of Ārya-Rāṣṭapāla Sūtra* (*Ārya-Rāṣṭapālapariṣcchā-sūtra*) states that due to ignorance of emptiness, peace, and the unborn, sentient beings wander in the cycle of existence. The phrase emphasizes emptiness, because all phenomena in the world are devoid of any inherent nature. In this context ‘peace’ refers to freedom from conceptual elaboration, which entails grasping onto true existence. ‘The unborn’ implies that in this sphere of freedom from conceptual elaboration, there is no arising, and since there is no arising, there is no cessation. This is the ultimate mode of all phenomena – the mode of emptiness.<sup>336</sup> The *Samyutta Nikāya* states “the emptiness concentration (*suññata samādhi*) is the path leading to the unconditioned path (*asaṅkhatagāmi magga*)”.<sup>337</sup>

The prerequisite condition for meditating on emptiness is that one can attain a non-conceptual realization of emptiness or the ultimate enlightenment consciousness. It is ‘the Buddha mind’ – a state in which dualities no longer have any meaning. In order to attain this state, one has a conceptual realization of emptiness or the conventional enlightenment thought, in which one's experience of emptiness is mixed with a generic idea of emptiness. The conventional enlightenment thought – the determination to achieve Buddhahood but still perceive the dualities of subject and object, *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, etc. – entails the practice of the Six Perfections (*Pāramitā*) of generosity (*dāna*), morality (*śīla*), patience (*kṣānti*),

<sup>334</sup>. *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta*, MN 117, p. 934. “yā kho bhikkhave, ariyacittassa anāsavacittassa ariyamaggasamaṅgino ariyamaggaṃ bhāvayato paññā paññindriyaṃ paññābalaṃ dhammavicayasambojjhaṅgo sammādiṭṭhi maggaṃ ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave, saṃmādiṭṭhi ariyā anāsavā lokuttarā maggaṅgā.”

<sup>335</sup>. Choong Mun-keat, *The Notion of Emptiness in Early Buddhism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1999), p. vii.

<sup>336</sup>. Gen Lamrimpa, *Realizing Emptiness: Madhyamaka Insight Meditation*, B. Alan Wallace (trans.), (New York: Snow Lion Publications, 2002), p. 18.

<sup>337</sup>. *Suññatasamādhi Sutta*, SN 43.4, p. 1373. “Suññato samādhi...ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, asaṅkhatagāmi maggo ... pe ....”

energy (*vīrya*), meditation (*dhyāna*) and wisdom (*prajñā*). Wisdom is the crown of the six. It is right view of emptiness which is the perfection of wisdom transforming the practices of compassion, merit as well as the other remaining five into perfections.<sup>338</sup> This can be explained that when one lacks any right understanding of emptiness, then all of one's other virtues are said to be blind for themselves and others to be freed from suffering. It should be borne in mind that right view of emptiness is the sense of the nature of emptiness which is punching a hole in the bag of *saṃsāra*.<sup>339</sup> As above analyzed the emptiness teaching firstly is comprehended in terms of the two truths, *saṃvṛtisatya* and *paramārthasatya*. In reference to *saṃvṛti*, the mundane nature of things is the relativity, conditionedness (*pratītyasamutpāda*), and is also conveyed by *upādāya prajñapti*, *vijñapti*. All things in reality are *niḥsvabhāva* and *naiḥsvābhāvya*. In reference to *paramārthasatya*, the ultimately true nature of things, *śūnyatā* means the non-conceptual, non-phenomenal, indeterminate nature of the absolute. Secondly, *śūnyatā* is understood through the Middle Way – the way that sees things as they are – which is not clinging to the determinate as ultimate in its determined nature and to the ultimate as anything specific. The last but most important nature of *śūnyatā* is the sense of the beyond of the thirst (*eṣaṇā*) for the real, the thirst for fulfillment. It describes the mind's thirst for fulfillment which comes to a rest with the realization of reality.<sup>340</sup>

## 5.2 Meditation on Emptiness

### 5.2.1 Meditation on Non-self

Meditation on non-self is explained as the first step. At a conventional level, there is a self which has the innate nature of delusion, passes through the lives, accumulates karma and experiences the result. Nevertheless, this 'self' in fact does not exist at the absolute level, i.e. there is no truly existent self. Meditation on non-self is that one realizes the non-existence of that self. Refuting a truly existing self refers to a 'completely imputed self', a self which is asserted as absolutely existing, and to a 'spontaneously arisen self', the reference object of our ego-clinging – the thoughts that think, 'I', 'myself', and so forth. In other words, it is contemplation on the non-existence of the five aggregates [*skandha*], the first which is form [*rūpa*] as the individual's body and the last four i.e. feeling [*vedanā*], perception [*saṃjñā*], formation [*saṃskāra*] and consciousness [*viññāna*] as the mind. Since the truly existent self

<sup>338</sup>. Della Santina, *The Tree of Enlightenment*, pp. 191-2.

<sup>339</sup>. Gen Lamrimpa, pp. 19-20.

<sup>340</sup>. Ramanan, pp. 338-9, 342.



is apprehended by ignorance with reference to the self which is apprehended with reference to the aggregates.<sup>341</sup> Therefore, the meditator has to view all five skandhas as being naturally empty, i.e. just a name, a basis for imputation that does not exist by its own essence. The *Heart of Wisdom Sūtra* says “one should have a pure sincere view that all five *skandhas* are naturally empty as well.” This statement is followed by the *Svātantrika-madhyamaka* tradition. In order to meditate, one firstly has to establish that no phenomenon whatsoever truly exists. Then, one refutes any true existence. There is no phenomenon which exists by its own essence. There is no consciousness, nor any aspect of clear light. There is absolute emptiness, blank like space. However, it is possible to easily develop a wrong understanding of emptiness that is criticized by great scholars such as Candrakīrti and Śāntideva.<sup>342</sup>

The Buddha instructs that a Bhikkhu is obliged to dwell contemplating arising and passing away of these aggregates which arise as the object of mental attachment. Since ‘self’ and ‘I’ awareness arises in the place where mental attachment develops with the five aggregates, the process of inward and outward emptiness constitutes the path for freeing oneself from attachment, from ‘I’ consciousness, and hence from Bondage.<sup>343</sup> The meditation on inward and outward emptiness is respectively instructed in *Cūḷasuññata* and *Mahāsuññata suttas* of MN 121, 122. The former introduces the preliminary steps for the process of emptying objects of consciousness in which the real test of inner experience is expected to proceed from here. One then, the latter presents, is prompted to attend to an external emptiness and proceed through similar critical reflection as regards his state of concentration. He is further prompted to attend to an inward and outward emptiness simultaneously. Finally, he attends to the perfected state of concentration whereby he realizes the state of *Arhatship*.<sup>344</sup> The five aggregates are defined in the double way ‘mentality-materiality’ (*nāma-rūpa*) by Buddhaghosa. In order to meditate on non-self, to abandon this worldly designation of ‘a being’ and ‘a person’ more thoroughly, to surmount confusion about beings and to establish the mind on the plane of non-confusion, he makes sure that the meaning of mere mentality-materiality of all things which is ‘no being’, ‘no person’ is realized.<sup>345</sup> After observing the nature of phenomena as empty of self, one should then come to meditate

<sup>341</sup>. Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso, *Meditation on Emptiness* (Seattle: Nalandabodhi Publications, 2001), pp. 15-6.

<sup>342</sup>. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-48.

<sup>343</sup>. *Buddhist Concepts: Old and New*, Buddhadasa P. Kirthesinghe (Ed.), (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1983), pp. 122-3.

<sup>344</sup>. Buddhadasa P. Kirthesinghe (Ed.), p. 121-2.

<sup>345</sup>. *Visuddhimagga* XVIII, 25 (Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa): *The Path of Enlightenment*, Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli (trans.), (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1975), p. 687-8.

(*samatha* and *vipassanā*) leading to *samādhi* and *prajñā*. This way of practice variously called emptiness-mind-liberation (*śūnyatā cetovimutti*) is the essential path to the ultimate liberation, *nirvāṇa*.

The contemplation on the selfless nature of all phenomena is taught by the Buddha in terms of ‘the liberation of mind by emptiness’ (*suññatā cetovimutti*) in *Godatta sutta* of SN 41.7. “Here a bhikkhu, gone to the forest or to the foot of a tree or to an empty hut, reflects thus: ‘Empty is this of self or of what belongs to self.’ This is called the liberation of mind by emptiness.”<sup>346</sup> The practice of *suññatā cetovimutti* is considered as the concentration on emptiness (*suññato samādhi*). It is mentioned along with signless-concentration (*animitto samādhi*) and desireless-concentration (*appaṇihito samādhi*) in SN 43.4, DN 33 and AN 3.163.<sup>347</sup> The three *samādhis* are sometimes expressed as three ‘emancipations’ *vimokkha* (Skt: *vimokṣas*) or three ‘doors to emancipation’ *vimokkhamukhas* (Skt: *vimokṣamukhas*). *Suññatā vimokkha* (Skt: *śūnyatā vimokṣa*) is the state of mind freed from the three impurities explained in *Dhammapada* 93:

“He whose corruptions are destroyed, he who is not attached to food, he who has Deliverance. Which is Void and Signless, as his object, - his path, like that of birds in the air, cannot be traced.”<sup>348</sup>

*Śūnyatā vimokṣamukha* results from the contemplation on the non-soul-concept. The *Vimuttimagga* of *Upatissa* also makes clear how the void-emancipation is fulfilled through penetration into no-soul-thought. One dwelling on the no-soul-thought obtains *śūnyatā vimokṣamukha*, says the *Paṭisambhidā*. This specific import of *śūnyatā* has also been much amplified by Nāgasena and Buddhaghosa. Nāgasena comments in *Milindapañha* book “the self-character of all the manifest elements, the supreme voidness, i.e. absence of any living being and intention the extreme voidness should be made right”.<sup>349</sup> Likewise, Buddhaghosa remarks: just as a marionette is void, soulless and without curiosity (i.e. free of any living being and intention), and while it walks and stands merely through the combination of strings and wood, yet it seems as if it had curiosity and interestedness, so too, this mentality-

<sup>346</sup>. *Godatta Sutta*, SN 41.7, p. 1325. “Idha, bhante, bhikkhu araṇṇagato vā rukkhamūlagato vā suññāgāragato vā iti paṭi-sañcīk-khati: ‘suññamidam attena vā attaniyena vā’ ti. Ayaṃ vuccati, bhante, suññatā cetovimutti.”

<sup>347</sup>. *Suññatasamādhi Sutta*, SN 43.4, p. 1373. *Sangīti Sutta*, DN 33, p. 486. *Kamma-patha-peyyāla*, AN 3.163, p. 374.

<sup>348</sup>. *Dhp.* 93, p. 87. “Yassasavā parikkhīṇā āhāre ca anissito, Suññato animitto ca vimokkho yassa gocaro | Ākāse’va sakuntānam padaṃ tassa durannayaṃ.”

<sup>349</sup>. N.A. Sastri, “*Sunyata and its significance in Buddhism*”, pp. 6-7. Mon. 26 Jan. 2015  
<[http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/bot/pdf/bot\\_12\\_02\\_01.pdf](http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/bot/pdf/bot_12_02_01.pdf)>.

materiality is void, soulless and without curiosity, and while it walks and stands merely through the combination of the two together, yet it seems as if it had curiosity and interestedness.<sup>350</sup> Thus the Buddha especially teaches Mogharāja that

“Look on the world as empty, being always mindful.  
Having removed wrong view of self, in this way one will cross beyond Death.”<sup>351</sup>

### 5.2.2 Meditation on Mind

The *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* which is the fundamental of Yogācāra Schools declares that all dharmas, except Consciousness or Mind, are unreal. Consciousness-only is the established truth preached by the Buddha. The *Sūtra* says that all the three worlds (*kāma*, *rūpa* and *arūpa*) are the result of discrimination or thought-relations. No external object exists in reality. All that is, is Consciousness.<sup>352</sup> In this *sūtra*, the Buddha teaches that the *Bodhisattvas-Mahāsattvas* will before long attain the understanding that *Nirvāṇa* and *Samāsāra* are one. Their conduct will be in accordance with the effortless exhibition of a great loving heart that ingeniously contrives means of salvation, knowing that all beings have the nature of being like a vision or a reflection, and that there is one thing which is not bound by causation, being beyond the distinction of subject and object ; and further seeing that there is nothing outside Mind, and in accordance with a position of unconditionality, they will by degrees pass through the various stages of *Bodhisattvahood* and will experience the various states of *Samādhi*, and will by virtue of their faith understand that the triple world is of Mind itself, and thus understanding will attain the *Samādhi Māyopama*. The Bodhisattvas entering into the state of imagelessness where they see into the truth of Mind-only, arriving at the abode of the *Pāramitās*, and keeping themselves away from the thought of genesis, deed, and discipline, they will attain the *Samādhi Vajravimbopama* which is in compliance with the *Tathāgatakāya* and with the transformations of suchness (*Dharmatā*). After achieving revulsion in the abode of the *Vijñānas*, they will gradually realize the *Tathāgatakāya*, which is endowed with the powers, the psychic faculties, self-control, love, compassion, and means; which can enter into all the Buddha-lands and into the sanctuaries of the philosophers; and which is beyond the realm of *Citta-mano-manovijñāna*. In order to attain liberation, therefore, these *Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas* should exercise themselves in compliance with the

<sup>350</sup>. *Visuddhimagga* XVIII, 32, p. 689.

<sup>351</sup>. *Mogharāja-māṇava-pucchā*, Sutta Nipāta 5.16. “*Suññato lokaṃ avekkhassu, Mogharāja sadā sato; Attānudiṭṭhiṃ ūhacca, Evaṃ maccutaro siyā.*”

<sup>352</sup>. Chandradhar Sharma, p. 109.

truth of Mind-only to desist from discriminating and reasoning erroneously on such notions as *skandhas*, *dhātus*, *āyatanas*, thought, causation, deed, discipline, and rising, abiding, and destruction.<sup>353</sup> The *Yogins* must recognize an external world whose self-nature is of Mind itself and of discriminations such as the grasping (subject) and the grasped (object). Only those are capable of obtaining an insight into the flowing of Mind itself in a world of discrimination, of being baptised by the Buddhas living in the lands without limits, and of realizing the self-control, powers, psychic faculties, and *samādhis*.<sup>354</sup>

Consequently, the meditator should abide in *dharmatā* which is empty of the duality of perceived (object) and perceiver (subject). There are four applications gained before resting within such *dharmatā*. These four applications are presented in Maitreya's *Distinguishing Phenomena and Pure Being*.

“The introduction to practicing wisdom correctly  
Entails the following four specific aspects:  
Practice involving something to focus on;  
Practice involving nothing to focus on;  
Practice involving no subject to focus on;  
Practice whose focus is nothing to focus on.”<sup>355</sup>

The first is to engage in practice involving something to focus on, namely, that all phenomena are mistaken appearances of mind only. With that as the basis, one then engages in practice involving nothing existing that could constitute a perceived object on which to focus. The perceived does not exist as an outer object. With the third, one engages in practice involving no subject to focus on, i.e., whatever appears as perceiver does not exist since what appears as perceived does not exist. It is the mind itself which appears as both, the perceived and the perceiver, but neither of these is really there. Finally, one engages in practice whose focus is the suchness, which is empty of perceived and perceiver on which to focus at all. One should contemplate on these four aspects in order to abide within *dharmatā*, emptiness of duality.<sup>356</sup>

<sup>353</sup>. *The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki (trans.), (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 2003), pp. 38-9.

<sup>354</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>355</sup>. *Maitreya's Distinguishing Phenomena and Pure Being*, Jim Scott (trans.), (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2003), p. 147.

<sup>356</sup>. Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso, pp. 33-5.

### 5.2.3 Meditation on Absolute Emptiness

Meditation on absolute emptiness is that one should rest within *dharmatā*, i.e. within emptiness which is free of all mental fabrications. That means there is no grasping anything in any way such as thinking ‘it is’ or ‘it is not’. *Prāsaṅghika-madhyamaka* and *Yogācāra-madhyamaka* agree on the essential point of meditation of the absolute being merely freedom from mental fabrications. However, from the absence of self in the individual, they all differ on how they describe this mere freedom from fabrications.<sup>357</sup>

Initially, the meditator gains a clear idea of what is, and what is not, being refuted. The object of refutation is inherent existence or *dharmatā*, *dharmadhātu*. The meditator clarifies what intrinsic existence is, and how it differs from mere existence. He may review the faults in attempting to refute existence as such, the conventional realm as well, particularly if his problem is to over-negate. He subsequently checks that the reasons given for absence of intrinsic existence do indeed entail such an absence. For example, in meditating on the emptiness of intrinsic existence of the self, he might consider that the self lacks intrinsic existence because of being neither the same as nor different from the psycho-physical constituents (the *skandhas*). He realizes that therefore the subject of analysis lacks intrinsic existence. With experience the meditator is able then to place his mind on this absence alone, the vacuity which is a specific vacuity that is absence of intrinsic existence in the object being analyzed. His mind in this state has no actual conscious conception of subject and object, although subject and object do still appear. He is said to have attained a conceptual realization of emptiness – conceptual because it is through the medium of a conceptualized image, it is still not a direct cognition of emptiness. Through repeated familiarization with such meditation the conviction that entities are empty of intrinsic existence becomes more and more firm and penetrates his awareness.<sup>358</sup> Then, any speculating about existence, non-existence, appearance, emptiness, thing, non-thing, etc. which would involve such mental fabrications are freed. This is called the absolute freedom of any assertion of emptiness, because it is beyond all conventions and mental fabrications, i.e. all are the same, inseparable, not to be conceptually grasped in the absolute, not ‘from

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<sup>357</sup>. Ibid., pp. 55, 62.

<sup>358</sup>. Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, pp. 72-3.

itself, other, both or neither (causelessly)'.<sup>359</sup> Jamgon Kongtrul in his *Treasury of Knowledge* still emphasizes

“[For a] *prāsaṅgika* the object to become accustomed to, the *dharmadhātu*, [and] what becomes accustomed to, the mind,  
Are inseparable, like water being poured into water.”<sup>360</sup>

The next stage of meditation on emptiness is to attain perfect meditative absorption. Practices for generating stabilization are self-settled, uncontrived, and calm abiding (*śamatha*). The meditator gains an ability to place his mind without effort and without wavering on the meditation object.<sup>361</sup> On the one hand, the meditator, instructed to ‘rest as a small child in your own way of being’ taught by the yogi Milarepa, does not need to reject appearances, label them or create any conceptual association; but just rest relaxedly in the true nature of mind. Encouraged to ‘rest as an ocean without waves’, on the other, he is not to be distracted by wavering thoughts of the three times: past, present and future; but completely calm and still as an ocean without waves.<sup>362</sup>

With the calm, still, powerful mind thus developed, the meditator now returns to emptiness, alternating calming meditation with analytic meditation. Eventually a deep state of absorption, one-pointedness (but not yet pure calm-abiding), is attained through analytic meditation itself. When analytic meditation actually generates the full state of calm-abiding, one is said to have attained insight (*vipaśyanā*). If this insight is generated with emptiness as the object, one enters what is called the ‘Path of Preparation’ (*prayogamārga*). Subsequently, the meditator removes the conceptual elements of this insight into emptiness. When a direct, non-conceptual insight into emptiness is attained in meditative absorption then one is said to enter the ‘Path of Insight’ (*darśanamārga*). This is a direct, non-dual cognition of the ultimate, emptiness. He has now so to refine his perception that he eradicates completely even the afflictive obstructions (*kleśāvaraṇa*) and cognitive obstructions (*jñeyāvaraṇa*). He must attain omniscience, Buddhahood, in which he no longer even sees intrinsic existence but sees emptiness in the very same perceptual act as he sees objects.<sup>363</sup> In the Yogācāra and Madhyamaka systems, the cognitive obstructions are treated as subtler hindrances that serve as the origin of the afflictive obstructions, and result from fundamental misapprehensions about the nature of reality. According to Yogācāra, because of the attachment deriving

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<sup>359</sup>. Gyamtso, p. 53.

<sup>360</sup>. *The Treasury of Knowledge* by Jamgon Kongtrul quoted in Gyamtso, p. 54.

<sup>361</sup>. Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p. 73.

<sup>362</sup>. Gyamtso, pp. 63-4.

<sup>363</sup>. Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, pp. 73-4.

ultimately from the reification of what are actually imaginary external phenomena, conceptualization and discrimination arise in the mind, which lead in turn to pride, ignorance, and wrong views. Based on these mistakes in cognition, then, the individual engages in defiled actions, such as anger, envy, etc., which constitute the afflictive obstructions. The afflictive obstructions may be removed by followers of the *Śrāvaka*, *Pratyekabuddha*, and beginning *Bodhisattva* paths, by applying various antidotes or counteragents (*pratipakṣa*) to the afflictions (*kleśa*); overcoming these types of obstructions will lead to freedom from further rebirth. The cognitive obstructions, however, are more deeply ingrained and can only be overcome by advanced *Bodhisattvas* who seek instead to achieve *Buddhahood*, by perfecting their understanding of emptiness (*śūnyatā*). Buddhas, therefore, are the only class of beings who have overcome both types of obstructions and thus are able simultaneously to cognize all objects of knowledge in the universe; this is one of the sources for their unparalleled skills as teachers of sentient beings. The *jñeyāvaraṇa* are therefore sometimes translated as “obstructions to omniscience”.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>364</sup>. Robert E. Buswell and Donald S. Lopez (eds.), *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014).

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

*Śūnyatā* which is the main doctrine of Mahāyāna Buddhism was formulated and justified differently by two Indian schools of Buddhism, the Madhyamaka and the Yogācāra. This doctrine was systematically expounded by the Madhyamaka in consideration of the philosophy of the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature. The Madhyamaka's philosophy of emptiness proclaims that inasmuch as *dharma*s dependently co-arise, they are said to be empty of self-nature (*niḥsvabhāva*). Nāgārjuna insists that one can account for enlightenment only if one can recognize that all phenomena lack self-existent reality, i.e. emptiness as dependent origination. Nāgārjuna equates emptiness with dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) which is the truth of all phenomena realized by the Buddha himself. Thus, the Madhyamaka philosophy represents a logical development out of the early Buddhist teachings. Furthermore, Nāgārjuna in his dialectic develops the doctrine of *śūnyatā* not as a view at all, but as a philosophically critical attitude. That is a common argumentative procedure of the denial of four alternatives (*catuḥkoṭis*). 'It is empty' is not to be said, nor 'it is non-empty', nor 'it is both (empty and non-empty)', nor 'it is neither'. The religious significance of this critical dialectic is the 'non-abiding' or 'non-clinging' of the way things are. Thus, Nāgārjuna emphasizes that the awareness of emptiness is the relinquishing of all views, even the negation of self-existence reality. Those who adhere to any idea of emptiness are incorrigible.

Likewise, the Yogācāra also affirms that all phenomena are empty. They state that emptiness is still seen as the result of causes and conditions and therefore characterized as dependently originated and empty of self-nature. All things, Asaṅga claims, in fact have the unreal imagination (*abhūta-parikalpa*) which artificially divides the world into many dualities such as subject and object, being and non-being. The elimination of dualistic fabrication is true emptiness of the reality. The Yogācāra often refutes mistaken ideas about emptiness, in particular 'wrongly-grasped emptiness' (*durgrhīta-śūnyatā*), at the same time put importance on a true understanding of emptiness, 'well-grasped emptiness' (*sugrīta-śūnyatā*). Yogācāra thought puts central emphasis on the practice of yogic meditation through the system of consciousness. It is consciousness that knows in an empty manner, that is the comprehensive reality, the Yogācāra reflects. Consciousness is constructed in *pratītyasamutpāda*, especially in three kinds of reality or three natures (*trisvabhāva*): the imagined (*parikalpita-svabhāva*), the other-dependent (*paratantra-svabhāva*), and the



absolutely accomplished (*pariṇiṣpanna-svabhāva*). It is these three natures which explain the functioning of the interplay between the store consciousness (*ālaya-vijñāna*) and the active consciousness (*pravṛtti-vijñānas*). It is realized that the illusory reality is non-existent and purifies the conditioned existence, which itself is not a real object but a modality of consciousness. The non-duality or emptiness of all phenomena then is manifested and exists from the ultimate point of view (*paramārthasatya*). Thus, whereas the notion of emptiness in Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka system is not specifically "placed" but equated with the doctrine of dependent origination, it is in Yogācāra thought located in the system of consciousnesses.

Nevertheless, the Madhyamaka philosophy, which began with Nāgārjuna, is believed to be wholly inherited by Maitreya-nātha, Asaṅga, and also Vasubandhu. The *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras are equally revered as authentic by both Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools. Furthermore, the Yogācāra developed the doctrine of emptiness as an important position by inheriting the entire body of thought of their former masters, i.e. *Prajñāpāramitā* and Madhyamaka. The Yogācāra emphasizing the insight on the Madhyamaka's thought displays a spirit of underlying continuity and acceptance. All Buddhist Schools, either explicitly or implicitly, acknowledge the world to be dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) which is understood as truth (*satya*) since it is the ground of being (*sat*). In the Madhyamaka, it is not referred to by name or accounted for by the explanation of phenomena, but relegated to the whole of empirical existence under one category *saṃvṛti*. The Yogācāra provides name for the provisional nature of such denotation. *Saṃvṛti* is constituted through a particular way by the dependent *paratantra* and the imagined *parikalpita*. Consciousness as non-conceptual is the *paramārtha*. The enlightened state is the accomplished nature (*pariṇiṣpannasvabhāva*) by Yogācāra, while it is referred to as the ultimate truth (*paramārthasatya*) by Madhyamaka.

Having stated the above, the doctrine of *śūnyatā* paves the way for both Madhyamaka and Early Yogācāra philosophies in early Mahāyāna Buddhism. While the Madhyamaka states that both the conditioned and unconditioned reality are empty, the Yogācāra emphasizes that the true reality is neither empty nor non-empty.

## Glossary

*abhāva* 無, non-being, negation, absence.

*abhāvasya bhāvaḥ*, being of non-being.

*abhūta-parikalpa*, literally, that where the construction of the non-existent (object) obtains; in the Yogācāra philosophy, a term for the ‘*paratantra*’ reality, the Constructive Ideation of Consciousness, the stream of ideas itself.

*ācārya* 阿闍梨, 教授, teacher, master.

*adhipati-pratyaya* 僧上緣, literally, a presiding or dominant condition or cause, e.g., the organ of vision with regard to the occurrence of visual sensation; one of the four kinds of Causes. This has been differently interpreted by the *Theravādins* and *Sarvāstivādins*. According to the latter, it is the influence that any entity exerts upon all other entities excepting itself and the unconditioned noumena.

*ālambana*, *ālambana-pratyaya* 緣緣, the object viewed as a cause or condition for the occurrence of any knowledge.

*ālaya*, *ālaya-vijñāna* 阿賴耶識, in the Yogācāra philosophy, the ‘store-house’. Consciousness containing potentially all the ideas and other mental states; it is also the residual of all thoughts and deeds.

*anātman* (Pāli: *anattā*) 無我, no self or non-self or more broadly “insubstantiality”; the third of the “three marks” (*trilakṣaṇa*) of existence, along with impermanence (*anitya*) and suffering (*duḥkha*). The basic Buddhist doctrine is that all things lack substance or permanent identical reality.

*animitta* 無相, *animittatā*, refraining from marking things occasions for clinging, as one of the gates to freedom or nirvāṇa.

*animitta-cetosamādhī* 無相心定, meditation on refraining from marking things occasions for clinging.

*anitya*, *anityatā* (Pāli: *anicca*) 無常, impermanent, changing, momentary.

*anupalambha* 不可得, 無所得, the non-clinging, as a name for *nirvāṇa*, as a name for *prajñāpāramitā*

*anupalambha-sūnyatā* 不可得空, non-clinging *sūnyatā*, a name for the ultimate truth.

*appaṇihito samādhi* 無願三昧, concentration on freeing from desire.

*Arhat* 阿羅漢, the perfect Saint who has eliminated all passions and suffering. This is the highest stage of attainment according to the *Hīnayāna*. The *Mahāyāna* sharply contrasts this with the *Bodhisattva* ideal of attaining complete Buddhahood and of non-egoistic striving for the salvation of all beings.

*arūpya-dhātu* (*arūpa-dhātu*) 無色界, the immaterial world, other realm of formlessness.

*ārya-satya* 聖諦, the Holy Truths, the four Buddhist Truths of Suffering, its Cause, its Cessation, and the Path leading to Cessation.

*asaṃskṛta* 無爲, *asaṃskṛta-dharma* 無爲法, the Unconditioned entities. According to the *Sarvāstivādins* there are three such entities: Space (*ākāśa*), *Nirvāṇa*, and the Cessation of Elements due to the lack of favorable conditions.

*Asaṅga* 無著, (ca. 320–c. 390 CE). *Ārya Asaṅga*, Indian scholar who is considered to be a founder of the *Yogācāra* school of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism.

*āsrava* (Pāli. *āsava*) 漏, the impure tendencies, passions (*kleśas*), that infect and defile the mind, causing bondage and suffering.

*ātman* 我, Self, Soul, Substance. *ātman* is equated with *dravya* (substance), with the *nitya* (permanent, eternal), with *svabhāva* (nature or self-being), with *sāra* (essence) and *vastu* (real).

*avavāda-prajñapti* 受波羅攝提, convention in regard to the complex entities in distinction from their subtle constituents.

*avyākṛta* 無記, *avyākṛta-vastūni*, the Undeclared, the Inexpressible, the fourteen questions regarding the ultimate nature of the World, the Perfect Being (*Tathāgata*), and the Soul (*jīva*) which Buddha declared as not capable of definition either existent or non-existent or both or neither.

*āyatana* 處, literally ‘bases’. In Buddhist psychology, the twelve āyatanas are the six senses or modes of perception and the six kinds of object they correspond to, namely: (1) sight and colour/form (*rūpa-āyatana*); (2) hearing and sound (*śabda-āyatana*); (3) smell and scent (*gandha-āyatana*); (4) taste and flavours (*rasa-āyatana*); (5) touch and tangible objects (*sparsa-āyatana*); and (6) the mind and ideas (*mano-āyatana*). Each āyatana is thus the sphere or domain of a particular sense, and encompasses everything that can be experienced through that particular ‘sense-door’.

*bhāva* 有, being, existence, affirmation.

Bhāvaviveka 清辯 (ca.490-570), A noted Indian Madhyamaka philosopher, also known as Bhavya, who wrote a number of important works, including the *Tarka-jvālā*, refuting other contemporary Buddhist and non-Buddhist doctrines. His method of argumentation is characterized by the use of standard syllogisms (*svatantra*) derived from the Buddhist school of logic in contrast to the *reductio ad absurdum* (*prasāṅga*) method of argument favoured by the later philosopher Candrakīrti.

*Bodhisattva* 菩薩, the Aspirant for Enlightenment.

*caitta*, mental states.

*citta* 心, mind, Pure Consciousness. In Buddhism, this is conceived as a stream or a series of momentary mental states without any abiding stratum.

*Cittamātra* 唯心宗, a term derived from the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* used in a loose and somewhat misleading manner in Tibetan Buddhist doxology to denote the Yogācāra school of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

*darśana* 知見, Immediate Knowledge, Transcendental Insight, Intuition.

*darśanamārga* 見道, the path of Insight or Illumination.

*dharma* 法, Law, especially Moral Law; virtue or merit; Essence or Nature of a thing; element or ultimate constituent of existence.

*dharma-dhātu*, *dharmatā* 法性, the Reality of Dharmas; the Noumenal Ground of phenomena; synonymous with *Dharma-kāya*, *Śūnyatā* and *Tathatā*.

*dharmakāya* 法身, the Cosmic Body of the Buddha: the essence of all beings.

*dharma-nairātmya* 法無我, the unreality of elements as separate ultimate existences; this contention of the Mādhyamika is directed against the dogmatic acceptance of the reality of elements by the Hīnayāna Schools (*Ābhidharmika* and *Sautrāntika*).

Dharmapāla 護法, one of the leading exponents of the Yogācāra school in India, a contemporary of Bhāvaviveka, active during the early decades of the 7th century CE and dying young at the age of 32. Eventually based at Nālandā, he initially travelled widely and studied both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna throughout India, with Dignāga numbered among his teachers. Unlike classical Yogācāra, his interpretation tends towards idealism and it was through the connections his student Śīlabhadra had with Hsüan-tsang that this understanding of Yogācāra was eventually transmitted to China.

*dharma-prajñapti* 法假, conventional designation of the subtle constituent elements.

*dhātu* 界, the literal meaning is ‘root’ or ultimate element. In Buddhist thought, this term is used in three senses: (i) the three planes of existence (*trai-dhātuka*), viz., the *Kāmadhātu* (the sphere of gross desires or bodies), *Rūpadhātu* (the sphere of subtle bodies) and *Arūpadhātu* (the sphere of immaterial bodies); (ii) for the six ultimate elements of existence (the four general elements of matter, viz., air, fire, water and earth), *ākāśa* (space) and *viññāna* (pure awareness); (iii) for the eighteen elements of existence (*aṣṭādaśadhātavaḥ*), viz., the six sense-data, the six sense-organs of cognition and the six resultant cognition or sensations.

*dravyasat* (*vastusat*) 實有, literally being a real, an immutable substance.

*duḥkha* (*dukkha*) 苦, suffering, unpleasant, painful; unsatisfactory, pain.

*ekayāna* 一乘, the One Way or Vehicle; a concept found in certain Mahāyāna texts such as the *Lotus Sūtra* which teaches that the three Ways (*triyāna*)—the *Śrāvakayāna*, the *Pratyekabuddhayāna*, and the *Bodhisattvayāna*—taught by the Buddha all converge in the single Buddhayāna.

*eṣaṇā* 求, seeking, longing, thirst for the real.

Fa-hsien 法顯, Chinese scholar and pilgrim-monk, born in Shansi and trained at Ch'ang-an in the west of China, which he left in 399 CE to visit India and elsewhere in search of the complete canon of Buddhist scripture. After extensive travels he returned home in 414 and began a translation of the Buddhist Scriptures. His works include an account of his travels, translated into English by various persons including a translation by H. A. Giles, *The Travels of Fa Hsien* (1923).

*grāhaka* 能取, grasper (subject).

*grāhya* 所取, the graspable, the grasped (the object).

*grāhya-grāhaka-abhāva* 無能取所取, the absence of the subject and the object.

*hetu, hetu-pratyaya* 因緣, cause; also used more specifically to mean the 'producing cause' (*nirvarttako hetuḥ*).

*Hīnayāna*, 小乘 also called Small Vehicle or Liberated Vehicle, which refers to *Śrāvaka* and *Pratyeka-Buddha*. It is a school of Buddhism, popular in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, hence also known as Southern Buddhism, in contrast with Northern Buddhism or Mahāyāna, the form mainly prevalent from Nepal to Japan. Hīnayāna is sometimes described as self-benefiting, and Mahāyāna as self-benefiting for the benefit of others. Another difference is that Pali is the general literary language in Hīnayāna while Sanskrit of Mahāyāna. Hīnayāna is nearer to the original teaching of the Buddha.

Hsuan-tsang 玄奘 (596-664), Chinese philosopher. After long search for truth in his homeland he went to India in his early thirties and remained there for sixteen years, eventually returning home to set up a school for the translation of hundreds of works that he had collected in India. His own findings expressed in his *Treatise on the Establishment of the Doctrine of Consciousness-Only* focus on the contention that neither the self nor external objects exist, but only the inner, psychic awareness. This is not and probably cannot be fully realized except by the *Arhat*.

*jñeyāvaraṇa* 所知障, the veil or obscuration of ignorance with regard to the true nature of the real. In the Yogācāra system, this stands for the obscuration engendered by the wrong belief in the reality of object. Only a Buddha can overcome this, in addition to overcoming the defilement-hindrane (*kleśāvaraṇa*). When it is overcome, a Buddha

is perfectly omniscient, capable of knowing both the intrinsic (*svalakṣaṇa*) and common characteristics (*sāmānya-lakṣaṇa*) of all things.

*kāma* 欲, pleasure; lust; enjoyment; an object of sexual enjoyment.

*karma* 業, 'action'. In the specifically Buddhist sense, it primarily means a morally skillful or unskillful action which determines specifically the manner of future existence of the doer. It is divisible as *mano-karma*, *kāya-karma* and *vāk-karma*. The latter two can induce *avijñapti-karma*. Karma can also be distinguished as individual and collective karma-s, of which the fruits of the latter are not regarded as *vipāka*, but *adhipati-phalas*.

*kleśa* 煩惱, afflictions as arising from and headed by ignorance and perversions.

*kleśāvaraṇa* 煩惱障, afflictive obstructions; obstructions to liberation; the veiling caused by passions.

*lakṣaṇa* 相, sign, mark in distinction from *dhātu* (nature); essential nature as synonym of *prakṛti*, *svabhāva*.

*laukika samyagdrṣṭi* (Pāli. *lokiya sammādiṭṭhi*) 正見出世間, the right view of the mundane or worldly truth.

*Madhyamaka* 中論, the Middle Position or Philosophy (of Nāgārjuna).

*madhyamā-pratipad* 中道, the Middle Path; the avoidance of extremes.

*Mādhyamika*, a follower of the Middle Position or Madhyamaka Philosophy.

*Mahāyāna* 大乘, 'Great Vehicle'. A name used by the Mahāyānists to stress that they aim at the perfect Buddha-hood of all beings, and their ideal is thus superior to that of the *Hīnayāna*.

*Mahīśāsakas*, One of the major Eighteen Schools of Early Buddhism, thought to have been a 2nd century BCE offshoot of the Vibhajyavādins. Based on present knowledge of its Abhidharma doctrines, it is sometimes considered to be a mainland Indian parent school linked to Sri Lankan Theravāda.

Maitreya-nātha (270-350 CE) 彌勒, One of the three founders of Yogācāra, along with Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. His dates are uncertain, and scholars are divided as to whether the name denotes a historical human teacher or the Bodhisattva Maitreya, used pseudo-epigraphically. The number of works attributed to him in the Tibetan and Chinese traditions but variously include the *Yogācārabhūmi Śāstra*, the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāra*, the *Dharma-dharmatā-vibhāga*, the *Madhyānta-vibhāga-kārikā*, the *Abhisamaya-alāṃkāra*, and the *Ratna-gotra-vibhāga*.

*mokṣa* 解脫, become released; liberation; emancipation.

*naiḥsvābhāvyā*, *niḥsvabhāva* 無自性, 自性空, devoid of self-being, non-substantiality

*nairātmya* 無我, soullessness, substancelessness, unreality.

*nairātmya-vāda*, the theory that there is no substance or soul.

*nāma* 名, names, concepts as conventionally established; mental elements in distinction from *rūpa*.

*nāmasaṅketa-prajñapti* 名字一, convention of names and signs.

*neyārtha* 不了義, teaching of the indirect or circumstantial import, having phenomenal validity only.

*nimitta* 相, the determinate entities as mark, sign; image; target, object; cause, condition. These meanings are used in, and adapted to, many contexts of which only the doctrinal ones are mentioned here.

*nirmāṇa* 化, creation, a name for the world of convention.

*nirodha* 滅, cessation, extinction or suppression, referring especially to the extinction of a specific affliction (*kleśa*) or group of afflictions.

*nirvāṇa* (Pāli. *nibbāna*) 涅槃, the extinction of the root of suffering, of clinging; the ultimate goal of all beings; the ultimate nature of all things.

*nirvikalpa* 了無餘, non-conceptual; free from conceptual construction; indeterminate.



*nītārtha* 了義, teaching of the direct or ultimate way, versus *neyārtha*.

*paramārtha* 第一義, *paramārtha-satya* 真諦, the ultimate or noumenal reality, Absolute.

*pāramitā* 波羅蜜多, literally, that which has gone beyond all limits; Infinite Excellence, Perfection.

*paratantra* 依他起, the dependent reality. In the Yogācāra system, it stands for the mind and the mental states on which there occurs the imputation of subject-object distinction; same as *abhūta-parikalpa*.

*parikalpita* 妄想, 遍計所執, the imagined or illusory aspect of appearance; in the Yogācāra, the entire world of objects is imputed on consciousness, and is therefore essentially unreal.

*pariṇāma* 轉變, modification, change.

*pariṇiṣpanna* 圓滿, the absolute reality; the specific term for the Yogācāra absolute.

*prajñāpāramitā* 般若波羅蜜, Perfection of Wisdom; the Highest Reality identified with the Buddha.

*prajñapti* 波羅攝提, name, concept, as well as the entity that the name designates; also convention.

*prajñapti-sat*, literally, real in thought (only); subjective; unreal.

*prapañca* 戲論, elaboration as the clinging to words or concepts and as the root of all contentions.

*pratipakṣa*, counter-thesis.

*pratiśaraṇa* 依, reliance, refuge.

*pratītyasamutpāda* 緣起, Dependent Origination, this is equated, in the Madhyamaka, with *śūnyatā*, the Reality of things.

*pratyaya* 緣, conditions; referring generally to the subsidiary factors whose concomitance results in the production of an effect from a cause, especially in the compound *hetu-pratyaya* (“causes and conditions”).

*Pratyekabuddha-yāna* 緣覺乘, the path, way, or ‘vehicle’ of the solitary Buddha.

*pravṛtti-vijñānas* 轉識, the cognitive awareness; the active consciousness.

*pudgala* (Pāli. *puggala*) 人, the empirical individual, ego.

*pudgala-ātman* 人我, *pudgala-ātman-vāda*, the theory held by the Vātsīputrīyas or Sāmmītiyas, of a quasi-permanent entity, neither completely identical with the mental states, nor totally different from them.

*samanantara*, *samanantara-pratyaya* 次第緣, the immediately preceding cessation of an entity conceived as a condition in the occurrence of an effect, especially of a mental state.

*saṃsāra* 輪迴, literally incessantly in motion, flux; the world of phenomena.

*samudaya* 集, origination or arising.

*saṃvṛti* 世間, as a name for the world of convention, the covering activity.

*saṃvṛti-satya* 俗諦, conventional, superficial or apparent truth, phenomena reality.

*śāśvata-dṛṣṭi* (Pāli. *Sassasta-diṭṭhi*) 常見, eternalism; one of the two extreme views (*antagrāhadṛṣṭi*), along with nihilism (*ucchedadṛṣṭi*).

*Satkāryavāda* 因中有果論, the (*Sāṅkhya*) theory that the effect is pre-existent in or identical with the cause; versus with *asatkāryavāda*.

*skandhas* 陰, the (five) groups of elements (dharmas) into which all existences are classified in Early Buddhism. The five are: *rūpa* (matter), *vedanā* (feeling), *saṃjñā* (ideation), *saṃskāra* (forces), *vijñāna* (consciousness).

*śūnya*, *śūnyatā* 空, empty, void, emptiness. The terms are used in two allied meanings: (i) the phenomena are *śūnya*, as they are relative and lack substantiality or independent

reality; they are conditioned (*pratītyasamutpanna*), and hence are unreal; (ii) the Absolute is *śūnya* or *śūnyatā* itself, as it is devoid of empirical forms; no thought-category or predicate ('is', 'not is', 'is and not-is', 'neither is nor not-is') can legitimately be applied to it; it is Transcendent to thought (*śūnya*).

*svabhāva* 自性, 自有, literally, self-nature or self-being, essential nature.

Tathāgata 如來, appellation of Buddha; one who has realized and known things as they are in reality; Perfect Being.

*tathāta* 如, Suchness, Thatness; the Real that stays unmodified; Absolute.

*uccheda-dṛṣṭi* (Pāli. *Uccheda-diṭṭhi*) 斷見, nihilism, materialism; one of the two extreme views(*antagrāhadṛṣṭi*) together with *śāśvatadrṣṭi*.

*upādāya-prajñapti* 假名, derived name, as a synonym of conditioned origination and of *śūnyatā*.

Vasubandhu 世親 (ca. fourth or fifth centuries CE), One of the most influential authors in the history of Buddhism, and the only major figure to make significant contributions to both the mainstream Buddhist Schools and Mahāyāna.

*vigata-kleśa* 無垢, *vigata* is the past participle of *vigacchati*. It means gone away, ceased, deprived of, and being without. *Kleśa* is defilement. *Vigatakleśa* is 'gone away defilement', or 'ceased defilement'.

*viññāna* 識, Consciousness

*Vijñānavāda* 唯識學派, 'The Way of Consciousness', an alternative name for the *Yogācāra* school. The title *Vijñānavāda* emphasizes the interest of that school in the workings of consciousness (*viññāna*) and its role in creating the experience of *saṃsāra*.

*viññapti* 了別, representation, a *Yogācāra* term which denotes the mentally generated projections of subject and object that are falsely believed to exist. In reality, according to *Yogācāra* teachings, they are merely superimposed by unenlightened beings upon actuality. The aim of *Yogācāra* practice is to realize the false and illusory nature of these projections and attain non-dual awareness (*nirvikalpa-jñāna*).

*viññaptimātra*, the sole reality of Consciousness; the Yogācāra doctrine of the Absolute.

*vikalpa* 分別, (1) ‘Imagining’, an intellectual process which leads to the formation of concepts, judgements, views, and opinions. In Buddhist thought, the term usually signifies deluded or erroneous thinking which is tainted with emotions and desires and fails to grasp the true nature of things as they are. In this sense it is synonymous with the term *prapañca*, meaning ‘mental proliferation’, an activity of the deluded and unenlightened mind. (2) The process, according to Yogācāra, which sets up a false dualistic split that is imposed upon reality, and involves belief in the existence of a perceiving subject and perceived objects. Some sources consider both ‘subjectivity’ (*grāhaka*) and ‘objectivity’ (*grāhya*) to be the result of *vikalpa*.

*vimokṣa* (Pāli: *vimokkha*) 解脫, deliverance, release, emancipation, The three liberations are:

1. the conditionless (or signless) liberation (*animitta -v.*), 2. the desireless liberation (*apanihita-v.*), 3. the emptiness (or void) liberation (*suññatā-v.*). They are also called 'the triple gateway to liberation' (*vimokkha-mukha*), as they are three different approaches to the paths of holiness.

*viśuddhālambana* 所緣清淨, object of observation of purification.

*vyavadāna* 清淨, purification, opposite to *saṃkleśa* (pollution, the process of defiling).

*vyavahāra* 世間, 世界, the world of convention, mundane life, mundane truth.

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