



The Meaning of Sunyāta in Buddhist Philosophy

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Introduction

Śūnyatā translated into English most often as *emptiness*¹ and sometimes *void-ness*, is a Buddhist concept which has multiple meanings depending on its doctrinal context. It is an ontological feature of reality, a meditation state, or a phenomenological analysis of experience.

In *Theravāda Buddhism*, *Suññatā* often refers to the not-self (*anattā*, *anātman*)² nature of the five aggregates of experience and the six sense spheres. *Suññatā* is also often used to refer to a meditative state or experience.

In *Mahāyāna*, *Sunyata* refers to the tenet that “all things are empty of intrinsic existence and nature”³, but may also refer to the Buddha-nature teachings and primordial or empty awareness, as in *Dzogchen* and *Shentong*.

Śūnyatā, in Buddhist philosophy, the voidness that constitutes ultimate reality; *Śūnyatā* is seen not as a negation of existence but rather as the un-differentiation out of which all apparent entities, distinctions, and dualities arise. Although the concept is encountered occasionally in early *Pāli* texts, its full implications were developed by the second-century Indian philosopher *Nāgārjuna*. The school of philosophy founded by him, the *Mādhyamika* (Middle Way), is sometimes called the *Śūnyavāda*, or “Doctrine That All Is Void”. The term *Śūnyatā* may also be used as recognition of *anattā*, or the absence of any self apart from the five *skandhas* (mental and physical elements of existence). *Śūnyatā* of all phenomena is stressed in many *Mahāyāna* scriptures, beginning with the *Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtras* and form that

becomes of paramount importance, not only to the *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra* school in India (including all of their respective subdivisions), but to all the *Mahāyāna* schools across the geographic landscape, ancient and modern. *Śūnyatā* also plays a critical role in all the *Vajrayāna* schools as well. Consequently, it is probably not unreasonable to cite its concept as the single most important *Mahāyāna* innovation. However, the meaning of *Śūnyatā* in Buddhist philosophy has also its seed in the *Pāli Nikāyas*, by analytical and empirical approach how the meaning of *Śūnyatā* made impress on the scriptures of *Pāli* as well as other schools in Buddhism.

Concept of Sunyāta

Śūnyatā, meaning “Emptiness” or “Voidness”, is an important Buddhist teaching which claims that nothing possesses essential, enduring identity because everything is interconnected in a chain of co-becoming and in a state of constant flux. In various schools of Buddhism, *Śūnyatā* is a key concept used to express that everything one encounters in life is empty of absolute identity, permanence, or an in-dwelling ‘self’ because everything is inter-related and mutually dependent—never wholly self-sufficient or independent. The importance of this insight is especially emphasized in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism.

Widely misconceived as a doctrine of nihilism, the teaching on the emptiness of persons and phenomena is unique to Buddhism, constituting an important metaphysical critique of theism with profound implications for epistemology and phenomenology. In the English language, the word emptiness suggests the absence of



spiritual meaning or a personal feeling of alienation, but in Buddhism the realization of the emptiness of phenomena enables liberation from the limitations of form in the cycle of uncontrolled rebirth.

The theme of *Śūnyatā*, emerged from the Buddhist doctrines of *anattā* (non-existence of the self) and *Pratitya-samutpada* (Interdependent Arising). The *Suñña Sutta*, part of the *Pāli Canon*, relates that the monk *Ananda*, the attendant to Gautama Buddha asked, “It is said that the world is empty, the world is empty, lord. In what respect is it said that the world is empty ?” The Buddha replied, “Insofar as it is empty of a self or of anything pertaining to a self: Thus it is said, *Ananda*, that the world is empty.”⁴

After the *Parinirvana* of the Buddha, *Śūnyatā* was further developed by Nagārjuna and the *Mādhyamika School*. *Śūnyatā* is also an important element of the *Tathagatagarbha* literature, which played a formative role in the evolution of subsequent Mahāyāna doctrine and practice. It should be noted that the exact definition and extent of *Śūnyatā* varies within the different Buddhist schools of philosophy which can easily lead to confusion.

These tenet-systems all explain in slightly different ways what phenomena are empty of, which phenomena exactly are ‘empty’ and what emptiness means. For example, in the *Cittamatra School* it is said that the mind itself ultimately exists, but other schools like the *Mādhyamaka* deny this. In the *Mahāyāna Tathagatagarbha sutras*, in contrast, only impermanent, changeful things and states (the realm of samsara) are said to be empty in a negative sense—but not the Buddha or Nirvana, which are stated to be real, eternal and filled with inconceivable, enduring virtues. Moreover, the Lotus Sutra states that seeing all phenomena as empty (*sunya*) are not the highest, final attainment: the bliss of total Buddha-Wisdom supersedes even the vision of complete emptiness.

According the *Mādhyamika*, or Middle Way philosophy, ordinary beings misperceive all

objects of perception in a fundamental way. The misperception is caused by the psychological tendency to grasp at all objects of perception as if they really existed as independent entities. This is to say that ordinary beings believe that such objects exist ‘out there’ as they appear to perception. Another way to frame this is to say that objects of perception are thought to have *svabhava* or ‘inherent existence’ ‘own being’ or ‘own power’—which is to say that they are perceived and thought to exist ‘from their own side’ exactly as they appear. In this light, *Śūnyatā* is the concept that all objects are Empty of *svabhava*, they are Empty of ‘inherent existence’. Therefore, emptiness refers to Emptiness of inherent existence. The Buddhist concept of Emptiness is a very subtle concept. In the *Mūlamadhamakakārikas*⁵ *Śūnyatā* is qualified as “...void, unreal, and non-existent.” Rawson⁶ states that: “one potent metaphor for the Void, often used in Tibetan art, is the sky. As the sky is the emptiness that offers clouds to our perception, so the Void is the ‘space’ in which objects appear to us in response to our attachments and longings.”⁷

However, ‘Emptiness’ is not the same as ‘Nothingness’, a mistake which is often made. Emptiness does not negate the play of appearances which manifest to a multitude of sentient beings; it asserts that they are insubstantial. According to the fourteenth Dalai Lama:

“One of the most important philosophical insights in Buddhism comes from what is known as the theory of emptiness. At its heart is the deep recognition that there is a fundamental disparity between the way we perceive the world, including our own experience in it, and the way things actually are. In our day-to-day experience, we tend to relate to the world and to ourselves as if these entities possessed self-enclosed, definable, discrete and enduring reality. For instance, if we examine our own conception of selfhood, we will find that we tend to believe in the presence of an essential core



to our being, which characterizes our individuality and identity as a discrete ego, independent of the physical and mental elements that constitute our existence. The philosophy of emptiness reveals that this is not only a fundamental error but also the basis for attachment, clinging and the development of our numerous prejudices. According to the theory of emptiness, any belief in an objective reality grounded in the assumption of intrinsic, independent existence is simply untenable. All things and events, whether 'material', mental or even abstract concepts like time, are devoid of objective, independent existence."⁸

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary where "empty" means: (i) having nothing inside, with nobody in it; (ii) empty of something, without or lacking in (a quality, without sense or purpose: empty threats, words, promise, dreams and (iii) hungry.⁹ This is the original or first meaning of *Sūnyatā* which expressed non-philosophic content and has the sense of 'empty', 'uninhabited', 'useless'.

Following these significations which we understand *Sūnyatā* is non-substantiality as opposite of substantiality, full, material, appearance. In fact, the meaning of empty in Buddhism is very profound and sublime and it is rather difficult to cognize because not only neither something, nor figure, nor sound, nor is empty, but also all living beings, phenomena come to existence be 'dependent co-arising' (*Pratītyasamutpāda*) is all so-called 'emptiness'. Here, the emptiness means the true reality that has left the false thoughts or wrong beliefs. That is the reason many times the Buddha had made this statement as follows: "I, Ānanda, through abiding in (the concept of) emptiness, am now abiding in the fullness thereof". (*Suññatavihārenāhaṃ, Ānanda, etarahibahulaṃvihārāmi*).¹⁰ However, in the evolution of the concept of emptiness in *PāliNikāyas*, also can found many others text which this research cannot explain detail about it.

Sunyāta in Early Buddhism

As we know, Buddhism is the way to live and liberation and Buddhist come to it by knowledge, intellectual or wisdom except belief or superstition. To advance wisdom, the Buddha has shown the four fundamental characteristics of individual existence established as *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (suffering), *anatta* (no-selfness, non-substantiality) and *Suññatā* (emptiness). The four marks are philosophically relevant to guide us to insight the reality except the themes for moral speculation or conclusion that life is the root of suffering, radical transience, impermanence, we must not desire and phenomena around us is empty. Such a thought not only harms all of us on the way to enlightenment, but also misconstrues Buddha's teaching purpose.

We must often reflect on the reality of ourselves and phenomena round and look at it by our insight to attach no any bonds. The basic principle of Buddha is to be free by wisdom through the method of contemplation and cultivation. In *PāliNikāyas*, *MajjhimaNikāya* devoted two suttas for specific consideration of the way of contemplation of *Suññatā*: *CūlaSutta* and *MahāSuññitaSutta*.

In the *CūlaSuññatāSutta*, the Buddha defined the meaning of the emptiness on two characters i.e. emptiness on the dwelt place and attaining of the stages of *jhānas*. In other word, the reflection on *Suññatā* from the simple, concrete material, to deep, sublime essence. First of all the Buddha explained emptiness as follow:

"As this palace of *Migāra*'s mother is empty of elephants, cows, horses and mares, empty of gold and silver, empty of assemblages of men and women, and there is only this that is not emptiness, that is to say the solitude grounded on the Order of monks".¹¹

Thus, a monk reflects the perception of village as emptiness and attending to the perception of human beings as existence. Here, Buddha clarifies that the emptiness on the dwelt place has the meaning that when a *Bhikkhu* enters a village which has nothing,



no elephant, cow, horse, mare, gold and silver then he should comprehend them as emptiness. In the contrast, in the palace of *Migāra*'s mother has something, the lecture-hall, the Order of Monks then he should awaken exactly as its existence. This means there presents the perception of human beings except the perception of village.

The second point of *Suññatā* in *CūllaSuññatāSutta* relates to the stage of *jhānas*. There are five stages of *jhānas* which a monk should attain to enliven the emptiness and enjoy *Nibbāna* as illustrated under:

“The disturbances there might be resulting from the perception of forest do not exist here, the disturbances there might be resulting from the perception of earth do not exist. There is only this degree of disturbance, that is to say solitude grounded only this degree of disturbance, that is to say solitude grounded on (the perception of) the plane of infinite *ākāsa*”.¹²

Like that, he contemplates (the perception of) the plane of infinite consciousness, the plane of no-thing, the plane of neither perception nor non perception, the concentration of mind. And the *MahāSuññatāSutta*, the Buddha taught a monk who has desired to enter on an inward (concept of) *MahāSuññatā* must be:

“Aloof from pleasure of the senses, aloof from unskilled states of mind, entering, on it abides in the first meditation the second the third the fourth meditation. Even so, *Ānanda*, does a monk steady, calm, make one-pony and concentrate his mind precisely on what is inward”.¹³

From these points, we can see *Suññatā* does not mean that all phenomena or all stages of *jhānas* are emptiness, nothing, but whatever has appeared or attained, clearly exists. And in the contrast, whatever disappears, does not achieve we must understand it is empty as it is. Here, the negation or the affirmations are of something specific. From this, the Buddha guides us reality. Therefore, *Suññatā* is also considered as reality.

Sunyāta in Mahāyāna View Point

Sūnyatā is a key theme of the Heart Sutra (one of the *Mahāyāna Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*), which is commonly chanted by *Mahāyāna* Buddhists worldwide. The *Heart Sutra* declares that the *skandhas*, which constitute our mental and physical existence, are empty in their nature or essence (i.e., empty of any such nature or essence). It also declares that this emptiness is the same as form (which connotes fullness)—i.e., that this is an emptiness which is at the same time not different from the kind of reality which we normally ascribe to events; it is not a nihilistic emptiness that undermines our world, but a “positive” emptiness which defines it.

As we have known the Buddha did not express his religious doctrine in term of *Sūnyatā*, but rather by Dependent Origination (*Pratīyasamutpāda*) ad Middle Path. Several centuries later, a group of *Mahāyana* texts such as the *Vajrachedikā-prajñā-pāramitāSūtra* and the *HrdayaSūtra* belonging to the *Prajñā-pāramitā* literature, introduces strongly the doctrine of *Sūnyatā*. In the later development of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, the philosophy of concept of non-substantiality of the *Dharmas* was widely accepted. It basically denied the separate reality of the elements (of existence). According to this, substance is unreal, a thought-construction (*vikalpa*) and the modes and attributes (associated with the thought-construction) are also unreal. It is well known that with the emergence of a vast literature such as *Prajñā-pāramitā*, *Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka*, *Laṅkāvatāra*, *Lalitavistara*, *Samādhirāja*, *Suvarnaprabhāsa*, *Vimalakīrti*, *ĀvatamsakaSūtras* and other *Mahāyāna* scriptures are to numerous to mention and among them specially the title of *Prajñā-pāramitā*. T. R. V. Murti says in this connection: “The *Prajñāpāramitā* revolutionized Buddhism, in all aspects of its philosophy and religion by the basic concept of *Sūnyatā*”.¹⁴



The philosophical systems of *Prajñā-pāramitā* literature including *Vajrachedikā-prajñā-pāramitāSūtra* in Buddhism made radical changes in the earlier concepts. The twin concepts of *Pudgalnairātmya* and the *Dharmanaitātmya* as found in the early Buddhism were made broad based in the *Prajñā-pāramitā* literature. The basic concept of *nairātmya* was further transformed into *Sūnyatā*. The concept of *Sūnyatā* subsequently absorbed in itself some of the concept which was primarily conceived ontological, epistemological or metaphysical. Some of the concepts like *ādhyātma*, *rūpa*, *saṃskṛta*, *asamkṛta*, *prakṛti*, *bhāva*, *abhāva*, *svabhāva*, *parabhāva*, *vijñāna*, *saṃskara*, *vastu* and *sattva* were associated with the concept of *Sūnyatā*.¹⁵

It may be pointed out here that the various modern commentators such as Professor *Stcherbatsky*¹⁶, *AiyaswamiSastri*, *Bhāvaviveka*¹⁷, *Obermiller*¹⁸, *Murti*¹⁹ who have contributed to the successive development of the concept of *Sūnyatā*.

With the emergence of the *MahāyānaSūtras* and *Mahāyāna* philosophers, a new dimension of *Sūnyatā* was added to the concept of *Sūññatā* in *PāliNikāyas* or *Pudgalanairātmya* and *Dharmanairātmya* in *Hīnayāna*. This concept of *Sūnyatā* literally revolutionized the earlier concept in *PāliNikāy* as with regard to some shades of different entities and different meanings in *MahāyānaSūtras* such as *Sūnyatā* as the true nature of empirical Reality, *Pratīyasamutpāda*, Middle Way, *Nirvāṇa* and *Sūnyatā* is considered as beyond the Negation or Indescribable (*Chatuṣkoṭi-vinirmukta*) and *Sūnyatā* is the means of the relative Truth (*Saṃvṛti-satya*) and the ultimate Truth (*Paramārtha-satya*).

Sūnyatā in Madhyamika Perspective

The stance that no contingent entity has any inherent essence forms the basis of the more sweeping 'sunyavada' doctrine. In the *Mahāyāna*, this doctrine, without denying the value to things, denies any essence to even the Buddha's appearance and to the promulgation of the Dharma itself.

For *Nāgārjuna*, who provided the most important philosophical formulation of *sūnyatā*, emptiness as the mark of all phenomena is a natural consequence of dependent origination; indeed, he identifies the two. In his analysis, any enduring essential nature would prevent the process of dependent origination, and indeed would prevent any kind of origination at all, for things would simply always have been and always continue to be.

This enables *Nāgārjuna* to put forth a bold argument regarding the relation of *nirvāna* and *samsāra*. If all phenomenal events (i.e., the events that constitute *samsāra*) are empty, then they are empty of any compelling ability to cause suffering. For *Nāgārjuna*, *nirvāna* is neither something added to *samsāra* nor any process of taking away from it (i.e., removing the enlightened being from it). In other words, *nirvāna* is simply *samsāra* rightly experienced in light of a proper understanding of the emptiness of all things.

The concept of emptiness is of the highest value and most profound truth precisely because of its soteriological application as the tranquilizing agent for "conceptual diffusion". As the grand master of the *Mādhyamika*, *Nāgārjuna*, wrote: "One who is in harmony with emptiness is in harmony with all things". "*Cittadrsya vikalpa mātra midamya dutatraidhātukam*".²⁰

Emptiness is equated with causation and with the entire range of associations which coalesce around the concept of dependent origination. *Candrakīrti* discusses this aspect of emptiness in the context of the sixth stage of the Bodhisattva's path:

"It is no secret that empty entities like reflections and so forth depend on a collocation (of causes and conditions) and that cognition may be produced in the form of an image of such an empty reflection, for example.²¹ All entities are, in a similar fashion, not only empty (as effect), but they are also produced out of empty (causes). According to the two truths, (entities possess) no intrinsic being, and therefore



they are not permanent, nor are they subject to annihilation.²²

In this passage emptiness is first presented as a matter of normal, everyday experience. Suppose for a moment that you have mistakenly perceived a reflected image in a mirror, taking it as the real (unreflected) object. In this case you have been misled by inattention or bad lighting or for some other such reason. Taking into account the circumstance, one can say that the reflection is illusion, in that it is not what it appears to be. Clearly such a statement does not imply that the reflection is totally nonexistent, or that the original object is transcendently existent. The reflection is said to be illusory only in order to correct the mistaken notions held by those who believe it is real in a way that it is not. As *Candrakīrti* writes, "In their circumstantial efficacy (words) are subject to the speaker's fundamental concern with communication".²³ This is a relative, not an absolute, assertion, tailored to meet the demands of a particular situation.

In the second part of the passage cited above, *Candrakīrti* describes emptiness as a considerably more subtle and complex state of affairs. The problem of illusion is now cast in the form of a much more broadly based existential concern. In what way are all the objects that we encounter in the course of everyday life similar to the reflected image discussed above? The *Mādhyamika* philosopher wants to draw our attention to the circumstance that the world we live in would look much different to us if we took the time and energy to investigate the presuppositions that are bound up with its conceptual and perceptual underpinning. The "I" and the objective, external things of the world appear to us as independent, self-sufficient entities, but upon closer examination this appearance proves to be predicated upon a tacit, preconscious failure to engage with the deeply contextual nature of their presence. As the analysis proceeds, *Candrakīrti* points out the paradoxical nature of causes and conditions which are they only the products of other such causes and

conditions. In the case of the reflection, a collocation of real causes and conditions results in an illusory, unreal effect, but the illusory appearance of the world is vastly more profound, for here both cause and effect are artificial constructs, devoid of intrinsic, self-contained being.

As long as the things of the world are used for everyday, practical purposes, their illusory nature may and usually does go completely unnoticed, though some unforeseen chance can momentarily upset the day-to-day routine of expectations. Indeed, very few look closely enough to notice the illusion, and of those who do, even fewer are affected by their vision into this ever-descending vortex of causes and conditions. Under normal circumstance we manage to function in the midst of this grand illusion with only the most superficial appreciation of the paradox and mystery that confront us at every step.

Conclusion

While highly influential in Indian and East Asian Buddhism, for western scholars the *Tathagatagarbha* doctrine of an 'essential nature' in every living being appears to be confusing, since it seems to be equivalent to a 'Self', which seems to contradict the doctrines in a vast majority of Buddhist texts. Some texts of the *Tathagatagarbha* literature, such as the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* actually refer to an atman, though other texts are careful to avoid the term. This would be in direct opposition to the general teachings of Buddhism on *anatta*. Indeed, the distinctions between the general Indian concept of atman and the popular Buddhist concept of Buddha-nature are often blurred to the point those writers consider them to be synonymous.²⁴ Some scholars, however, view such teachings as metaphorical, not to be taken literally.²⁵

According to some scholars, the Buddha-nature which these sutras discuss does not represent a substantial self (*ātman*). Rather, it is a positive expression of emptiness, and represents the potentiality to realize Buddhahood through Buddhist practices. In



this view, the intention of the teaching of Buddha nature is soteriological rather than theoretical.²⁶ According to others, the potential of salvation depends on the ontological reality of a salvific, abiding core reality — the Buddha-nature, empty of all mutability and error, fully present within all beings.²⁷

According to *Matsumoto Shiro* and *Hakamaya Noriaki*, the idea of an ontological reality of the Buddha-nature is a un-Buddhist idea: Their “Critical Buddhism” approach rejects what it calls “*dhatu-vada*” (substantialist Buddha nature doctrines).²⁸ Buddhism is based on the principles of no-self and causation, which deny any substance underlying the phenomenal world. The idea of *tathagata-garbha*, on the contrary, posits a substance (namely, *tathagata-garbha*) as the basis of the phenomenal world. *Matsumoto Shiro* asserts that *dhatu-vada* is the object that the Buddha criticized in founding Buddhism, and that Buddhism is nothing but unceasing critical activity against any form of *dhatu-vada*.²⁹

The critical Buddhism approach has, in turn, recently been characterized as operating with a restricted definition of Buddhism. *Paul Williams* comments: At least some ways of understanding the *Tathagatagarbha* contravene the teachings of not-self, or the *Madhyamika* idea of emptiness. And these ways of understanding the *Tathagatagarbha* were and are widespread in *Mahāyāna Buddhism*. Yet by their own self-definition they are Buddhist.³⁰

References

1 A common translation is “no-self” without a self, but the Pāli canon uses *anattā* as a single substantive, meaning “not-self”.

2 Bronkhorst, Johannes. *Buddhist Teaching in India*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009, p. 124.

3 Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, London: Routledge, 2008, p. 68-69

4 *Samyutta Nikaya* 35.85, *Suñña Sutta*: Empty, *Thanissaro Bhikkhu* (trans.), update at www.accesstoinsight, 30 November, 2013.

5 De la Vallee Poussin (ed.), *Mūlamadhamakārikas*, in *Bibliotheca Buddhica*, 1913.

6 Philip S. Rawson (1924 -1995) at Middlebrough in United Kingdom. He was a specialist on Eastern art and wrote widely on the subject in books and for various publications.

7 Rawson, Philip. *Sacred Tibet*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1991, p. 11.

8 Dalai Lama, *The Universe in a Single Atom: The Convergence of Science and Spirituality*, Mumbai: Broadway Books, 2005, p. 120.

9 Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, A. P. Cowie (ed.), Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 394-5. 10 *The Middle Length Saying*, F. L. Woodward (trans.), Vol. III, No. 121: *Culasuññata Sutta*, London: Pāli Texts Society, 1994, p. 147.

11 *The Middle Length Saying*, F. L. Woodward (trans.), Vol. III, No. 121: *Culasuññata Sutta*, London: Pāli Texts Society, 1994, p. 148.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 149.

13 *The Middle Length Saying*, F. L. Woodward (trans.), Vol. II, *Mahāsuññata Sutta*, London: Pāli Texts Society, 1994, p. 104-5.

14 Rinpoche C. Mani; Murti, T. R. V. (ed.), *Mādhyamika Dialectic and the Philosophy of Nāgarjuna*, Sarnath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1977, p. 10.

15 *Bhikkhuni Gioi Huong, Bodhisattva and Sūnyatā: In the Early and Developed Buddhist Traditions*, Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 2004, p. 185.

16 Theodor Ippolitovich Stcherbatsky (1866 – 1942) was born in the city of Kielce, Poland. He was one of the founders of Russian Indology and Buddhology.

17 *Bhāvaviveka* also call *Bhāviveka* (c. 500 – c. 578) was a sixth century *Mādhyamika* Buddhist. In Tibetan Buddhism *Bhāviveka* is regarded as the founder of the *Svātantrika* tradition of the *Mādhyamika* school of Buddhism, which is seen as antagonistic to *Prāsarigika Mādhyamaka*.

18 Obermiller E. (1901 – 1935) was born in Leningrad, Russian.

19 *Tirupattur Ramaseshayer Venkatachala Murti* (1902 – 1986) was an Indian academic, philosopher, writer and translator. He wrote several books on Oriental philosophy; particularly Indian philosophy and his works included commentaries and translations of Indian and Buddhist texts. He was an elected honorary member of the International Association of Buddhist Studies (IABS), a society promoting scholarship in Buddhist studies. *Studies in Indian Thought: Collected Papers, Central Philosophy of Buddhism and A Study of the Mādhyamika System* are some of his notable works. The Government of India awarded him the third highest civilian honor of the Padma Bhushan, in 1959, for his contributions to education and literature.



20 Vaidya, P. L., *Saddharma-LaṅkāvatāraSūtra*, Darbhanga: Buddhist Sanskrit Text 3, 1963, p. 555.

21 If the Yogācārin intends to use these words in support of his argument, then the Mādhyamika offers an extract from the Yogācārin's own scriptural authority in response: "The Bodhisattva completely comprehends dependent origination according to its form... he realizes that this mass of suffering, this tree of suffering alone is present, devoid of anyone who acts or feels. He realizes that the object of action (karma) is defined through clinging to the reified concept of agent. Where no agent exists, there the object of action as well is not apprehended in an ultimate sense. The triple world is mind only. The twelve limbs of existence distinguished and proclaimed by the Tathāgata all rest on mind alone".

22 The expression non-Buddhist philosophers (tīrthikas) are used in a generic sense, as it must also include any Buddhists (dhārmikas) who postulate a person or the like. In a manner of speaking, these Buddhists are not Buddhists at all, since like the non-Buddhists they have not correctly penetrated the meaning of the teaching (on emptiness). Therefore this designation applies to all of them".

23 Concerning the definition of mind alone provides here. (Vaidya, P. L., *Saddharma-LaṅkāvatāraSūtra*, Darbhanga: Buddhist Sanskrit Text 3, 1963, p. 34.) "The person, the continuum, the psychophysical aggregates, conditions and atoms, a creator god, the high lord, and the agent-these are (all) simply minded alone".

24 Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, London: Routledge, 2008, p. 104-105.

25 Hopkins, Jeffrey. *Mountain Doctrine: Tibet's Fundamental Treatise on other Emptiness and the Buddha Matrix*, London: Snow Lion, 2006, p. 214.

26 King, Sallie B., *The Doctrine of Buddha Nature is Impeccably Buddhist*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997, p. 174.

27 Yamamoto, Koshō. *Mahāyanism*, Tokyo: Karin Bunko, 1975, p. 156.

28 Jamie Hubbard (ed.), *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997, p. 192.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 326.

30 Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, London: Routledge, 2008, p. 124.

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