CONCLUSION

An attempt has been made in the foregoing pages to study Nāgārjuna's contribution in all aspects - personal history, literary composition as well as philosophical and religious contribution. My venture was started to review Nāgārjuna as a Buddhist thinker. He is a famous philosopher who calls his own philosophical position as 'Madhyamāpratipada' and categorically names his treatise as Madhyamaka-sāstra, a work in which the philosophy of Madhyamā-Pratipada is expounded. But his position has been characterised as 'nihilism', 'absolutism', 'monism' and what not, by the renowned scholars all over the world. No doubt studies of so many scholars in respect of Nāgārjuna's philosophy are important but still they do not present a complete and total picture. Their studies, of course, throw considerable light on the development and evolution of Indian philosophy. They consider Nāgārjuna as a contributor to, and an abiding part of, Indian thought movement. Nevertheless, these studies have the effect of distancing Nāgārjuna from essentially as a unique Buddhist thinker after the Lord Buddha himself.

My earnest zeal is to portray Nāgārjuna as a Buddhist philosopher and search out his contribution in the realm of Buddhist philosophy. Towards this goal, an attempt has been made to search out basic difference between so called Hinduism and Buddhism. This brings in attitude towards "Soul" or "Self" of the two systems. I have brought out that the attitude to Soul was based on psychological and sociological standpoint. Psychological because human beings do suffer
psychologically and that affects our day to day life. Buddha denied eternity to enlighten common people that nothing is permanent in this created realm and his followers like Nāgārjuna consolidate this point as well as make it amenable to the discerning thinkers by the lucid logical treatment.

Naturally a sketch on his personal life and work was wanting to understand his background and literary contributions to enrich Buddhist field. His major contribution Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā is a much discussed composition and it has already been studied historically, analytically, comparatively and philosophically. So it must not be kept out of our discussion; but a study on his minor writings was still a desideratum for proper assessment of author's creativity and literary merit.

Nāgājuna, as a capable founder of famous philosophical school, Mādhyamika, is also evaluated. In this connection evolution of Buddhism from Hīnayāna to Mahāyāna as extended upto Diṅnāga and Dharmakīrti has also been presented. There by continuous historical picture of an obscure period of Buddhist religious history is presented.

My study on the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā reveals the fact that he never forgets his fundamental stand and examines various issues of early (Hīnayāna) as well as later (Mahāyāna) Buddhist thoughts with equal emphasis. Practically, Buddha's message has been much misunderstood, misinterpreted and distorted throughout the ages. Nāgārjuna's has been the struggle all through his writings
to establish his Lord's message in proper perspectives, so that man can enjoy liberation.

In the Vigrahavyāvartanī (verse 29.) Nāgārjuna himself admits that he has no views or theses to offer and therefore he must be absolved of all errors.

All this points to one thing: that the reality of things is not bound to logical or conceptual understanding. Reality or human experience lends itself to symbolism but to that extent it must be understood that symbolic references are strictly speaking deficient of ultimate reality. To exhibit this fact is the tenor of the whole of the Kārikā. This spirit is quite aptly demonstrated in the early remarks by Candrakirti that any reality or any experience due to dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda), if characterisable at all, will have to be in the following negative terms:

Āniruddham anutpādam anucchedam asāsvatam
anekārtham anānārttham anāgaman anirgaman

These are known popularly as the Eight Negations or the Eight Noes. But they are not another set of conceptions expressed in mere negative terms; rather they are expressions of the reality of the nature of things in dependent origination and, as expressions, they only point to the limits of reason, indirectly exhibiting the fact that the negative terms are only expressive of a positive content to the nature of things. In other words, since dependent origination is at all time
dynamically involved, no positive static view of reality as such (tattva) is grasped and thus the negative expressions only aid in "narrowing down" or "squeezing reality" to the point of giving the reader a microscopic view of the dynamic flow of existence.

The language or the linguistic aspect may actually turn out to be a limiting function in Buddhism for, in the use of a term, there is only peripheral or superficial reference to an event or experience and never with respect to concrete reference to the nature of things themselves in totality. It is trite to say that language can never reach reality per se and yet we must remind ourselves of this to restitute the Madhyamika's Philosophy from the charge of any 'ism'.