PREFACE

The present study - "Studies In the contribution of Nāgārjuna In the Field of Buddhist Philosophy", is carried out under the direct supervision of Prof. Dr. Bela Bhattacharya, University Professor of Pali, Calcutta University. It will be indeed unjust on this occasion if I do not mention the name of Herambanath Chatterjee Shastri (Late Professor of Government Sanskrit College, Kolkata), who unfortunately is no more with us, but whose inspiration stimulated and compelled me to study this particular subject. His influence is very much evident throughout my study. Nevertheless, I really owe much to my guide Prof. Bhattacharya and it is not a matter of exaggeration to say that her help and guidance in every respect alone could get me reach the desired destination. I am really very much indebted to her.

Nāgārjuna has drawn continuous attention of Buddhist and non-Buddhist scholars since his own day and deserved attention of the modern scholars during the first half of nineteenth century when the manuscript of his 'magnum-opus' - 'Mūlamadhyamaka - Kārikā' with one of its commentaries 'Prasannapadā' by Candrakīrtī was found among the 381 bundles of Sanskrit manuscripts of Buddhism, discovered from Kathmandu by Mr. Brian Houghton Hodson, appointed resident there in 1833-43. From then Nāgārjuna and his philosophy have been the field for study by many renowned scholars both indigenous and foreign. In view of the fact that many scholars have attempted to study the nature and significance of Nāgārjuna's philosophy, their efforts have given rise to
II

considerable divergence of opinions and a mass of variety of such views about his philosophical position and personality naturally has given rise to confusion and misunderstanding. The objective here is to review the contribution of Nāgārjuna as an able successor of the Lord Buddha in the field of Indian philosophic thought movement.

Our main sources for an understanding of Nāgārjuna and his cultural backgrounds are his own works and the document belonging to the tradition in which he was active as a creative writer. Ancient commentarors on Nāgārjuna's works and modern observers would appear to agree on this point that the Mādhyamika school founded by Nāgārjuna stood on the foundation of Buddhist doctrine and philosophy promulgated by Gautama, the Buddha to whom Nāgārjuna pays his high tribute as an advocator of the doctrine of Pratītyasamutpāda, specially.

Aniruddham anutpadam anucchedam āsāvatam

ānekartham ananartham anagamam anirgamam

Yah pratītya-samutpādam prapañcopiaśamam śivam,

des'ayamāsa sambuddhaḥ taṃ vande vandatam varam//

(Mūlamadhyamaka - kārikā, dedicatory verses).

The task of understanding Nāgārjuna's link with the teachings of the Buddha, though they were separated from each other by at least a couple of centuries, has
remained far from being clearly accomplished. Therefore, in the introductory chapter a short discussion on the appearance of Buddha as a Saviour of mankind by propagating the theory of origin of the world of beings based on Duḥkha (Pali - Dukkha) has been appended. Then a discussion of Buddhist theory of soullessness (Anattā) as against the deep rooted upaniṣadic soul - theory has been put in for proper understanding of the uniqueness of Buddhist philosophy. Now a short outline on Nāgārjuna’s life and works is presented. Thereafter a study of the origin and evolution of the four Buddhist philosophical schools is presented for proper understanding of the status of Mādhyamika school in the Buddhist circle. Then the study is concentrated on the Mūlamadhyamaka - kārikā - the major contribution of Nāgārjuna, revealing at the same time Nāgārjuna's philosophical status and doctrinal characteristic.

Finally, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my guide, my parents, my teachers, my colleagues and my friends who have cheerfully endured the trials of research work and the stresses of writing this thesis. I believe it is my duty to express my gratitude to the authorities of Central Library of Calcutta University, Sanskrit College Library, Mahabodhi Society Library and Sanskrit Parisad Library for giving me permission to consult books, documents and periodicals from time to time.

Place: KOLKATA  
Aiswarya Biswas