CHAPTER V

MEDITATION ON EMPTINESS - THE MAHAYANA WAY

"Aniruddhanyatpädananucchedamasåsvatam
Anekarthamananarthamanågamamanirgamam
Yah pratityasutpädam prapancopasamam Sivam
Desayamasa Sambudhasam Vande Vadatåm Varam"

I bow down to the perfect Buddha,
The best of propounders, who taught
That what dependently arises
Has no cessation, no production.
No annihilation, no permanence, no coming.
No going, no difference, no sameness,
Is free of the elaborations of inherent
Existence and of duality and is at peace.'

Mula Madhyamika Karika
CHAPTER - V
MEDITATION ON EMPTINESS - THE MAHĀYĀNA WAY

As it has already been indicated in the Introduction, in regard to Mahayana, the scope of the thesis is confined to the Prasangika Madhyamikā meditation on emptiness. The thesis deals with the analytical or dialectical method of meditation on emptiness as enunciated by Nāgārjuna in his two principal texts, namely, Mūlamadhyamaka Kārika and The Mahā Prajñāpāramita Śāstra. Meditation on the emptiness of inherent existence is the central theme of the two texts of the Prasangika system of the Madhyamika. The thesis does not seek to deal with the Yogacara-Vijñānavāda method of meditation. Nor does it propose to touch upon the Svatantrika Madhyamika method of meditation. The Vijrayāna system of meditation also falls outside the scope of this thesis.
The term "emptiness" has two basic meanings. Firstly, it means the relativity of all things. And secondly, emptiness refers to whatever is left over when all things are removed. That which is left over is the Unconditioned which is beyond all categories of thought. Nothing can be asserted of the Unconditioned. And all that is conditioned is phenomenal, relative and substantially unreal. No dharma, ether physical, mental or both, has an unconditioned or true existence. The Mādhyamikā thinkers declare that all dharmas are marked with emptiness. There is no fundamental difference between the world of phenomenality and the realm of absolute truth. Nirvāṇa and saṃsāra are the same. There is no separation or distinction between them. There is only the illusion produced by the mind which creates the false bifurcation. As T.R.V. Murti puts it "The absolute is the only real; it is the reality of saṃsāra which is sustained by false construction (Kalpana). The absolute looked at through the thought forms of constructive imagination is the empirical world; and conversely, the absolute is the world viewed sub specie aeternitatis without these media of thought"\(^1\).

The terms "phenomena" and "nonmena" are the constructions of the mind. On the phenomenal side, sūnyata is veiled by illusion (māya). This illusion is responsible for the differentiation of things. All that exists is the Unconditioned only. The Unconditioned is sūnyatā which is without limitation. Although emptiness is
indescribable, many terms are used to describe it. Emptiness is inexhaustible, boundless and indestructible. Meditation on emptiness is the denial of all things as they appear to be. The emptiness itself can never be denied. Perfection of wisdom (prajñā-pāramitā) is the total knowledge of śūnyatā. It is the sameness of all dharmas. It is neither produced nor stopped. It neither arises nor does it ever cease to be. It is unthinkable, self-identical and adamantine. "On this great concept' is founded the Mādhyamikā school of Buddhism, the systematic dialectic of the philosopher Nagarjuna, and the inspirational homiletic of the poet Śāntideva"².

Nāgārjuna is the generally acknowledged founder of the Mādhyamikā School of the Prāsaṅgika. He is also known as the systematizer of the Prajñā-pāramitā literature. He is likely to have lived around 150 A.D. According to a Tibetan legend Nāgārjuna was born in South India, probably in the region of Nāgārjunakonda. Mūla-Mādhyamikā Kārika is his chief work. It has been recognized as the basic text of the Prāsaṅgikā Mādhyamikā School. There are eight commentaries on it. Nāgārjuna himself has written a commentary known as Akutobhaya. Candrakirti's commentary known as Prasannapada is a classic commentary on the Kārika. The principal aim of the Kārika and the commentaries thereof is the criticism of the Abhidharma concepts of dharma, pratyaya (causation), āyatanas (the six sense perceptions), the skandhas (the five groups of grasping) and
the dhātus (the root elements of air, fire, water, earth, space and awareness). All these concepts are resolved into emptiness by means of a subtle analysis or dialectic. The analytic is born of Prajñā. It is meditative in character. It seeks to destroy a positive affirmation of everything, including that of the negative. All opinions, extreme views are reduced to absurdity. Only the middle way of steering clear of the exclusive positions is upheld. "This is why the school was called the teaching of the Middle Way (Madhyamaka Darśana), because it sought a path between the antinomies of reason. Every view is shown to be self-contradictory, and the revelation of truth is left to the operation of intuitive insight."³

Mahā Prajñāpāramita Śāstra is another great work ascribed to Nāgārjuna. It is said to be a commentary on the Pancavimsatisahāsrika Prajñāpāramita. It also applies the Madhyamikā dialectic of reduction and absurdum to all the concepts and categories of the Buddhist and non-Buddhist schools. It also deals with the perfections (pramitas) to be complemented to the meditation on emptiness. Nāgārjuna seems to have taught the doctrines of the Prajñāpāramita at the Buddhist University of Nalanda. The legend says that the serpent King, Nagaraja invited Nāgārjuna to the underwater and gave him the basic text of the Prajñāpāramita. The Buddha himself had given the text to Nagaraja for guarding it
until the world was ready to receive it. Nāgārjuna is supposed to have written twenty four books on the Prajñāpāramitā.

As it has been mentioned above, meditation on emptiness is the central theme of both the texts of Nāgārjuna, namely, Mūla Mādhyamikā Kārika and Prajñāpāramita Śāstra. The texts are based on the theme that all phenomena are empty (śūnyā) of self-nature. Nāgārjuna demonstrates this truth through the dialectic which is wisdom oriented and meditative in nature. The meditative dialectic demonstrates that there is no substance anywhere. It shows that no phenomena have an intrinsic being. Self-nature or inherent existence is out of the question. Everything is relational and dependently arising (pratityasamutpāda).

MĀDHYAMIKĀ ONTOLOGY

In Buddhism, the doctrine of no-self (anattā) occupies the central position. The four major schools, namely, the Vaibhāṣika, the Sautrāntika, the Vijñānavāda and the Mādhyamikā have given a great importance to the doctrine of no-self. The understanding and interpretation of the anattā is the substructure of the rest of their theories. The import and meaning of the anattā doctrine has profound implication for their methods of meditation also. The Vaibhāṣikas, with their realist notion of non-existence, have viewed the no-self of the individuals as real. The Sautrāntikas have viewed it as non-real. The Vijñānavādins have viewed it as real. And the
Mādhyamikās have viewed the no-self as unreal. "In turn, these different ways of understanding the import of the no-self doctrine conditioned the type of meditation which was found on each, and each has served as a theoretical basis for the development of the Buddhist path".

The two schools of the Hinayāna, namely, the Vaibhāśika and the Sautrantika subscribe to the reality of the substantive matter and mind. They also admit of causal relation between matter and mind. They argue that in the act of cognizing the pot, the pot as a conglomeration of atoms, acts as the cause of the mental act of its cognition. As the pure realists, the Vaibhāśikas hold that things are real existents. Things exist independently of their naming or conception. They are not the constructs of the mind but exist really as they appear to be. The Sautrantikas also hold that the object of direct perception exists independently of its conceptual ascription. The concept is an image, a mental representative of the real existent. Direct perception is non-illusory and its object has svalakṣana. As against this, the Prāsangikā Mādhyamikās maintain that the existents are merely constructs. Things are only appearances to cognition. They do not have an existence of their own. They do not exist independently of their name or conception.

The Sautrantikas, Yogacāras and the Svātantrika Mādhyamikās have held an intermediary position between the Vaibhāśikas and the
Praśaṅgikās. They have considered some existents as real and some as constructs. The Sautrāntikas have determined the phenomena more on the side of realism. The Yogačāras and the Svātantrikas have determined the phenomena more on the side of constructionism. Of these, the former are more realistic than the latter.

The Yogačara holds that all uncaused entities (asaṁskṛta dharmas) are ascribed entities (parikalpita) only. They do not exist self-subsistently (svalakṣana asidha). All caused entities are originated (saṁskṛta dharmas) and dependent (paratantra). They are regarded as self-subsistently existent (svalakṣana siddha). All asamskṛta dharmas are conceptual constructs and exist as phenomena only. Saṁskṛta dharmas exist as ultimates, but they are not the ultimate truth. The ultimate truth is the final natures of things and the individuals. All existents, both caused and uncaused, ultimates and non-ultimates, are phenomenal truth only. Śūnyatā alone is the transcendental truth. Śūnyatā is also an uncaused entity (asaṁskṛta dharma). It signifies the two kinds of emptinesses, namely, the emptiness of individuals (pudgala nairatma) and the emptiness of things (dharma nairatma). Śūnyatā is the final nature (parinīṣpanna) of the subjective and objective reality. The Yogačara contends that except for the two emptinesses, namely, the final natures of an individual and of a thing, all things are phenomenal.

"The character of paramārtha is its being the final object of
understanding of the path of purification, specifically, the two emptinesses, of a thing such as the skandhas etc. and of an individual (pudgala and dharma nairatmya)⁶. 

The Yogacāra admits of direct perception to be non-delusory in respect of the object of cognition. But it refuses to consider the cognition to be non-illusory. It holds that there is no need to postulate a real substantive matter behind cognition because substantive matter is nowhere to be found. The existence of a substantive matter is an impossibility on account of infinite divisibility of matter. There is no evidence of the existence of a final particle of matter. Even the atom is subject to infinite divisibility. If a real, ultimate material substance were to exist, it should be findable at least by way of an intellectual analysis. Independent substantive material stuff is only a hypostatized entity. External object (bahyārtha) to be seen in cognition is not a separate material stuff causing cognition. It is only another modality of a mental substance. The cognizer and the cognitum form a single substantive mental entity. So, the cognitum, namely, the object cognized, is illusory. Although purely mental, it appears to be something other than mental. It appears to be an independent substantive object existing in the external world. Yogacara contends that even the cogniser is illusory, since its manifest object is illusory. Non-illusory, according to Yogacāra, is the absence of a substantive difference between the
cognizer and the cognitum. The difference between them is not actual but logical only. The substantive difference is illusory. So the absence of the substantive difference is non-duality. This non-duality itself is śūnyata, the ultimate truth. "Non-illusory is simply the absence of a substantive difference between the cognizer and cognitum. This is non-duality, and this non-duality is the ultimate truth and the meaning of the emptiness of dharmas for the Yogacāra"7.

Thus in the Yogacāra, śūnyatā is the final nature (parinīsppanna) of the subjective and the objective existents. Śūnyatā is unthinkable, unutterable and non-dual. It is beyond the knower and known duality. Śūnyatā is empty of all things except its own existence in reality. It alone exists as an ultimate truth (paramārthasat). And it is the supreme object of the path of meditation and purification. The Yogacāra system of ontology is called the idealist non-dualism. It was primarily advocated by Asaṅga and later supported by his brother, Vasubandhu. The Yogacāra is also known as Vijñānavāda or Citta-mātra or Mind only doctrine.

The Mādhyamikā ontological position is that there is nothing whatever that exists as an ultimate or as a real. It questions our natural tendency to see things in realistic terms. Every existent appears to be a real. It appears to have an inherent or independent existence which is illusory. The phenomena arise by depending on
their causes and conditions. The Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamikā like Nāgārjuna holds that no entity "exists" but exist as a phenomenon only. In this sense he is a pure nominalist who repudiates real being altogether. Things are only mental constructs. They are nothing more than words or concepts. He maintains that the very notion of the "real" involves grave contradictions. Nāgārjuna reduces the whole phenomenal world to an illusion by depriving it of any real being whatever.

Nāgārjuna's pure nominalism delimits the meaning of "to exist" to "to exist as a phenomenon". It altogether rejects the real being by revealing the self-contradictions the notion of the real involves. Nāgārjuna demonstrates it through the dialectic entailing the notion of the real. He proves the emptiness of the phenomena by applying to them the inconsistent notion of the real. The explanation of the nature of things through the idea of the real involves several contradictions. The contradictions are due to the emptiness of the real. Nāgārjuna reduces the whole phenomenal world to an illusion. He deprives all phenomena of real being. He does not even posit a real being elsewhere, above or beyond the phenomenal world. He is categorical in declaring that "the final nature of all things to be just that lack of the kind of real being which things possess for ordinary apprehension and that it is precisely this false way of apprehending things in which the illusion of the phenomenal world consists".

181
Nāgārjuna's nominalism of considering "the existent" as a logical construct provides the basis for the Mādhyamikā practice of meditation. The nominalist ontology is the basis for the Prāsaṅgikā Mādhyamikā meditation on the emptiness of all phenomena. Meditation consists in seeing clearly that there is nothing whatsoever which exists as an ultimate or as a really real. Meditation is a critical perspective of our natural tendency to see things in realistic terms. It is a process of negating the hypostatized inherent being of things. The notion of realistic existence is the main target of the Prāsaṅgikā Mādhyamikā meditation. The mediation demonstrates the truth that all things are non-existent by way of a real being. It proves the emptiness of a real being through the principle of dependent arising (pratītyasamutpāda) of all existents. "That which is dependent arising does not exist by virtue of its true being (svabhāva) and this emptiness of real being is a thing's dependent arising".

The Prāsaṅgikā Mādhyamikā meditation on emptiness is a way of perceiving things directly as they are. It is seeing things as resembling an illusion of magic. Meditation is analytical or dialectical in nature. Analysis exposes the ultimate nature of things to be empty. Things are empty in the sense that they do not have an inherent nature. The dialectic reveals that all phenomena exist in accordance with the principle of dependent origination. The dialectic enables us to clearly comprehend the 'true' nature of things. It gives us the
intellectual understanding of the appearance of the inherent nature of things. Besides analysis the Prāsangikā method includes cultivation of ten perfections (pāramitās) also. The perfection are required for the direct realization of the emptiness of the phenomena. The ten perfections are giving, conduct, endurance, effort, concentration, wisdom, skill, vow, power, and knowledge (gnoses). The cultivation of the perfections is coextensive with the Mahāyāna path of vision. That is why the Mahāyāna meditation is also known as the Path of Emptiness as well as the Path of Perfections10.

**ANALYTICAL MEDITATION**

The Mādhyamikā analytical meditation provides a solution to a variety of problems. It helps us in developing a realistic view of our mental and physical existence. It liberates us from our assumptions that are the source of our frustrations and unhappiness. Analytical meditation requires a steadfast concentration on the subject. The mind should not wander from the subject of analysis. We have to dissolve the mind in the subject and penetrate it with intellectual thought. Meditation may take the form of an internal dialogue or debate. Analytical understanding has to be stabilized by the intuitive experiencing. During the analysis one should develop an intuitive experience of the subject under analysis. One should hold the intuitive feeling with single-pointed concentration as long as possible. The meditation here is not only analytical but also stabilizing. The
union of analysis and stabilizing is necessary for the transformation of the mind. "In analytical meditation, we think about and intellectually understand a particular point and through stabilizing meditation we gradually make it a part of our very experience"\textsuperscript{11}.

The purpose of the Buddhist meditation and that of the Prāsaṅgikā Mādhyamikā in particular, is the realization of emptiness. Realization of emptiness means the liberation of the mind from the false way of seeing things. It also means the realization of enlightenment, the budhāhood. Emptiness, according to the Prāsaṅgikā, is the emptiness of inherent existence. All things are empty of intrinsic existence. Inherent existence is a quality that we instinctively project onto all phenomena. We mistakenly think that every thing or person has an intrinsic being of its own. "We see things as fully, solidly existing in and of themselves, from their own side, having their own nature, quite independent of any other cause and condition of our own mind experiencing them"\textsuperscript{12}.

For instance, if we take a chair, we see a solid and an independent chair existing out there. It seems meaningless to doubt the real existence of the chair. But what exactly is the chair? Where is its chariness located? Is it one of its legs, or its seat, or its back? Is it independent of all its parts? If we analyze thoroughly, we will understand that we cannot simply find the chair we think is there. The chair exists as a composite thing; it does not exist as an
independent thing of its parts; it exists as a non-inherent thing changing from moment to moment. But we fail to see the chair in this sense. We see an exaggerated existence of it projected by our mind. "This mistake marks every one of our mental experiences, is quite instinctive and is the very root of all our problems".

The mistake of seeing the inherent chair has its roots in the misapprehension of our own self. We think that we have an abiding "self" over and above our body. We forget the fact that the "self" is a body composed of a mass of flesh, skin, and bones. It also consists of a mind which is a stream of perceptions, thoughts and feelings. The whole thing is designated with a name. The composition does not have an inner core, known as the "self". It ceases to be with the death of the body-mind complex. But the ego craves for security and immortality and invents an inherent self. It takes place deep in the sub-conscious state of our mind. Adhering to the non-existent self is ignorance. It defiles all our dealings with the world. We get attracted to things, to places and people who gratify us. We depend on everything that upholds our self-image. We respond to situations with attachment, fear and animosity. Thus, the notion of the false self forms the basis for several other sorrowful states of mind.

Solution to the elimination of the ignorance of grasping the self lies in the realization of the emptiness in ourselves and in everything other than ourselves. Wisdom that realizes the emptiness leads to the
ultimate transformation of mind. Emptiness that the Prāsaṅgikās advocate is not an abstract concept but "a practical reality. The process of realizing the emptiness of our "self" consists of two steps. Firstly, we have to get a clear idea of the "self" that we strongly think that it exists. We experience a powerful sense of the "I" when we narrowly escape an accident. We can recall some such events when we meet with the strong sense of the "I". The next step is to realize the truth that the "I" is a hallucination only. It has to be realized through the method of analytical meditation. "The first step towards understanding it is to try and get an idea of what it is we think exists; to locate, for example, the I that we believe in so strongly and then, by using clear reasoning in analytical meditation, to see that it is a mere fabrication that it is something that has never existed and could never exist in the first place."14.

Analytical meditation should be such that it does not repudiate the "self" totally. It should not go to the extreme of rejecting the "self" altogether. There is definitely the "self" that is conventional and interdependent. There is the "self" that works, eats and meditates; there is the "self" that suffers pains and attains enlightenment. Analytical meditation is imbued with wisdom. It clearly distinguishes between the valid I and the false one. "In the concentration of meditation it is possible to see the difference; to recognize the illusory
I and eradicate our long habituated belief in it. The meditation here is a practical first step in that direction.\textsuperscript{15}

**MEDITATION ON SELF-SUBSTANCE**

The concept of Self, Substance or Self-substance looms large in several philosophies. Primarily it figures in the Upaniṣadic doctrine of the *Brahman* or Ātman. The early Buddhists like the Adhidhārmikas subscribe to the self-nature of the *dharmas*, the *skandhas* and the *āyatanas*. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas also speak of the nine kinds of substances (*dṛavyās*), namely, earth; water, fire, air, ether, time, space, self, and mind. Fundamentally, Substance or the Self has been defined as an independent and a permanent being. It is characterized as being self-caused, indeterminate and unconditional. It is an absolute having a self-nature (*svabhāva*) and self-identity (*mama*). Substance has been viewed as the substratum of the changing attributes. Remaining the same amidst diversity is its unique character.

The Upanisads speak the Self which is uncreated, immutable and eternal; it is self-luminous, undivided and eternal. The Abhidharmikas subscribe to discrete and specific bits of realities existing in their own right. These realities are substantial and have a self-nature. They are neither created nor destroyed. "They are in this sense ātman, having a self-being.\textsuperscript{16} The flux of life does not affect their substantial nature. Momentariness is their function only. It is
only their efficiency to renew themselves without any change. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas speak of atomic as well as compound substances. The atomic substances (paramāṇus) are eternal, indivisible and ultimately real. They are self-existent, immutable and veritable selves as it were. The compound substances are composed of atomic substances. They are impermanent and subject to destruction. Yet they are substances since each of them has its own specific inalienable nature (svabhāva).

The Prāsaṅgikā Mādhyamikā thinkers are also known as the Śūnyavādins. They are the dialecticians who arrive at śūnyatā by a critical examination of the phenomena mistaken for a substantial reality. The dialectic is known as the analytic meditation. It is a means of liberating the mind from the concept of self or substance, the root cause of attachment, hatred and delusion. Śūnyavādins are the uncompromising critics of the concept of substance and the ontologies founded on it. They contend that the true nature of the phenomena is non-substantial. The entities and persons do not have a self-nature. Nothing is independent and self-abiding. Nothing can exist in its own right. The phenomena are empty (śūnyā) of self nature; substantial or independent existence is a contradiction in terms. Everything arises in the matrix of causes and conditions (pratītyasamutpāda).
Nāgārjuna argues that substantialism goes against the truth of śūnyatā. It fails to comprehend the phenomena in terms mutual relation. It entifies the phenomena and views them in terms of extremes views (dṛṣṭis). Nāgārjuna deconstructs the concept of substance through the trenchant dialectic. The dialectic is called the "logic of śūnyā". The logic demonstrates the inconsistencies involved in the concept of the self. It analyzes the concept to its logical necessity. It proves its presuppositions as being false. It frames a thesis against itself by deducing absurd conclusions from it. The dialectic thus proves the absurdity of the thesis through its own absurd conclusions. It criticizes an extreme view by formulating it in the form of four possible positions. The positions are 'is', 'is-not', 'both is and is-not' and 'neither is nor is-not'. These extremes may be expressed in other terms like identity (tat), difference (anyat), both identity and difference (ubhaya), and neither identity nor difference (anubhaya). They can also be expressed in terms of the self (sva), other (para), both self and other (ubhaya), and chance (ahetuka).

Nāgārjuna dialectically examines the four extremes and establishes that they are inconsistent and self-contradictory. They are not independent but one overlaps the other. The primary extremes, namely, 'is' and 'is-not' are not exclusive but mutually dependent. The third one is a mechanical combination of the first two. It can not explain the phenomena in clear terms. And, the fourth one represents
irrationalism. It cannot comprehend the truth of the phenomena. The śūnyā-logic reduces a position to absurdity without advancing a counter position. The sole aim of it is to release the mind from the fetters of the extreme views. The extreme views are the wrong views which are the source of samsāra. The Prasaṅgikā Madhyamikās does not advance his own view in criticizing other views. He holds that "no positive statement can be made of a Madhyamikā position, there being none at least in theory".22 As against this, the Svātantrika Madhyamikā, Bhavaviveka being its sole representative, seeks to prove his thesis on the basis of independent argument.

Nāgārjuna criticizes the concept of self-substance by applying to it the four cornered logic. He formulates the existence or the origination of the self-substance in the four possible views and reduces them to absurdity. The self-substance, if at all it exists, it should exist in either of the four ways, namely, (i) self-caused, (ii) other-caused, (iii) both self and other-caused, or (iv) neither self nor other caused, i.e., non-causal. Nāgārjuna criticizes the first view that self-substance is self-caused. The arguments (prasaṅgavakhyas) are as follows. The self-substance cannot be said to cause itself, for the idea of self-causation involves the absurdity that the self-substance existed before its creation. The idea of self-production implies that the entity in question does not yet exist and has yet to create itself. But how can a non-existent entity create itself?23
The idea of self-creation involves the self-contradiction that the substance is both existent and non-existent at a time. It means that it possesses two mutually exclusive qualities. But a thing can either be existent or non-existent. It cannot be both at the same time\textsuperscript{24}. Self-creation also means that a thing produces itself redundantly without ever perishing. Redundant production is only a self-duplication and not a real creation\textsuperscript{25}. Nāgārjuna further argues that the self-substance cannot create itself, for all creation is possible only in dependent origination (pratityasamutpāda). Production is possible through causes and conditions. That which is created should possess the character of being made. But the nature of the self-substance is such that it precludes the principle of dependent origination. It cannot have the character of being produced\textsuperscript{26}. Fundamentally, the very existence of a self-substance is out of the question. The self-substance is characterized as possessing self-identity, self-hood and individuality. But these qualities in their basic nature are relational. They cannot have the character of being independent and permanent\textsuperscript{27}. So the self-substance, if at all it exists, should exist as a relational entity, like any other entity. But a relational entity is a conditioned entity. It cannot have the character of being a self-substance.

Self-substance cannot be said to produce itself, for it entails the existence of two entities at a time. The two entities are the one which
is producing and the one which is produced. And the relation between
them should either be identity or difference. But no causation is
possible when the producing entity and the produced entity are
identical. Similarly no production is possible when they are totally
different from each other. There can be no relation between the two,
let alone the causal one. Self-causation of the substance is not
tenable also because it cannot have the character of an effectuating
cause. The very idea of an effectuating cause is not permissible, for
no entity can arise from an independent being. All production is in
mutual relation. Further, the idea of self-creation does not sustain
when the nature of the created substance is analyzed. The nature of
the created entity should be either complete or incomplete within
itself. But the nature of the produced entity cannot be complete, for
that which is complete cannot be produced at all. That which is
complete loses the character of being produced. A produced self-
complete entity is a contradiction in terms. So also, the self-created-
substance cannot be an incomplete being; for an incomplete being,
cannot create itself and so it is non-existent. Production of an
incomplete being is no production at all.

Self-causation is a fiction in yet another sense. Substance is
defined as a self-complete being. It is a plenum which is full of self-
nature (svabhāva). But the idea of self-nature is such that it goes
against the idea of relational and causal conditions by virtue of which
alone anything can arise. So the self-substance with its self-nature cannot be said to be created\textsuperscript{31}. Therefore the self-substance cannot be said to create itself either as a complete being or as an incomplete being. Thus Nāgārjuna dialectically analyzes the view that the self-substance cannot create itself. The criticism shows that the idea of self-creation is not tenable under any circumstances. The idea is self-contradictory and inconsistent. The self-substance cannot be said to exist as a self-caused being.

Nāgārjuna’s criticism of the second view that the self-substance is created by something other than itself is as follows. The self-substance cannot be caused by the other, since anything that is a self-being is independent of every other thing. The substance is an absolute being; it exists in such a way that it requires nothing else. The substance which is dependent and relational ceases to be a substance. Creation by the other is not possible because the very existence of the other is out of the question. The existence of the other is of out the question, since the existence of the substance itself is out of the question. The existence of the other is meaningless when the existence of the substance itself is meaningless. The impossibility of the substance as a self-created entity has already been demonstrated in the criticism of the first view\textsuperscript{32}. So the other is non-existent. And the non-existent-other cannot create something other than itself. The existence of the other is not possible also because ‘the
other' is also the self-substance. What is the 'self' for one, the same would be 'the other' for another person. The existence of the self-substance is not possible also because everything exists only in mutual correspondence with others. And from the non-existence of the self, the non-existence of the other follows.\(^3^3\)

Further, creation by the other is untenable, for, the other, if at all it exists, can exist only as a self complete being; and a self-complete being cannot be a cause of another being. A being of completeness cannot have any relation with anything; production warrants a casual relation. But the other as a self-complete being cannot have any relation with another being which is self-complete. Just as total identity, total difference too militates against production as such. Further, creation by the other is unjustifiable, for it involves the absurdity that anything can produce anything. It violates the invariable relation that should exist between the cause and effect. It implies that mere otherness is sufficient for causation. In that case even the stone can be said to sprout, for the stone is as much the other to the sprout as the seed is. The idea of the other-cause implies the absurdity that existence arises from non-existence; it implies that something comes out of nothing; it presupposes production of the self-being without establishing the being of the other. Thus the idea of production by the other involves the absurdity that everything arises from everything or from nothing. In that case the orderly world
of everyday experience would be reduced to chaos and confusion. Thus Nāgārjuna deconstructs the second extreme that the substance is produced by the other. He dismantles the concept of creation by the other by exposing its anomalies.

Next Nāgārjuna takes up the third view that the self-substance is caused both by itself and the other. He shows that this view is not justifiable since causation by the self as well as by the other has been refuted in the first and the second views respectively. The third view is inconsistent since it is a combination of the two mutually exclusive views, namely, the self and the other. The two mutually exclusive views cannot be ascribed to a single thing at a time. Even if they are ascribed to a single thing on two different occasions, the thing in question ceases to be one and the same thing. Moreover, as a syncretic form of the first two extremes, the third view suffers from all their anomalies. Thus Nāgārjuna declares that the existence or origination of the self-substance is untenable even by the third view that it is caused both by the self and the other, the being and non-being.

And, Nāgārjuna holds that the fourth view is meaningless, since it implies that there is no causation of any kind in the world. The view that the self-substance is caused neither by itself nor by the other implies that entities are not caused but happen to be by mere accident (ahetuka). It ascribes not order but randomness to the world.
of experience. The fourth position is that of an irrationalist who refuses to see order in the world. It may also be ascribed to an agnost who holds that knowledge and description about the world is not possible. But, indeed, it is possible to have knowledge and description about the world. Even the agnost's position presupposes some kind of knowledge and description about the world. Nāgārjuna therefore contends that the agnost's position amounts to a fools talk. He further maintains that the fourth view is representative of the sceptic also. The sceptic holds that no definite knowledge and description about the world is possible. Nāgārjuna says that the sceptic is inconsistent, since if no knowledge or description is certain, his own position too is uncertain. The position that all knowledge and description is indefinite amounts to eel wriggling, quibbling and eventually evasion of the issue in question.\(^{36}\)

Nāgārjuna thus meditatively analyzes the four views about the possible existence of the self-substance. He reduces them to absurdity by bringing to light the contradictions involved in them. He establishes that the so-called self-substance cannot arise in any of the four ways. It cannot be produced either by itself or by the other or by both or by neither. It cannot be said to exist in any way other than the four ways found to be defective. Nāgārjuna argues that the self-substance cannot exist even as the substratum of the attributes. If the self-substance is assumed to be the substratum of the attributes
then where do the attributes inhere? Do they inhere in the substratum or outside it? They cannot be said to inhere outside it, in a vacuum. They should inhere in the substratum only. Then the question is whether the substratum is qualified, unqualified, both, or neither? It cannot be a qualified one, since it would mean that the substratum is already possessing qualities. It cannot be an unqualified one, since an unqualified substratum is beyond our comprehension. An unqualified entity is no entity at all. The substratum cannot also be said to be both qualified and unqualified, for it involves self-contradiction. And lastly, the substratum cannot be said to be neither qualified nor unqualified, since this position simply avoids the issue in question.

The untenability of the substratum is evident if we examine its relation to the attributes. The relation between them should either be one of identity or difference. In case, the substratum is identical with its attributes, then it would be subject to origination, duration and cessation. The substratum which is subject to the temporal qualities ceases to be a substratum. And, if the substratum is different from its attributes, then it would be beyond our comprehension. An attributeless substratum would be inconceivable and hence unjustifiable.

Thus Nāgārjuna contends that self-substance does not actually exist. It is only a mental construction. The extreme concepts and the
views about it are false. The analytical meditation has proved that there is no such thing as an independent and self-abiding entity. The dialectical criticism of the concept of substance has profound implications for emptiness (śūnyatā). It has revealed that all phenomena are only relational. They are devoid of self-nature (svabhāvaśūnyā), impermanent (anityā), and mutually dependent (pratityasamutpāda). It is wrong to view the phenomena in substantialistic terms and extreme positions. It is wrong to grasp them in mutually exclusive terms of self and no-self, being and non-being, identity and difference, existence and non-existence.

The phenomenon is of the nature of śūnyatā. Śūnyatā stands for the relational, dependent arising, and all-inclusive nature of the phenomena. In its transcendental sense (pāramārthikasatta), śūnyatā stands for the undivided and the indeterminate nature of the phenomena. In their ultimacy, all phenomena are quiescent (śāntam). Quiescence is the supreme excellence, the wondrous peace and perfection of the phenomena in their ultimacy. It stands for the suchness (tathatā) or the thatness (tattva) of the phenomena. Nāgārjuna expresses it in terms eight negations, namely, non-extinction (anirodham), non-origination (anutpādaṃ), non-destruction (anucchedaṃ), non-permanence (aśāśvataṃ), non-identity (anekārthaṃ), non-differentiation (anānārthaṃ), non-
coming-into-being (anāgamaṇī) and non-going-out-of-existence (anirgamaṇī).

Śūnyatā refers to the two truths, namely, the determinate and the indeterminate. The truths are not totally different from each other. The determinate truth (saṁyṛti satya) is not separate from the indeterminate truth (pāramārthika satya). The former is only the appearance of the latter, while the latter is the ground of the former. The determinate truth is saṁsāra whereas the indeterminate truth is nirvāṇa. There is not the slightest difference between the two. In its ultimacy, the determinate truth itself is the indeterminate truth. Those who fail to understand the subtle distinction between the two truths will fail to understand the profound significance of the Buddha’s teachings.

Śūnyatā is the middle way (madhyamapatipad) of steering clear of the extremes of the determinate and the indeterminate truths. It avoids grasping the phenomena in terms permanence (śāsvatavāda) and total destruction (ucchedvāda). It is an antidote to the defilements of attachment, aversion and sorrow. The mind that has realized śūnyatā is never touched by sorrow, for it does not succumb to the dream-world of substantialism. It does not grasp the phenomena in terms of essentialistic thought-construction. Nāgārjuna likens the substantialistic world of mental construction to an imaginary city in
the sky. It is totally unrelated to the world of the phenomena which are uncreated and unimaginary⁴².

The analytical meditation has revealed that the self or substance is a mere mental construction. The dialectic has demonstrated that there is no such thing as a self-abiding entity. Everything arises in mutual dependence. Self-substance is unfindable in actual reality. Śūnyatā is the ultimate nature of all things. It is neither created nor uncreated. It stands for a beginningless and an endless interdependence of the undivided reality. The concept of self-substance does not correspond with śūnyatā. Śūnyatā is not a concept. Conceptualizing śūnyatā is highly disastrous. It is, as Nāgārjuna puts it, as ruinous as a badly seized snake. It destroys the unwise that reduce it to a concept. Those who grasp it as a substance are the incorrigible victims of sorrow⁴³.

Meditation on the emptiness, the substance, denies self-nature to śūnyatā also. Śūnyatā does not stand for anything substantial. It is only a provisional name, a convenient designation for the suchness of the phenomena. Emptiness is as much empty of self-nature as the self-substance is. Nāgārjuna has taught not only emptiness but emptiness of emptiness (śūnyatāśūnyatā). Śūnyatā is the basis of all existence, both the relative and the absolute, the conventional and the transcendental. It is the only way of expressing the truth without entitivating it. It is the middle way of comprehending the truth by
avoiding the extremes of eternalism and annihilationism, self-indulgence and self-mortification. Truth is that which is in correspondence with śūnyatā. Truth ceases to be truth the moment it is not in correspondence with śūnyatā. “Śūnyatā is not nothingness, but lack of inherent existence”.44

Śūnyatā cures the decease of inferring intrinsic objects corresponding to words and concepts. It stands for non-referential use of language. It ‘signifies’ that things are empty of self-being. So also, emptiness is not total nothingness either. It drives home the truth that language and objects are real in the practical sense. They are real in so far as they are functional and efficacious. It points to the world of everydayness imbued with paradox and mystery. So emptiness is not to be conceived but ‘cognized’ directly, actually and non-inferentially. It has to be ‘known’ through ‘personal experience’ transcending unexamined socio-linguistic categories. It has to be realized in direct awareness brought about by critical reflection and practical training. It has to be “seen by non-seeing and realized by non-realization”45.

Śūnyatā ‘signifies’ the realm of the uncreated or the unborn. It cannot be verbalized and taught as if it were an objectively present fact. The dharma that emptiness stands for can neither be taught nor heard. Yet it may be expressed through the conventional mode of language. It may be articulated through the process of metaphorical
imputation. So the term "emptiness" is used to point out the fact that the phenomena are devoid of an intrinsic being. It also indicates the fact that the phenomena are not a vacuum, totally empty of being. Nāgārjuna has used the term "śūnyatā" with an intention of rejecting the metaphysics of permanence and total destruction. "Emptiness is a conventional designation (pirajñapti), an ordinary word used, like all other words, to accomplish a specific purpose registered in the intention of the speaker".46

MEDITATION ON THE I AND THE BODY

Having dealt in detail with the application of analytical meditation to the concept of self-substance and proved its emptiness, let us now deal with its application to the I and the body and prove their emptiness. As it has been mentioned earlier meditation on emptiness proceeds by two stages. The first is identifying the way the phenomena appear to be. The phenomena appear to be inherently existent. We have to be clear about how we firmly believe that phenomena appear to be so. This stage is called identifying the object of negation, namely, inherent existence of the phenomena. Our meditation on emptiness will be effective only when we have a very clear image of what is to be negated. The second stage consists in refuting the identified object of negation. It means the actual realization that the object of negation does not really exist. The object of negation is the inherent existence. Meditation on emptiness is
proving to ourselves that inherent existence does not exist. The process involves using various lines of reasoning as shown in the preceding pages. The reasoning culminates in the realization of "the absence, or non-existence, of the object of negation, which is emptiness".47

The Prāsaṅgikā Mādhyamikā emphasizes the realization of the soullessness of the two kinds of phenomena. The two phenomena are the I and the body. They are important because we grasp most strongly at them. Soullessness here means the emptiness of inherent existence. Application of meditation to the I and the body leads to the realization of the emptiness of their inherent existence.

Firstly, let us take up the I and realize the emptiness of its inherent existence. The first stage of meditation consists in identifying the I to be negated. We generally grasp an inherently existent I all the time, even during sleep. But we have to identify it in clear terms. To do so, we have to allow it to manifest strongly. To do so, we have to contemplate the situations in which we experience it vividly. We have to observe the events when we are embarrassed, ashamed, praised, afraid and so on. We have to try to obtain a mental image of how the I naturally appear to be in such situations. We have to concentrate on the image "till the I appears to be completely solid and really existing from its own side without depending upon the body or the mind".48.
In the second stage of meditation, we have to refute the I that has been grasped as being completely solid. The method of refutation proceeds by four stages, since the I, if it exists in the way it appears, must exist in the four ways only. The four ways are: (1) as the body, as the mind, as the collection of the body and mind, and as something separate from the body and mind. These are the four possible ways through which the I has to appear to be. There is no scope for any other possibility. Meditation has to examine and refute each one of the four possibilities.

Examination and rejection of the first possibility is as follows. If the I is identical with the body then we cannot say 'my body' since the I and the body are not different. Identity of the I with the body also implies that there is no rebirth, since the I dies along with the body. It also implies that everything that I do, even the body can do. 'Since none of this is true it follows that the I is not the body.'

Analysis and refutation of the second possibility is as follows. If the I is identical with the mind then we cannot say 'my mind.' since the I and mind are not different. If the I is identical with mind, then a person should have as many I's as the states of mind. But we always say 'my mind' and have only one I. So it follow that the I is not the mind.

Refutation of the third possibility is as follows. Third possibility is that the I should be the collection of body and mind. But in the
first, we have denied that the I is the body. In the second possibility, we have dined that the I is the mind. From the denial of the first and second possibilities, the denial of third follows. That is, the I cannot be the combination of the body and mind. There is no I in the collection of the body and mind. The collection consists of the parts of the body and the states of mind. None of them is the I. When none of them is the I, their collection cannot be the I. "For example, in a herd of cows none of the animals is a sheep; therefore the herd itself is not sheep. In the same way, in the collection of the body and mind, neither the body nor the mind is the I, therefore the collection itself is not the I."

And, the last and fourth is refuted thus: the fourth possibility is that the I is separate from the body and mind. In the first three we have seen that the I is neither the body nor the mind nor both. What remains is that the I is different from them. But the I cannot be different from the body because we cannot apprehend the I without the body. There would be no I in the absence of the body. So also the I would cease to be if the mind were to disappear. When the body with its parts and the mind with its thoughts disappear there will remain nothing that could be called the I. Then it follows that the I is not separate from the body and mind. Now the meditation can conclude that the inherently existent I does not exist at all. The
inherently existent I that appeared to be vivid is unfindable. "This absence of an inherently existent I is emptiness, ultimate truth."\textsuperscript{31}

In the same way, we have to meditate on the emptiness of the body. The process begins with identifying the object of negation in respect of the body. Here the object of negation is the body that we think exists as a single entity independent of its parts, inherently from its own side. It has to be identified by recalling the situations in which our body appears to be inherently existing. We have to observe the situations like praise, insult, and so on, in which it appears to be existing from its own side. This is the first step in meditation on the emptiness of the body.

The second step involves the rejection of the object of negation. Here there are two possible ways in which the body can appear to be inherently existent. The two ways are: (1) as its parts, and (2) as being separate from them. There is no third possibility.

Firstly, the body cannot be identical with its parts, since no part of it, either the hands, the face, the bones, or any other, can be taken as the body. None of the individual parts of the body is the body. Similarly, the body cannot also be one with the collection of its parts. When no single part is the body, the collection of the parts cannot be the body. That is, the legs, the feet, and so forth are only the parts and not the body itself. "Even though all these parts are assembled
together, this collection remains simply parts, it does not magically transform into the part-possessor, the body.*52.

Secondly, if the body is not one with any of its parts or with their collection, then it must be different from its parts. But this cannot be the case, since the body will cease to be when all the parts are absent. Nothing will be left when we contemplate on the disappearance of each part. So there is no body separate from its parts. The inherently existent body is not findable. "This absence of an inherently existent body is the emptiness of the body."*53

Meditation on the emptiness of the I and the body reveals that they are merely convenient designations. The I exists conventionally. The ultimate unfindability of the inherent I does not mean that the I does not exist at all. It does exist as a designation imputed by the conceptual mind upon the body and mind complex. We use the I when we say that 'I exist', 'I meditate', and so on. There is no problem in using the I in that sense. The problem arises only when we think that the I has an ultimate existence. It is wrong to think that there is an I other than the conceptual imputation. Such an I is unfindable upon investigation. "This unfindability of the I is the emptiness of the I, the ultimate nature of the I. The I that exists as mere imputation is the conventional nature of the I."*54.

Similarly, there is no such thing as the substantially existent body independent of its parts. The body exists as a convenient
designation only. The word “body” is a conventional imputation over
the collection of the limbs like the head, the trunk, and so forth. Just
as we use the term “forest” to a group of trees, we use the term “body”
to refer to a collection of the parts. "Body is simply an imputation
made by the mind that imputes it. It does not exist from the object's
side".55

Meditation on the emptiness of the inherent I and body teaches
that all phenomena exist by way of convention only. No phenomena
exist inherently. All phenomena have parts. Physical phenomena
have physical parts. Mental phenomena have psychical attributes.
Nothing is an exception to this rule. This applies to Buddha and even
to emptiness itself. Everything is merely imputed by the mind. Any
phenomena is not one of its parts, not their collection, and not even
separate from them. This is what is meant by the emptiness of all
phenomena. We can apply analytical meditation to the phenomena
that give rise to attachment, anger and so on. The meditation will
reveal their emptiness and liberates the mind from them. "By
analyzing correctly we shall realize that the object we desire, or the
object we dislike does not exist from its own side – its beauty or
ugliness, and even its very existence, is imputed by mind. By thinking
in this way we shall discover that there is no basis for attachment or
anger".56
PĀRAMITĀS

In the Mahāyāna, and in the Prāsangikā Mādhyamikā in particular, meditation is the way of overcoming ignorance by realizing the true nature of one's own being as well as of all other beings and things. According to Nāgārjuna's Prajñāpāramitā Śāstra, meditation comprehends the determinate nature in the light of the ultimate reality which is emptiness. Meditation is a process of realizing the undivided being. It is aimed at the rejection of the falsely imagined separateness of the determinate existence. The rejection of the divided existence is not an end in itself. The rejection implies the ever widening integration of all phenomena. It implies the unity underlying the ultimacy of the undivided being. The integration that meditation brings about is not something that comes from "outside". It does not obliterate the uniqueness and individuality of the mundane world. The Great Way (Mahāyāna) is great because it is not exclusive of anyone or anything. It is the way of all beings. It is not itself any specific way. It unconditionally works for peace and harmony in the world. This is the way which avoids all exclusive clinging. "In this it is comparable to akāsa, the principle of accommodation".57

The Great Way of Nāgārjuna is also the way of Perfections (pāramitās). Here Prajna is the primary perfection. It is the Prajñāpāramitā itself. Prajñā as the perfection has six different aspects. They are called six kinds of perfections (pāramitās). The six
paramātās are: (1) charity (dana), (2) moral conduct (sīla), (3) endurance (ksanti), (4) effort (viyā), (5) meditation (dhyāna), and (6) wisdom (prajna).

Charity is the essential quality of perfection. It consists of five characteristics: (1) thinking associated with the knowledge of all forms, (2) giving away all things, internal and external, (3) sharing the merit of charity with all beings, (4) looking back to the Buddhahood, and (5) doing all this with a skillfulness of non-clinging. Nāgārjuna says that the bodhisattva, the farer on the great way, practices the perfection of charity with the sole aim of realizing the wisdom of the Buddha. He does not seek any other fruit from it. He does not expect the results like name, fame or birth in the higher states of existence. He does not aspire for immediate nirvāna, since he wants to help all beings by retaining his individuality. He lives a life of utmost sacrifice to eradicate the suffering of all beings. He cultivates the heart of great compassion and works for others. Compassion helps him overcome the temptation to efface his individuality. It saves him from rushing to seize the complete nirvāna. "He does not seek also to realize complete Nirvāna by an effacement of individuality as it is his purpose to help all beings by retaining it. He seeks only to fulfil the achievement of all the factors of Buddhahood. Such as the complete knowledge of all forms, and this, just in order to terminate the suffering of all people. This is what is meant by associating the
thought with the knowledge of all forms. That he shares with all beings this merit of his act of charity is like throwing open the granary of a noble family to the use of all. All people find their support in this merit of the bodhisattva even as all birds take their resting place on a tree of good fruits.

Moral conduct is the second perfection. The farer on the way cultivates it in order to help all beings that have sunk in the ocean of samsāra. As a consequence of this merit, the farer will be born in a good family and meet good people. It gives rise to the right understanding of life. It is conducive to the cultivation of all the six perfections. The farer cultivates moral conduct with great compassion for others. Compassion gives completeness to the perfection of moral conduct. Performing action in non-clinging way is the highest kind of moral conduct. It also means non-clinging to sin or merit as absolute and unconditioned. The bodhisattva is one who contemplates on the empty-nature of things. He enters into the truth of things with his eye of wisdom. So he does not regard sin or merit as having absolute or inherent nature. So he is above the sense of despise or pride. "The excellence of moral conduct does not permit any attitude of despising the sinner or any attitude of taking pride with regard to the merited. It is the non-clinging way imbued with right understanding of things that gives perfection to morality."
Endurance is the next perfection. The bodhisattva cultivates the perfection of endurance in the spirit of non-clinging, with the comprehension of the true nature of things and with the heart of great compassion. The cultivation of endurance is of two kinds: endurance in regard to beings, and endurance in regard to the true nature of elements. The former gives unlimited merit and the latter unlimited wisdom. With these, the bodhisattva achieves all that he wishes. He overcomes wrong passions of all kinds—attachment, aversion and delusion. He is above the defilements of avenging or attaching himself to anybody. He endures even reviling with equanimity and forbearance. He becomes steadfast in the attitude of enduring even with people and things that are inimical to him. His resolve to endure is so strong "as the colour that gets the necessary gum remains firm in the picture." Bodhisattva’s understanding of the true nature of things in their mundane as well as ultimate nature gives him the endurance known as dharma-kṣānti. By virtue of the knowledge of the true nature of things, the bodhisattva does not misconstrue his senses and their objects. He keeps himself free from clinging to them. Dharma-kṣānti is the capacity to sustain the comprehension of the truth of things. This comprehension gives rise to an irreversible faith in the truth of things. "Having known the true nature of prajñāpāramitā, he does not give rise to imaginative constructions; his
mind remains ever free from clinging and thus he has the capacity to forbear, to endure all things\textsuperscript{61}.

Effort is the fourth perfection. Right effort is fundamental to the cultivation of concentration and meditation. It forms the sixth step of the noble eightfold path. Right effort is put in a non-clinging way. The Prajñāpāramitā Śāstra calls it determination (chandas) and absence of lassitude (apramāda). Determination is the first step to effort. Effort cannot sustain without a firm resolve. Resolution to tread the way puts an end to languor. It keeps the effort unfailing. The bodhisattva fixes his mind firmly on the way of the Buddhahood. He exerts himself to cultivate all that is good. He also exerts himself to extricate his mind from all that is bad. There will be no prevarication from the way of the Buddha. The bodhisattva thus gradually attains the perfection (pāramī) of effort. "It is the effort put forth in order to achieve the way of the Buddha that is called the perfection of effort"\textsuperscript{62}.

The fifth perfection is dhyāna. The Śāstra says that dhyāna comprises both concentration and meditation. Concentration and meditation are necessary for single-mindedness which is essential for the arising of real wisdom. It is from the real wisdom that there arises the eternal joy of nirvāṇa. Wisdom cannot function fully in a mind that is scattered. Wisdom works fully and deeply only in the mind that is calm and collected. The scattered mind is like the lamp put in a windy place. Although the lamp has the capacity to emit light fully,
it cannot do so because of the wind. In the same way, dhyāna attains the status of perfection only when it is enlightened by wisdom. Concentration and meditation have to be saturated with the sense of the unconditioned. So also they have to be accompanied by compassion for all beings. They have to be followed by abandoning the pleasures of the senses. They have to be practiced with the spirit of non-clinging. Only then does dhyāna deserve to be called perfection. The bodhisattva practices dhyāna without seizing its flavour. He does not also seek its results. In entering dhyāna his only aim is to subdue his mind. He comes out of it to help others cross samsāra. He is able to go into dhyāna and again rise from dhyāna at will. It is through the skillfulness of his wisdom that he is able to do so.

Having attained the perfection of dhyāna, the bodhisattva is careful about the concentrated and obstructed states of mind. He does not seize them as absolute and unconditioned. He regards them as causally conditioned and dependently arising. They are like any other phenomenon. Having comprehended the true nature of all phenomena, the bodhisattva knows fully well that emptiness is the ultimately true nature of the concentrated as well as of the fluctuating mind. Even the elements that obstruct the mind are empty of inherent nature. Nāgārjuna says, “The dhyāna that is saturated with
this comprehension of the ultimate truth has attained its perfection.\(^63\)

And wisdom (prajñā) is the sixth and last perfection. Wisdom is the guiding light of the remaining perfections. Devoid of wisdom they are blind. Wisdom includes profound understanding of the true nature of things. It is also insight into their ultimate nature. So it gives right direction to the way. It makes the wayfaring fruitful and meaningful. Wisdom is the governing principle of the Mahāyāna Way. Wisdom is all comprehensive. It is inclusive of several kinds and levels of knowledge. All of them are called wisdom only. The Buddha taught the one and the same wisdom through different names depending upon the capacity of the person to whom he taught. All kinds of knowledge and understanding culminate in the one and only wisdom, namely, the complete knowledge of the true nature of the phenomena. The bodhisattva gets inspiration from the true knowledge of the phenomena (sarvakāraññata). According to Nāgārjuna, the perfection of wisdom alone can be called prajñāpāramita because it is to realize it that the bodhisattva fares on the way. "As the bodhisattva cultivates the way to realize this true prajna and to cross over to the other shore, his wayfaring in the path of knowledge is called pāramita, reaching perfection, while in the case of the Buddha who has already crossed over to the other shore, the prajñā is called, the knowledge of all forms."\(^64\)
Besides the six original perfections elucidated above, there are four more auxiliary perfections. They are: (1) the perfection of skillful means, (2) the perfection of the vow, (3) the perfection of the powers, and (4) the perfecting of knowledge (jñānapāramitā). The Mādhyamikā has assigned a subordinate role to these perfections. The four minor perfections are supplementaries to the sixth perfection, namely, wisdom.

The perfection of the skillful means is concerned with propagation of the Buddhist dharma. It entails the fulfillment of the practical element of the Buddhist path. It consists of three groups of items. The first group comprises the four elements of attraction. The first is generosity. It refers to the giving of the gift of the dharma, the Buddhist teachings. It is considered the best of all gifts because it provides a means for the eradication of all desires. The second is pleasing speech which attracts others to the bodhisattva's words and finds meaning in them. The third is purposeful behaviour. It means that the bodhisattva does not waste time or energy in fruitless activity but always applies himself completely to the task at hand. The fourth element of attraction is impartiality. The bodhisattva behaves in accordance with an ideal of impartiality. He treats everyone with the same kind of affection. He regards all sentient beings as his own sons. He also considers himself as the son of all other beings. "Yet in this life none is really a son or a stranger to anyone else"66.
The second group of characteristics of the skillful means is related to the analytical knowledge of the bodhisattva. It embodies the bodhisattva's practical grasp of the dharma. It also includes his ability and confidence in communicating the teachings. And, the last and the third part of the perfection of the skillful means is the knowledge of the Mahāyāna rituals. It includes chanting of the rituals as aids to meditating. Chanting of the ritual formulas helps in collecting and focusing the powers of the mind.

The perfection of the vow is the second of the minor perfections. It means taking a resolution to cultivate the Buddha's qualities. The bodhisattva takes a pure resolve in the vow of adhering to the Buddha's teachings. Then the teaching and instructions pour forth from his own mind. When the bodhisattva achieves the perfection of vow, he actualizes the philosophical understanding of the teachings. He sees the world not as a collection of isolated entities and events surrounding an isolated "I" but "as a multilayered web of relations in the midst of which he acts with complete freedom from clinging"66.

The perfection of the powers is the third of the minor perfections. It consists of consolidating different kinds powers the bodhisattva has achieved so far. The powers of giving, endurance, effort, concentration, and knowledge are the fruits of treading the path so far. At this stage, the bodhisattva brings all these powers to perfection. Here he focuses his attention on action. He not only

217
conceptually understands the Buddhist doctrine but also conveys it to others. He does not confine himself to an inferential understanding of the Mahāyāna doctrine. He does not indulge himself in sterile rationalistic or idealistic abstraction of the teachings. Nor does he retreat into the peace of nirvāṇa. But he leads the most active and fruitful life of living the teachings. He lives a compassionate and spontaneous life devoid of doubt or confusion. “And with his ascent to the ninth level of the path, the whole of everyday experience is said to reflect the strength of his vow to propagate the teachings and lead all sentient beings to liberation from suffering”67.

The perfection of knowledge is the fourth and last one of minor perfections. It is also the tenth and final perfection of the path of total perfections. This marks the culmination of the bodhisattva’s intellectual and spiritual journey. At this stage, the bodhisattva enters a meditative state of equanimity. He attains concentration imbued with non-dualistic knowledge of emptiness. He initiates himself into the omniscience of a perfect Buddha. Knowledge (paññā) is the clarity of the mind that no longer clings to reified concepts. It is the unerring sensibility of a mind that sees life not in mental constructions but in the matrix of relationships. “It is direct and sustained awareness of the truth, for a bodhisattva, that meaning and existence are found only in the interface between the components of
an unstable and constantly shifting web of relationships, which is everyday life.\textsuperscript{68}

Knowledge (jñāna) here is non-dualistic in nature. It manifests the experiences of the bodhisattva. It forms the basis of his conceptual and perceptual life. Wisdom (prajñā), the sixth perfection, is analytic in character. It is the power of intellectual discrimination. It is a tool capable of piercing through afflictions and attachments. Yet wisdom does not seem to have the quality of the non-dualistic knowledge. The bodhisattva develops the non-dualistic knowledge only at the final and tenth stage of the path, namely, jñāna. However, it is difficult to draw any line of definite distinction between prajna and jnana, wisdom and non-dual knowledge.

Thus comes to an end the Mahāyāna, the Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamikā, meditation on emptiness of inherent existence of all phenomena. We have examined the emptiness of the self-substance, the I and the body. We have also elucidated the ten perfections that are included in the Prāsaṅgika method of meditation on emptiness.
REFERENCES


4. Ibid., p. 25.


7. Ibid., p. 31.


9. Ibid., p. 33.

10. Ibid., p. 63.


12. Ibid., p. 58.

13. Ibid., p. 59.

14. Ibid., p. 60.

15. Ibid.


220


24. Ibid., VII:30.

25. Ibid., VII: 19.

26. Ibid., IX: 1.

27. Ibid., XVIII: 2.

28. Ibid., XX: 19.

29. Ibid., I: 7.

30. Ibid., XX: 21.

31. Ibid., XXIV: 22.

32. Ibid., XXI: 12.

33. Ibid., I: 3.

34. Ibid., VII: 19.

35. Ibid., VII: 20.


37. Ibid., p. 207.


39. Ibid., XVIII: 9.
40. Ibid., XXV: 20.
41. Ibid., XXIV: 9.
42. Ibid., VII: 34.
43. Ibid., XIII: 8.
46. Ibid.
49. Ibid., p. 108.
50. Ibid., p. 109.
51. Ibid., p. 110.
52. Ibid., p. 112.
53. Ibid., p. 113.
54. Ibid., p. 111.
55. Ibid., p. 114.
56. Ibid., p. 114.
58. Ibid., p.282.
59. Ibid., p. 283.
60. Ibid., p. 284.
61. Ibid., p. 285.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid., p. 286.
64. Ibid., p. 287.
66. Ibid., pp.100-1.
67. Ibid., p. 103.
68. Ibid., p. 104.