CHAPTER IV

CONCEPT OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN YOGACARA BUDDHISM
- A METAPHYSICAL VIEW
The Vijnanavada School is also known as Yogacara. For Asanga and others, the Absolute truth i.e. pure consciousness (Vijnana) can be realized only by the practice of Yoga. The extensive usage of the yogic terms in the works like Dasabhumika sutra and Lankavatara sutra justifies the Vijnanavada School to be rightly termed as Yogacara. This indicates the practical side of this school, while the word 'Vijnanavada' brings out its speculative features. In its practical application, it is described as Yogacara i.e. following the path of Yoga. These philosophers thought that the ultimate Reality can only be realized by yogic methods i.e. by meditation and contemplation and not by mere philosophical reasoning. This school is called Vijnanavada because philosophically it propagates that the ultimate Reality is only pure consciousness (Vijnana). Therefore, from the practical standpoint, in its moral and religious aspects, it is Yogacara; while in its metaphysical aspect, it is Vijnanavada.

The Yogacara holds consciousness to be the only reality. The empirical world reduces itself to ideas. They deny the independent existence of the world apart from consciousness. Nothing exists outside mind or consciousness. Consciousness is creative. The object has no separate existence of its own since it is not known to exist apart from the consciousness of it: the two are not distinct at all. But, the creativity of consciousness should not mean that
consciousness creates real physical objects. Its creativity consists in being diversified into so many modes, which though having an apparent externality, are really but modes of consciousness. One idea gives birth to another idea, but not an external object. Again, the external objects have no self-existence but are mere mental constructions. They are like the floating hare in the atmosphere or like the vision of the double moon. The Yogacara argues that a real object can be self-existent if it remains in one and the same condition forever. But, the objects of the world are not of this nature. They are in constant flux. Furthermore, they hold that momentariness is the sole reality. So, the objects of the world do not have self-nature. They depend on relations for their existence and relations are nothing but creations of our mind.

Vaihāsika and Sautrantika analyze the world through the co-operation of seventy-five kinds of mental and material elements. Yogacara also admits a hundred such kinds of elements and it opines that all elements are mental. "There is no other dharma apart from the Manadharma or mental dharma. Vaibhasika and Sautrantika argue mental and material dharma, while Yogacara reduces all dharma into the Minds".

Vijnanavada means a theory which upholds only momentary consciousness (vijnana). It is also called subjective idealism which denies the reality of external objects and treats them as the projection of the momentary vijnana. For Vijnanavada, everything is momentary and there is no permanent
reality. So this school propagates a doctrine of universal flux only and believes that there is no substance and no soul behind this momentary consciousness.

According to Vijnanavada, "There can be no object independent of consciousness; consciousness however is not so dependent and can exist even without any object. The Vijnanavadin thought that the outer world is but an imagined (parikalpita) projection of thought. And the illusion of an 'I' and of a concrete world confronting this 'I' comes into being by consciousness splitting into a subjective and a seemingly objective (image) part. In other words, our knowledge about the object is merely the expression of our consciousness as an objectified part which appears through the process of self-differentiation of consciousness, because many objects in our knowledge are merely the experience or interpreted one. After all the subject-object dualism is based not on fact but on self-differentiation of consciousness. Its process is equivalent to the dreaming state in the Upanishads.

A content is said to be subjective, when it is merely in thought, and has no grounding in external reality. Subjectivity thus entails a constructive mechanism of thought. The Vijnanavada is considered to be the subjective idealism. They deny, at the outright, the reality of external objects and treat them in the projection of the momentary vijnana. They also deny the real independent existence of the world because in true sense they do not deny the categories of the universe, name, identity, negation, relations, etc. They point out that all these categories are the construction of our imagination. Hence they
do not denote any objective reality of things. So, the reality is ideal and it is consciousness. Vijnanavada is not only mere idealism but also Absolutism. For them, from the ultimate standpoint, pure subject ceases to be subject; it becomes something non-conceptual. It compels them to transcend idealism to absolutism. Nothing exists objectively. The objectivity is only a mode of consciousness. When this illusory idea of objectivity is removed, the subjective consciousness also ceases to exist (grahyabhava grahakabhava). At the transcendental level, pure consciousness exists alone. This is ultimate reality, the essence of everything. So, pure consciousness, free of the duality of subject and object, is the Absolute.

Maitreyanatha is known as a systemic expounder of Vijnanavada school of Buddhism. He was also the teacher of Asanga, who is a very prominent and dominating thinker in the development of Vijnanavada philosophy. Asanga's well known work, the Mahayanasutralankara, is a landmark in the development of Vijnanavada absolutism. Asanga does not treat the momentary vijnana as the sole Reality. For him, Reality is non-dual and it is free from subject-object duality, indescribable and indeterminate. It can be realized intuitively. Momentariness applies only to phenomena. Absolute is the permanent background of momentary phenomenal world, but is itself not momentary. The Absoluteness of pure consciousness is emphasized by Asanga alone.

Asanga believes in Absolute Reality. For him, the sole Reality is pure consciousness. He identifies the Absolute with pure consciousness (citta). The
Absolute Reality is called by different terms such as *Tattva* (Reality); *Visuddhatatathata* (pure suchness); *Citta* (mind or consciousness); *Dharmadhatu* (essence of all things); *Vijnaptimatrata* (consciousness); *Budhatva* (Buddhahood); *Nirvana* (liberation); *Mahatman* (universal soul).

Asanga defines Absolute Reality (*Tattva*) as that which is free from duality (*dvaya-ralita*); indescribable and non-determinate. Reality is non-dual. It is called *Dvaya-rahita* (free from duality) because in it there is no distinction between subject and object, positive and negative. The positive and negative are the one and the same (*bhavabhava samanata*). This subject-object duality is merely an imagination (*parikalpita*) and hence it is unreal. The Reality is non-dual consciousness, because it cannot be defined in terms of subject-object duality. Asanga says that Absolute Reality is indescribable and non-determinate. It is indescribable in terms of any empirical predicates. It cannot be described positively or negatively. It is neither existence (*bhava*) nor non-existence (*abhava*). It cannot be called existence because it is not subject to origin, decay and death. There is no empirical existence which is free from origin, decay and death. Empirical existence arises from causes and conditions. Everything which arises from causes and conditions is necessarily momentary. Whatever is produced by cause and condition has beginning, decay and death. Reality is non-caused and unconditional; hence it cannot be called an existence. It also cannot be called non-existence because non-existence is a relative concept depending upon concept of *bhava* (existence). Reality cannot be called both existence and non-existence at the same time because these are
contradictory terms and cannot be applied to the same thing at the same time. For e.g. light and darkness (dahatimira) cannot remain at the same time and at the same place. Again, if it is both existence and non-existence, it will not remain uncaused and unconditioned, because both existence and non-existence are dependent on causality. But, Reality is not dependent on any other thing for its existence. It is self-existent (sat) and non-relative. Therefore, the Absolute is called avyakrta i.e. indescribable in relative terms.

Nagarjuna also defines Absolute Reality as "That which can only be directly realized, that which is quiescent, inexpressible, that which is non-discursive and non-dual". He opines that Reality is indescribable, nondeterminate and thus it is Sunya. He adds that Reality is Sunya in the sense of non-describable and is free from all empirical predicates. The word 'Sunya' is understood in two senses. Firstly, it is Sunya from the phenomenal point of view, which means svabhavasunya, i.e. devoid of independent substantial reality of its own. Secondly, it is sunya from the Absolute point of view, which means prapancasunya i.e. devoid of verbalization, thought construction and plurality. It is indescribable in language. It does not mean absolute blank. Nagarjuna clearly states "It cannot be called void or not void, or both or neither, but in order to indicate it, it is called void (sunya)". Just as in case of Asanga, Nagarjuna also is of the opinion that Absolute cannot be identified with pure consciousness. He emphasizes the transcendental aspect of the Absolute.
Reality is also called 'dharma-dhatu' i.e. essence of all elements. It is substratum of all phenomena. It is the principle of unity underlying the entire phenomenal world. It is essentially identical with all the elements (dharmas) and yet it cannot be defined in terms of any element; it transcends all of them. It is unimaginable, immeasurable and all-pervading. It is neither one nor many. It is also called Mahabodhi (great enlightened man) which is permanent and eternal. Reality is eternal in the sense that it is beyond space and time. It is not a spacio-temporal entity. It is permanent in the sense that it cannot be produced or destroyed. It is uncaused, un-originated and self-existent.

Absolute Reality is paramarthata satya (highest truth). Paramartha satya is the only truth which is non-dual and is Absolute. It has been mentioned that there are two other kinds of truths – parikalpita and paratantra. For Asanga, the phenomenal world is not utterly unreal; it has a relative existence. The world does not exist independently and outside consciousness. He clearly explains this idea by marking the differences between these three kinds of truths. The Madhyamika accepts only two truths – samvrti and paramartha satya. Samvrti covers the real nature of all things. Phenomena are characterized as samvrti because they cover all around. It is vyavaharika satya i.e. pragmatic or empirical reality while paramartha satya is Absolute Reality. Paramartha satya or Absolute Truth is the knowledge of the real as it is without any distortion. This truth is, in fact, the unutterable (anabhilapya), the unthinkable, the unteachable, etc. Chandrakirti says that samvrti is ajnana. But Nagarjuna says, "Without recourse to pragmatic reality, the Absolute truth cannot be taught
and without knowing the Absolute truth, nirvana cannot be attained\textsuperscript{10}. Therefore, samvrtti is upaya (means) and paramartha is upeya (goal). The Madhyamika regards two kinds of samvrtti—lokasamvrtti and alokasamvrtti. Lokasasamvrtti refers to the common empirical object recognized as real by all. Examples are a book, a pencil, etc. while the other is not real like hare’s horn, sky-lotus.

Sankara also admitted Pratibhasika, Vyavaharika and Paramarthika level in his metaphysics. The parikalpita, paratantra and parinispanna correspond to the Pratibhasika, Vyavaharika and Paramarthika respectively while samvrtti and paramartha of Nagarjuna correspond to vyavahara and paramartha of Vedanta.

According to Sankara, such things cannot be taken as unreal, for if this was true, they would not have been perceived. When we perceive a snake in a rope, the snake belongs to pratibhasika level. It is perceived by only one individual and that also for a few moments.

Sankara says that an unreal thing is never perceived by anyone. No one has seen the hare’s horn or the sky-flower. These are all mere words. There is no object corresponding to them in the real world. In the rope-snake example, the entity like rope is perceived in the empirical world. This entity cannot be denied. The rope belongs to vyavaharika order of reality.
Sankara holds that the knowledge of Brahman is not contradicted. The knowledge of the empirical world of diversity and change is contradicted by Brahman. For, it is impossible to conceive the absence of consciousness at any level. Pure consciousness is the highest reality for it persists uncontradicted through all forms of existence in all places and times. Therefore, Sankara calls it supreme reality or paramarthika satta.

Now, we will discuss the view of the three truths of Yogacara, which is known as the doctrine of three natures (tri-svabha). The three svabhās are—parikalpita, paratantra and parinispāna. The word parikalpita itself indicates that it is merely an imagined truth. It has no intrinsic existence of its own. It is purely a mental construction; thus it is absolutely unreal. It has no real existence and but merely as a name. Parikalpita being purely imaginary cannot be said to be eternal and that which is not eternal cannot be existent ultimately. Therefore, this satya has no truth at all. It is believed to be existent by ignorant people. It is therefore, so-called truth; truth as conventionally believed. Vasubandhu describes parikalpita satya as pure imagination by the intellect; it does not exist in reality.

Paratantra is so called because it is dependent on causality. It includes the whole of phenomenal reality. It is real on the empirical level. It is caused by the causes and conditions therefore it has beginning, decay and death. Though it exists for all practical purposes, yet it is not the highest truth. Asanga calls Paratantra as Abhutaparikalpa, which literally means construction of non-
existent object. The term Abhutaparikalpa is so called because non-existent things (i.e. phenomenal world) are imagined by this truth or it is imagination of non-existent phenomenal world on pure consciousness (abhutasya, parikalpo yasmat sah). For Vasubandhu also ‘Paratantra’ is dependent; it arises out of causes and conditions. The word Abhutaparikalpa applies to all three truths, viz. parikalpita, paratantra and parinispanna. It is parikalpita in the sense of unreal subject-object duality which is superimposed on pure consciousness (abhutascasauparikalpitasca). It is non-existent (abhutah) but imagined (parikalpitah). They exist as illusory or as appearance. It is paratantra in the sense of projecting non-existent world on the pure consciousness. It applies to the phenomenal world of subject-object duality, manifested by the creative consciousness (alaya). The word Abhutaparikalpa also applies to parinispanna (highest truth) in the sense of being the supporting transcendental ground of all phenomena and is non-dual. It is the ground for superimposition of the phenomenal world (abhutasya parikalpo yasmin sah). The non-existent thing is super-imposed on this parinispanna truth. Paratantra is not utterly unreal as parikalpita. It is empirically real. It is real for all practical purposes. But, ultimately it has no existence of its own.

The word ‘Parinispanna’ literally means well established truth (paritah nispannah). It is called ‘paramartha satya’. It is non-dual, beyond speech and indescribable by verbalizing mind. It is equated with Absolute. It is the nature of the highest truth. Asanga says that this satya is non-dual (advanya) because it is free from five kinds of duality —
(i) It is non-existing under the aspect of parikalpita (imagined truth) and paratantara (dependent truth) and not non-existent under the aspect of Parinispanna.

(ii) It is neither existent nor non-existent because parikalpita and paratantara are not the same as parinispanna.

(iii) It is neither production nor destruction.

(iv) It is neither increasing nor decreasing.

(v) It is neither pure nor impure.

Paramartha Satya is equated with dharmadhatu, i.e. essence or nature of all things. Dharmadhatu itself is un-originated, it has no production, but it is the Absolute immanent in the phenomenal world. Parinispanna relates to nirvana, a state of peace where all imaginary things cease. It is beyond the scope of discursive thought, language and empirical activity. It is the highest state in which man cannot distinguish himself from other things.

It is clear that among these three truths, parikalpita has no existence of its own. It is purely imaginary and therefore it is amitya – not real. On the other hand, paratantara is superimposed on consciousness. It is relative; the cause of suffering and momentary only. It is real on the empirical level only. But, ultimately it has no existence of its own.

Parikalpita and Paratantara are related to worldly things only, while Parinispanna is related to the highest truth Nirvana, where all klesas and
imaginations cease to exist. Lankavatara also refers to these three truths and states that *parikalpita* is purely imaginary like a hare's horn or a sky-flower or a dream, etc. *Paratantra* is relative and it depends on causes and conditions. It comes under the realm of phenomena. *Parispanna* is the *paramartha satya* (highest truth), absolutely real which transcends subject-object duality. It is purely based on spiritual experience. So, *Parinispanna* is the only Reality and the only truth. Vasubandhu says, "*Parinispanna* is the only truth; it exists independently by itself." The other two truths have no independent existence of their own. In fact, there are no degrees of truth or reality. Therefore, Asanga accepted that there is only one truth – *Paramartha Satya* and that is Reality only. So, he says that Absolute Reality is *Paramartha Satya*.

It is clear that Asanga admits the existence of phenomenal world on empirical level. It is called *paratantra* (dependent) and ultimately it is not real. But he denies absolute reality of phenomenal world. (He recognizes that the phenomenal world exists in the sense of having position in time and space and causal system, though it is not absolutely self-existent). Asanga declares that the object of the phenomenal world is momentary. He argues that everything which arises from causes and conditions is necessarily momentary. All the phenomenal objects are produced by causes and conditions. Whatever is produced by causes and conditions has beginning, decay and death. Therefore, all phenomenal objects are momentary and not real ultimately.
To show the momentariness of these phenomenal things, they can be compared to the flame of a lamp and to the water of a river. In a lamp, one flame is continuously succeeding another; and in a river water is always flowing and fresh water is coming in every moment. In the same manner, phenomenal things are momentary and there is nothing in the world which is not momentary. Asanga, on the basis of parinamavada, proves the transitory nature of the phenomenal world. Every object of the phenomenal world is changing at every moment and thus, it is momentary.

Asanga interprets pratityasamutpada in terms of relativity and proves the dependent unreal nature of all elements. He criticized the Hinayanists' view of pratityasamutpada as the evanescent momentary things appear (pratiprati itayayam vinasinam samutpadah). Pratityasamutpada is the causal law regulating the coming into being and disappearance of the various elements. It is temporal sequence of real entities between which there was a causal relation. On the basis of this concept, the Hinayanists analyzed all the phenomena into elements (dharmas) and believed that these dharmas have separate reality of their own. It was their belief that only the pudgala or personal self is unsubstantial, while the dharmas or elements of existence are real entities. However, Asanga says that pratityasamutpada is not a principle of temporal sequence but the principle of essential dependence of things on each other. He declares that all the elements of existence in the world are non-substantial, momentary and not real as believed by the Hinayanists. Not only pudgala (self) is unsubstantial but all the dharmas (elements of existence) are also
unsubstantial. Nagarjuna says, "There is no real independent existence of entities (pratyana); since there is no element of existence (dharma) which comes into manifestation without conditions." Asanga also states that the doctrine of causation (Pratityasamutpada) itself makes it clear that all the dharmas (elements of existence) are relative and dependent and they have no separate reality of their own (nihsvabhava). Therefore, this doctrine shows impermanence and conditioned nature of all phenomena. It also teaches that all phenomenal existence, all entities in the world are conditioned and devoid of real independent existence. Births, old age, death and all the miseries of phenomenal existence arise through dependence upon conditions. There is not a single thing in the world which exists in its own rights. Thus, all dharmas (elements of existence) are not substantial, devoid of independent reality of their own. This whole phenomenal world is called Paratantra-dependent. Therefore, it is apparent and not real ultimately.

It has been mentioned that Asanga's theory of momentariness applies only to phenomenal world of objects. Asanga proves Absoluteness of permanent Reality (citta); and establishes theory of momentariness of the phenomenal world. We have already mentioned that all that is caused and conditioned i.e. phenomenal world of existence (dharma) is not really existent because everything undergoes change with time. While, real existing things i.e. the Absolute has no cause and no change is possible in it. Also, the fact of coming and going cannot be attributed to it. Therefore, Reality is called un-originating, un-decaying. Asanga, for the first time, interprets pratityasamutpada
in terms of *parinama* (theory of transformation) which deals with the process of evolution of the phenomenal world. He thinks, "Phenomenal world is transformation of the pure *vijnana* only. The Absolute transcends everything, but tainted with ignorance, it manifests itself as subject-object duality"\(^{13}\). The Yogacara analyses this entire process of phenomenalization of pure consciousness in the following manner.

*Alaya-Vijnana* is the first product of *parinama* out of pure consciousness (*citta*). It contains the seeds of the whole universe. It is seed of all phenomena. *Alaya-vijnana* or the cosmic mind is the dynamic aspect of this Reality. The external objects and the subjective elements have no reality of their own, since they are nothing but the transformation of *Alaya-vijnana*. In other word, "*Alaya-vijnana* is the ground of the subjects and the objects of the empirical world"\(^{14}\).

It is called *Alay* because it is the place or the receptor or the seeds or impression (*vasana*) of any *karma*. All *dharma* ensue from it as its effects or evolutes\(^{15}\). It is called *vijnana* because of its ideal form while it is called *vipaka*, because any kind of *karma* done by the individual in any spheres of existence leaves its trace in the *Alaya*. *Alaya-vijnana* has to preserve all the elements of its own attributes. In consequence, an element which can be known as substance of a thing is not an essence of thing itself, but merely the manifestation of an attribute of *Alaya-vijnana*. These attributes of *Alaya-vijnana* are called the seeds. According to Hajime Nakamura, "One of them is that of potentialities (*bijja-seeds*) which make up the store-consciousness. The concept
was probably inherited from the Sautrantika School, and it can be traced in the *Abhidhama-mahavibhasa-sastra*\(^{16}\).

*Alaya-vijnana* is called seed (*bija*) of all phenomena. It is that principle in which the seed of all elements (*dharma*) of phenomenal existence is present. It is responsible for creating all the elements of the phenomenal world. All types of dualities and thought constructions are products of *Alaya-vijnana* only. It is the storehouse of different forms of consciousness. Because of various *vasanas* or impressions left in the *Alaya*, the ego and the material world, the subject and object are produced. Junjiro Takakusu explains the *Alaya-vijnana* as follows –

"When all things are reflected on our mind, our discriminating or imagination power is already at work. This is called our consciousness (*vijnana*). Since the consciousness coordinating all reflected elements store them, it is called the store-consciousness or ideation-store"\(^{17}\).

Sthiramati (later Vijnanavadin) explains the meaning of *Alaya* in three different ways: (i) *Alaya* mean a place for all seeds of elements which are responsible for *klesa* and defilement. These elements are stored here. In the passage of time they come out of it, taking different forms of consciousness, or (ii) *Alaya-vijnana* is the source from which all elements of the world are produced. The elements are connected with the *Alaya* as effect to a cause, or (iii) *Alaya* is the cause of all elements; there is a cause and effect relation between them.
Vasubandhu states that everything in the phenomenal world is transformation of pure vijnana only. The first product of parinama out of this pure consciousness is the Alaya-vijnana. Vasubandhu calls them as vipaka-vijnana i.e. the consciousness in which all the effects (vipakas) of past karma are stored. It contains the seeds of the whole universe. Because of vasanas or impressions left in the Alaya, the ego and the material world, the subject-object duality is produced. It is very clear that according to Asanga and Vasubandhu, the whole phenomenal world comes out of this Alaya-vijnana. Everything is transformation of the original citta or pure consciousness that is stored in it.

Alaya-vijnana is defiled aspect of pure consciousness only when the consciousness is defiled; it becomes Alaya-vijnana (a store-house of consciousness). From the Alaya-vijnana, ego consciousness (ulistumanovijnana) and objects are produced. They are all modifications of Alaya-vijnana only. It has been mentioned that the Hinayanist's theory of a stream of thought is replaced by the theory of transformation (parimana) of consciousness. This concept of Alaya-vijnana can be compared to primitive matter (pradhana or Prakriti) of the Samkhya Philosophy. Samkhya philosophers believe that all the individual objects and ideas are modifications (parimana) of primitive matter (pradhana). Prof. Stcherbatsky rightly observes that this store-house of consciousness is analogous to the primitive matter (pradhana) of the Samkhya School. All the individual objects and ideas are regarded as its modifications (parinama) by the Samkhya. The Yogacara likewise regards all separate ideas as modifications of their store-
consciousness. This represents a disguised return from theory of a stream of thought to the doctrine of the substantial soul. In a stream of thought every preceding moment of consciousness is the cause of the following one. This relation, called ‘Samanantara Pratyaya’, is now replaced by the relation of the store consciousness (alaya) to its modifications (parinama)\textsuperscript{18}.

Lankavatara also deals with this concept of Alaya-vijnana. But, Alaya-vijnana is here equated with Absolute Reality. It is unconditioned aspect of the Absolute, free from subject-object duality, beyond production and destruction, beyond all plurality of imagination. It is permanent, immortal and never-changing storehouse of consciousness, which underlies the apparent subject-object duality.

For Asanga, Alaya-vijnana is not permanent, immortal and absolute Reality as stated by Lankavatara. He says that it is a product of parinama of pure consciousness. Asanga considers Alaya-vijnana as lower concept. This is defiled aspect of the Absolute; and so, it is not pure, not permanent like pure consciousness (citta). This Alaya-vijnana, which is defiled, creates subject-object duality which is responsible for all pain and sufferings. Purification of citta or consciousness is nothing but becoming which is free from subject-object duality, created by Alaya-vijnana and stopping activity of Alaya-vijnana. So, there is a difference between Alaya-vijnana of Asanga and Alaya-vijnana of Lankavatara.
The Alaya-vijnana or universal consciousness further manifests itself in two forms. Firstly, it takes the form of an individual subject or ego (klista manovijnana) and secondly, it manifests itself in the form of various mental states and the so-called external objects (visaya). It seems that behind these three modifications, Alaya is the citta or dharmadhatu, which is a permanent background and unchanging pure consciousness (tattva). It is the one only.

The plurality of the waves, the manifestation of the ocean and the manifold vijnanas are the manifestations of the Alaya. There is not the slightest difference between the individual vijnanas and the Alayas. It is only by the discursive intellect that the Alaya is compared to the ocean and the vijnanas to the waves. Ultimately the Alaya is indescribable and transcends all categories of the intellect.

Among the three stages in the evolution of consciousness, the second is the mana-vijnana. It is called ‘Manas’ because the process of intellect (manana) always goes on it. The activity of manas is directed towards the actualization of the potential forces stored in the Alaya. It is the Alaya which supplies the data on which manas operates. Manas is not independent consciousness.

The determinate awareness of the object is the third stage of consciousness, which is called the pravrtti-vijnana. This stage of consciousness matters only in empirical discourse and it is known empirically only. "The Alaya is the ocean; pravrtti vijnanas are the waves just as that stirred by the wind-
dance on the ocean, and similarly the many fold individual vijnanas stirred by the wind of objects which are the creation of Ignorance, dance on the Alaya. These are the three stages of the evolution of Vijnanas though the evolutes of Vijnana are infinite. None of these evolutes has an absolute existence of its own and they are not ultimate and the evolution is caused solely by an illusory idea of objectivity. Once this idea of objectivity is eradicated, all the three Vijnanas revert to the pristine purity of Vijnaptimatrata: the only reality of pure consciousness.

Vijnaptimatrata holds that only consciousness is the sole reality. 'Vijnapti' means 'representation' and it denotes the mentally generated projections of subject and object that are falsely believed to exist. According to Yogacara teachings, they are merely superimposed by unenlightened being upon actuality. The aim of Yogacara practice is realization of the false and illusory nature of these projections and attainment of non-dual awareness. The independence of the external object confronting consciousness is only apparent. The distinction natively made between the percept and its content is illusory; like the blue and the consciousness of blue are identical. At the very outset of the auto-commentary on his Vijnapti-matrata-siddhi Vimsatika, Vasubandhu says that only consciousness exists. According to him, the empirical world reduces itself into ideas. The independence of external objects confronting consciousness is only apparent, as the external objects are perceived along with the consciousness of it. To establish the difference between two things, it is necessary to perceive them separately. It is the simple
logic that if two things are invariably found in conjunction, they cannot even be reckoned as two. The relation of difference granting that difference as a relation presupposes the separateness of the relata. By 'consciousness' the realists and the Yogacara understand two entirely different ideas. The realists hold that consciousness is different from the object conceived. The two have attributes contradictory to each other. For the realist, consciousness is an almost-transparent or diaphanous entity through which transparent object pass in and out without affecting any modification. Consciousness here is neutral and absolutely formless. For the Yogacara, there is no other reality but consciousness and the forms perceived must pertain to consciousness alone as there are no external objects. Consciousness creates its own forms as the content of consciousness is not imported from outside. By the creativity of consciousness, it does not mean that consciousness creates real physical objects. Its creativity lies in being diversified into many modes; modes of consciousness. One idea generates another idea, and not external objects.

The realists argue that the content perceived is independent of the act of perception. Perception does not alter the context perceived whatever may be the case. Formerly, it remained unperceived, and during perception, it is being perceived. The objects remain the same in perception, before perception and after perception. But the Yogacara challenges that, to trace this identity, we must know the object both before being perceived and during perception. To insist that the object owes nothing to the fact of its being perceived; we must know what the object was before being perceived. This means that we must
know without knowing. We know the content only as it is perceived and cannot compare it with its unperceived state.

The Yogacara argues that we can never transcend knowledge. When we say that perception reveals only the objects that exist already, it implies this transcendence. The object has no existence of its own because it cannot be known to exist apart from the consciousness of it. The Yogacara asserts that objects cannot be merely internalized and then sustained as a form of consciousness. The object is denied because it has no intrinsic existence of its own. The consciousness is capable of existing on its own right. It does not require any illusory ‘other’ to project that ‘other’ as its object. Otherness should not be an inherent characteristic of consciousness. The sole reality of consciousness requires that it should be free from any trace of objectivity, that it should be capable of existing without any ‘other’ to it.

Regarding the nature of *Vijnaptimatrata*, different Buddhist scholars like Dignaga, Dharmakirti, Santaraksita and Kamalsila gave different views which asserts that *Vijnaptimatrata* is not eternal and permanent. It is momentary. On the other hand, Asanga, Vasubandhu and Lankavatara-sutra hold that *Vijnaptimatrata* is permanent and it is eternal. Sthirmati says that *Vijnaptimatrata* has been described as perceptual (*dhruva*) because of its eternity and non-destructibility. It is blissful because it is eternal. Vasubandhu says that *Vijñaptimatrata* does not stand for the absolute state of realization. It
is one of the states in samsara experiences as objects are mere representation of consciousness.

Description of Vijnaptimatra has been made in the Trimsika in stanzas 26, 27 and 28, as follows:

As long as consciousness does not abide
In Vijnaptimatrata,
The attachment to the two fold grasping
Will not cease to operate. (26)

One does not abide in it (Vijnaptimatrata)
Just on account of the (theoretical) perception
That all this is Vijnaptimatra,

If one places (sees) something before oneself (27)
One does not abide in Vijnaptimatra
When does not perceive also a supporting
Consciousness,

For, the graspable objects being absent
There cannot either be the grasping of that
Namely, the grasping of the supporting
Consciousness (28).

(Translation, Kochumuttom)

Dignaga and Dharmakirti are two great Indian logicians and eminent philosophers of Vijnanavada School. For them, the ultimate reality of this world...
is consciousness only. Dignaga states that external objects do not exist independent of the mind. The so-called external object is only the object co-ordination of consciousness. It is internally cognized by introspective and appears as external object. The ultimate reality is an 'Idea'. Dignaga says, "All relations are of the form of substantive and the attributive and are apriori. They are the rules or principles of understanding which are constructed by our imagination for the sake of explaining the connection between empirical phenomena"\(^20\). Therefore all relations are contingent and have no self existence. There is no difference between the patch of blue and sensation of blue. Both subject and object are internal. He assumes that for transcendental illusion it is reflected in the double form of subject and object\(^21\).

Dharmakirti states that we never perceive or infer the external objects. What we perceive is only the sense-data. Our mind receives sense data and analyses this data according to their own forms. Moreover, mind and sense organs are nothing but cognition. We find only the cognition behind the external object. The Yogacara holds that cognition is self-luminous, it manifests itself and it is self-aware. There is no real distinction between subject and object. The subject-object distinction is equally false creation of the cosmic principle. But though they are fundamentally agreed on reality of consciousness alone, they differ in a very material respect. Their differences are fundamentally nothing but the self-expressions of consciousness appearing in the process of division into the act of knowledge, the object of knowledge and the result of knowledge. In consequence, they are merged into one and the same consciousness. The
Yogacara philosophers are clear in this position that the distinction between the subject and the object is illusionary. Therefore, the external world is not real. The appearance of the world is the self-consistence of cognition and all activities of our cognition are the modifications of consciousness. Therefore, it is said that all is mere mental creation, only the mind exists.

Shantaraksita maintains that consciousness is only reality and supports the non-existence of external object. He says that if an external object exists, it must be perceived as either atomic or compound. If it is atomic, then it would be too small to be perceived. Again, if it is not atomic i.e. composite object like a table, then it would be necessary to perceive all the objects simultaneously. But, that is not possible. We cannot even say that the atoms forming thereby perceiving the original object is not a possibility. Thereby it can be concluded that external object does not exist, the only reality is consciousness.

According to Shantaraksita, cognition is self-aware (svasamvedana). Its essential nature consists in self-awareness. It is self-revealing consciousness. It does not apprehend an external object. There is neither a permanent self nor an external object. There is only a series of self-aware cognition (vijnana). Vijnana alone is the reality.

Shantaraksita stated that there is no evidence of the existence of an external object, which cannot be perceive by a formless cognition. A formless cognition cannot come into relation with an object. A cognition invaded with the
form of an object perceives its own form. It does not perceive the form of its object. So, an external object cannot be perceived. Shantaraksita puts forward another argument with the help of an example — colour blue and the consciousness of the colour blue are never to known to exist separately. They are identical with each other. This proves that the independent existence of an object is not possible. The objects are never cognized independent of the cognizing mind. So, consciousness is the sole reality.

The fact that Absolute Reality is called by different terms as Tathata (suchness), Dharmadhatu (essence of all things), Tattva (thatness), Buddhatva (Buddhahood), etc. has already been mentioned and will now be discussed.

_Tathata_ is the Absolute Reality. It is non-dual and indescribable. It cannot be defined in terms of thought categories. It is neither pure nor impure, neither one nor many. It is like 'akasa' (sky) which pervades everything and is affected by nothing. It is essentially identical with all dharmas yet it cannot be defined in terms of any dharma because it transcends all of them. Pure Tathata is termed as soul of Buddhas by Asanga. He says, “Soullessness is the pure Tathata and is the Atman of the Buddhist”. He also states that realizing Tathata is called liberation.

_Tathata_ is an absolute impersonal Reality, which is not truth itself. It is a state of identity between knower and the known. In order to reveal itself the
impersonal Absolute requires appropriate medium. *Tathatgata* is that medium which is the linking thread between the Absolute and phenomenal beings.

*Tathagata* is a manifestation of the Absolute. Mere Absolute manifests itself in the form of a diverse person or God. It seems that even though early Buddhism originally opposed the idea of any personal God, later Buddhism accepted divine personality of the Buddha as the object of worship. This *Tathagata* level Buddha as God that is endowed with all power, perfection and free from obscurcation. For *Vijanavadin*, *Tathagata* is the personalized aspect of the Absolute. It is a person and yet free from all bondage. He is such type of person who knows what the Absolute is and reveals it to other beings. *Tathagata* is like an amphibious being partaking both of the Absolute and Phenomena. It is called “Eternal body of Buddha”. That is why Asanga says that all beings are wombs of *Tathagata*.

The *Madhyamika* also used the term *Tathata* for the Absolute. For them, *Tathata* is the truth but it is impersonal. In order to reveal itself, it requires a medium and that medium is *Tathagata*. The word *Tathagata* is interpreted as *tatha + gata* i.e. ‘thus gone’ or ‘thus come’\(^{26}\). It is also called *Tathagata-garbha*. Its essential character is *sunyata* and *karuna*.

*Vijnanavada* also accepts that *karuna* is a very important aspect of the *Tathagata*. It is known as infinite compassion for the ignorant, miserable and suffering people. It is natural affection for the people. This affection for the
people is not for any selfish end but for the upliftment of the ignorant human being. Karuna is pure love for the people to rescue them from the clutches of misery, attachment and darkness of ignorance. Asanga clearly states that "Tathagata's love or affection towards the people cannot be compared with fatherly, motherly or friendly love because these are tainted with attachment and hence impure. Tathagata's compassionate affection is pure and beyond empirical level"²⁷.

Tathagata is the God-head of the Mahayana Buddhism. It has three aspects known as the three kayas of the Tathagata Buddha. Asanga, for the first time developed these concepts of trikaya. These are – (i) Svabhavika kaya or Svabhavika Dharmakaya, (ii) Sambhogakaya, and (iii) Nirmanakaya.

Nirmanakaya is the real body assumed by Buddha to save human beings from misery. This is the visible body of the Buddha. For its existence it depends upon Dharmakaya. So, Dharmakaya is the basis of Nirmanakaya. Vasubandhu says that Nirmanakaya is meant for sravakas – common people (prthakjana) and Bodhisatvas who are not yet in one of the ten Bhums. It may appear in all lands whether pure or impure. Madhyamikas also discusses the kaya. They say that Nirmanakaya is a body assumed by the Buddha in order to save the ignorant mankind. So, Nagarjuna says that Rupakaya or Nirmanakaya denotes gross and subtle body. It is not a real kaya. Ultimately it is unreal.
Sambhogakaya is visible only to some heavenly beings. Sambhogakaya is also based on Dharmakaya. In fact it is produced by Dharmakaya. Therefore, it is said that Dharmakaya is the basis of the Nirmanakaya and Sambhogakaya. Sambhogakaya is the mysterious personality of the supreme Buddha associated with all powers and excellences. It is this body with which the Buddha enjoys his creation. “This kaya, universal form of Buddha, is endowed with all excellence. It can be compared to universal form of lord variously described by the Gita.” This idea of Sambhogakaya is also similar to the concept of ‘Isvara’ or ‘Vishnu’ of the theistic Vedantins for whom the Bhoga-sarisa of Vishnu is that in which He spends His time in enjoyment in Vaikuntha (the highest heaven).

Dharmakaya is a natural kaya of Buddha. It is non-dual and pure kaya (Vishudha). It is the essence, the reality of the universe. It is identified with the Absolute. Dharmakaya is the basis of the Nirmanakaya and the Sambhogakaya. These two kayas are ultimately not different from Dharmakaya or Dharmadhatu or Absolute. It is one and the same for all.

For Madhyamikas, Dharmakaya is the only real kaya. It is the essential nature of the Buddha. “The Dharmakaya is a knowing, loving, willing being, an in-exhaustible fountain head of love and compassion.” Vijnanavada holds Dharmakaya of Buddha as free from illusion; it is pure, infinite, like the sky. For them, it is the Absolute Reality.
Asanga calls it as Svabhavika (natural kaya) Dharmakaya. It is one and the same kaya in all Buddhas, very subtle, unknowable and eternal. He says that it is the essential nature of Buddha. It has a characteristic of transformation of the store-house consciousness when it ceases evolving and merges into pure consciousness. Therefore, it is called Asraya-paravrtti where Alaya is its essential character. Under the influence of Avidya, Alaya (store-house) creates subject-object duality. This is a state of pure consciousness. This is Visuddha (pure) Tathata. It is ultimate Reality. Therefore, Asanga called it Svabhavikakaya. He also says that the goal of the Bodhisatva is to realize this Dharmakaya of the Buddha. It is identified with Absolute Reality. So, Asanga called it by different names such as Dharmakaya, Dharmadhatu or Visuddha Tathata or Buddha.

Buddha regards the nature of the world as a series of flux or becoming which appears in everlasting change. He denied the possibility of an unchangeable reality and asserted to avoid the idealistic error for which man gets into trouble. He defined the nature of all objects in the phenomenal world as impermanence and non-substance (anatta, anatman) from the standpoint of time and space and as suffering (dukkha) from the ethical point. But, Buddha maintained silence about the metaphysical questions beyond our experience. It seems that Buddhism is opposed to the existence of self or Atman. The Hinayanists to the Mahayanists (Sunyavadin and Vijnanavadins) explicitly denied existence of the soul. T.R.V. Murti rightly pointed out that there is no Buddhist school of thought which did not deny the Atman. Let us now discuss
the arguments set forth by Buddhism against the existence of Anatman, from the Buddha to the Mahayanist thinkers.

For Buddha, the word Atman is nothing but ego i.e. notion of 'I' and 'mine'. The notion of 'self' is regarded as the cause of misery and bondage. The Buddhists call it 'sat-kaya drsti'. "When we take anything as self, we become attached to it and dislike other things that are opposed to it." The notion of self is, for the Buddhists, the root cause of all sorts of attachment, misery and pain. And this notion of the self is the source of all misdeeds. This has led Buddhists to deny the existence of Atman. In the later Buddhist School, Atman is divided into two interpretations (i) it means that self does not exist (non-self), and (ii) that self cannot be known through our experience (not-self).

The meaning of Atman as non-self was mainly related by the Hinayana Buddhism, especially in the Abhidharmaraksosa. On the other hand, Mahayana Buddhism was chiefly concerned with the meaning of Atman as not-self. Atman as non-self means that there is no self anywhere. V.P. Varma asserts the overwhelming refrain of the Tripitakas as that there is no soul or self as a substance. This is because all conditioned things are impermanent, their nature is to rise and pass away. If there is a self or substance in the things, they cannot be changed. But, everything (sarvam) constantly changes in time and space. Therefore, Buddha states as follows – "But this does not mean that arising and passing away of everything is generated by change, because if
everything is generated world is supported by the causal law and everything is mutually dependent and co-existent\textsuperscript{33}.

It can be judged, at least from this fact, that in the original Buddhism, we could not find the theory of impermanence identified with the doctrine of momentariness (\textit{ksamavada}). "Rather, the later was formulated from a logical analysis of the process of change (\textit{parinama}), by the later Buddhist scholars belonging to the scholastic (\textit{Abhidhama}) tradition\textsuperscript{34}. So, it is reasonable to say that, in the original Buddhism, "Things are impermanent not because they are momentary but because they are arising (\textit{uppuda}) and passing away (\textit{vaya})".

The Buddha says, "Everything (\textit{sabba sarvam}) in the world is \textit{anicca}, \textit{dukha} and \textit{anattam}\textsuperscript{35}.

The Buddha understands the \textit{Atman} as man's self and it is also connected with the 'I' or 'individuality' or personality, etc. If there really existed the self, there would also be something which belonged to the self. Buddha states as follows –

"If self, monks, and what belongs to self, although actually existing are incomprehensible, is not the view and the causal relation that: this the world, this the self, after dying I will become permanent, lasting, eternal, not liable to change, I will stand first like us to the eternal – is not their, absolutely complete folly?"\textsuperscript{36}
In the *Samyukta Nikaya*, it is mentioned that, "Self is nothing else but aggregate of five *Skandhas*". These are the aggregates of body (*Rupa*) and the four kinds of mental processes, namely feeling (*Vedana*), perception (*Sanjna*), disposition (*Sanskara*) and self-consciousness (*Vijnana*). The five states of the five senses and the mind as well as the feeling that is related to mind are all void of self. Early Buddhist literature reveals that Buddha admitted the states of consciousness but not the soul.

The meaning of *Atman* is non-self, that which is called one or self is not a permanent reality, but on a bundle or combination of ideas, emotions and active tendencies. Like Hume, Nagasena also maintained that the so-called self is nothing but a stream of ideas. It is psychologically impossible to believe in the existence of self. It is nothing else but collection of certain qualities which exist together. All the Hinayanists support that the self is a name for the sum-total of the states which constitutes our mental existence. The self or personality is like a stream of river; there is continuity even though one movement is not the same as another. Therefore, G. N. Joshi said that the self came in the hand of the Buddhists to be regarded as congeries of the various mental states which are transient. But, this does not imply that the man (or individual) does not exist. Even he is nothing, but a mind-body complex, at least as a concrete individual man exists in this world. He is not static or unchangeable one but dynamic or living by itself. Buddha analyses the man in the dynamic field, not in the static field. As a consequence, we can assert that, Buddha does not deny the existence of individual but the individuality which is based on the "I" or "Ego".
Here, we can mention two meanings of individuality; one is the character of individual and another is the true nature of the individual. The former is mainly connected with the *karma* (*kamma*). According to Rhys Davis, *kamma* means — deed as expressing the agent's will i.e. qualified deed, good or bad\(^{39}\).

Naturally the *karma* (*kamma*) theory is intimately related with the theory of rebirth (*samsara*). [But when these theories of *karma* and *samsara* meet the *Atman* as non-self, we are confronted by difficulty searching for their harmony; then how is acceptance of *karmavada* coherently fitted with *Atmavada*?]

Buddha says, "*Karma* (*kamma*) is not predestination imposed on us by some mysterious creator to which we must helplessly submit ourselves"\(^{40}\). If we accept that God is the creator or the Lord of *Karma*, we would never have escaped from the *karma* without His permission. Therefore, liberation can never be attained by us, with our own effort. The theory of *karma* does not differ from the Dependent Origination (*Pratityasamutpada*). Therefore, we can say "In the moral sphere, the cosmic law is revealed as the law of *karma* and in the Philosophical sphere, the Dependent Origination"\(^{41}\).

For the *Madhyamikas* self is an unreal entity. Nagarjuna declares that "Self is neither identical with nor different from the five *skandhas*"\(^{42}\). Nagarjuna's followers like Aryadeva and Candrakirti also treated self as unreal entity. Candrakirti states that *Atman* is the root cause of all sufferings and demerits and adds that wise man (*yogi*) should deny its ultimate reality. Santideva also remarks, "Just as when one goes on taking off the layers of a plantain trunk or
an onion, nothing will remain, similarly, if one goes on analyzing the so-called 
existence of the self, ultimately it will be found to be nothing.\textsuperscript{43}

The Vijnanavadins are not far behind about criticizing the existence of 
the self of the earlier Buddhist. They also took the notion of \textit{Atman} as ego entity 
and criticize it as non-existent entity. Asanga, the great \textit{Vijnanavadin}, criticizes 
the notion of self as mere illusion in his major work \textit{Mahayanasutralankara}. He 
says \textit{"Atman is simply a pre-conception or an illusory concept"}.\textsuperscript{44} Like 
Nagarjuna, Asanga also says that it is neither spiritual entity nor aggregate of 
\textit{Skandhas}. He says that \textit{Atman} is purely imaginary and does not exist.

Vasubandhu opined that the notion of the self is the root cause of 
suffering and it is unreal entity. He says, \textit{"The individual self depends on \textit{Alaya} 
and is accompanied by four kinds of suffering – self-notion, self-delusion, self­
pride and self-love"}.\textsuperscript{45} For Vasubandhu, consciousness transcends the duality of 
the subject (\textit{pudgala nairtmya}) and the object (\textit{dharma nairtmya}) both of which 
are ultimately unreal.

The later \textit{Vijnanavadins} - Dharmakirti and Shantaraksita, remarks that 
\textit{Atman} is the root cause of misery and attachment. Shantaraksita maintained 
that \textit{Atman} is nothing but consciousness associated with ego; ultimately it 
denotes nothing.
From the above discussion it is clear that the Buddhists, right from the Buddha to the Shantaraksita, severely denied the notion of *Atman* and it is generally understood in the sense of individual ego, which is the root cause of passion, misery and attachment, etc. (Therefore, it is variously called, *Atman*, *Pudgala* and *Satkayadrsti*).

The term ‘*atman*’ or self plays an important role in Advaita Vedanta system also. It means various things, such as physical body, life, intellect, individual soul and the absolute self. Primarily, in Vedanta, ‘*atman*’ is used in the sense of consciousness. For the Vedantins, both atman and consciousness are identical. They hold that the ultimate reality is nothing but the self or atman. According to Sankara, atman is free from activity because he holds that activity is non-external while atman is external. Sankara regards the atman as one, universal and infinite. It is said that Sankara’s self is not the individual knowing subject. It is neither the individual self nor a collection of such selves. These depend upon universal self. The universal self is identical with ultimate reality.

The Vedanta refutes the Buddhist opponent because Buddhist thinkers believe neither the existence of self nor in the nature of any pure permanent consciousness. The Vedanta proves that the world process presupposes the existence of a principle of pure consciousness which is absolutely and ultimately real. It is immediate and intuitive Reality which means that which is not determined by anything else and in this sense pure consciousness is the only reality – all else is indescribable, neither real nor unreal; and the Vedanta is
not interested to discover what may be its nature. According to Vedantins, the self alone is ultimately real when it is being Brahman.

Buddhism is different from that of the Upanishads. Buddha denies the realities of Atman and Brahman. This is because, as long as the experience is on the basis of our cognition, we cannot know it. Rather, we can know only the fact that the phenomenal world changes endlessly. That is an actual judgment about the phenomenal world. So, we have to regard it as a valid and objective knowledge. If we consider it as incomplete, then it changes into a judgment of value. In this case, value involves an element of our desire. Therefore, suffering is basically originated from the confusion fact with value. While, Buddha said that suffering is rather due to belief in the reality of one absolute reality. As a result, Buddhism seems to deny the reality of Atman.

In Upanishads, there are two sorts of the Absolute Reality: one is Brahman and the other is Atman. The former is the symbol of an external Absolute, cosmic spirit and universal self, whereas the latter implies the internal Absolute, innate self, individual self, etc. Both of them are not independent substance or realities. Although the Upanishads assert the ultimate identity of Brahman and the Atman, it can be said that their largest character lies in the concept of Atman. According to Upanishads, we need not rely on the external Absolute for gaining the liberation, because it is already immanent in a man as self. It is called Atman as true nature of man and is permanent and
unchangeable reality by its nature. Therefore, to realize the reality of Atman means to obtain the liberation and to be Absolute itself.

The concept of liberation or Nirvana is one of the greatest original contributions of Indian Philosophy to the world thought. All the systems of Indian Philosophy except Carvaka, consider ‘Moksa’ as the highest value, the Summum bonum of human life. To attain this liberation or to become free from the clutches of ignorance, sufferings and passions, Indian sages and thinkers have enumerated and emphasized different paths based on their spiritual experience. Though the nature of Nirvana or Moksa is different from other schools, yet, the ultimate goal is liberation or freedom from bondage.

The word ‘Nirvana’ does not appear in the Upanishads. The original contribution of the word Nirvana is found in Buddhism. The Hinayanists think that Nirvana is something existent, full of peace and beyond misery. It can be attained by realizing Pudgala nairatmya (i.e. realizing self or ego to be non-existent which is the real cause of pain and passion). While Mahayanists hold that Nirvana is not something to be achieved, it supports realizing the true nature of things. It is incredible and beyond categories of intellect. So they opine that Nirvana is neither existent nor non-existent. Mahayanists say that for attaining the Nirvana, it is not enough to realize the Pudgala nairatmya, but, realizing the Dhanmanairatmya is also essential.
Nagarjuna also states that \textit{Nirvana} cannot be said to be existent or non-existent. It is beyond all categories of thought. It is non-dual. For \textit{Madhyamikas}, there is no difference between \textit{Nirvana} and \textit{Samsara}. The same reality viewed from the empirical standpoint is \textit{samsara}. It is free from all pluralities. \textit{Nirvana} is \textit{sunyata} i.e. giving up all views, standpoints and predicament. \textit{Madhyamika} holds that Absolute is \textit{Sunya} i.e. indescribable. So, \textit{Nirvana} is also \textit{Sunya}.

The concept of \textit{Nirvana} of \textit{Vijnanavadin}s is different from that of \textit{Madhyamika}. \textit{Vijnanavadin}s believe that the ultimate reality is pure consciousness. So, \textit{Nirvana} is also a state of pure consciousness (\textit{cittam}) where it is free from all subject-object duality. \textit{Nirvana} meant realizing of \textit{Dharmakaya} or \textit{Dharmadhatu}. \textit{Vijnanavadin}s say that every being is potentially a Buddha and is, in essence, nothing but realization of this potentiality. Ultimately, the \textit{Vijnanavadin}s hold that the \textit{Nirvana} comes to mean self-realization. All the \textit{Vijnanavadin} thinkers – Asanga, Vasubandhu and later thinkers, directly or indirectly, uphold that \textit{Nirvana} means self-realization.

According to Lankavatara, \textit{Nirvana} is something indefinable. It is non-dualistic in nature. For them, the real knowledge of the \textit{Alaya} is \textit{Nirvana}. \textit{Alayavijnana} is the \textit{Nirvana} where revulsion of all the seven \textit{pravrtivijnana} (\textit{caksu}, \textit{ghrana}, \textit{srotra}, \textit{jihva}, \textit{kaya} and the \textit{manas} and \textit{visista manovijnana}) takes place. This is self-realization. Again, in Lankavatara, it is found that \textit{Nirvana} is not something which can be attained. There is no \textit{Nirvana} where one may enter or come out\textsuperscript{46}. Asanga holds that Pure \textit{Citta} or consciousness is the
sole Reality. It is also equated with Dharmadhatu, Tathatu and Buddhattva. Therefore, Nirvana means realization of pure consciousness which is one's own original nature. It is realization of Dharmadhatu underlying the whole universe. It is a state of omniscience which is free from all obscurations. Nirvana is a state free from all sorts of klesavarana and jnayavarana.

Asanga states that Nirvana means realization of one's own true nature or discovery of sole reality of consciousness and destroying subject-object duality and empirical object. Nirvana is covered by the clouds of ignorance. The sun, covered by the clouds, becomes unseen; similarly, absolute covered by the ignorance is not easily seen or realized by the man. Nirvana, therefore, means removal of clouds of ignorance covering round the light of Bodhi or the Absolute.

Asanga says that there is nothing in the world besides this Tattva or the Absolute. For him, except this Tattva or reality everything else is maya or illusion. So, realization of illusory existence of self and all elements are absolutely necessary for attainment of Nirvana.

Asanga also calls Nirvana as Vikalpopasama i.e. destruction of imaginary thoughts and things. There is nothing to imagine for him. This is called enlightenment (Bodhi). So, Nirvana is called Vikalpopasama. Nirvana is destruction of imaginary thoughts. It is peaceful. This is so because the realized person will not be affected by any impurity, attachment and aversion. His mind
will be stable and will not be disturbed by 'I' and 'mine' consideration. Nirvana is only *paramartha satta* and it is *parinispallalaksana*. Asanga, like Nagarjuna, declares that there is not even the slightest difference between Nirvana and Samsara, Noumena and Phenomena, Absolute and Empirical. Nirvana and Samsara are not two different sets of reality posited against each other. Phenomena viewed as relative, is governed by causes and conditions (*pratityasamutpada*) which constitute samsara or world. This is bondage and a product of ignorance. It is caused by the false notion of there being something external and real. The same reality viewed as free of all conditions is the Absolute or Nirvana.

Asanga states that pure consciousness is the sole Reality. This Absolute Reality is called by different terms as Nirvana, Dharmadhatu, Visuddha Tathata, Tattva, Parabodhi, Buddhatva, etc. For him Nirvana is identified with pure consciousness, Absolute Reality. This Absolute Reality or Nirvana is beyond all thought discrimination. This thought discrimination implies duality which is ignorance and unreal. But, Reality is free from subject-object duality. It is non-dual. There is no room for subject-object, positive or negative. It is indescribable and indefinable. Therefore, this Buddhatva or Nirvana cannot be said to be existent or non-existent at the ultimate point of view. This Nirvana is unfathomable, unimaginable and all pervading. So, Asanga says that, by its very nature, Nirvana is self-luminous.
Vasubandhu whole-heartedly supports Asanga's view on Nirvana. He also says that Nirvana is non-dual reality. Nirvana is destroying the ignorance, removing Avaranas (obstruction) and attains Vimukti. For him it is realization of pure consciousness (Vijnaptimatrata) merging with it. He describes Nirvana purely in positive terms. It is absolute, immutably eternal, devoid of all kinds of passion, absolutely pure Dharmadhatu. It is beyond our speech and comprehension. Vasubandhu states that Nirvana is the highest good and infinite bliss. It is the Dharmakaya of Lord Buddha. It is Vimukti.

For Asanga, Nirvana is not a negative concept. It means destruction of ignorance, routing out of desire and cessation of all sufferings. From the positive side, Nirvana means realization of pure consciousness or Thathata (suchness). While on the negative side, it means realization of essencelessness.

Now we will discuss the comparison between the Yogacara idealism and other forms of idealism like Berkeley, Hegel. Berkeley holds that the empirical world cannot be independent of the perceiving consciousness. Whatever exists must be perceived i.e. esse-est percipi. So called physical objects exist only in the mind. Berkely broadly uses the word 'perception' to include all the conscious activity of the mind. "The esse of an idea is percipi only because it is identical with the perception of it, is only a form of consciousness." The sense-data are real subjective facts, but they are realized only as objectified and substance in this category of objectification. It is called subjective because consciousness is
its basis on which it functions. He maintains that consciousness entails a
minimal substance and consciousness or conscious perceptions are the
essence of mind. The whole of the empirical world is thus reduced to so many
ideas in the mind. For him, concrete experience can be analyzed into two
factors — the ideas and the mind. Mind or spirit is active and ideas are passive
and inactive. As he says "This perceiving active being is what I call mind, spirit
or myself. By which words I do not denote anyone of my ideas, but a thing
entirely distinct from them, wherein they exist, or which is same thing, whereby
they are perceived"\textsuperscript{49}.

Berkeley distinguishes an idea from a creative act for which the idea
alone exists. But for the Yogacara ideas are not distinct from consciousness.
The ideas are, in themselves, self-sufficient. They say that an idea exists for
itself, and not for some other mind. The ego as well as the object is mere form
of consciousness. There is no object apart from the idea of it; hence the ego
has no real existence apart from the idea of it. Consciousness is creative, and it
creates the ego as also the object. Therefore, consciousness is the sole reality.
Berkeley holds that a spirit or mind is not known by way of idea, and that we
can have only a 'notion' of it\textsuperscript{50}. For the Yogacara, consciousness is diversified
into the various ideas, each of which is unique and individual unit (svalaksana)
of consciousness. "An idea knows itself in knowing the content; no separate act
of knowledge in the way of notion is required to make it known\textsuperscript{51}. According to
Yogacara, ideas are not distinct from consciousness. They have no separate
existence; they are not objects before consciousness.
Hegel is called the 'prince of idealism'. He expresses his concept of consciousness through his dialectic method. For him consciousness is an activity of the mind. According to Hegel, consciousness constantly relates itself to an object. The fundamental act of consciousness consists of distinguishing this object. To be conscious is to be with objects. Consciousness is sensitive to objects. Therefore, Hegel states that the object is a necessity; without it the subject would not be a subject. For Hegel, idealism does not mean the rejection of an object. The object has no independence; it is essentially related to the subject. Moreover, the subject is not primal and the object is not its own creation. If there can be no object without the subject, then there can be no subject unrelated to the object. Though Hegel is an idealist, his philosophy cannot be compared with the Yogacara because the Yogacara regards reality as the subjective, the creative consciousness. Everything is the manifestation of consciousness. In fact, the object is created by consciousness. The external world is denied for everything is mental.

The Vedantists have made many discussions regarding the concept of consciousness. Gaudapada and Sankaracharya are well known Advaitin Philosopher who regards consciousness as the basis of all experience whether it is psychic or physical. Denial of consciousness means denial of everything else. Gaudapada regards the Reality as pure consciousness, which manifests itself as and ultimately transcends the subject-object duality. Gaudapada agrees with the Yogacara in maintaining that the world is ultimately unreal, only consciousness is real. He says that for the ordinary people, this world exists
because things are perceived and there is practical utility. But, for him "From the ultimate standpoint, perception and practical utility are invalid argument to prove the reality of the world, because even in a magical elephant and dream-object both perception and practical utility may be found." So, Gaudapada says that the world is unreal because it is indescribable or unthinkable either as existent or as non-existent.

According to Sankara, *Brahman* is pure consciousness. *Atman* or self is nothing but *Brahman* or pure consciousness. Also, *Brahman* is the only reality. It is one and non-dual. The *Jiva* and the world are not the real transformation of *Brahman*; they are the appearance of *Brahman*. Transformation (*parinama*) is that when the milk is changed into curd and appearance (*vivarta*) is that when the rope appears as a snake. In the case of transformation both cause and effect are real. But, in *vivarta*, nothing really comes into existence as the effect. In the case of illusion of a snake in a rope, the rope is real and the effect, namely snake is false. In fact, no effect has been produced. Likewise, *Brahman* is not transformed into the world and individual selves. This world is merely an appearance like the appearance of a snake in a rope. Therefore, Sankara's theory is known as *vivartavada*.

*Brahman* is the ground of the world. The world has the double characteristic of both real and unreal. From the empirical standpoint the world is the reality but, transcendentally it is not real. The world is not totally illusion because *maya* does not transform the world into illusion. *Maya* indicates that
the world does not exist by itself. We know about the changing character of the world with the help of *maya*. According to Sankara, *maya* is a creative power of God and God does not undergo any real change; change is only apparent.

Sankara states that the world is *mithya* or false. *Brahman* is the only real or true. We can perceive the unreal world as the real *Brahman*. This unreal world is neither existent nor non-existent, but indefinable. It is not existent for the existent is only the *Brahman*. It is not non-existent for it is responsible for the appearance of the *Brahman* as the world. It cannot be both existent and non-existent for this conception is self-contradictory. It is called neither real nor unreal (*sadasadvilaksana*). It is false or *mithya*. But it is not a non-entity like a hare’s horn (*tuchchha*). Actually “the world is *mithya*” does not mean that the world is totally false. It means that in the Absolute, the world has no reality apart from *Brahman*, the world-ground. Sankara says that the world continues to exist until the realization of the ground, i.e. *Brahman*. When *Brahman*, the ground of the world is realized, the world ceases to exist. So, Sankara emphasizes that from the phenomenal point of view the world is real. It is not an illusion. Therefore, Sankara criticizes the *vijnanavada* in the non-existence of the external things.

“The non-existence of external things cannot be maintained because we are conscious of external things. In every act of perception we are conscious of some external things corresponding to the idea, whether it be a post or a wall or a piece of cloth or a jar, and that of which we are conscious cannot but exist”\(^{54}\).
For Sankara, when our consciousness is not in contact with the external things, our knowledge about them can be acquired. If there were no objects, the idea could not have the forms of the objects and objects are actually apprehended as external. Therefore, things and ideas are distinct.

According to Sankara, it cannot be argued that the existence of external things is not possible. The existence of external object is ascertained by all kinds of valid knowledge. Therefore, it must be real.

Sankara opines that external objects are actually perceived, and therefore their existence cannot be denied. We do not perceive cognitions, but only external objects. The Yogacara argues that internal cognitions appear like external objects. Sankara urges that if external objects are non-existent and never perceived, internal cognitions cannot appear like external objects. Visnumitra cannot appear like the son of a barren mother. So, external objects are actually objects that are perceived as external.

Though Sankara criticized the Yogacara, the Vedanta and the Yogacara agree that all knowledge about the phenomenal world is fundamentally subjective and illusive. In this regard, Murti said, "Both Vedanta and Yogacara analyze illusion and show that the illusory appears on a real ground (adhisthana) but for which illusion itself would not be possible. The world illusion too is, thus, a super-imposition on Brahman or Vijnana.\textsuperscript{55}"
Sankara wants to prove the unreality of the external world, not by saying that it does not fall outside of consciousness, but by saying that it is essentially indescribable as existent or non-existent. The Vedanta argues in favor of the illusory world. The world is false because it has a determinate character or form, like the 'shell-silver'. A determinate character is an elaboration or thought-interpretation of what is directly or intuitively known and therefore is dependent on the latter. Again, the world is false because it is not self-evident (jada). Only the self-evident (svayamprakasa) is real. The self-evident is that which is not object and yet immediately and unconditionally aware of itself. The Advaita also states that the world is false, because it is limited in space, in time and in regard to its nature. Only the infinite is real (ananta, ananda). All worldly objects arise as limitations of the infinite Being (Brahman). The Real is therefore defined as sat (being), cit (consciousness) and ananda (bliss); which is understood negatively and is different from non-being, from the unconsciousness and from the painful.

As Absolutism, the Vijnanavada and the Advaita Vedanta exhibit some common features regarding their form. They differ in the mood of their approach and possibly with regards to that entity with which they identify the Absolute. In these systems, the Absolute is non-conceptual and non-empirical. It is realized in a transcendent non-dual experience called by them lokottara-jnana and aparoksanubhuti respectively. They emphasize the inapplicability of empirical determination to the Absolute and employ the language of negation. They argue on the formal aspect of the Absolute. The Vedanta and Yogacara identify the
absolute with something that is experienced in some form even if empirically, the Vedanta with pure being (sanmatra) which is atman and the Vijnanavada with consciousness.

In Advaita Vedanta, Brahman is no doubt devoid of determination; it cannot be made an object of thought as a particular thing is. But it is self-evident (svayamprakasa) and because of this anything becomes evident; it implicitly, invariably and unconditionally illumines things. In a slightly different manner, Vijnanavada shows that the object is dependent on consciousness, and not vice-versa. Vijnana is self-conscious (svasamvedya) and is creative of the object. The Vijnanavada negates objectivity, for this makes vijnana (consciousness) infected with the duality of subject and object. While the Vedanta negates difference (bheda); the real is universal and identical.

The realists refute the Yogacara view and advocate the existence of the external objects. The realists observe that if the objects of the world are illusory then how can it be possible for the existence of the empirical world, which is regulated by strict and rigorous laws? If the object is only a creation of our mind, then why can we not produce it at our sweet will? All things are similarly apprehended by all men. However, the objects of dream are subjected to sublation. The reality of waking experience is the basis of the sublation of the dream objects. In our dreams, we see only the objects of our waking state in a different order. If there is no experience of objects, there cannot be dreams as well. Again, if we do not believe in the external world we cannot explain the
results which follow from the external objects. For instance, an imaginary torture
cannot give pain to any body. He feels pain when he is actually tortured.

The Yogacara replies that the dream world is entirely subjective. It is a
construction of our mind. It arises when the sense organs are not in contact with
the objects at all. But, this objectivity is not due to the external objects, it is a
characteristic of consciousness. Consciousness can create the content of a
perceptual world and project them as objective.

The realist further urges that without an external object, illusion is not
possible. The existence of external object is an indispensable antecedent
condition for all illusory cognitions\(^{57}\). For instance, we may take the rope-snake
illusion. Actually, they are real objects which have been previously experienced
by us in our daily life. A man who has never perceived a snake cannot have the
illusion of a snake in a piece of rope.

According to Yogacara, there can be no object independent of
consciousness. However, consciousness is not so dependent and can exist
even without any object. As a result they thought that the outer world is but an
imagined (parikalpita) projection of thought and the illusion of ‘I’ and of a
concrete world confronting this ‘I’ comes into being by consciousness splitting
into subjective and seemingly objective (images) part. In other words, our
knowledge about the object is merely the expression of our consciousness.
The realist raises an objection that if we believed that ideas are the only reality we will not be able to explain how a desired result is obtained. Mere ideas cannot quench our thirst, nor can they satisfy our hunger. A thing can be regarded as real only when it is capable of producing the desired result. Consequently, our empirical world will be stalked of which the Yogacara is always conscious and does not want to temper with in any way.

The Yogacara replies to the realist that ideas are capable of producing the desired result. We experience the horrors of a nightmare. Moreover efficiency itself is a mere idea which is caused by the transcendental illusion and which consists of apprehending an ideal content as something objective. Thus, activity is not hampered in any way.

The Realist believed that the existence of the external world is proved by perception. The beautiful scenery of the holy river Ganga in the moonlit night pleases our eyes. The melodious voice of a cuckoo or the celestial song of a devout hermit gives joy to our ears. The fragrance of a flower attracts us, the bad smell of rotten eggs or fruits repel us. The realist states that if the different kinds of feeling would have been simply mental, they would have been different from organ to organ because mind is one and the same.

The Yogacara replies that realist's images are inherent in our knowledge and they refer to external reality. These images cannot invoke direct awareness of the external object because they are stored up in their selves (i.e. external)
and cannot go outside to grasp the external object. If they go outside consciousness, they will lose their internal character because one thing cannot be external as well as internal at one and the same time.

The Realist say that in our experience there are images or ideas in our mind regarding the reality of external objects. But these images are not mental arrangements. Their immediate presence is felt by us. The mind projects the inward reflex and guides the purposive action.

The Yogacara replies that our immediate feeling of the external world cannot be reliable source of its existence. They say that the so-called construction of an object is nothing but the imagined aspect of its idea. The external object constructed in imagination is not the thing actually felt in sensation. We can only make an idea about it.

The critics say that the denial of the external world will bring the entire activity to an end. The activities are based on some objective. They are directed to achieve some end. People follow the path of salvation. If there are no external object apart our ideas, why should people resort to activity? Moreover it is not for the pleasures of a dream that people engage themselves in the performance of duty.

The Idealists refute the above argument and say that the activity is not to be hampered in any way owing to the unreality of the objects. The people in this
world accept something as real and resort to activity and this process goes on forever. In this regard, the activity is not hampered even after knowing the unreality of the objects because after knowing through reasoning and scripture the momentariness and soullessness of all things, people fully realize the truth and the wheel of causation.

Again the realist says that when we cognize something, this something is different from the cogniser. This feeling of difference between the two arises only when the cognition of an object takes place. Its cognition does not take place when it is non-consistent, although all the conditions of its apprehensions are then present. For instance, we take the cognition of colour. Here, all essential factors of cognition i.e. the visual sense-organ, the light and the aroused attention may be present. But its cognition cannot take place in absence of a colour.

The Yogacara replies that the idea of the cogniser and the cognised, the apprehender and the apprehended does not prove the reality of the external world. Actually, they are the content of same consciousness. The external object i.e. a jar or a piece of cloth is as much integral to consciousness as its idea. However, the objects of the world have no self-nature. They depend for their existence on relations, and relations are nothing but the creations of our mind.
According to realist, an object exists outside consciousness which simply reveals it and does not create it. But the idealist asks how do we know that the object exists before it is known? Therefore idealist says that we can identify only that thing which was known before and is known later. We cannot identify that thing which was not cognised before. The so-called external objects are invariably related with consciousness. They appear when consciousness appears and do not appear when it does not appear. So, they are mere ideas and are inherent in the states of consciousness. For instance, we may take the apprehension of blue colour. The blue colour can never be known unless there is an idea of blue colour.

The Realists refute the Vijnanavadins and advocate the existence of external objects. They say that cognition must have its objective cause otherwise the distinction between the subject and object will be impossible. The external objects must exist because cognition and suffering depend upon them.

The Yogacara replies that the upholders of external objects want to prove that cognition must have a cause. But the objective cause which they adduce is no cause at all. The object exists as an object for the knowing subject, but it does not exist outside of consciousness because the distinction of the subject and the object is within consciousness itself. So, consciousness is the only reality.
Actually, when the Yogacara says that there is no object (\textit{dharma-nairatmya}), it does not mean that there are no objects at all. There goes a saying, “When the mind does not know, the eyes do not see”. For example, in our daily experience, when we enter our own room, even though it is dark, we can find the switch-board, because the position of the switch-board is already in our mind. But, when a guest enters the same room, even though the switch-board lies in the same place, he will not be able to find it because he does not have the knowledge. We can take another example – When we go for sightseeing to another place like Agra, even though we know where Agra is and how we can reach it, still we follow a map so as to admit it properly in our mind. Again, even though we can see the image of the Taj Mahal in a book, yet we go there for mental satisfaction. Things have their own existence. But, to admit that a thing has existence it must be a matter of experience. The admission of a thing that it has existence is created by mind.
References:

1. A. K. Chatterjee, The Yogacara Idealism, p. 45
2. Ibid., p. 49
3. S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, Vol I, p. 629
4. A. K. Chatterjee, The Yogacara Idealism, p. 159
5. Ibid., p. 1
7. Ibid. Vol. XXI, p. 2-11
8. T. R. V. Murti, The Central Philosophy of Buddhism, p. 244
9. Ibid.
10. Stcherbatsky, The Concept of Buddhist Nirvana, p. 54
11. Trimsika, ed. by Ramshankar Tripathi, p. 21
14. K. D. Sinha, Nairatmyavada, chapter 23; p. 76
16. Hajme Nakamura, Indian Buddhism, p. 258
17. Junjiro Takakusu, The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy, p. 82
18. Stcherbatsky, The concept of Buddhist Nirvana, p. 32
19. C. L. Tripathi, The Problem of Knowledge in Yogacara Buddhism, p. 363
20. Stcherbatsky, The Concept of Buddhist Nirvana, p. 259
22. T. R. V. Murti, The central Philosophy of Buddhism, p, 17
23. Oldenberg, Buddha, p, 218
24. Y. S. Shastri, Mahayanasutralankara of Asanga, p, 75 (cf. Samyukta Nikaya, p, 54)
25. Majhima Nikaya, I, 1.2
26. Stcherbatsky, The concept of Buddhist Nirvana, p, 55
27. A. K. Chatterjee, The Yogacara Idealism, p, 172 (cf. MSA XVIII, 43, p, 127)
28. Bhagavadgita, ch. XI, verse 57; p, 10-12
29. Stcherbatsky, The Soul Theory of Buddhism, p, 45
30. T.R.V. Murti: The central Philosophy of Buddhism, p, 17
31. Ibid.
32. V.P. Varma, Early Buddhism and its Origins, p, 148
33. Samyukta Nikaya, XXXVII, p, 4, 85
34. D.J. Kalerpahana, Buddhist Philosophy, p, 36
35. Watanable Fumimaro, Philosophy and its Development in the Nikayas and Abhidhamma, p, 56
36. Oldenberg, Buddha, p, 218
37. Samyukta Nikaya, p, 56
38. G.N. Joshi, Atman and Moksa, p, 118
39. Rhys Davids, Development of Moral philosophy in India, p, 158
40. P.V. Bapat, 2500 years of Buddhism, p, 32
41. K.P. Sinha, Nairatmyavada, p, 58
42. Nagarjuna, Madhyamakakarikas, X, p, 15

44. *Mahayanasutralankara* by Asanga, XVIII, p. 101

45. *Trimsika*, p. 6


47. *Trimsika*, p. 30


49. Ibid., p. 185

50. Ibid., p. 186-187

51. A.K. Chatterjee, *The Yogacara Idealism*, p. 45

52. S. Chennkesavam, *The concept of mind in Indian Philosophy*, p. 8

53. *Madhyamakakarika*, XI, p. 2

54. *Vedanta Sutras of Samkarabhasya II*, ed. by Dr. Soloman E. A., 2.28


56. Ibid., p. 236

57. C. L. Tripathi, *The Problem of Knowledge in Yogacara Buddhism*, p. 323

58. Ibid., p. 326