CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION
Based on the discussions in the foregoing chapters, we have arrived at the following conclusions:

1. In order to understand the process of knowing the reality in Buddhist philosophy, the realists hold that the content perceived is independent of the act of perception. Moreover, the perception does not, in any way, change the content perceived. The fact that perception is independent can be well explained by the example of light, which does not create things, but merely reveals what was hidden in the dark. The realists state that perception reveals the objects only as they are and does not construct, either wholly or in part.

   a. The Vaibhasikas are also called the Sarvastivadins, because they believe in the existence of all things, physical and mental. According to Sarvastivada, the objective world exists, because its existence can be ascertained and maintained as a result of direct perception.

   b. Later, development of Vaibhasika School lead to the establishment of the Sautrantika School, which believes that one does not
perceive a thing directly, but only infer the reality from its images or ideas. This means that we do not know the thing in itself, but we can only know the ideas which are copies of mental pictures of reality and from these pictures we infer the existence of the originals. So the Sautrantika is not so much a new philosophy. This school is called Sautrantika School because unlike the Vaibhasikas, it emphasizes the Sutras of Sutrapitaka. On account of its metaphysics, it paved the way for the later Mahayanistic developments in the history of Buddhism.

c. The Madhyamika adopted a different approach towards the objects of the empirical world. Nagarjuna is known as a systemic expounder of the Madhyamika System. He opines that everything that exists is relative, dependent and thus unreal because relativity is the mark of the unreal of the object. The Madhyamika declares that if things were objective and real, it would be able to exist by itself. In this regard, Nagarjuna says that nothing has its own independent nature (svabhava). He denies the self-existence of a thing. Again, Nagarjuna says that our entire experience is purely subjective; things have only an apparent existence (samvrti) in reality. This led him to conclude that the Absolute Reality is Sunya. It is sunya in the sense that it is transcendent to thought. It is indescribable, non-determinate and non-dual. It is neither subject
nor object. It is free from this duality because subject-object duality indicates relativity and whatever is relative is unreal.

d. Sankara is very close to the Madhyamika Philosophy of Nagarjuna. Both Nagarjuna and Sankara regarded the world as subject to change and therefore unreal. Sankara explains the world with his concept of *maya*, whereas Nagarjuna takes the help of the concept of *sunyata*. *Sunya* neither means a mere negation nor does it mean nihilism. From the empirical standpoint *sunya* means all *dharmas* or world experiences which are similar to *avidya* in Advaita Vedanta.

e. The differences between the Madhyamika *sunyata* and *Brahman* are rather superficial and even verbal, and the two systems of philosophy are almost identical.

f. The Madhyamika belongs to *anatman* tradition of the Buddhist. The Advaita belongs to *atman* tradition of the Upanishad. The Advaita accepts the reality of *Brahman* or *Atman* in conformity with the Upanishadic tradition whereas the Buddhist denies the reality of the *Atman*. The Madhyamika absolutism is an Advayavada and Vedanta Absolutism is Advaitavada. *Advaya* is knowledge free from the duality of the extremes of ‘is’ and ‘is not’, being, becoming
and their derivatives. Advaita is knowledge of differenceless entity – Brahman (Pure Being).

g. The difference between Vedanta and Sunyavada is the difference of emphasis only. The Sunyavada is keener to emphasize the ultimate reality of all phenomena; Sankara is keener to emphasize the empirical reality of all phenomena. Again, the Sunyavadin is less keen to develop the conception of ultimate Reality; Sankara is keener to develop this conception almost to perfection.

h. Some of the Mahayanists adopted a revolutionary, rather a more positive way of thinking. They realized Absolute Reality as pure consciousness and accepted the theory of Sunya of Nagarjuna and interpreted it in an idealistic manner. For them, pure consciousness is the sole reality and it is Sunya. It is Sunya in the sense that it is indescribable in terms of human language. It is pure consciousness, free from subject-object duality and non-dual. They accepted ideal Reality i.e. pure consciousness. They have established Vijnanavada or Yogacara School.

2. To know the reality, the Yogacara states that it is essential to know its position towards a given object of the empirical world. To understand this, we should firstly visualize that any external object has two images – perceptual image and conceptual image. The perceptual image projects the
exact dimensional picture of the object of the external world before our eyes. Sarvastivada and Sautrantika were primarily concerned with the perceptual image. On the other hand, Yogacara School lays stress on the conceptual image, which is consciousness only. At this point, Yogacara explains how the process of perceptual and conceptual image works through consciousness. The visible object stimulates the sensitivity of the eye and at the same time it appears at the subject factor i.e. manas. This occurs by virtue of its ability to activate the consciousness. All the objects of the world exist in perceptual form; but, it is only their conceptual image which is considered as consciousness (vijnapti) only is real.

a. The Yogacara thinks that Phenomena, though unreal, must be rooted in some reality. There must be some basis for these worldly appearances. They conclude that the ground for this phenomenal world is pure consciousness which itself appears as subject-object duality. This appearance is transcendental illusion. The appearance of a form of consciousness as something objective and independent is illusory. But that which is ground for this appearance is real; it is the Reality i.e. pure consciousness. Hence, this view is consciousness alone or Vijnaptimatrata. This philosophy is called Yogacara Idealism.

b. In general, Philosophical Idealism is usually characterized as a denial of the common-sense view that material or external sense
objects exists independent of the mind i.e. independent of their being perceived. This broad sense of idealistic theory has two aspects – one pertaining to nature of reality i.e. Metaphysical Idealism and the other to that of knowledge i.e. Epistemological Idealism. Metaphysical Idealism is opposed to materialism as consciousness is fundamental for the metaphysical construction. But Epistemological Idealism is different from Metaphysical Idealism. According to Epistemological Idealism, the content that would fall outside the knowing act is 'a mere word and failure or else an attempt at self-contradiction'. Epistemology is more primary than Metaphysics and idealism therefore should essentially be understood in an epistemological sense. Yogacara idealism tries to establish a consciousness which is unaffected by the subject-object duality, a non-dual consciousness.

3. The Yogacara is not merely an idealism but it is Absolutism. The transition from mere idealism to absolutism is made possible by the Madhyamika dialectic. Nagarjuna mentioned that both the subject and the object are correlative categories and that one cannot be had without the other. He says that reality cannot be called pure consciousness. The Reality is thought-categories and inexpressible (sunya). But, Yogacara states that Reality is ideal and it is pure consciousness. This is the idealistic standpoint. Accepting Nagarjuna's dialectic method, they conclude that the Ultimate Reality i.e. pure consciousness is something that cannot be called a subject
in the ultimate analysis. For the Yogacara, the objectivity is only a mode of consciousness. When this illusory idea of objectivity is removed, the subjective consciousness also ceases to exist. When there is nothing to know, consciousness also ceases to exist. At the transcendental level, pure consciousness alone exists. This is ultimate reality, the essence of everything. Pure consciousness, free from the false duality of subject and object, is the Absolute.

4. Yogacara as an Epistemological doctrine means knowledge is constructive. It does not reveal; it creates. According to Yogacara, category of the object contributes nothing to knowledge, which is autonomous and self-legislating. The essence of the Epistemological argument is given by the sahopalambhaniyama, which means, in case of knowledge and its object; we never have the object apart from the knowledge situation. To assert the existence of knowledge, we have to know it. Knowledge is the only reality and there is no non-knowledge assessed to the object. The blue is identical with the cognition of blue.

a. The Vijnanavadin says that the object cannot be considered as external to consciousness. It is nothing but cognition. They declare that knowledge and object are essentially identical. The essence of an object is always known and proved only through knowledge. It cannot be independent of knowledge. According to Vijnanavadin, knowledge and object are related to one another, neither does the
object exist without being known to exist, nor does knowledge occur without having some object. Knowledge always appears as revealing a content of its own (sakara). So, knowledge and object are not different but are essentially identical.

b. The Vijnanavadin maintains that knowledge has not only a form but it is also self-luminous. If knowledge were not essentially luminous, it would not reveal an object. Knowledge cannot depend, for its existence and revelation, on anything extraneous to itself. The object is known as the content of knowledge. If knowledge and object are different, then the object cannot appear as the content of knowledge. The Vijnanavadin argues that the object is essentially of the nature of knowledge and against the externality or independence of the object. The object appears to have luminous essence (as the content of knowledge) as a part of knowledge, but not vice-versa. Knowledge alone is real, and everything else is unreal. Any object is revealed in and through knowledge. Therefore, knowledge is essentially luminous and self-luminous too.

c. The Vijnanavadin distinguishes between transcendental knowledge and empirical knowledge. Empirically, the object is revealed through knowledge and it has no externality or independence. The independence of the object is fictitious. The object, so far as it is
known, is nothing but a content of knowledge. Transcendental knowledge, being pure (devoid of contents), independent, self-luminous, is real. It does not depend on anything else for its own revelation. For them, all knowledge is self-luminous. Knowledge alone is real, for it is self-luminous and self-existent. The object is transcendentally false, hence the subject-object relation is not considered as real. The Vijnanavadin argues that the object is a 'creation' or an 'expression' of knowledge. The Advaitin agrees with the Vijnanavadin on this point. However, the Advaita considers, from an empirical point of view, knowledge to be savisaya. The Vijnanavadin thinks that knowledge is not savisayatva even from empirical point of view. For them, empirically knowledge is sakara. Ultimately, the Advaita and the Vijnanavadin think that transcendentally the object is nothing but the creation or expression of knowledge. So, knowledge alone is real.

5. As a realist, Nyaya contends for the savisayatva and nirakaratva of knowledge. Knowledge is essentially of an object (savisaya) and formless. To deny the object of knowledge leads to the denial of the reality of knowledge. The Nyaya realism is opposed to the idealism of the Vijnanavadin. From Vijnanavadin point of view, all different objects are essentially of the nature of knowledge and are, therefore, fundamentally one. But, the Nyaya opines that if the object were a mere content of
knowledge, then all knowledge would have the form like ‘knowledge is yellow’ or ‘I am yellow’ instead of ‘this is yellow’ or ‘that is yellow’.

a. For the Naiyaikas, every piece of knowledge must have some object. The object known is experienced not as a content of knowledge. Knowledge is not apprehended when an external object is known. But the Nyaya thinks that from Vijnanavadin point of view, all different objects are apprehended simultaneously in one knowledge, e.g. ‘table, chair and ink-pot’. The Nyaya also contends that object must be admitted to be external to knowledge in order to justify this simultaneous knowledge of different objects. The table is not apprehended as chair or as ink-pot nor is anything else found in experience.

b. The Nyaya also states that if the object were essentially identical to knowledge, then nothing could be considered as unknown. Hence, ‘knowing the unknown’ would be meaningless.

6. Existence and non-existence are to be determined on the basis of (valid) means of knowledge. Of all the means of knowledge (direct), perception is the best. Dignaga and Dharmakirti, the great Indian logicians as well as Vijnanavadin Philosophers, support that there are only two sources of knowledge – perception and inference. If the object is not seen at all, how
can it be possible to perceive and what really is a perception. But Yogacara says that perception takes place by thought consciousness.

a. In early Buddhism, perception involves the participation of at least three things – an object, an organ and a pure consciousness. In other words, perceptual cognitions originate depending upon its object and sense-organ. Perception means that the sense-organ is ‘approached’ or "Knowledge is dependent upon the sense". In the actual use, it indicates the idea or the direct knowledge. Therefore, knowledge, which presents as object directly, is called perception.

b. In latter period, the Buddhist logicians like Dignaga and Dharmakirti objected that, if by perception, we take that knowledge (which depends upon the sense) means sensations or sensuous knowledge; then other varieties of direct knowledge such as mental sensations will not be included in perception. However, Dignaga defines perception as that cognition which is free from conceptual construction. He makes a radical distinction between perception and imagination. Hence, for him, the perception of a snake in a rope or of water in a desert is not a perception at all. It is a construction of our imagination. According to him, perception is a self-conscious process which determines the object. Dharmakirti added the term ‘non-erroneous’ (abhrantam) to the definition put forward by Dignaga. He considers cognition as free from
conceptual construction (*kalpana*) and errors. According to him, when a thing is perceived the totality of its attributes is perceived.

c. Dignaga says that the object of perception is an extreme particular. It is beyond our speculative thought. They are applicable only to the generalized images of inferential knowledge. It is unique; it is the reality which can be apprehended only through the senses. It is the ultimate reality and is the cause of our imagination. It is the basis of all our empirical knowledge. Dharmakirti says that in a perceptual process the cognizer apprehends the vision of reality. It is essence in itself, and has nothing of imagination or description. Particular is the object of cognition which produces a vivid flash of consciousness when it is near and a dim one when it is at a distance.

d. The object of perception is particular because it is not in need of a universal to denote its subsistence. The reality is extreme particular. It is momentary and beyond the human language. The Vijnanavadin points out that category are nothing but mere name. They do not designate any object which really exists. So, the world is the construction of our mind. For Dignaga, categories are mere thought construction. He denies the category of universal because it is the imagination of our intellect. Universal is not capable of producing any effect. Hence, it is not real. It cannot produce any
real sensation due to it. Therefore, universal are mental construction. They do not represent any external reality. Dharmakirti also says that universals are construction of our imagination. They are formed to express the activities which are associated with particular things. The reality of universal is the result of an illusion which is generated by well established linguistic usage or practice. Further, the existence of universals cannot be inferred from the idea of universals. Therefore, they do not denote any objective reality of things.

7. According to Yogacara, the appearance of the world or phenomenal world is illusory. It is a thought image. The Yogacara asserts that illusion is the superimposition of the form of knowledge on the external object and is not real. For them, illusion is purely subjective hallucination and it is not produced by an external object in contact with sense-organs. It is a subjective notion which is a projection of our mind. The appearance of the world is of transcendent illusion. This transcendent illusion does not mean that the world is a vacuity or a mere zero. Simply, it means that the objects cannot be described as existent or non-existent. They fall beyond the categories of our understanding and are, therefore, described as illusion.

8. The appearance of the world is the self-consistence of cognition and all activities of our cognition is the modification of consciousness. Consciousness (Vijnana) is the only reality. The object has no separate
existence of its own as it cannot be known to exist apart from the consciousness. The objects of the world are the creations of the mind. Therefore, it is said that all is mere mental creation, only the mind exists.

9. The reality is pure consciousness. Asanga identifies the Absolute with pure consciousness (citta). He says that all the external objects are phenomenal and momentary. But he does not deny their existence as utterly unreal. They are conditional and relative so that they are ultimately not at all real; but have empirical existence. The phenomenal world does not exist independently and outside of consciousness.

a. All phenomenal objects are momentary; but Asanga does not treat the momentary Vijnana as the sole Reality. Reality is non-dual, free from subject-object duality, indescribable. Absolute is the permanent background of momentary phenomenal world, but is itself not momentary.

b. Every object of the phenomenal world is changing at every moment and for that it is momentary. If it is not momentary, it will not come into existence at all. The preceding moment is the cause of the succeeding moment. If produced things are permanent, then how could they afterwards cease to exist? Again, if a thing which is produced afterwards becomes permanent, then how does it
become itself by any cause? But, it cannot become permanent by itself, because afterwards it ceases to exist.

10. Absolutism is committed to the doctrine of a plurality of 'Truths', for it has to make the distinction between appearance and reality. For the Yogacara, the real is a non-dual consciousness, but what appears is an illusory duality. Therefore, there are two truths – the real (Paramartha) and the apparent (samvrti). The whole phenomenal existence is Samvrti-Satya. But, in Phenomena itself, there are two aspects – one is utterly unreal and the other real. Thus, from Phenomena to Reality, there are three truths. The first is the Paramartha, also called Parinispanna, and it is the Absolute. The second is the phenomenal aspect of the Real and it denotes the subjective. It is also known as the Paratantra because it is caused by causes and conditions. The third is the object, which is no reality whatsoever apart from the consciousness of it. It is merely imagined to exist. It has no intrinsic existence of its own; therefore, it is also called Parikalpita. The paratantra and the parikalpita collectively constitute our empirical experience (samvrti); while consciousness, as non-conceptual, is the Absolute (paramartha).

11. The phenomenal world is transformation of the pure vijnana only. The Absolute transcends everything, but tainted with appearance, it manifests itself as subject-object duality. The evolution of phenomenalisation of pure consciousness is Alaya-vijnana. The objects of the world are nothing in themselves but the creations of the mind only. The mind has infinite power
stored in it in the form of store-consciousness (Alaya-vijnana). This store house of consciousness is always associated with various types of seeds (bijas) and impressions (vasanas). Alaya-vijnana is called seed (bija) of all phenomena. It is that principle in which the sight of all elements of the phenomenal existence is present. Actually, 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.

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

b. The Alaya-vijnana or universal consciousness further manifests itself in two forms. Firstly, it takes the form of an individual subject or ego (klista or manovijnana) and secondly, it manifests itself in the form of the various mental states and so called external objects (visaya-vijnana). 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. Moreover, the determinate awareness of the object is pravrtti vijnana. It is known empirically only. Therefore, it is said that the
Alaya is the ocean, pravrtti vijnana are the waves just that is 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 three Vijnanas revert to the pristine purity of Vijnaptimatrata, the only reality of pure-consciousness.

12. 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 distinction natively made between the percept and its content is illusory; like the blue and the consciousness of blue are identical. The object is denied because it has no intrinsic existence of its own. Consciousness is capable of existence of its own right. The sole reality of consciousness requires that it should be free from any trauma of objectivity, that it should be capable of existing without any ‘other’ to it.

13. Dignaga and Dharmakirti state that the ultimate reality of this world is consciousness only. Dignaga says that external objects do not exist independent of the mind. The so-called object is only the object condition of
consciousness. For him, all relations are of the form of substantive and the attributive and are apriori. These relations are the rules or principles of understanding which are constructed by our imagination for the sake of explaining the connection between two empirical phenomena. Therefore, all relations are contingent and have no self-existence.

a. Dharmakirti states that we never perceive or infer the external objects. What we perceive is only sense-data. Our mind receives sense-data and analyses these data according to their own forms. The so-called external objects are forms of cognition (vijnana). The apprehending cognition (grahaka) and the apprehended object (grahya), subject and object are the forms of consciousness. They are one and self-identical. So, consciousness is the only reality.

b. Santaraksita and Kamalasila support consciousness as only reality and produces arguments for the non-existence of external object. The essential nature of cognition is self-awareness (svasamvedana). It is self-revealing consciousness because it reveals itself without existence of external objects. There is neither a permanent self, nor an external object. There is only a series of self-aware cognition (vijnana). They also state that if an external object exist, it must be perceived either as an aggregate of atoms or as a complex. If it is atomic, then it would be too small to be perceived. Only gross objects are perceived. But atoms cannot
produce the cognition of gross objects. Again, if it is composite object like a table, then it would be necessary to perceive all the objects simultaneously, which is not possible. The external object cannot be a gross object not consisting of atoms. So, it can be concluded that external object does not exist. It is unreal appearance, the only reality is consciousness.

14. The Vijnanavada also denies the existence of the self because, in the case of the external object, it is merely the objective part of the consciousness. Moreover, in the case of man, it is the subjective part which appears in the process of self-differentiation of consciousness. Early Buddhism takes the word ‘Atman’ in the sense of the individual ego or jivatman which is a product of Avidya. In Vijnanavada, “There is only one category called Vijnana”. Some Vijnanavadins identify it with Tathata and others with Tathagatagarbha; however, each of these represents the Absolute.

15. The Advaitin philosophers, Gaudapada and Sankaracharya also regard consciousness as the basis of all experience whether it is psychic or physical. Gaudapada regards the Reality as pure consciousness, which manifests itself as and ultimately transcends the subject-object duality. He agrees with the Yogacara in maintaining that the world is ultimately unreal because it is indescribable or unthinkable either as existent or non-existent.
a. Sankara mainly criticizes the Vijnanavada in the non-existence of external things. He finds it reasonable to say that when our consciousness is not in contact with the external things, our knowledge about them can be acquired. For, if there were no objects, the ideas could not have the forms of the objects, and objects are actually apprehended as external. Therefore, things and ideas are distinct.

b. 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.

c. 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.

16. The Yogacara on his part countercharges Vedantins that they do not fare better because they also hold that the world is unreal and that only the *Brahman* is real. Though both deny the external world, yet there is a fundamental difference in their standpoints. For the Yogacara, the external
world is unreal because it is the manifestation of consciousness while 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.

a. As Absolutism the Vijnanavada and Advaita Vedanta exhibit some common features as to their form. The Absolute is non-conceptual and non-empirical. It is realized in a transcendent non-dual experience called by them *lokottarajhana* and *aparoksanubhuti* respectively. The Advaita and Vijnanavada identify the absolute with something that is experienced in some form even empirically, the Advaita with Pure-Being which is atman and the Vijnanavada with consciousness.

It is true that there are some resemblance between the Advaita Vedanta and the Vijnanavada. Though, the Advaita Vedanta is little different from the Vijnanavada, yet both systems are Absolutism and they reach Absolutism through dialectic and negation. Actually the primary aim of the Vedanta and the Vijnanavada is to seek the truly real and suffuse the mind exclusively with it to the extent that the mind becomes one with the real. In Advaita, dialectic is employed to demolish difference (*bheda*), plurality (*dvaita*) and particularity (*pariccheda*), thereby establishing the reality of Pure Being as changeless, universal and self-evident. The Vijnanavada was dialectic to disprove the reality
of the object and plurality; it thereby establishes the sole reality of consciousness (vijnana).