Consciousness occupies an important place in human life, be it philosophy or psychology. The word 'consciousness' is derived from the Latin word 'conscire' which means to know things together. Generally, consciousness means the mental process with the help of which we can regard someone to be conscious. Simply speaking, consciousness means awareness. Philosophically, consciousness is a form of force which arises from the inner part of the body. The concept of consciousness is discussed by the philosophers from different angles. Buddhism has its distinct concept of consciousness. It regards "to be conscious of an object" as being conscious of its image, which has been evolved by the object. For them, consciousness is not divided between a soul and an inner-sense, which itself is pure consciousness.

The Buddhist schools from different zones represent divergent views about consciousness. The Mahayana school of Buddhist philosophy is represented by the Madhyamika and the Yogacara. The Yogacara is also called Vijnanavada because it propagates that the Ultimate Reality is only pure consciousness (Vijnana). In its practical application, it is described as Yogacara i.e. following the path of yoga.
The Yogacara denies the external reality of the object and reduces the object to *vijnapti* (consciousness). The Yogacara school of philosophy built a system which is called the doctrine of *Vijnaptimatra* (consciousness only) or *cittamatra*. The aim of this study is to find out whether an object really exists and the justification of consciousness being called the only reality. An attempt is also made to find out the exact nature of *vijnana* whether it is continuous, formless, pure consciousness or it is a flow (or flux) of consciousness as well as to determine the relationship between *vijnana* and *Alayavijnana*. For this purpose, early Buddhism, emergence of Yogacara Buddhism and the epistemological and the metaphysical views of consciousness have been discussed.

The present work is based on the study of original sources as far as possible and we have also made use of various secondary sources. We have often referred to the systems of Nyaya and Advaita Vedanta. At times, we have also tried to compare Yogacara Idealism to those of Berkeley and Hegel.

The thesis consists of five chapters – Introduction, Emergence of the Yogacara Buddhism, Concept of Consciousness in Yogacara Buddhism – An Epistemological View, Concept of Consciousness in Yogacara Buddhism – Metaphysical View and Conclusion.

The introductory chapter is basically a historical survey and it includes the life and teachings of the Buddha; the Buddhist social and moral ideals; the
relation of the Buddhism to the other systems of thought; and finally, the main
differences between the Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism.

The second chapter deals with how the Yogacara School emerged out of
the inner dynamism inherent in Buddhism from the very outset. Also discussion
is made of the three different spheres of the Buddhist school; role of the
Sautrantika in the emergence of the Yogacara and the stages of the
Madhyamika. The chapter is devoted to the important Acharyas and their texts.
The middle part of this chapter includes Nagarjuna's famous theory of
Sunyavada and discusses the relation between Madhyamika and Advaita
Vedanta of Sankara. Finally, an attempt is made at pointing out the differences
between early Yogacara and the Svatantra (later) Vijnanavada Buddhism.

The third chapter analyses the epistemological basis of the system. Here,
a comparison has been made between Nyaya, Advaita Vedanta and
Vijnanavada. This chapter deals with Dignaga and Dharmakirti's theory of
perception, the nature of the object of perception and different kinds of
perception. Here, illusion has also been discussed.

The fourth chapter attempts to analyze the Yogacara metaphysics as a
form of Absolutism and shows how consciousness, the sole reality, is actually
diversified into the multi-dimensional forms of the so-called empirical world. It
also includes a comparison between the Yogacara Idealism and Western forms
of idealism namely those of Berkeley and Hegel. We have also described the
similarities and differences between Advaita Vedanta and Yogacara. Finally, a
critical estimate of this system has been made.

In the final chapter, conclusions have been drawn from the discussions in
the preceding chapters.

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