Chapter 5

Conclusion

Vincent B. Leitch in his book *Deconstructive Criticism* explains the term conclusion in the following manner:

A conclusion typically promotes unified closure and ordered coherence.
The end of the text either repeats the initial thesis with a difference, or repackages the main points within tight borders, or enacts a last deduction as a final supplement. A conclusion renders up results, passes judgments, reduces details, effects settlement, and shuts down play. (253)

For John Sturrock however, “Conclusions in books are normally closing statements of more or less reductive kind.” (144). In keeping both the views in mind, this concluding chapter would close the arguments of this thesis by repeating and repackaging the main points to enact the deduction by rendering the results of the study which set out to find the fore father of Derrida in the person of Buddhist thinker Nagarjuna. Of course in a subject like this judgment may be uncalled for but definitely one needs to reduce the details and to effect a settle down and the shutting down of the play is highly impossible and not necessary as this type of comparative study ought to go on for the development of knowledge and wisdom.
The difficulty of the scholar in comparing a major contemporary philosopher such as Jacques Derrida with an ancient philosopher Nagarjuna in a research like this is manifold. First and foremost to explain Derrida’s concepts is already to lift them out of Derrida’s key concepts. Secondly there is the danger of oversimplifying of pigeonholing, of reducing and of defining artificial boundaries when facing a movement of thought that constantly evolves so as deliberately to defeat and baffle all preordained categories.

Then there is also the danger of being merely mimetic, of just repeating strategies and gestures that have been identified with a signature, with an author, and that tend to be singular, unrepeatable, yet endowed with universal validity. Considering and coping with the difficulties listed above this research work as mentioned in the literature review, closely follows the work of Robert Magliola, whose book *Derrida on the Mend* is recognised by many as the comparative spark that initiated the emergence of contemporary Buddhology’s fascination with Derrida’s deconstructive project.

The intellectual lure of this comparison has yielded to thought provoking studies in the east - west philosophic and literary dialogues. Buddhism and Deconstruction provide rare insights into the pioneering spirit of the eastern masters who seem to have influenced the traditional western thinkers in a way that is very surprising and astounding.
This thesis which set out to find the forefather of Derrida in the person of Nagarjuna could be utilised as one of the important resources for those who are interested in following the ongoing development of this trend in scholarship, and it could also serve as an accessible introduction to an often difficult subject in the comparative study of east and west philosophy and literature.

Those who are already familiar with this field of comparison may not find a great deal of new ground traversed in the comparative possibilities of deconstruction and Buddhist thought but will appreciate the detailed quality of analysis found within the varied thematic discussions in the four chapters. Through the research work of this kind the easterners would get a chance to see in Derrida the possibility of a unique kinship with Western philosophy, the one representative of the Western philosophical tradition that they could take some comfort in embracing.

Nagarjuna would have definitely inspired Derrida with a way of thinking designed to discredit all other kinds of thinking (especially Western kinds). What could really make Nagarjuna as Derrida’s forefather is the fact that he was attacking from the inside, and he would have certainly served as a pioneer for Derrida to make him realize the great flaws in Western essentialism. Such a comparative study of Eastern and Western philosophers for long has been hindered by Eurocentric assumptions about philosophy.
The widespread discounting of Eastern thought derives, in large measure, from the modern Western failure to understand the nature of the traditional metaphysics of both the Occident and the East. This failure could thus be remedied by this type of comparative study. European philosophers have sometimes been guilty of the insularity. Eastern philosophical thought is all too often ignored, marginalised, or treated as kind of fumbling proto-philosophy, hopelessly mired in religious superstition. The dominant trend in Western histories of philosophy has been to disqualify the Orientals altogether.

Having found the pioneering thoughts of Nagarjuna in Derrida the researcher would like to add the following observation: Although there are striking similarities between Derrida’s deconstruction and Eastern enlightenment-based wisdom of Nagarjuna, Derrida could not achieve full freedom from the West and take head on the eastern thought because he seems to have remained stuck in language and his linguistic theory evolves into explorations of ethics and justice.

The comparative study of Nagarjuna and Derrida offers convincing evidence to further conversations in this field. This could also advance the infusion of Buddhist perspectives into modern global responses to contemporary realities by activating our quite real differences as the basis for mutual contribution and ever more deeply shared flourishing. As might be expected, the search for Derrida’s forefather in the person of Nagarjuna raises important
questions, opens promising avenues for further conversation. Nagarjuna’s teachings about non-duality seems well suited to address the apparent *aporia* with respect to difference that these realities pose: the seemingly contrary needs both to recognize and respect differences to historically unprecedented degrees, and to subsume our differences within globally committed patterns of common cause.

This research which tried to find out Derrida’s forefather followed the tradition of east–west comparative dialogues that juxtapose the thought of a specific Western thinker with branches of Eastern philosophy with an aim at locate points of similarity and difference between their respective methodological approaches and philosophical commitments. In terms of content, it breaks new ground in exploring in detail the connection between Derridean deconstruction and Nagarjuna’s *Madhyamika* philosophy. The nature and scope of this research revolved around certain carefully chosen concepts and aspects of Derrida’s long and diverse philosophical career. The key concern is with Derrida’s notion of *Différance*.

Derrida and Nagarjuna are both characterised as pre-eminently concerned with the treatment of binary oppositions, and both enumerate middle ways of sorts that are, nonetheless, not reducible to a traditional dialectics. Both Derrida and Nagarjuna are wary of postulations regarding the self or subject. Certainly it is true that neither Derrida nor Nagarjuna assent to any kind of essentialist understanding
of the self. Finally, to validly argue for any kind of equivalence in regard to their positions on the self and subjectivity, consideration ought to have been given to the way in which Derrida continues to take the transcendental turn in a manner that Nagarjuna arguably does not. Nagarjuna and Derrida share in common reservations about the positing of any essential self, God, or like figure, and the theory of dependent arising is not unrelated to the Derridean emphasis upon *Différance* and the trace, Derrida does not think that one might ever finally experience reality unveiled as it were, a desire that persists in the various different Buddhist traditions.

Derridean deconstructive strategies of *Différance* and *aporia* which suspend, defer, or displace dualities (rather than totally eliminating or identifying them) can easily be applied to some of Nagarjuna’s philosophical/religious texts in increasingly sophisticated ways. On the other hand, Derrida himself has moved toward ways of thinking about the difference and singularity of the other in a more explicitly social and political context.

The various chapters of this research work were picking up on this turn within deconstructive theorising and looking at Nagarjuna’s philosophical texts in the light of Derrida; or more precisely they were exploring the ways in which strategies of deconstructive or *aporia* is closely tied to the ethics of deconstruction, that have been in operation for centuries in Nagarjuna’s thinking
resonate with certain key strategies of deconstructive ethics in the west.
Furthermore, even the Derrida of the free play of signifiers believes that not only
texts but language in general must have an ‘other’ outside of it which leaves a
trace within inhabiting the in between of words and concepts, and of the binary
oppositions of words and concepts.

Thus this research dissertation postulates the notion that there is a complete
continuity between the thought of Nagarjuna and the some of the thoughts of
Derrida. It is shown that there is strong reason to view Nagarjuna as the forefather
of Derrida. The innovation produced by Nagarjuna is next contrasted to Derrida’s
style of argument, and it is shown that these two author’s notions of emptiness, as
well as their particular implementation of logic, significantly converge with each
other. The following is the repetition and repackaging of the way in which this
research paper is organised and structured.

The introductory chapter of this research work which set out to find
Derrida’s intellectual forefather by reading Derridean Deconstruction against the
backdrop of Nagarjuna’s Philosophy, being a comparative study of the philosophy
of the East and the West examined in detail the contribution of India to the
Western thinking. It explored from the very earliest times to the modern era and
analysed the contribution from different sources who were involved in taking the
east to the west. This study which follows the comparative genre of the East and
the West has thus rightly analysed India’s contribution to the West. After discussing this in detail it also explored how Derrida follows this rich legacy of east-west cultural and philosophical exchange. Consequently this part initiated the researcher’s quest to find out the forefather of Derrida. In order to understand Derrida the introductory chapter then narrated in brief the life history of Derrida and established Derrida’s Indian connection.

The review of the critical points of contemporary knowledge with substantive findings as well as theoretical and methodological contributions to this area research was then discussed in Literature review. For this purpose it analysed the works that have been done on this subject by eminent authors like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Harold Coward, Robert Magliola, David Loy, Jay Garfield and their works were discussed in detail. In addition to this, the introductory chapter also discussed how Derrida and Nagarjuna could be compared after briefly analysing Nagarjuna’s biography.

Having seen the lives and milieu of thought of both the authors under comparison the researcher discussed Nagarjuna’s Philosophy at length so as to relate Nagarjuna’s thought with that of Derrida. Thus definite parallels in the philosophy of Derrida and Nagarjuna were unearthed. The deployment of negative Dialectics in both the thinkers was discussed in detail as both the authors’ dialectics slightly goes in the direction of negation. Another issue in which one
could unearth further comparative study apart from the issue of negative dialectics was language and hence the issue of the use of language and its’ theories both in Nagarjuna and Derrida was taken for discussion.

Comparison of authors who belong to millennia apart is not that easy and hence the operational difficulties of this research was analysed to explain how the researcher encountered certain difficulties in handling ancient texts. The question, ‘Why Nagarjuna and Derrida?’ was discussed to establish the relevance of this study and it also explained different aspects deconstructed by Nagarjuna in his Madhyamika critique section. Then the introductory chapter gave the gist of how the chapters of this research paper was organised.

The second chapter entitled *The Negative Dialectics in Derrida and Nagarjuna* analysed the origin and the deployment of negative dialectics in Derrida and Nagarjuna through their historical evolution of thought. As Derrida was greatly influenced by Marxism in his development of negative dialectics Marxism, Frankfurt school, Adorno and his negative dialectics were discussed in detail after the exposition on the terms dialectics and negative, then the negative dialectics of Derrida was parallely studied with Adorno and Marxist critique. Soon after this parallel study, Derrida’s Marxian negative dialectics was exclusively dealt in detail. Derrida is the father of the revolutionary concept
deconstruction and so negative dialectics followed in deconstruction was brought out besides the discussing at length the negative theology and Derrida’s part in it.

The discussion of negative dialectics in Derrida would make one think that he is nihilistic and so to absolve Derrida of this charge, there followed a detailed exposition on Nihilism and attempt was made to absolve Derrida of the nihilistic charge. Then the discussion proceeded to the parallel and comparative study of Derrida with Nagarjuna. In order to do full justice it started with a detailed explication on the origin of Buddhism as Nagarjuna’s negative dialectics was part of Buddhism and soon after it went on to explain in detail Nagarjuna’s Madhyamika Buddhist thought.

Like Derrida, Nagarjuna’s critics too observe him to be nihilistic and hence attempt was made as in the case of Derrida to absolve Nagarjuna of Nihilistic charge. Having absolved the nihilistic charge the chapter proceeded to explain Nagarjuna’s Negative Argument. Finally the Deconstructive Parallels of Derrida and Nagarjuna were discussed wherein; interesting parallels to Derrida’s type of deconstruction, from Nagarjuna’s point of view was discussed.

Chapter three focused on the comparative study of Jacques Derrida’s highly influential concept of *différance* with Nagarjuna’s *Sunyata*. Before going further the terms *différance* and *Sunyata* were explained in great detail so as to understand
the crux of the discussion that ensues. *Sunyata* is a term which has a deeper implication than what it generally appears to be on the surface level and hence it’s deeper implication was given a prominent space in the discussion.

*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, or *Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way* is the masterpiece of Nagarjuna where he brings out his negative dialectics as well as the concept of *Sunyata* and hence a detailed summary of the primary text of this research was given for understanding the arguments in a better light. While explaining, the competing interpretations of the work were also given. The form and content of the masterpiece with the explanation of its early chapters and the later chapters were analysed in great detail.

The chapter then moved on to the important comparative aspect and studied how deconstruction was at work in *Sunyata* and in *différance*. It also focused its attention on the theory of rising/falling both in Nagarjuna and Derrida. Finally it further analysed Derrida’s in-decidability and Nagarjuna’s middle path throwing lots of comparative insights which would substantiate the research in establishing Nagarjuna as the forefather of Derrida.

Chapter four entitled *Derrida’s Word Game and Nagarjuna’s Word Maze: Lexical-Syntactical Deconstruction* focused its’ attention to the unexplored parallels in Derridean and *Madhyamika* deconstructive use of language. Prior to
the comparative analysis, the language of Buddhist scriptures was analysed so as to give an insight into the philosophy of language that existed in Buddhism. Since the comparison is to be made between philosophies of language of Nagarjuna with Derrida, a detailed study of Derrida’s Philosophy of Language was soon followed by Buddhist philosophy of language and Nagarjuna’s standpoint.

The chapter then analysed Buddhist Semiotics and Buddhism in semiotics both of which open one into lots of interesting discussions. Having analysed the semiotics of Buddhism the chapter focused its attention on Derrida’s Semiotics. The comparative study on the treatment of language by Derrida and Nagarjuna was soon followed by the discussion of Derrida’s view of language in contrast with Nagarjuna. Finally Derrida’s word game and Nagarjuna’s word maze were analysed comparatively.

The comparative analysis through the above chapters has helped in proving the fact that Derrida must have been influenced by the eastern thought especially by the thoughts of Nagarjuna and hence one could honestly consider Nagarjuna as the forefather or the pioneer of Derrida and his deconstructive thinking. As Harold Coward highlights in his concluding remarks on a comparative study of Derrida and Nagarjuna in his book *Derrida and Indian Philosophy* “Derrida’s spiritual result is in many ways very close to the goal of Nagarjuna’s *catuskoti*” (144)
further Coward opines “… both Derrida and Nagarjuna envisage a spiritual realization in which language continues to function.” (146)

Having striven to prove the pioneer of Derrida the researcher would like to conclude the thesis with the optimistic remark of Coward.

The gain of this East-West dialogue … is not just in the building of a bridgehead between two traditions, important as that is in itself, but the benefit is also one of a deeper self-understanding achieved by examining one’s own thinking in relation to the thought of the other. More simply put it is sometimes through others that we come to know ourselves. Indeed Derrida would maintain that it is only in our dynamic relation with the other that knowledge can arise. (148)

This dissertation thus would really help in understanding both the east and the west in a better comparative light and would certainly be of use for knowledge building through the dynamic relations. Moreover, reading Derridean Deconstruction against the backdrop of Nagarjuna’s philosophy would definitely aid literary critics and critical theorists in understanding Derrida from an eastern angle.