CHAPTER-VI
CONCLUSION
STATUS OF THE EXTERNAL WORLD
IN BUDDIST PHILOSOPHY
"All phenomena are unreal. He who realizes this by insight becomes disgusted with misery and vanity of existence. This is the path of purity"

-Dhammapada, ch-12
In the foregoing chapters, we have studied the status of the external world in Buddhism in a historical manner. First, we tried to find out what are the foundational concepts that made Buddhism a success in its early period. This was covered in the chapter devoted to early Buddhism. Then, we studied the status of the external world in Buddhist philosophy successive chapters devoted to Vaibhasika, Sautrantika, Madhyamika and Yogacara Buddhism. Our observations by way of conclusion of a particular school are available whose these had to be made. Now, it is time we culled together the conclusions in the final chapters.

1. The world is a process of dependent origination

   A) Everything arises depending on some other thing and exists depending on different conditions. The world is an inderdependent process. Buddha says, "I will teach you the Dharma that being present, this becomes from the arising of that, this arises, that being absent this does not become from the cessation of that, this ceases."\(^1\) Everything is mutually dependent for origination and existence. The world is the totality of causal series of the casual relations. It is a continuous process. Relation constitutes the world. Relativity is the essence of origination, existence and destruction of the world.

   Thus, the world is conditional, relative and devoid of independent reality. It is simply a process of dependent origination. "Existence is transformation. It is a series of successive states."\(^2\) Neither the world is the transmigration of individual reality nor it is the evolution of eternal reality. The
world is the involution of dependent origination process. But the same thing does not evolve and involve in the world. Because, there is transmigration, but there is no transmigrating thing. God and reality, unity and diversity, enjoyment and suffering, good and evil, all these are in the world.

B) Vaibhasika and Sautrantika assert that every element is a separate force or a separate power. But the elements co-operate with each other in their manifestation and manifest various things of the world. Elements are dependent in their manifestation.

C) Madhyamika points out that the process ‘dependent origination’ is the relativity of things. It is the essence of the world. Because, relativity of things constitutes the world. Therefore, the world is conditional and devoid of independent reality.

D) Yogacara analyses this process through the mental elements. Therefore, Yogacara asserts that the world is the manifestation of consciousness.

2. Causation governs the world.

Dependent origination is nothing but the law of causation of the world or it is another name of causality. Every thing has a cause. On the other hand, nothing happens without a cause i.e. nothing is uncaused. The whole universe is conditioned by the cause.

B) Vaibhasika and Sautrantika state that the co-operating function of momentary elements is nothing; it is only the law of causation. Every separate
element operates among others by the definite law of causation. Their preceding moment is called cause and the consequent is the effect. Thus, *the world is a discontinuous continuity process*. It is controlled by the law of causation.

C) Madhyamika points out that the world is not ultimately real. It is a realm of relativity. It is simply a process and things are simply events. The world is the continuity of causality.

In the law of causation, every effect becomes in turn a cause. The cause necessarily produces an effect. The effect in its turn is transformed into a cause, a cause into an effect and vice versa. This process goes on infinitely in the universe. Therefore, the prime cause of the world is inconceivable. The world has neither beginning nor it has an end. Causation governs the world without a maker and without a beginning.

Madhyamika also points out that the prime cause of the world cannot be established. If we investigate the prime cause of the world there will be an infinite regress. Therefore, the prime cause of the world is inconceivable.

The world is the continuity of causality. But the relation between cause and effect cannot be established. Neither there can be established any beginning of this causality nor there can be established any end of this causality.

D) According to early Buddhist philosophy, the law of causality is nothing, but a form of the law of karma. Every karma necessarily products the fruit either good or bad. Good karma produces good result and bad karma
produces bad result. The present existence is the result of past karma and future will arise by the law of past and present karma. The variety in the world is due to the karma.

Thus, the law of karma governs all physical and mental phenomena. It is the supreme impersonal law of the world. "Buddhist law of karma is inexorable and remorseless in its operation. There could be no escape from it. God as a creator and controller of the universe had no place or role in it. In fact, this law of karma is a serious challenge to the belief in an omnipotent and compassionate creator." Thus, the existence of the world is the continuity of karma.

E) Similarly, Vaibhasika and Sautrantika also assert that the law of causation is nothing but the karma or actions of elements. Elements co-operate with another and manifest various things of the world. This function and activity of all elements is called karma. The existence of past, present and future are the results of karma of momentary elements. The variety of the world is due to the karma. Thus, the world is the result of karma. Karma manifests and governs the world. Therefore, Buddhism uses the concept of karma in a much wider sense than it is used in other schools of Indian philosophy.

F) In the process of the world, the cause does not transform into the effect. Therefore, neither the effect is identical nor it is different from the cause. Buddhism does not believe that the effect is produced from the cause, nor does it regard the effect as related to the cause. In its view, the cause is
completely destroyed before the production of the effect. It is only after the
destruction of the seed that the sprout arises. Therefore, the cause does not
continue to exist in the effect. Everything arises in the world through this law of
causation. There is transformation of things but the same thing does not
transmigrate. It seems that Buddhism believes in immanent causality.

3. The world is momentary

The world is momentary is another central theme of early Buddhist
philosophy. All things change constantly at every moment and two moments of a
thing are not the same. “All existence are essenceless and impermanent.”
Therefore, the world is new at each and every moment and no two moments are
identical. It is so because at every moment things depend on different conditions
for their existence.

Thus, there is no identity; there is only continuity of life. Identity
is another name of continuity. It is used to cognize and recognize something
from some other thing. “There is neither absolute identity nor absolute
difference. The whole is a series. The new creation is so immediate on the old
that for all practical purposes it may be taken as the continuance of the old.
There is a continuity of Karma. Re-birth is a new birth.” Thus, the universe is a
perpetual succession of becoming and it is constantly changing where one
transient thing is followed by another. There is change, but there is no changing
thing. Change is the reality and impermanence is the law of the universe. Thus,
change is a mental process and it is cosmic.
B) Vaibhasika and Sautrantika point out that the Elements are momentary. Therefore, their manifestations are also momentary. So, the world is momentary. The world exists but its existence is momentary— it is the basic point of Vaibhasika and Sautrantika philosophy. Elements co-operate each other in their manifestation. Elements appear and disappear successively in order to follow the next moment by another momentary existence. Elements do not change but only disappear. Therefore, a moment becomes a synonym of an element. Two moments of a thing are two different elements ie every element at every moment is a new element. Thus, the world appears and disappears and in every respect it is impermanent. The world is new at each and every moment and at no two moments are identical. The world is a flux. It is like a current of a river. Thus, the world is momentary.

Elements have no duration. Elements change without having mental gap. Therefore, in the dynamic change of the world, there is no duration between one moment and another moment. The world is a continuous whole or a process.

Elements are at unrest. Elements change continuously without having any mental gap. Therefore, the world is restless. The world is a discontinuous continuity process. It is the continuous lighting of different momentary elements.

Now the question is, if the world is momentary, how can we define the existence of the world? According to early Buddhism, the causal efficiency is
the characteristic of existence. If a cause is efficient to produce its effect, it is called existence. The seed is said to exist, since it can produce shoots. This causal efficiency is momentary. Therefore, things must be regarded as having momentary existence. So, whatever is existent is momentary.

4. Only three things are born in the world.

It is noted in Pali literature that in conscious life the karma is born, in unconscious things, the cause is born and in natural event the season is born. There is nothing in the world other than these three truths. Space and Nirvana exist independently like karma, cause and season. Thus, karma cause and season these three are the truths of the world.

5. The world is unsubstantial or soulless.

A) Early Buddhist philosophy denies the existence of permanent soul or substance. What we call soul or substance is an aggregation of pancha skandhas, viz, *Rupa, Vedana, Samjna, Samskara* and *Vijnana*. Nothing of them is soul or substance. The soul is an aggregation of psychophysical organism. The psychophysical organism is an unbreakable stream of changing consciousness. Buddha says that the so called soul or self is nothing but a stream of changing moments of consciousness. The soul or substance is a name or symbol of a complex of constituents. The Buddha says, "With regard to these five groups, I do not find any ego (atta) or something belonging to as ego (attaniya). I am no longer subject to the thoughts of 'I am' or 'thus I am."" The great Buddhist scholars T.W Rhys Davids say that the self is not only a collective but a
recollective entity. Just as there is no wheel in a critical sense of the term similarly that there is no permanent soul in body. The wheel is an aggregation of parts and it is a name of the parts. Similarly, what we call soul or substance is an aggregation of psychophysical status and processes. The idea of self or soul is a false and imaginary belief. It has no corresponding objective reality.

B) Vaibhasika and Sautrantika also deny the existence of permanent soul or substance. What we call soul or substance is the aggregate force of the elements of mind and the elements of matter. Thus, the world is unsubstantial or soulless. Similarly, what we call an individual is only a force of co-operating elements. According to Th Stcherbatsky, disappearance is the very essence of existence, what does not disappear does not exist. Therefore, there is change, but there is no changing thing.

It is found in Vaibhasika and Sautrantika philosophy that the world is cosmic. It is neither finite nor infinite. The world is only becoming, a process, because the elements of the world are not potential but their force is potential. The force is cosmic. It is not transcendental. Therefore, elements are cosmic or worldly. Thus, the world is cosmic it is not transcendental.

Thus, the world is dynamic and it is the central theme of early Buddhist philosophy. In the process of dynamism, there is neither being nor non-being. The world is only becoming and it is the ultimate truth of the world. It means, there is neither being in becoming nor non-being in becoming. The concept of being is derived from the process of becoming. Therefore, it is neither
true nor false. It is true only in terms of becoming. In Buddhism, what we call ‘being’ is a relative concept. A changeless individual being is not found in the world. The independent and permanent existence of being is the false knowledge of reality of the world. It arises due to our ignorance. The world is a succession of transient phenomena. There is no permanent being.

6. The world is the manifestation of mental and material elements

The central point of Vaibhasika and Sautrantika philosophy is that 'All things exist' (sarvan asti). All things of the world are constituted and existent due to co-operation of the elements of mind and the elements of matter. Thus, the world is constituted by the mental and material elements. “The elements are realities, all compound things are mere names denoting groups of separate elements. Every element is a separate entity. There is no inherence of one element in another.”7 Every element is a separate force or separate power. Therefore, the elements of mind and elements of matter exist independently. Vaibhasika and Sautrantika admit independent existence of mind and matter. So, they are called natural dualists. Thus, the world exists independently and its existence is not of our thought.

In Vaibhasika and Sautrantika philosophy ‘something exists’ means that the twelve ayatanas exist. They call these elements ‘dharma’ in technical sense. Because, these twelve elements are the ultimate principles of the material and mental world. Thus, all things of the world arise and exist through these twelve ayatanas or dharma. In the classification of the elements, the sixth
elements i.e. consciousness does not arise without any content. Consciousness arises supported by the mental or subjective and material or objective elements. *The subjective and objective elements are the doors for consciousness to appear.*

It seems that we are conscious and the world appears in consciousness supported by the mental and material elements. Thus, there is consciousness but there is no conscious thing. The varieties of the world are the creation or manifestation of consciousness in support of the mental and material elements. Composition of elements, their consciousness and stream of compounds or Dhatus- all these are the process of the world and their status is impermanent. *Thus, the world is only a stream of consciousness, which arises in support of the mental and material elements.*

7. **The world is the force of co-operating elements of mind and the elements of matter.**

Vaiśehika and Sautrantika analyse the concept of production, growth and destruction of things through the forces of combining elements. Elements operate together in their manifestation and in destruction they disappear. Their co-operating activity is called force. All mental and material elements act as a force in the world. Thus, the world is only a totality of forces of combining elements.

Forces have no independent reality apart from elements. They are produced in the combination of elements. Vaiśehika asserts the four universal forces of the phenomena. But Vasubandhu and Sautrantika deny the reality of
the four manifested forces. In their view, the forces arise from the composition of elements and it is undivided.

8. Vaibhasika holds that the essence of the world always exists in past, present and future. But according to Sautrantika, the world exists only in the present.

From the metaphysical point of view, Vaibhasika and Sautrantika assert the same view, but from the epistemological point of view, they propound the different views about the world. According to Vaibhasika, the real essence of elements exists always in past, present and future. Even elements are momentary, though they represent the potential appearances or the force into phenomenal existence. Therefore, there is change but there is no changing thing. So, elements exist in three phases of time viz, past, present and future. Therefore, the world which is a totality of elements exists in three phases of time viz, past, present and future.

Vaibhasika points out that if past and future things do not exist, there would be consciousness without any object. Secondly, if past does not exist, how can good and bad action bring forth a result? Thirdly, when a dharma goes from one period of time to another, its nature is not modified but its existence is modified. For example milk becomes whey; its taste, force and digestibility change but does not change its colour. Similarly, when a future dharma passes from the future into present, its future existence is abandoned and its present existence is acquired, but its nature remains the same. Fourthly, a
dhārma going throughout the time periods, takes different names through different relationships that is, it is called past, future or present, through a relationship with what proceeds and with what follows. For example, the same woman is both a daughter and a mother. According to Vaibhasika, the time period and the condition are established through the operation of the activity of a dhārma. When a dhārma does not accomplish its operation, it is future, when it is accomplishing its operation it is present and when its operation has come to an end, it is past. *Thus, the world exists in three phases of time.*

Sautrantika denies the existence of dhārmas in past and future. They admit the reality of elements only in the present. They do not deny the influence of past facts upon present and remote future ones. But they explain it by a gradual change in an un-interrupted sequence of moments. All elements are momentary. Therefore, every element in every moment is a new element. Elements are new at each and every moment. *So, the world exists only in the present.*

Sautrantika points out that all things are conditional. Therefore, they do not always exist. On the other hand, if things or elements do not always exist, then it cannot be said that they exist in past present and future. Secondly, if past and the future elements exist as the elements exist in present, then they cannot be called by different names as past and future. Thirdly, time period is not justified. Because, if activity is the same as the dhārma and if the dhārma always exists, its activity would also always exist. And if it is so, then why does
one say that sometime it is past and sometime it is future. Therefore, according to Sautrantika things exist only in the present. Thus, the world exists only in the present.

This is really a critical position of Vaibhasika and Sautrantika philosophy. But it seems that the position of Sautrantika is more logical than that of the Vaibhasika. Thus, the world is external to our mind. But the phenomenal world is not real, it is momentary and this is the final philosophy of Vaibhasika and Sautrantika school.

9. **Vaibhasika holds that we directly perceive the existence of the world. But according to Sautrantika, we directly perceive cognition and we infer the existence of the world through the cognition.**

According to Vaibhasika, we directly perceive the real existence of the external world. The world is real it is not our mental creation. It exists independently. So, we directly perceive the existence of the world.

But, according to Sautrantika, we directly perceive cognition and through the cognition we infer the existence of things. In their view, cognitions are the mental representations through which we infer the existence of things. Sautrantika gives the following reasons;

First, objects produce their cognitions and imprint their forms on them. The forms of cognitions are similar to the external objects. When cognitions arise, at that time their objects have ceased to be. Therefore, present cognition cannot perceive the past object. The forms of object are inferred from
their cognition. So, they point out that external things are inferred from their cognition. Cognitions are copies or representation of their object. In the absence of cognition object cannot be inferred. Therefore, we do not perceive directly the existence of things. We perceive cognitions under the forms of objects. What I know, I know it under the forms of objects through their cognitions. Therefore, the existence of external world is only inferred. Thus, from the doctrine of Sautrantika it can be concluded that the world is external to consciousness and our belief in it is based on inference. Sautrantika advocates the indirect realism.

Vaihbasika criticizes the Sautrantika view and points out that the view of Sautrantika is linguistics. 'I perceive my cognitions'-the statement is linguistics. Vaihbasika gives some reasons against the Sautrantika views. First, if all external objects are inferred from their cognitions then there are no objects of perception. Secondly, knowledge arises after the perception of things. If there is no thing, there is no knowledge of that thing. Therefore, according to Vaihbasika, the world exists independently and we directly perceive its existence. Vaihbasika advocates direct realism. Their theory is called naïve realism.

10. The world is Sunyata.

According Madhyamika philosophy, relativity is the essence of things and Sunyata is the reality of the world. The world is devoid of independent existence and so the world is relative. But the relativity of things cannot be established or it is unintelligible. ‘If two things are identical with each
other, they cannot be related to each other. Identity and relation cannot exist together. Therefore, there are no relation and relata. Relations are unintelligible and phenomenal. They are not ultimately real.\(^8\) The relation between part and whole, cause and effect, substance and attribute, production and destruction, etc all these relations cannot be established independently because all these relations are contingent. Therefore, the world is Sunyata. The world is devoid of substantiality or permanent reality. It is relative at each and every moment. Thus, relativity constitutes the world.

From the epistemological point of view, the knowledge, which occurs through our sense organs, is not the real knowledge of the world. Our experience gives us only an unconditioned world, because it appears as real to us. But the world is relative and its reality is conditional. All things of the world are dependent, relative and devoid of absolute reality. Every thing arises and exists depending on some other thing. Thus, from the point of view of the ultimate truth the world is an illusion.

According to Madhyamika, all our mental categories like causality, substance, name etc are the construction of our imagination. They do not denote any absolute reality of things. The world is devoid of objective reality and it is unreal. Nagarjuna says that the wheel of existence originates form the propensity for erroneous imagination. He states that the emotional obscuration of attachment, aversion and delusion originate form the imagination (vikalpa).
Thus, for Nagarjuna intellectual functions are responsible for the sustenance of the phenomenal universe.

Thus, the phenomenal universe is the construction of thought which is fabricated by imagination conditioned by propensities (samskarta). The phenomenal world is an illusion. It has no ontological status. So, it cannot ultimately be said of the phenomenal universe that it exists, it does not exist, it originates or it is extinguished etc. Just as fictitious appearance which have no objective reality appear to the deluded, so the phenomenal universe appears to the naive consciousness. *In reality the nature of phenomena is devoid of any substantiality, empty and inconceivable.* “There is neither destruction nor production, neither transitoriness nor eternality, neither unity nor plurality, neither coming nor going. Dependent origination is not real. The highest good is the cessation of all phenomena. The whole world is devoid of origination and destruction. Production, existence, and destruction are only apparent or phenomenal.”

The world is the totality of relations of things. But the relativety of things cannot be established. The origination of things cannot be established. Because, whether the things arise themselves, from another, from both or from a non-cause, it cannot be established.

Conditionality of things cannot be established. Conditions do not pertain to either existence or non-existence. It cannot be said that it pertains to an existent effect. Since effect already exists, the conditions are superfluaries.
the other hand in the absence of an effect condition are obtained. Alternatively, if conditions pertain to a non-existence effect, then the cause will be disassociated from the effect. Thus, conditions are unintelligible. Since the conditions are unintelligible, the world that constitutes of conditions is also unintelligible. Thus, conditions of a thing are neither existence nor non-existence, neither both nor non both. Since the conditions are unintelligible, the existence and origination of the things are also unintelligible.

The relation between cause and effect is unintelligible. If an effect is already real in a cause, there can be no production. If it is unreal in a cause, there can be no production. If both real and unreal, there can be no production. Thus, the relation between cause and effect cannot be established. Similarly, the relation between subject and object, perceiver and perceived object, substance and quality etc, cannot be established independently. Therefore, their status is Sunya.

Thus, the phenomena originate from a combination of condition. They do not come into existence themselves nor do they appear unless the appropriate conditions are present. Therefore, the existence of phenomena is conditional and relative. This quality of existing dependent upon and relative to other factors is termed the emptiness of phenomena.

All phenomena are empty (sunya). Emptiness annihilates the alternatives constructed by imagination like existence and non-existence. It transcends thought and expression and is declared to be the actual nature of all
phenomena. This is the ultimate truth of Madhyamika philosophy. For Madhyamika all phenomena are ultimately relative, devoid of independent existence and hence empty. Relativity is an appearance or phenomenon.

Thus, ultimate existence cannot be attributed to phenomena, because existence is ultimately impossible. It has no conceptual reality of its own, but is relative to the notion of non-existence. Therefore, the world is devoid of independent reality and ultimately the world is unreal.

It is found in Madhyamika philosophy that the world is Sunyata in three fold senses viz, 1) It is devoid of any structure or rule 2) It can arise any structure or rule and 3) It can cohere with all types of structure and rule. Sunyata connotes the non-conceptual nature of the absolute. It is free from the duality of 'is' and 'is not' and it is identical with absolute. Whatever is interdependently originated is emptiness. There is nothing to affirm and there is no new thing to negate. It seems that Madhyamika uses the term Sunyata as a symbol of the inexpressible.

Thus, from the epistemological point of view the world is relative but from the ontological point of view the world is Sunyata. Sunyata is neither existence nor non-existence. Sunyata is the middle path between existence and non-existence, between essencelessness (sunyata) and essence of being (satta). "Sunyata is not produced by other causes (aparapratyaya); it is absolute claim (santa); it is not expressed by empirical definitions and characteristics
(prapanca); it is one (ananartha); it is apprehended by supraintellectual intuition (nirvikalpa).”

11. Sunyata does not mean void. It simply means the non-acceptance of independent reality or entity in the world.

The world is a network of different relations. When we realize that the external world is neither real nor unreal, neither both nor non-both, we have glimpse of Sunyata. Thus, Sunyata is the denial of svabhava (nature) of all mundane existence. Sunyata is neither negative nor positive, neither relative nor phenomenal.

The denial of self-nature of all existence does not mean that Sunyata is something like positive existence. If there had been something like Asunayta or external existence there would have been Sunyata as well. It means Sunyata does not have any existence of its own. Sunyata is Sunyata. It is neither eternalism nor nihilism. Therefore, the world is not void or zero. On the other hand, it is also not something real or positive or independent existence. Thus, the world is neither real nor unreal, it is only Sunyata.

Sunyata is not negativism. Therefore, the world is not non-existence. Because Sunyata does not simply negate all affirmation about the reality. The Madhyamika only negates all views about reality. It does not negate reality itself. It cannot therefore be called nihilism. Sunyata is negative only for thought, but in itself it is the non-relational knowledge of the absolute.
Sunyata is absolute. “The absolute is neither existent nor non-existent, nor both nor neither. It is beyond these four empirical categories.” The absolute is inexpressible (anaksara). It cannot be described by imputed characters (samaropa). All relative and contingent phenomena become extinct in the Absolute (sunyata). It cannot be called Sunya or Asunya, or both, or neither. But the world is called Sunya in order to indicate its nature. Thus, Sunyata is transcendent and unconditioned. It is the absolute ground of the empirical world of phenomena.

Madhyamika concept of Sunyata is very similar with the absolute Brahman of Vedanta. “Higher Brahman is unqualified (nirguna). It is attributeless. It is indeterminate. This Atman is not this, not that. It is devoid of discriminations. It is supreme reality. There is nothing beyond it. It is imperishable (aksara), immortal (amrta), transparent (subhra), immaculate (niranjana), pure (suddha), characterless (alaksana), non-phenomenal, non-dual, calm, partless, inactive, summum bonum.” But there is a logical difference between these two systems. Madhyamika Sunyata does not have any existence of its own. Vedantic Brahman is self-existent without existence of phenomena. It is non-spatial, non-temporal, and non-causal.

Ultimately Nagarjuna accepts two kinds of truth, viz, absolute truth and relative truth. It means that he accepts two kinds of world — relative world and absolute world. Relative truth is the phenomenal truth. The relative world of phenomena is conventional and is revealed in relative truth. The relative truth is
called *samvrti* satya in Madhyamika philosophy. *Samvrti* covers the real nature of things. Therefore, it is the veil of ignorance. It veils the nature of the reality. Samvrti is the cause and conditions. It is relative, contingent and dependent nature of the phenomena. *Thus, the world is relative, it is only phenomenal and the statement ‘world is Sunya is absolute’*. The relative world has contingent reality, which can serve the practical purposes of our life. Therefore, it has empirical reality. It is unreal in relation to the Absolute (sunyata).

But there cannot be Absolute world without the existence of relative world. The Absolute world is Sunyata only from the point of view of the relative world. Thus, relativism is not the Absolute truth. “The relative is the way to the Absolute, which cannot be attained without the help of the relative.”

This is the philosophical position of Madhyamika and this point differs their Absolutism from the Vedantic Absolutism and it cannot be compromised. Although, there is a similarity between Madhyamika Sunyata and Vedantic Brahman, but they are not identical because the source of Buddhism is completely different from the source of Vedanta.

The Absolute truth is real non-dual, and free from all empirical predicates and relations. It is devoid of any kind of relations. The universe viewed as a whole is the Absolute, viewed as a process, is the phenomenal. Nagarjuna says “having regard to that cause and conditions constituting all phenomena, we call this world a phenomenal world, this same world, when causes and conditions are disregarded i.e. the world as a whole, and subspecie
eternities is called the Absolute.”\textsuperscript{14} The absolute world is neither existence nor non-existence neither both nor non-both, ultimately the world is Sunyata and it is absolute.

12. The world is the manifestation of consciousness. Therefore, It has no independent existence.

According to Yogacara, the phenomenal world is the manifestation of consciousness. It is the result of cosmic evolution of consciousness. So, all things are the construction of our mind. The objective world and subjective ego are the manifestation of consciousness. Therefore, they deny the independent existence of the world apart from the consciousness. “The Lankavatara declares that all dharmas, except consciousness, are unreal. Consciousness only is the established truth preached by Buddha. All the three worlds (nama, rupa and arupa, i.e. matter, form and no-form) are the result of discrimination (vikalpa) or thought – relations. No external object exists in reality. All that is, is consciousness.”\textsuperscript{15}

Consciousness is the sole reality and external world is the manifestation of consciousness. No object can ever be experienced apart from consciousness. Therefore, consciousness and its objects are one and identical. The empirical world reduces itself to ideas and it is the vibration of consciousness. The self-evolving thought or cosmic mind transforms itself on the one hand into different subjects and into different objects on the other. Our
knowledge of the external world is the self-consistence of consciousness. "All is mere mental creation, only the mind exists." 16

There is no distinction between subject and object in consciousness. This distinction occurs only owing to illusion. Thus, this duality of subject and object is as illusory as the appearance of the double moon. Vijananvada holds that cognition is self-luminous. It manifests itself and it is self-aware. It is undivided. Therefore, cognition does not apprehend the external object.

According to Vijananvada, consciousness is formless, but consciousness assumes the form of subject and object. Therefore, the inner cognition of object and external object are the forms of cognition. Thus, the distinction between subject and object is illusory. The appearance of the world is the self-consistence of cognition and all activity of our cognition is the modification of consciousness.

It is found in Vijananvada that the knowledge of the world which arises through perception or the five sense organs is not the true knowledge of things. Our experience never produces the real nature of things Therefore; the appearance of the world or the phenomena is not real. The world is the result of transcendental illusion. "All phenomena, subjective and objective, mental and physical, are real transformations of Vijnana. They spring from the cosmic consciousness (Alayavijnana) like the waves. The individual cognitions (pravrttivijnana) and the world of sense-data are its transformations" 17
The essential characteristic of consciousness is that consciousness does not directly reveal the phenomenal world. It perceives only its ideas. Consciousness is mediated by its own representation in the perception of objects. We are conscious on the one hand and there is the object on the other, but in between these two we have a tertium quid— the image or ideas. Thus, objects are not immediately presented to consciousness. They are represented indirectly through ideas, which are the signs of their present characters. So, consciousness is the source as well as the result of itself. For Buddhist idealist, the cognition and the content of cognition are one and the same. Thus, the world is not real. It is the manifestation of consciousness. It is found in Vijnanavada that from the epistemological point of view the world is the manifestation of consciousness and from the ontological point of view the world is illusory.

Buddhist idealists point out that the act and content of cognition are not two different things. We impose two different aspects in one and same reality. If a thing is looked at from two different standpoints there occurs the difference. The same woman is mother wife and daughter. But she is numerically one and same person. The same applies to the process of cognition. According to Dharmakirti, the same cognition becomes the content when it is co-ordinates with the mental image. Thus, the world is known only through the cognition when our cognition co-ordinates with the mental image not with the external things. All the properties we know i.e. length, size, taste, etc are the subjective.
Thus, the world is purely subjective. Kumarila calls it Niralambanavada, because it recognizes the reality of self-subsistent cognitions without any basis in external object. Consciousness evolves like the flowing water of a river and manifests various things of the world.

It is found in Vijnanavada that in subjective point of view consciousness is the cosmic mind, but in objective point of view consciousness or cosmic mind takes the forms of object, which is self-consistence. Consciousness evolves and takes various forms of object. Thus, *the world is the cosmic evolution of consciousness.*

13. The world exists in the Alayavijnana

All dharmas or subjective and objective phenomena exist in a potential state in Alayavijnana and it is another central theme of Vijnanavada school. All things exist in the Alaya. Therefore, Alaya is the cause of the world. Alayayavijnana and the world are intimately related to each other as the ground and consequence.

It is called Alaya, because it contains the seeds or potentialities of all dharma. All dharmas of the world are the effects of the seed potentialities preserved in it. Thus, Alaya exists in all dharma in the form of a cause. “Alaya is the repository of the dispositions (vasana) or seeds (bija) of the past experiences of all individuals. It is the constantly changing stream of consciousness. All individual subjects and all objective phenomena spring out of it and merge into it. It is the universal comic consciousness. It exists in each individual stream of
consciousness as the sub-conscious mind. The world is the expression of the Alayavijnana or cosmic consciousness.\textsuperscript{18} The Alaya with its internal duality of subject and object becomes itself a little world.

Though, Vijnanavadins mention the grade of consciousness. they assert these only to account for empirical distinctions. The Alaya is the ocean and Vijnanas are the waves. Just as the waves stirred by the wind on the ocean, similarly manifold individual Vijnans stirred by the wind of objects, which are the creation of ignorance, dance on the Alaya. Neither the Vijnans are identical nor different from the Alaya.

Yogacara accepts the three kinds of Vijnanas, viz (1) Pravrtti vijnana (2) Manovijnana and (3) Alayavijnana. The evolutes of Vijnana are infinite and these are three stages of its evolution. The difference between them is only that of the degree of self-determination. None of these three evolutes has an absolute existence of its own. So, none of these three is ultimate. The evolution itself is not ultimate though it is a real process. The essence of Vijnana is creativity. Therefore, these three Vijnanas are creative.

Thus, Alaya is Absolute, because it is the essence of all things. The Absoluteness of Alaya can be compared with the Absolute Brahman of Vedanta. But these two are not identical. Because Alaya is cosmic but Brahman is transcendental. Secondly, Alaya is not individual and independent reality, because it cannot transcend the individual. But the Brahman is the individual and
independent reality because, it always transcends the individual. Thus, Alaya and Brahmana both are Absolute but they are not ontologically identical.

Dr D.T. Suzuki regards the Alayavijnana of Lankavatara sutra as the supra-individual mind. Dasgupta regards the Alayavijnana of Asanga and Vasubandhu as the cosmic consciousness. It is in this cosmic mind that the germs of all things exist in their ideality. It is the essence of the inanimate world. It is the life that grows in the organic world. It is the energy that produces matter, life, and mind. This is the cosmic evolution of the Alayavijnana.

Asanga asserts the three grades of reality viz-(1) Imaginary reality (2) Relative, contingent or dependent reality and (3) Absolute reality, is beyond empirical existence, non-existence and both. It is the same in all positive and negative beings. It is beyond samsara and nirvana. It is free from empirical categories. It is the ontological reality. It is tathata (thatness). It exists in past, present and future. It is not born. It is subject to modification. It is unchangeable, immutable and eternal. It is the supreme reality and essence of all beings. It seems that the absolute reality of Asanga is to extent similar with the absolute Brahman of the Vedanta.

Thus, Alaya is the source as well as result of the world. We cannot know anything beyond ideas and how these ideas are related to the external world cannot be explained. The world beyond our ideas is meaningless. We know the world only through the ideas. Thus, there is an internal force, which
creates the illusion of the external world. This force may be called the force of transcendental illusion.

14. The world is the result of transcendental illusion and it has no independent existence.

Vijnanavada asserts that the entire world is an illusion. It is a reflex or thought image. Just as a man with defective sense organs sees the vision of double moon, in the same way, the ignorant man who has not attained to the absolute wisdom sees the vision of diverse colours and forms and acts on the presumption that they are real. But all these various objects are illusory. All these are the projection of the mind and appear as something external. Thus, the phenomenal world is the result of transcendental illusion and it has no independent existence.

From the empirical point of view, the moving tree is illusion. But from the transcendental point of view, the vision of standing tree is also illusions. We cannot apprehend reality in its true nature. Therefore, our knowledge is empirically true but transcendently false. Thus, the appearance of the world is an illusion of our mind.

According to Vijnanavada the illusory cognition is produced by vasana which arises in the beginningless series of transcendental illusion. This beginningless series of impression is purely subjective. Therefore, illusion is produce by an external object in contact with sense organs. It is a subjective notion, which is a projection of our mind. Thus, our consciousness appears in the
dual forms of subject and object due to the transcendental illusion. For Buddhist idealist, all our mental categories are thought constructions. The categories of universal, action, quality and substance etc do not exist. They do not possess objective reality. Therefore, categories do not apprehend the existence of the external world.

15. What we perceive is not the external world; it is the extreme particular, the essence of things.

Vijnanavada maintains that the extreme particular is beyond our speculative thought. The categories of understanding do not characterise it. It is beyond space and time. It represents a single moment. It is the ultimate reality and cause of our imagination. It is the basis of our empirical knowledge. According to Vijnanavadins, this particular is not presented to the senses. It is directly intuited by consciousness. Thus, the world appears as real due to the transcendental illusion. Things are the results of cosmic evolution of consciousness and in Vijnanavada it is known as biotic force.

According to Vijnanavadin only that particular is the object of perception, which is capable of producing an effect. Therefore, only that thing is real if it is capable to produce an effect. The particular alone is efficient to produce the desired effect. Therefore, particular alone is existence and it is real.

Thus, for Vijnanavadin, only efficient cause is the cause of our sensation. Buddhist idealists call it image. Judgments refer to this image.
Therefore, judgments do not refer to any objective reality of things. The object of judgments is a logical and psychological result of sensation.

Vijnanavadins accept the existence of the external world for the purpose of logical elaboration. But they deny the real independent existence of the world. Because in true sense they do not deny the categories of universal, name, identity, negation, relation etc. They only point out that all these categories are the construction of our imagination. Therefore, they do not denote any objective reality of things. So, the world is ideal and it is absolute.

In Vijnanavada, Buddhist logic and metaphysics had reached a rare height. Though philosophers still debate about the nature of Vijnana, and more notably Alayavijnana, as to whether they are momentary or eternal, the basic terror of this philosophy is highly idealistic and hardly distinguishable from Vedantic idealism. It is a strange irony of philosophical development that having stanted as a revolt against upanisadic other-worldly philosophy, Buddhism itself culminated into one. It might have, thereby, lost its relevance and momentum and hence met with a sad decline even as a religion in India. However, this issue is very complex and deserved independent enquiry.