

# Unfolding the Nature of Madhyamaka Śūnyatā

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## Abstract

The central theme of Nāgārjuna's philosophy is called emptiness (*śūnyatā*). Nāgārjuna uses this term in no literal sense but in a technical one. To him, as everything in this world is conditional and interdependent (*pratītyasamutpanna*), considered as devoid of both essence (*svabhāvasūnya*) and free from four-fold exclusive categorisation (*catuṣkoṭivinirmukta*). That is why Nāgārjuna only intends to criticise his opponent's (*pūrvapakṣī*) dogmatic position without giving any thesis of his own. This kind of philosophical position of Nāgārjuna is vehemently criticised by his opponents (*pūrvapakṣī*). According to them, this kind of non-assertive philosophical position with reference to the dialectical method (*prasaṅga*) leads ultimately to moral destruction, which affects the equilibrium of society without an intermediary. This position creates a barrier on the way of initiating a comparative study between different kinds of moral values, as there remains no such definite criterion. However, this sort of criticism arises out of misunderstandings as well as misinterpretations of Nāgārjuna's textual exposition. Without a proper understanding regarding the same, it is not possible to undertake a faithful presentation of Nāgārjuna's arguments

as presented in his philosophical works; there remains ample room for misunderstanding and misinterpretation regarding the same. Therefore, the present paper initiates a humble attempt to examine the criticism of his opponents (*pūrvapakṣī*) and tries to provide a possible answer with reference to basic textual evidence. Hence, emphasis is given on how Nāgārjuna's realisation regarding emptiness (*śūnyatā*) leads to the ultimate meaning (*paramārtha*) by following the middle path (*madhyamā pratipadā*), which contributes a proficient implication towards the ceaseless upliftment of society.

**Keywords:** *madhyamā pratipadā, prasāṅga, pratītyasamutpannatā, śūnyatā, textual evidences*

## Introduction

The word 'empty' (*śūnya*) is used in our daily life to understand the absence of anything. Despite this kind of negative interpretation, we find another sense of emptiness (*śūnya*) in Nāgārjuna's philosophy. In order to understand the basic differences inherent in these two approaches and to go through with the proper implication of this word in Nāgārjuna's philosophy, it proposes to institute an illuminative consideration of Nāgārjuna's arguments as mentioned in his philosophical texts.<sup>1</sup> It is often alleged that the philosophy of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) has no logical basis and makes practical life irrelevant. Hence, it is important to discuss the concept of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) in such a way that gives us the efficacy to understand Nāgārjuna's intention towards the practical world. Nāgārjuna's point of view regarding the philosophy of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) necessitates an importance for understanding of what Nāgārjuna means by free from four-fold

1. The discussion is made with reference to the philosophical texts of Nāgārjuna, such as, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, Śūnyatāsaptati, Vīgrahavyāvartanī, Vaidalyasūtra.*

negation (*catuṣkoṭivinirmukta*) and how he uses the dialectical method known as *prasaṅga* with reference to the textual along with critical analysis.

## Understanding *catuṣkoṭivinirmukta* and *prasaṅga*

Nāgārjuna uses the term ‘empty’ (*śūnya*) in order to understand the conditional and interdependent (*pratītyasamutpanna*) aspect of things. To him, everything in this world conditionally originates (*utpāda*), exists (*sthiti*), and destroys (*bhaṅga*)<sup>2</sup> (Lindtner, 2011, p. 35). It is not possible to include these conditional and interdependent (*pratītyasamutpanna*) things limited within any exclusive category. We can consider no conditional and interdependent (*pratītyasamutpanna*) thing as independently existing. It is possible only in the case of independent things which in no way bound by the principle of conditionally interdependence (*pratītyasamutpannatā*) of things.

In other words, if anything is considered to exist independently, it leads to the belief in the eternal existence (*śāśvatavāda*), which Nāgārjuna wants to avoid. As it makes suffering (*duḥkha*) eternal (*nitya*), the teachings (*deśanā*) of the Buddha purposely become irrelevant. Moreover, Nāgārjuna’s denial of eternalism (*śāśvatavāda*) never leads to the advocacy of nihilism (*ucchedavāda*). Nāgārjuna never makes it a point that everything is considered as non-entity (*alīka vastu*) like sky-flower (*ākāśakusuma*), hare’s horn (*śaśaśṛṅga*), etc., rather everything exists as conditionally interdependent (*pratītyasamutpanna*). The direct knowledge of object (*sākṣyātpratīti*) along with the

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2. In *Śūnyatāsaptati*, Nāgārjuna states that the Buddha uses these words in his teachings (*deśanā*) only to accomplish our daily activities in the sphere of *vyāvahārika satya*. These can never be considered from the point of view of *paramārtha satya*.

causal efficiency (*arthakriyākārītva*) are the signs of conditional and interdependent (*pratītyasamutpanna*) things, which in no way are applicable to non-entities (*alīka vastu*).

Furthermore, the advocacy of nihilism (*ucchedavāda*) in the given context makes the relation between action and its consequence, and therefore, the teachings (*deśanā*) of the Buddha in terms of the four noble truths (*catvārayāryasatyāni*), the noble eight-fold path (*āryāṣṭāṅgikamārga*), the middle path (*madhyamā pratipadā*), become irrelevant. In short, the Buddhist interpretation of self-transcendence based on a righteous (*kuśala*) manner seems impossible with the advocacy of nihilism (*ucchedavāda*). The rejection of these two exclusive extremes makes amply clear that the combination of these stands usually rejected. Because it is not logically possible to accept these two self-contradictory alternatives in an indifferent time (Kalupahana, 2015, p. 386). Nāgārjuna, again, incidentally rejects the fourth alternative also. Nāgārjuna's point of view regarding this denial necessitates an understanding of Nāgārjuna's application of negation (*niṣedha*). Nāgārjuna denies the assertion in relation to the independent existence of anything in terms of simple negation (*prasajya pratiṣedha*), which is different from relational negation (*paryudāsa pratiṣedha*).<sup>3</sup>

Nāgārjuna propounds that the denial of anything never advocates its contradiction (Pandey, 1988, pp. 241-242).<sup>4</sup> The

3. In the case of *paryudāsa pratiṣedha*, the denial of an alternative implies the acceptance of its contradiction. But in the case of *prasajya pratiṣedha*, it shows only the absurdity of the opponent's assertions. That is why, there is no need to accept any contradictory alternative.
4. Nāgārjuna's position can easily be understood with reference to Candrakīrti's account in *Prasannapadā*. According to him, if a person demands something from another person but that one does not have it then the demander does not demand 'the nothing' from that person.

world must not be divided only into two exclusive categories, like white and black rather remains beyond this dichotomy. He always stands against any kind of exclusive categorisation simply because all things are conditional and interdependent (*pratītyasamutpanna*); therefore, they belong to a *fuzzy area*. For example, it is not possible to state everything in terms of either red or non-red, as there remains the possibility of the existence of colourless things also.

That is why Nāgārjuna takes initiative with reference to the dialectical method (*prasaṅga*), to criticise the existing dogmatic thesis (*drṣṭivāda*) of his opponents (*pūrvapakṣī*) by illustrating the blemish of self-contraction (*svavacana vyāghāta*) as is inherent in their assertions without advocating a new thesis of his own. This philosophical position is known as ‘commitmentless denial’ (Matilal, 2016, p. 66). His aim, contextually, intends to show that any other alternative leads towards unavoidable sufferings (*duḥkha*). Nāgārjuna, therefore, emphasises on the importance of going beyond the dichotomy of all exclusive terms through the proper realisation of the philosophy of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) as by the wise one. That is why it is important to understand Nāgārjuna’s use of the philosophy of emptiness (*śūnyatā*).

### **Nāgārjuna on *śūnyatā***

In Nāgārjuna’s philosophy, empty (*śūnya*) is understood in two senses—*svabhāvaśūnya* and *prapañcaśūnya*. The former alternative neither means the non-existence of a thing nor the absence of the special nature of anything. Nāgārjuna makes a clear-cut difference between the special nature along with the essence (*svabhāva*) of a thing. To him, hotness, the special nature of fire, can never be considered as the essence (*svabhāva*) of fire, as the existence of fire is always dependent upon certain

conditions. But essence (*svabhāva*) means *svayambhāva*, which is only applicable to independent things, not in the case of conditional and interdependent (*pratītyasamutpanna*) ones. Nāgārjuna, therefore, says that fire, along with all worldly things in spite of having the special nature, remains devoid of essence (*svabhāvasūnya*). Therefore, there remains ample room for the eradication of unrighteous (*akuśala*) with the help of the righteous (*kuśala*) one. This understanding definitely leads to the state of cessation of sufferings (*nirvāṇa*), which, according to him, is *prapañcaśūnya*, which can only be realised through the right view (*samyak drṣṭi*) regarding self-purification, therefore, remains free from any kind of wrong view (*mithyā drṣṭi*) in terms of exclusive categorisation.

### **An example of Nāgārjuna's criticism of exclusive categorisation**

This realisation results in showing the hollowness of any kind of dogmatic approach as it simply creates a barrier towards contextual possibilities. That is why Nāgārjuna vehemently criticises the Naiyāyika's knowledge episode, which has a realistic tinge without advancing any new thesis of his own. To Nāgārjuna, it involves the blemish of self-contradiction (*svavacana vyāghāta*) as they state that the instrument of valid cognition (*pramāṇa*) and the object of valid cognition (*prameya*)—the pillars of their knowledge episode, are considered as independent categories (*padārtha*) while they also propound at the same breath that both are worthy of their name with reference to each other.

To him, it is not possible to get rid of the blemish of self-contradiction (*svavacana vyāghāta*) by saying that the instrument of valid cognition (*pramāṇa*) is over and above any

sort of justification.<sup>5</sup> Because it remains inconsistent with their fundamental assertion that the role of the instrument of valid cognition (*pramāṇa*) is to justify the object of valid cognition (*prameya*) as it happens in the case of a weighing instrument (*tulā*).<sup>6</sup> It also involves the unavoidable fallacy of infinite regress (*anavasthā doṣa*),<sup>7</sup> as it is not possible to determine a definite

5. Nāgārjuna argues that if the Naiyāyikas give the privileged position to *pramāṇa* then it seems equally happen to *prameya* also and consequently the role of *pramāṇa* becomes redundant. If not then, they should have given the proper justification of what belongs to the privileged category and what not. But they do not point to any kind of distinction like this. Therefore, their position has no logical basis.
6. The Naiyāyikas refute Nāgārjuna's objection by giving the analogy of weighing instrument (*tulā*). To them, as weighing instrument (*tulā*) is needed to measure something in the same way *pramāṇa* is always needed to measure *prameya*. In fact, the analogy of weighing instrument (*tulā*) can easily be considered as *pramāṇa* and which is to be measured as in the case of a bundle of paper can be taken to account as *prameya*. Side by side, if a weighing instrument (*tulā*) is measured by another weighing instrument (*tulā*) then the object of measurement, for example, the given weighing instrument (*tulā*) is considered as *prameya* and the another weighing instrument (*tulā*) by which it is measured is considered in the follow-up process as *pramāṇa*. There exists only contextual difference between them and nothing else. The measured thing is always considered as *prameya* and the measuring instrument is, therefore, *pramāṇa*. But, to Nāgārjuna, it rejects the demarcation of exclusive categorisation.
7. This context can be explained with reference to the analogy of grammatical use of cases (*kāraṅkas*) as given by Vātsyāyana in his *Bhāṣya*. For example, the use of the term 'tree' determines its contextual meaning. Such as, 'there is a tree'—here 'tree' is *kartā*, 'one looks at the tree'—here *karma*. If 'one sprinkles water to the tree'—is *sampradāna*, 'leaves fall from the tree' is *apādāna*, 'there are birds in the tree' is *adhikaraṇa* (locus). He simply upholds that the impossibility of forming any strict distinction rather he intends to say that the role of *pramāṇa* and *prameya* should be understood only with their contextual uses. But Nāgārjuna, again, argues that if there is only contextual difference between *pramāṇa* and *prameya* then it is hard to distinguish between these two and become conditional and interdependent (*pratītyasamutpanna*) and empty (*śūnya*).

starting point regarding the same. Their interpretation seems to suggest that the instrument of valid cognition (*pramāṇa*) intends to justify such an object that has already existed as justified by the same. This defective position is known as the blemish of proving what has already been established (*siddhasādhana doṣa*). Nāgārjuna, therefore, makes it a point that there remains no logical ground for accepting the instrument of valid cognition (*pramāṇa*) and the object of valid cognition (*prameya*) as independent categories (*padārtha*) either in the past or present or future (*traikālāsiddhi*).<sup>8</sup> To Nāgārjuna, this kind of dogmatic approach of the Naiyāyikas makes everything independent, unchangeable, and permanent, and consequently leads to sufferings and creates a barrier against transcendence. This barrier can only be removed with reference to the proper realisation of the philosophy of emptiness (*śūnyatā*). That is why Nāgārjuna remains dissatisfied with the Naiyāyikas' dogmatic approach towards their knowledge episode (the *pramāṇa* and *prameya* episode).

Nāgārjuna, again, meets another criticism of his opponents (*pūrvapakṣī*), which is another example of the lack of faithful consideration of his textual evidence. They argue that the rejection of exclusive categorisation along with the non-assertive position simply demolishes the strict criterion of different kinds of moral values, the theory of causation (*karmavāda*), and the

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8. Nāgārjuna asserts that *pramāṇa* remains non-existent for three times—past, present and future (*traikālāsiddhi*). As, according to them, if *prameya* exists prior to *pramāṇa* then the role of *pramāṇa* becomes redundant. Again, he propounds that it cannot be said that *pramāṇa* exists temporarily posterior to *prameya* for without justified by *pramāṇa* then nothing can be considered as *prameya*. Moreover, it also cannot be said that *pramāṇa* and *prameya* exists simultaneously. As according to the Naiyāyikas, two different cognitions can never exist simultaneously.

teachings (*deśanā*) of the Buddha one by one. Consequently, facilitates anarchy in society, resulting into sufferings (*duḥkha*) which the Buddha wants to eradicate.<sup>9</sup>

In other words, they differ from Nāgārjuna's philosophical approach, which purposely points to an ambience that contradicts the theory of causality (*karmavāda*) stands exclusively for ascertaining the thesis in terms of a particular effect (*phala*) that is always associated with its inherent respective cause (*karma*). There remains no scope for any other alternative. Sesame oil, as we know, can never come from mustard seeds. Nāgārjuna's critique of the opponent's (*pūrvapakṣī*) exposition of the theory of causation (*karmavāda*) makes worldly affairs, along with any strict criterion of moral values becomes questionable as it demolishes the possibility of trepidation with reference to its respective unrighteous (*akuśala*) action. But the teachings (*deśanā*) of the Buddha incidentally make one aware of restraining the self from adopting unrighteous (*akuśala*) means for attaining an alluring object, and thereby, doing away with the possibility of taking recourse to righteous (*kuśala*) ones. Because there remains always an eternal relation between cause (*karma*) and its associated effect (*phala*) with reference to essence (*svabhāva*) that never entertains any other alternative. Here is no denying the fact that the Buddha himself purposely lays emphasis on the same in terms of the conditional interdependence (*pratītyasamutpannatā*) of the same. Otherwise, he never advocates that the righteous (*kuśala*) way leading to the state of cessation of sufferings (*nirvāṇa*). The

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9. Nāgārjuna himself includes this kind of possible objections in his *Vigrahavyāvartanī* (*kārikā* 7-8) and *Śūnyatāsaptati* (*kārikā* 33-37) and replies to his opponents accordingly in *Vigrahavyāvartanī* (*kārikā* 52-56) *Śūnyatāsaptati* (*kārikā* 38-43).

teachings (*deśanā*) of the Buddha blossom the potentiality for adopting the righteous (*kuśala*) means only leading ultimately to transcendence. Hence, to the opponents (*pūrvapakṣī*) of Nāgārjuna, the advocacy of essence (*svabhāva*) makes all of these possible in this mortal world, while the rejection of the same leads to the socially destructive self-centric attitude.

It can be argued contextually that Nāgārjuna is of the opinion that his intended approach of the term ‘empty’ (*śūnya*) denies solely the dogmatic tendency in terms of exclusive categorisation in relation to worldly things, instead of denying the conditional and interdependent (*pratītyasamutpanna*) existence of the same. To him, conditional contextuality along with exclusive categorisation in no way come within the same boat. As everything belongs to the former alternative, it is possible to explain the practical utility with reference also to exceptional instances. This realisation makes one aware of the irrelevance of all charges usually put forward by Nāgārjuna’s opponents (*pūrvapakṣī*).

However, Nāgārjuna’s position can easily be defended with reference to the translucent understanding of the textual analysis. It is found contextually that he only criticises the dogmatic approach in relation to worldly objects, which obviously meets with contradiction in the realm of *saṃsāra*. If we take into consideration all the respective objections of his opponents (*pūrvapakṣī*), we find that their viewpoint regarding the strict determination of moral values with reference to essence (*svabhāva*) directly hinders the possibility towards tranquil transcendence through the righteous (*kuśala*) way using religious practices (*dharmācāraṇa*). As there remains no point in denying

the fact that essence (*svabhāva*) makes everything permanent, unconditional, and unchangeable. It, therefore, directly hinders the contextual possibility of transcendence towards the highest meaning (*paramārtha*) of an individual's life. On the contrary, the proper realisation of Nāgārjuna's philosophy of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) implies contextual transcendence tinged with a righteous (*kuśala*) approach, ultimately leading towards the attainment of the state of cessation of sufferings (*nirvāṇa*).

As it has already been stated contextually that the technical meaning of the term 'empty' (*śūnya*) stands for the conditional interdependent (*pratītyasamutpanna*) existence of all things. In spite of denying the exclusive categorisation, it is possible to explain every worldly affair with reference to the causal potentiality (*arthakriyākāritva*) of the respective object only. This interpretation, to Nāgārjuna, leads to every successful activity in the sphere of practical perspective. It also includes all contextual exceptional instances in the related sphere. A teacher, for example, who teaches a pupil, may contextually become the teacher of another pupil in a different spatial and temporal context.

The point remains here that there remain no strict criteria of worldly objects; rather, they are playing just contextual roles. If we keep pace with his opponent's (*pūrvapakṣī*) position, it becomes difficult to provide any sufficient justification regarding exceptional happenings along with changeable contextual affairs. The advocacy of the causal theory (*karmavāda*) with reference to essence (*svabhāva*), namely, righteousness (*kuśalatva*) and unrighteousness (*kuśalatva*), simply eradicate any context of reformation leading towards the highest meaning (*paramārtha*).

But the Buddha lays emphasis on this process of reformation, which ultimately leads to transcendence. Otherwise, he never states that overcoming unrighteousness (*akuśala*) is possible only with reference to righteousness (*kuśalatva*). Nāgārjuna follows the same in terms of accepting the contextual relative existence of everything. He focuses on the causal efficacy (*arthakriyākāritva*) of every conditionally interdependent (*pratītyasamutpanna*) object in this practical world. That is why, taking cue from Nāgārjuna's interpretation, it can easily be explained the fact that the respective cause of a mango tree can never be a papaya seed. It implies that he never denies the practical utility from the given perspective.

Nāgārjuna criticises his opponent's (*pūrvapakṣī*) dogmatic approach because of which they misinterpreted emptiness (*śūnyatā*) as nihilism (*ucchedavāda*). This kind of negative approach undoubtedly makes the moral life and the teachings (*deśanā*) of the Buddha irrelevant. But the lucid interpretation of Nāgārjuna's texts reveals that all charges raised by his opponents (*pūrvapakṣī*) seem baseless. Nāgārjuna argues that the advocacy of essence (*svabhāva*) in any context makes it static. Therefore, any kind of practice of righteous (*kuśala*) activity as distinct from unrighteous (*akuśala*) one that indicates a kind of moral progress that remains impossible without leading a moderate life, especially influenced by the teachings (*deśanā*) of the Buddha. The point remains that as essence (*svabhāva*) simply rejects the conditional and interdependent (*pratītyasamutpanna*) aspect of things and the possibility of transcendence towards the highest meaning (*paramārtha*), therefore, goes against *dharma*. And, to the Buddha, those who do not understand the importance of the conditional interdependence (*pratītyasamutpannatā*) fail to

realise the significance of *dharma*. Without the proper realisation of *dharma*, it is not possible to get rid of sufferings (*duḥkha*). That is why, Nāgārjuna says that if a person does never realise the philosophy of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) properly and considers either its literal meaning or a kind of new thesis, remains in the state of sufferings (*duḥkha*) and fails to attain the highest state similarly like an immature man, who does not know how to deal with any kind of the poisonous creature and faces miserable consequences.

### **Realisation of *saṃvṛti satya* (*saṃsāra*) and *paramārtha satya* (*nirvāṇa*)**

It appears incidentally that Nāgārjuna neither denies the conditional and interdependent (*pratītyasamutpanna*) existence of *saṃsāra* nor the fact that the true realisation regarding *saṃsāra* leads to *nirvāṇa*. He states that both of these truths can never be regarded as two separate truths rather can be made out from different points of view. He admits no ontological difference between *saṃvṛti satya* (*saṃsāra*) and *paramārtha satya* (*nirvāṇa*). Nāgārjuna never states that the realisation of these truths can exist separately. Rather, *paramārtha satya* can be realised only within the sphere of the *saṃvṛti satya* through the continuous righteous (*kuśala*) activities. In other words, when one realises that every conditional and interdependent (*pratītyasamutpanna*) thing is devoid of essence (*svabhāvaśūnya*), then that person realises that everything is impermanent and contextually changeable. This facilitates the possibility of eliminating the root of attachment, which owes to ignorance (*avidyā*) and transcends oneself towards attaining *nirvāṇa*. In other words, the difference between *saṃsāra* and

*nirvāṇa*, which appears in front of us, is nothing but the result of ignorance (*avidyā*), and that can only be removed through the true realisation of the teachings (*deśanā*) of the Buddha. The same, to Nāgārjuna, initiates an attitudinal change by which one can understand why and how *saṃvṛti satya* is considered as *upāya* and *paramārtha satya* is *upeya*.

## Conclusion

On the basis of the above discussion, it can be said that Nāgārjuna's interpretation of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) neither meets with any blemish in either case of the teachings (*deśanā*) of the Buddha or the basic dealings that happen in the context of the practical sphere. As Nāgārjuna believes in the conditional interdependence (*pratītyasamutpannatā*) of everything, there remains no room to deny the fact that he accepts the role-playing feature tinged with causal efficacy (*arthakriyākāritva*) of every cause (*karma*) and its associated effect (*phala*) respectively. So, the objection of the opponents (*pūrvapakṣī*) with reference to his denying the relation between any cause (*karma*) and its associated effect (*phala*) can never be justified purposely in this practical sphere.

Moreover, conditional contextuality never makes morality irrelevant. Rather, it makes the teachings (*deśanā*) of the Buddha possible in the ambience of this respective world. With reference to the sagacity relating to the same, the personal upliftment in a righteous (*kuśala*) context leads ultimately to tranquility, the highest meaning (*paramārtha*) of an individual. Nāgārjuna argues that it remains somehow or other impossible in the context of prevailing essence (*svabhāva*). As it consequently makes the context of moral dilemmas being with all exceptional instances,

irrelevant. Relevance is explicit in the Mahābhārata where Kauśika, a sage, takes a vow to tell only the truth in order to attain the heavenly abode. But in a given unfavourable situation, he adheres to the principle of telling the truth rather than saving an individual's life. Consequently, he fails to attain the desirable end. Hence, it is clear that no strict criteria can be applied with reference to any kind of contextual dilemma.

Besides, an indifferent thing often leads to different consequences. For example, a person may opt for an eggplant that can be allergic to someone else. These instances point to the inapplicability of the advocacy of essence (*svabhāva*) in almost all aspects of our lives. On the contrary, the proper realisation of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) makes one aware of the importance of transcendence with reference to certain righteous (*kuśala*) restrictions in a way similar to the utility of bitter medicine for curing a specific kind of illness. Additionally, in another context, it can be revealed that a certain cause of one's illness is only because of an unsuccessful surgery done by a surgeon. Hence, there remains no indifferent solution to any so-called similar situation, for example, illness in general. Rather purposely implies different solutions as per their spatial along with temporal context. This kind of adoption is only possible with reference to the proper realisation of Nāgārjuna's interpretation of emptiness (*śūnyatā*).

In other words, it is the uniqueness of Nāgārjuna's philosophy of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) that intends to create a moral sphere based on purified, proficient thinking. Under the umbrella of dogmatism, any attitudinal change leading towards self-transcendence is eradicated. Whereby, the proper realisation

of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) results into a profound attitudinal change which implies a balanced position implicating all-round progress for society. A keen perusal of Nāgārjuna's view on emptiness (*śūnyatā*) makes it clear that he lays emphasis on the relative outlook towards this respective practical sphere, leading towards the highest meaning (*paramārtha*) purposely by following the middle path (*madhyamā pratipadā*). It helps one to transcend towards a tranquil state where one remains unaffected by any kind of self-centric feeling relating to worldly objects and possesses nothing but *anukampā* (Nayak, 2001, p. 56).

Incidentally, the transcendent one always thinks and helps for the well-being of others and guides them to uplift themselves from any kind of undesirable situation. In other words, the right view (*samyakdr̥ṣṭi*) of the wise one implies that everything is conditional as well as interdependent (*pratītyasamutpanna*), therefore, considered as devoid of essence (*svabhāvasūnya*), and consequently, overcomes the present impermanent undesirable situation only by following the middle path (*madhyamā pratipadā*) leading towards the state of cessation of sufferings (*nirvāṇa*). Contextually, this realisation helps the wise one to be free from any ambiguous semantic expressions with reference to this phenomenal world (*samsāra*). It gives emphasis on the endeavour for understanding the technical meaning of the same rather than the literal one, therefore, repudiates all the irrelevant criticism of his opponents (*pūrvapakṣī*) based on the latter one. In short, the proper realisation of Nāgārjuna's intention regarding emptiness (*śūnyatā*) unfolds the plausibility of transcendental change when the wise one realises that the conditional interdependence (*pratītyasamutpannatā*), the middle path (*madhyamā pratipadā*), the philosophy of emptiness (*śūnyatā*),

and the state of cessation of sufferings (*nirvāṇa*) are equal and synonymous. This realisation of oneness (*advayatatva*) simply indicates the ubiquitous fact that without the proper realisation of the same, nothing can be considered as pertinent. That is why, Nāgārjuna states that— “*sarvaṃ ca yujyate tasya śūnyatā yasya yujyate//sarvaṃ na yujyate tasya śūnyam yasya na yujyate.*”

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