

Chapter V

Conclusion and Suggestions

5.1 Conclusion

Upon the analytical study of the concept of Śūnyatā (Emptiness) and its development in Early Buddhism, Sarvāstivāda and Mādhyamika, it is found the result of study as follows.

5.1.1 Śūnyatā (Emptiness) in Early Buddhism

Upon the historical background and thought of Early Buddhism, the concept of dharma was put forth to substitute the concept of Brahman in the Upaniṣads. Probably the first systematized teaching was the Four Noble Truths. The way of investigating as being found in the case of the Four Noble Truths can be found in investigating various phenomena (dharmas). The clear understanding of the truths is the clear understanding of the dharmas. The clear understanding of the Four Noble Truths was systematized in minute detail by later conservative Buddhists (Hīnayānists). The Eightfold Path begins with Right View (sammādiṭṭhi), which means ‘seeing the dharma’. The teaching of the Middle Way is the basis of ethics of Early Buddhism. The concept of Dependent Origination (paṭiccasamuppāda) has been discussed by many scholars. Although various formulas of Dependent Origination are set forth in the scriptures

of Early Buddhism, the best known and most representative formula of the theory is that of the Twelve Links.

Over the investigation into the concept of Śūnyatā (emptiness) in early Buddhism, the concept of ‘void’ (suñña) can be noticed in the scripture of Early Buddhism. It came to be a key-point for meditation. In Saṃyutta Nikāya it is stated that the world “is empty of a self or of anything of the nature of a self.” When Ānanda asks Gautama Buddha the meaning and significance of the phrase ‘the world is empty’ the Buddha says to Ananda that it is empty Ānanda, of a self, or of anything of the nature of a self. And what is it that is thus empty? The five seats of the five senses, and the mind, and the feeling that is related to mind—all these are void of “self” or of anything that is pertaining to “self”. In Cūḷa-Suññatā Sutta and Mahā-Suññatā Sutta, the concept of emptiness could be defined into three contexts as meditative dwelling, the lack of ‘self’ or Anattā, and awareness release.

Upon investigation into the development of Śūnyatā (emptiness) in early Buddhism, it is found the texts in early Buddhism that seem to offer the oldest formulation of the doctrine of emptiness which could be summarized in two categories from the viewpoint of anattā which appears to be a more direct, natural and discursive way of propounding the emptiness (Śūnyatā) through seeing anattā. and from the viewpoint of conditioned genesis which appears to be the first step to comprehend the profound dharmas of emptiness and nirvana.

5.1.2 Śūnyatā (Emptiness) in Sarvāstivāda

Upon the historical background and thought of Sarvāstivāda, the Sarvāstivāda School was closely related to the orthodox Theravāda School. The earliest extant systematic presentation of Buddhist philosophy dates from the third century, when the Sarvāstivādin thinker, Dharmaśrī, composed *Abhidharma Essence*, in which he tried to encompass all Buddhist thought in a coherent framework which served as the standard text on Sarvāstivādin. The Sarvāstivāda comprised two subschools, the Vaibhāṣika and the Sautrāntika. The Vaibhāṣikas maintain continued existence before and over three lifetimes. The best-known compendium of the doctrine of the Sarvāstivādins is Vasubandhu's *Abhidharma-kośa-śāstra* (The Storehouse of Theology) which he wrote this work basing himself upon the standpoint of the Sautrāstivādins.

Over the investigation into the concept of Śūnyatā (emptiness) in Sarvāstivāda, Sarvāstivāda, as its name implies “sarvam asti” i.e. “All is” or “All exists”, stood for the principle of “All existing” in the three periods of time, ie. past, present and future. According to Sarvāstivāda school, the past and the future are real because the present has its root in the past and its consequence in the future. Besides, it holds that the three periods of time ought to exist separately, because the notions of past and future would not occur in us without separate realities. The reality of the three periods of time, however, does not mean that the three periods themselves are eternally extant, nor does it mean that time is a real substance. It means that all things or elements are real in the past and in the future as they are in the present—but without enduring from one period to another. Its doctrine did not thereby profess merely the real

existence of things, such as psycho-physical elements, but rather insisted quite vigorously on the non-existence of the ego. The Sarvāstivāda school taught only one kind of emptiness, i.e., the emptiness of ātman or the non-existence of ego or individuality, which is regarded as Pudgala-Śūnyatā.

Upon investigation into the development of Śūnyatā (emptiness) in Sarvāstivāda, the theory of Everything Existing is arising from the view that the dharmas going in and out of existence are actually secondary dharmas—the stages of appearing, remaining, and passing away of each momentary relationship—but that the aggregates maintain their existence in all three time frames. The idea that all things exist may go back even to the time of the Buddha himself, for the word ‘sabban atthi’ (all things exist) is found already in the Saṃyuttanikāya.

5.1.3 Śūnyatā (Emptiness) in Mādhyamika

Upon the historical background and thought of Mādhyamika, founded by Mādhyamika Nāgārjuna (CA. 150-250 C.E.), is a philosophy of the middle way between two impossible extremes. The middle way is not in the sense of the middle path but the middle way things are. Nāgārjuna developed his teachings under the influence of Prajñāpāramitā philosophy. Later his philosophy paved the way for the development of Mahayana Buddhism not only in India but also in China, Japan, Tibet and other parts of Asia. The middle period, sometime after the fifth century, the Mādhyamika school split into two sects, the Prāsaṅgika and the Svāntantrika. The Prāsaṅgika utilize prāsaṅ methodology in accordance

with Nāgārjuna's negation. Whereas the Svaatantrika seek to establish ultimate truth not only by the negation of conventional truth, as do the Prāsaṅgikas. Chandrakīrti (7th Century CE) —a great exponent of Madhyamaka defends Buddhāpalita's position and refutes Bhāvaviveka's assertion of autonomous syllogisms. Prāsaṅgika was brought to China by Kumārajīva ; being flourished in China and later in Japan and Korea.

Over the investigation into the concept of Śūnyatā (emptiness) in Mādhyamika, Mādhyamika is a philosophy of the middle way between two impossible extremes. The middle way is not in the sense of the middle path but the middle way things are. Therefore, the word Mādhyamika when used in this sense is translated as Treatise on the Middle Way. The concept of Mādhyamika's emptiness is based on the theory of dependent-arising and the two truths. To the research, various meanings of emptiness are exemplified in the successive stages of Mādhyamika negation. On the first level, emptiness means that commonsense things, which appear to be real, are not really real. On the second level, emptiness is employed to revoke dualistic thinking. The term 'empty' means that both naive realism and nihilism are unintelligible and their descriptions of the world should be discarded. Here the doctrine of emptiness is expressed as the denial of both being and non-being. On the third level emptiness implies that monistic as well as dualistic and pluralistic views of the world are untenable. It is the negation of conceptualization, stated as a denial of both duality and non-duality. At this stage, one is supposed to be free from all attachments.

Upon investigation into the development of Śūnyatā in Mādhyamika, , while the Sarvāstivāda logic of dharma attempts to explain logically the transiency of all things, the Mādhyamika theories of emptiness (śūnyatā) and absence of self-nature (niḥsvabhāva) are clearly intended to refute or go beyond the Sarvāstivādin concept of dharma by applying the eight negations. There are different approach to the Mādhyamika doctrine of emptiness between Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika. For the Prāsaṅgika, ultimate truth is utterly beyond constructed while the Svaatantrikas seek to establish ultimate truth not only by the negation of conventional truth, as do the Prāsaṅgikas, but also by positive argumentation of the syllogistic form. For the development of Śūnyatā (emptiness) as San-lun Mādhyamika in China, Chi-tsang, the greatest San-lun master, has applied the three elements, sentient beings, skilful means and non-duality in the establishment of the two truths. The three elements that contribute to the division of two truths become an expedient means for sentient beings to comprehend the non-duality.

5.2 Suggestions

Over the investigation into the development of Śūnyatā (emptiness) in Buddhism, the development has been concentrated on the Early Buddhism., Sarvāstivāda and Mādhyamika. The study has started from the historical background and thought of each tradition so that the concept and development could be clearly seen. To the research, even different approach to emptiness among the traditions, all traditions seems to follow the teachings of the Buddha but might be based on different viewpoints. But all different viewpoints come to the same goal for the

freedom of mind from any attachment, thus the cessation of sufferings. Anyhow, wisdom, understood literally, became a hindrance to Wisdom. What a great benefit one will get from this literal wisdom is to practice meditation on emptiness also so that one might have clearer understanding of more profound meaning of emptiness among different periods of the traditions

Anyhow any other research concerning Śūnyatā (emptiness) should be on further studies as suggestions :

1. A study on the development of Śūnyatā (emptiness) in Mahayana Buddhism.
2. A comparative study of emptiness between Theravada and Mahayana.
3. A study of the influence of Mādhyamika's Śūnyatā (emptiness) on Zen
4. A study of emptiness meditation in Theravada and Mahayana.
5. A study of different approach to Śūnyatā (emptiness).

More suggestion is the exchange between sects and traditions for the mutual understanding among religions, regardless of sects and traditions. Also any propagation for the widespread of Śūnyatā (emptiness) in a school or university to give the right understanding of Śūnyatā (emptiness) to be applied in daily life's work and activities.

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