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Buddhist Approaches to Impermanence: Phenomenal and Naumenal

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Abstract: The doctrine of impermanence can be called the most salient feature of the Buddha's teaching. The early Buddhist doctrine of impermanence can be understood in four different but interrelated contexts: Buddha's empiricism, the notion of conditioned/constituted objects, the idea of dependent arising, and the practical context of suffering and emancipation. While asserting the impermanence of all phenomena, the Buddha was silent on the questions of the so-called transcendent entities and truths. Moreover, though the Buddha described Nibbāna/Nirvāṇa as a 'deathless state' (*'amataṃ padam'*), it does not imply eternity in a metaphysical sense. Whereas the early Buddhist approach to impermanence can be called 'phenomenal', the post-Buddhist approach was concerned with naumena (things in themselves). Hence, Sarvāstivāda (along with Pudgalavāda) is marked by absolutism in the form of the doctrines of substantial continuity, atomism, momentariness, and personalism. The paper also deals with the approaches to impermanence of Dharmakīrti and Nāgārjuna, which can be called naumenal rather than strictly phenomenal. For Dharmakīrti, non-eternality was in fact momentariness and it was not a matter of experience but derivable conceptually or analytically from the concept of real. Nāgārjuna stood not for impermanence, but emptiness (*sūnyatā*), the concept which transcended both impermanence and permanence, substantiality and non-substantiality.



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1. Introduction

In this paper, I want to show that though Buddhism is known for its doctrine of impermanence, the Buddhist approach to impermanence underwent change. The Buddha's approach can be called phenomenal (or phenomena-oriented). He said that all phenomena, that is, appearances or experiential objects, are impermanent. They arise from causes and cease. The real things beyond appearances are either non-existent or worth bracketing because they are irrelevant to the problem of suffering. The ontological and metaphysical issues which the Buddha set aside were regarded as important by the later Buddhists. As a result, we have reality-oriented approaches, which can be called naumenal (or naumena-oriented) approaches to impermanence. I have referred to three approaches of the latter kind in this paper. One was the approach of Sarvāstivāda (along with Pudgala-vāda); the other two are found in the positions of Dharmakīrti and Nāgārjuna. Though chronologically Nāgārjuna precedes Dharmakīrti, I have discussed the former at the end, as he deviates from the Buddha's approach to impermanence most.

2. Part I: The Phenomenal Approach of Early Buddhism

The doctrine of impermanence can be called the most salient feature of the Buddha's teaching. The significant presence of the doctrine can be observed from the first sermon to his last message before *Parinibbāna*. The first sermon of the Buddha centers on the problem of suffering and the middle path. However, interestingly, as is said in the *Dhammacakkappavattanasutta*, immediately after the Buddha's first sermon, one of the disciples, Koṇḍañña,

got an insight, which he expressed as, “Whatever has the nature of arising, has the nature of cessation”.¹

In the second sermon (*Anattalakkhaṇasutta*), the Buddha argued that the notions of ‘I’, ‘mine’, or ‘self (*attā*)’ cannot be attributed to the five aggregates. Impermanence of all the five aggregates is one of the grounds of the argument there. The argument has the following form:

1. Given any aggregate, it is impermanent.
2. Whatever is impermanent is unsatisfactory.
3. What is impermanent and unsatisfactory, is not fit to be regarded thus: ‘This is mine; this is I; this is my self’

In fact, it can be said that among the three characteristics of things (*‘tilakkhaṇa’* (Pali), *‘trilakṣaṇa’* (Sanskrit)), namely impermanence (*anicca*), soullessness/non-substantiality (*anatta*), and un-satisfactoriness (*dukkha*), which the Buddha talked about, impermanence is the basis of the other two characteristics.

According to Vinaya, what Assaji told to Sāriputta and the latter to Moggalāna as the essence of the Buddha’s teaching was the following:

The Tathāgata has expounded the causes
Of whatever be the phenomena that arise from causes.
He has also expounded their cessation;
This is what the great recluse has said.²

The last words of the Buddha before his *Parinibbāna* were as follows: “Now, monks, I exhort you, All conditioned things are subject to decay! Strive with diligence!”³

2.1. Three Contexts of Impermanence

The doctrine of impermanence in early Buddhism can be studied in four different but interrelated contexts:

1. The context of empiricism;
2. The context of conditioned/constituted objects;
3. The context of causes and conditions: Dependent arising;
4. The practical context of suffering and emancipation.

2.1.1. The Context of Empiricism

The Buddha was concerned with the nature of dhammas, that is, phenomena or empirical objects.⁴ When the Buddha was talking about ‘all’ in the context of the three characteristics, he was talking about the five aggregates. The five aggregates are nothing but material and mental aspects of a living being which are experiential in nature. Hence, Buddha’s talk of impermanence had this context of empirical world and life. The Buddha was critical about the transcendental metaphysics of Upaniṣads, which accepted eternal *brahman* as the ultimate reality. His main objection was that nobody has seen Brahman face to face, but still the Upaniṣadic thinkers accept its existence dogmatically. The Buddha was also critical about the transcendental dogmatic beliefs of other schools, such as Jainism and Ājīvakas.⁵ His insistence on the empirical world is also reflected in his deliberate silence over the metaphysical issues put forward by his disciples, such as Vacchagotta and Mālunkyaputta.

2.1.2. The Context of Conditioned/Constituted Objects

Different formulae of the Buddha’s doctrine of impermanence indicate that he was talking about the regular relation between origination and destruction. ‘Udaya-vyaya’, ‘utpāda (Pāli: uppāda)-vyaya) are the pairs often found described as the characteristics of phenomena. “Whatever has the nature of arising, has the nature of cessation” (*‘yaṃ samudyadhammaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ’*) and “All conditioned objects are impermanent” (*‘sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā’*) are some of the major formulations of the doctrine of

impermanence. These formulae come as the general rules based on observation and inductive generalization.

2.1.3. The Context of Causes and Conditions: Dependent Arising

An important contextual framework in which the Buddha presented his doctrine of impermanence is the framework of causes and conditions. The same framework also becomes a part of a larger framework of the doctrine of dependent arising. According to this framework, things arise as a part of a causal process. A thing/phenomenon arises from its causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*) and it ceases when they cease. The model of causation is a model of dependence. 'A thing arises from its causes' means that the existence of the thing depends on the causes. Moreover, because existence of the thing is dependent on its causes, it does not stay permanently; it ceases when the causes cease. The Buddha applies this model to the problem of suffering. Suffering arises from its cause, namely craving, and it will cease to exist when craving ceases. Hence, the Buddha presented the twelve-linked chain of causes and effects (*dvādaśa-nidāna*) in both forward (*anuloma*) and backward (*pratiloma*) direction. It explains how suffering arises and also how it ceases.⁶ This brings us to the practical context of the doctrine of impermanence.

2.1.4. The Practical Context of Suffering and Emancipation

The Buddhist doctrine of impermanence is not only an empirical and factual doctrine, but it has practical relevance for the issue of suffering and emancipation. We have seen that according to the Buddha's doctrine of three characteristics, the phenomena are impermanent, non-substantial and unsatisfactory and that impermanence is the basis of the other two features. Though the phenomena are in fact impermanent, due to *avijjā* (ignorance or misconception) we think them to be permanent and develop craving (attachment or hatred) towards them and this causes suffering. In order to get rid of suffering one has to be free from misconception. It means developing right vision, which implies understanding things as they are, that is understanding them to be impermanent, non-substantial and unsatisfactory. Hence, realization of impermanence becomes an important part of the Buddhist meditation, particularly mindfulness meditation or insight meditation.

2.2. Unanswered Questions and the Nature of Nibbāna

It is suggested above that in his discussion of the problem of suffering and emancipation, the Buddha was primarily and solely concerned with the empirical world and not with the trans-empirical metaphysical issues. This becomes evident from the Buddha's silence on the metaphysical questions which are popularly known as un-answered questions (*avyākṛta-praśnas*). The questions included the following:

- (1) Is the world (*loka*) eternal or non-eternal?
- (2) Is the world infinite or finite?
- (3) Does the *Tathāgata* exist after death?
- (4) Is the self (*jīva*) same as body or different from body?⁷

The list of these questions is further augmented by conjunctively affirming and denying some of the internal options and is made into the list of 12 or 14 questions. Here, it is to be noted that questions (1) and (2) do not pertain to this or that phenomenon in the world but to the world as a whole. This is important, because the Buddha did make statements about phenomena in the world by saying that they arise from causes and whatever so arises also comes to an end. The world as a whole can be conceived as the totality of the series of causally connected phenomena, and now the question is whether this totality has a beginning and an end. Similarly, it is generally agreed that the Buddha accepted the doctrine of rebirth and the wheel of becoming caused by misconception (*avidyā*) and craving (*trṣṇā*), but the question was whether the person such as *Tathāgata*, who is free from these causes of suffering, will also have rebirth. Similarly, it was clear that the Buddha did not accept a noumenal self, i.e., *ātman*, but the question was whether the phenomenal

self, which he accepted was inseparable or separable from body. The Buddha's silence on these questions has been explained in different ways.

One possible explanation which we find in the *suttas*, such as *Cūlamalunkya-sutta* (Warren 1953, pp. 117–22) and *Poṭṭhapada-sutta* (Humphreys 1987, pp. 53–54), is that these questions and the possible affirmative or negative answers to them are irrelevant to the fundamental problem of life. They are similar to the questions regarding the physical and social details of a poisoned arrow for the person who is actually wounded with it. The other explanation is found in *Aggivacchagotta-sutta* (Warren 1953, pp. 123–28), which particularly refers to the question regarding the existence of Tathāgata after death. The Buddha claims there that the question is a false question, i.e., the question based on a false presupposition. It is similar to regarding an extinguished fire and questioning whether it went in eastern direction or western direction, etc. It is doubtful whether this second explanation given by the Buddha was logically satisfactory. The question regarding extinct fire (whether it went in the eastern direction or western direction, etc.) is a wrong question based on a false presupposition that fire, when it becomes extinct, goes somewhere. No such false presupposition is logically involved in the question about Tathāgata.

The question whether the self (*jīva*) and body are the same or different is an equally tricky question. The Buddha, in a dialogue with Ānanda, said that if he would have said to Vacchagotta that there is a self (other than body), then it would have been a siding-in with eternalists (who believed that there is the eternal *ātman*), and if he would have said that the self does not exist, it would have been siding-in with annihilationists.⁸ The question is very much related with the question of existence of Tathāgata after death. Perhaps the Buddha is reading the question the way he does to avoid the disrespect people would have shown to the doctrine of *nibbāna* if the Buddha would have plainly accepted that a liberated person no longer exists after death. This leads us to the question of interpreting Buddha's description of *nibbāna*.

The Buddha's description of *nibbāna* as non-constituted (*asaṅkhata*) and a deathless state (*amataṃ padam*) has been interpreted as Buddha's acceptance of *nibbāna* as eternal.⁹ It can be argued that there is a basic difference between the so-called deathlessness of soul or Brahman on the one hand and that of *nibbāna* on the other. The soul or Brahman are supposed to be real positive entities, whereas ontologically, *nibbāna* is of the nature of *nirodha* (cessation, stoppage), which is negative in nature. Cessation of anything is eternal in a peculiar sense. It occurs at a particular time, but after that, it remains forever. There is no cessation of cessation.¹⁰ It can also be called non-constituted, because, being of the nature of negation, it is not made or constituted in the way any positive entity is. This does not mean that *nirodha* or *nibbāna* should be regarded as eternal in the sense of non-temporal. As with any cessation or destruction of a thing, it does occur at a point of time. *Nibbāna* in Buddhism is regarded as the cessation of cravings and subsequently the cessation of pains. Since this occurs in a human being, it also has a psychological aspect. From a psychological point of view, it is described as the highest satisfaction (*paramaṇi sukham*). In *Udānavagga* it is described as follows:

“Whatever is the sensuous pleasure or the great heavenly pleasure, it does not amount even to the sixteenth part of the pleasure arising from the destruction of craving”¹¹

Thus, the realization of *nibbāna* is not that of a positive and eternal ontological entity like Ātman-Brahman of the Vedāntins. The point I want to make is that the Buddha's general theory of impermanence of all phenomena, of all that is constituted, etc. does not get violated by his conception of *nibbāna* as deathless and non-constituted. That is because the theory of impermanence applies to positive phenomena, whereas *nibbāna*, which is conceived as cessation of cravings, cessation of suffering or that of perception and sensation (*saṃjñā-vedayita-nirodha*), is essentially negative in nature. However, *Nibbāna* is not cessation of awareness, and psychologically, it is 'satisfactory'.

3. Part II: Naumenal Approaches of Later Buddhism

3.1. From Empiricism to Absolutism: Post-Buddha Developments

After the demise of the Buddha, some followers attempted to give substantial basis to the Buddha's phenomenological thought. These attempts manifest what Kalupahana (2011, p. 125) calls 'absolutist tendencies after the Buddha's demise'. Such tendencies are found as a part of Sarvāstivāda and also outside it.

3.1.1. Realism (Sarvāstivāda)

Sarvāstivādins maintained that everything exists at all times. Hence, how to account for change along with continuity was a problem for them. According to them, *dravya* (*svabhāva*) of a thing does not undergo change (Dhammajoti 2009, p. 134). What changes then? Dharmatrāta held that only the manner or mode of being (*bhava*) changes; Ghosaka held that only a characteristic (*lakṣaṇa*) changes; Vasumitra held that only the state of the thing (*avasthā*) changes; Buddhadeva held that only the temporal relation changes (*anyathānyathātva*). (Ibid., p. 119) Among these views, Vasubandhu equates Dharmatrāta's view with the *pariṇāmanavāda* of Sāṅkhya. He approves of Vasumitra's view which describes change in terms of activity (*kāritra*).¹² (AKB 1967, V.26). Other views can be compared with those of Jainas and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas.¹³

3.1.2. Atomism

Vaibhāṣikas also advocated atomism. Saṅghabhadra defined an atom (*paramāṇu*) as 'The finest part in a resistant matter which cannot be further divided.' He also introduced the notion of an aggregate atom (*saṅghāta-paramāṇu*), which is 'a multitude of such *paramāṇu*-s that are mutually combined and necessarily inseparable.' Dhammajoti observes that this gives us two types of *paramāṇu*: "(1) *paramāṇu* in the proper sense of the term—the smallest conceivable building block of matter. This is also called *dravya-paramāṇu*. (2) *saṅghāta-paramāṇu* in the sense of a molecule¹⁴ that can actually occur in the phenomenal world". (Dhammajoti 2009, p. 200). Out of them, *saṅghāta-paramāṇu* can be called empirical, but *dravya-paramāṇu* is supposed to be transcendent. In this, it resembles the *paramāṇu* of Vaiśeṣikas. In fact, the *paramāṇu* of Vaibhāṣikas is supposed to be so minute that it occupies no space. Secondly, unlike the *paramāṇu* of Vaiśeṣikas, the *paramāṇu* (even *dravya-paramāṇu*) of Vaibhāṣikas is supposed to be impermanent, rather momentary.

3.1.3. The Doctrine of Moment (Kṣaṇa)

Saṅghabhadra in *Nyāyānusāra*, while defining *paramāṇu* as the ultimately small particle of matter, also defined moment (*kṣaṇa*) as the smallest unit of time (Dhammajoti 2009, p. 200). Von Rospatt (1995, pp. 29–39) discusses how the doctrine of momentariness was accepted in various ways in Hīnayāna schools of Buddhism. Reducing impermanence to momentariness can be regarded as attempt to absolutize impermanence. We will see later that the doctrine of momentariness became a central point of Dharmakīrti's ontology.

3.1.4. Personalism (Pudgalavāda)

We have seen that in early Buddhism, all the five aggregates were regarded as impermanent and non-substantial. Accordingly, whom we regard as a person is just a collection of the five aggregates. However, the question then was how to understand unity or continuity between action and fruition, transmigration and emancipation. Those Buddhists, who by their sect were called Vātsīputrīyas and Sāmmītiyas, held that a person who represents such unity and continuity must be real. "In the true and absolute sense, the person (*pudgala*) is perceivable, realisable, exists and is well-observed. Hence, there is definitely the *pudgala*" (Dhammajoti 2009, p. 91). To avoid the charge of eternality and momentariness, they regarded the person as "neither identical nor different from the aggregates" (Bronkhorst 2009, p. 69). This indicates the tendency to essentialize a person within the Buddhist framework of the 'no soul' doctrine. Other Buddhist sects were opposed to it, as they regarded 'person' as a mere designation, not a real entity.

3.1.5. Transcendentalism (Lokātītavāda)

We have seen that the Buddha observed silence over the question whether the Tathāgata exists after death. His answer to the question of the eternality of *nirvāṇa* was more pragmatic than theoretical. Sarvāstivādins, in their systematization, brought *nirvāṇa* under the category of *asaṃskṛta-dharma* (unconditioned or un-constituted thing), which they regarded as eternal. A similar eternalist tendency viewed “the Buddha as someone who has *totally* transcended the world and *nirvāṇa* as a state of eternal life after death” (Kalupahana 2011, p. 129).

3.2. From Empirical to Conceptual: Dharmakīrti

Around the second century AD, *Nyāyasūtra* of Akṣapāda presented its framework of *pramāṇa* (means to knowledge) and *prameya* (object of knowledge) and posed a challenge before different philosophical perspectives to fit themselves in the *pramāṇa-prameya* framework. Different perspectives, such as Sāṅkhya, Jainism, Mīmāṃsā, and Vedānta, responded to this challenge by developing their own *pramāṇa-prameya* frameworks.

Buddhism had a two-fold response to this challenge. Nāgārjuna posed a counter-challenge before Nyāya through his works *Vaidalyaprakaraṇa* and *Vigrahavyāvartanī*, where he questioned the *pramāṇa* system as such. The Buddhist philosophers Diñnāga and Dharmakīrti followed a different route. They developed an alternative *pramāṇa* system suitable to the non-eternalist and non-substantialist ontology of Buddhism. In the next section, we will deal with Nāgārjuna’s approach to impermanence. In this section, we will deal with the approaches of Diñnāga and Dharmakīrti, particularly that of the latter.

Diñnāga-Dharmakīrti epistemology is marked by the acceptance of two (and only two) *pramāṇas*, perception and inference. Among them, impermanence of things is a matter of inference. An often-quoted example of inference in their system is that a word is impermanent because it is a product. The example contains a general statement, such as “Whatever is a product is impermanent like a pot”; such statements echo the Buddha’s pronouncement of the impermanence as the property of all that have origination. However, the ways in which such general statements—technically called the statements of pervasion (*vyāpti*)—occur in Diñnāga’s and Dharmakīrti’s models of inference are different. In Diñnāga’s theory of inference, the statement of pervasion occurs as the one based on observation and non-observation. It is closer to the Buddha’s approach to impermanence in this respect. However, Diñnāga’s theory of inference does not give the notion of pervasion as a universal relation between probans and probandum. According to his theory of triple character (*trairūpya*) of probans, positive concomitance (*anvaya*) is obtained in the realm of similar cases (*sapakṣa*) and negative concomitance is obtained in the realm of dissimilar cases (*vipakṣa*). However, the two concomitances together do not give a ‘universal concomitance’ belonging to all possible realms. Dharmakīrti, however, interpreted the doctrine of triple character as implying universal concomitance between probans and probandum.¹⁵ This universal concomitance according to him cannot be ascertained through observation and non-observation, but through necessity. On the basis of necessity, we are able to say that if probans exists, probandum *must* exist and that probans *cannot* exist in the absence of probandum. This necessity according to him becomes available in two ways: 1. Cause-effect relation, such that we can say that if an effect exists, it must have been preceded by its cause. Here, the effect serves as the probans, which is called ‘*kārya-hetu*’. 2. Identity between two aspects of one and the same thing, such that we can say that if one aspect (that is, the pervaded aspect) exists, the other aspect (that is, the pervading aspect) must exist. Here, the pervaded aspect is supposed to be the probans, which is called *svabhāvahetu*.¹⁶ All this is relevant to the doctrine of impermanence because Dharmakīrti discusses the doctrine of impermanence in the context the inference based on *svabhāva-hetu*. “Whatever is real is impermanent” occurs as a statement of pervasion in the context of *svabhāvahetu* in *Nyāyabindu*. In *Hetubindu*, Dharmakīrti argues for a more radical form of the doctrine of impermanence, as the doctrine of momentariness of everything that is real (*sat*).

Dharmakīrti in *Hetubindu* argues for the statement of pervasion, “Whatever is real is momentary”, on the basis of the identity relation between ‘being real’ and ‘being momentary’. While justifying this pervasion, Dharmakīrti defines real (*sat*) as ‘capable of a causal function’ (*arthakryāsamartha*). He then argues that a non-momentary thing does not have capacity with respect to anything, because it lacks the capacity to produce an effect either successively or simultaneously.¹⁷

It is important to note that the pervasion relation between ‘real’ and ‘momentary’ is not known through observation and non-observation, but on the basis of the conceptual relation between ‘being real’ and ‘being momentary’ (technically, it is called the identity (*tādātmya*) relation, but I have argued elsewhere (Gokhale 2018) that it can be regarded as the relation of conceptual or analytic necessity¹⁸). Such a conceptual relation becomes possible because of the particular definition of the term real (*sat*). Dharmakīrti defines real (*sat*) as ‘capable of a causal function’ (*arthakryāsamartha*). This would not have been possible if the term ‘*sat*’ would have been defined differently. It is interesting to see how different metaphysical schools define the notion of ‘real’ differently and derive different implications from them. For example, Advaita-Vedāntins defined *sat* as that which is never sublated¹⁹ and argued on this basis that what is real must be eternal and only Brahman is real in the strict sense of the term. Jainas defined *sat* as that which has origination, destruction as well as stability²⁰ and tried to establish their theory of non-absolutism in the light of this definition of *sat*. Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas distinguished between being (*astitva*) and realness (*sattā*). According to them, ‘being’²¹ characterizes all the seven categories (*padārthas*), whereas realness (*sattā*) is a universal property (*sāmānya* or *jāti*) which characterizes only three categories,²² i.e., substance, quality, and motion. The point is that Dharmakīrti’s claim that everything real is momentary is not a purely observational truth. It is not only analytical, but also governed by a particular definition of ‘real’.²³ In his work *Nyāyabindu*, Dharmakīrti’s example of pervasion in the inference from ‘own-nature as probans’ (*svabhāvahetu*) is “All that is real is impermanent like a pot etc.”. He calls this probans (‘realness’) as ‘pure own-nature as probans’ (*śuddhasvabhāvahetu*). He also considers two other statements of pervasion: “All that is originated is impermanent” and “All that is made is impermanent”. He calls the probans namely originated-ness (*utpattimattva*) as ‘a different natural property’ (*svabhāvabhūta dharmabheda*) and ‘made-ness’ as an adjunct property (*upādhibheda*). This suggests Dharmakīrti attaches primary status to ‘realness’, and secondary status to originated-ness and still more secondary status to ‘made-ness’. The reason for this seems to be that realness (which is defined as the capacity to have a causal function) implies impermanence more directly, whereas originated-ness or ‘made-ness’ does not imply impermanence so directly. They do so only via realness.²⁴

If we go back to the Buddha’s doctrine of impermanence, we find that ‘realness’ has no status in the Buddha’s original version of the doctrine. On the other hand, ‘originated-ness’ has a primary status there. Hence, Dharmakīrti’s approach, which understands impermanence as momentariness and derives it inferentially and conceptually from ‘realness’, is essentially different from Buddha’s approach, which holds that ‘everything originated is subject to destruction’ as an empirical and inductive truth.

The difference between *anitya* and *kṣaṇika* is quite important. ‘*Kṣaṇika*’ means that which gets destroyed ‘immediately’. As Von Rospatt (1995, p. 1) put it, the fundamental proposition of the doctrine of momentariness is that “all phenomena . . . Pass out of existence as soon as they have originated and in this sense are momentary”.²⁵ ‘*Anitya*’ means that which will get destroyed sometime (not necessarily immediately); that everything which is constituted from causes ceases to exist some time can be a matter of experience or an inductive generalization derived from the common human experience. Certain things are experienced by us as moving fast or instantly changing. For instance, lightning, a flowing river, a vehicle, or an animal running fast. However, not every object of common experience is observed to be changing every moment in this sense, nor can it be derived to be so by a simple inductive generalization. The Buddha’s appeal was to the sense of *anityatā*, which was realizable by many through careful and unattached observation of the

facts of life. His appeal was not to the intellectual insight into momentariness, which was available to few.²⁶

Does the doctrine of momentariness score over the early Buddhist doctrine of impermanence, in terms of its emancipatory potential? It seems that it does not.²⁷ If we suppose that everything that is real in fact changes every moment, on the basis of an inferential exercise, it remains an intellectual belief and not a matter of experience. In mindfulness meditation, the phenomenon we experience from moment to moment may be changing or continuous and stable. One observes that even what appears as stable is not permanently stable. One does not experience it to be changing every moment. Experience of ‘impermanence’ is more relevant to emancipation than an intellectual belief in momentariness.

Dharmakīrti’s deviation from the Buddha’s original view can be compensated by the former’s conception of the unique particular (*svalakṣaṇa*), as the object of perception and as ultimately real (*paramārtha-sat*). However, Dharmakīrti’s view still remains naumenal, as it holds that the phenomenon itself is the naumenon. It is distinct from the Buddha’s approach, which focused on the phenomena, but was silent about the so-called naumena.

3.3. Beyond Permanence and Impermanence: Nāgārjuna

Was Nāgārjuna true to the Buddha’s original teaching? Some scholars of Theravāda Buddhism have claimed that he was. For example, Gombrich (2011, p. 37) believes that Nāgārjuna’s reaction against the essentialism of Buddhist Abhidhamma was in the spirit of the Buddha’s intention. David Kalupahana (2011, pp. 163–66), in his writings, emphasized the continuity between early Buddhism and Nāgārjuna’s Mādhyamika philosophy. He interpreted Nāgārjuna’s position as non-substantialism (*nairātmya* of *dharmas* as well as *pudgala*). He equated in this context *ātman* with *svabhāva* and consequently *nairātmya*, with *niḥsvabhāvatā* or *śūnyatā*. He also referred to *Kātyāyanāvādaśūtra*, which Nāgārjuna himself refers to as evidence for Buddha’s non-essentialist approach. Moreover, Kalupahana regards dependent arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*) as common to both early Buddhist philosophy and Nāgārjuna’s position. It is doubtful whether these evidences are sufficiently convincing.

3.3.1. Impermanence, Non-Substantiality, and Essence-Less-Ness

It is well-known that the Buddha denied the eternal substance. However, whether Kalupahana is justified in identifying non-substantiality (*nairātmya*) with essence-less-ness (*niḥsvabhāvatā*) is doubtful; neither in early Buddhism nor in Nāgārjuna do we find such identification. The Buddha said that conditioned things are impermanent, non-substantial, and unsatisfactory by their very nature (*lakṣaṇa*).²⁸ This can be called the non-essentialist approach of the Buddha in the sense that it rejects any permanent essence of things. However, it accepts impermanence itself as an essence of things and in this minimal sense, the Buddha’s approach can be called a form of minimal essentialism. Nāgārjuna argues against essentialism even in its minimal form.

In chapter 18 (*Ātmaparīkṣā*) of MMK, Nāgārjuna critically examined the notion of self by arguing that it can be neither identical nor different from aggregates (*skandha*). However, Nāgārjuna’s denial of the self differs from that of early Buddhism in at least two ways:

1. In the early Buddhist model, the notion of aggregates is primary. It is not doubted that the aggregates are real; they are only argued as impermanent, non-self, and unsatisfactory. Nāgārjuna, on the other hand, denied the very existence of the five aggregates in chapter 4 (*Skandhaparīkṣā*) of MMK.
2. In chapter 18 verse 6, Nāgārjuna says, “Buddhas have conveyed that there is self. They have also taught that there is “nonself”. They taught as well that there is neither self nor non-self”. This suggests that the truth (that is, *śūnyatā*) according to the Buddha, as Nāgārjuna understood it, is beyond Self and Non-self.

The chapter 23 (*Viparyāsaparīkṣā*) of MMK is also relevant in this context. Here, Nāgārjuna examined the notion of perversion (*viparyāsa*). According to traditional Bud-

dhism, the defilements (*kleśas*) arise due to four types of perversions, which constitute the identification of non-substantial as substantial, impermanent as permanent, unsatisfactory as satisfactory, and impure as pure. It is understood there that the empirical objects are in fact non-substantial, impermanent, unsatisfactory, and impure, but they are thought to be otherwise due to misconception (*avidyā*). Nāgārjuna in the chapter '*Viparyāsaparīkṣā*' questions the very possibility of the four perversions. Let us consider some of his statements:

"Neither the existence nor the nonexistence of the self is established in any way. How will the existence or nonexistence of the defilements be established without that?" (MMK, 23.3);²⁹

"The perversions concerning the good and the bad do not occur essentially; in dependence on what perversion concerning the good and the bad will there be defilements then?" (23.6);³⁰

"If it would be a perversion to think with respect to impermanent things that they are permanent, how can there be a perversion then, there being nothing that is impermanent with regard to what is empty?" (23.13)³¹

"If to think with respect to impermanent things that they are permanent is a perversion, then, isn't it a perversion to think with respect to empty things that they, are impermanent?" (23.14)³²

The above statements suggest that emptiness (*śūnyatā*) becomes the major overarching concept in Nāgārjuna's scheme. It treats 'pure and impure', 'substantial and non-substantial', and 'permanent and impermanent' as binaries worthy of rejection from both sides.

In fact, Nāgārjuna deconstructs the traditional Buddhist doctrine of impermanence in different ways:

1. As we have seen, the content of the Buddha's teaching is famously described by the following verse:

"The Tathāgata has expounded the causes of whatever be the phenomena that arise from causes. He has also expounded their cessation; This is what the great recluse has said".(See Note No. 2)

Opposed to this, Nāgārjuna, in the first chapter of MMK, denied the very possibility that things can arise from causes. In fact, he denies 'arising' as such when he says, "Not from itself, not from another, not from both, nor without cause: Never in any way is there any existing thing that has arisen".³³

2. A basic formulation of the rule of impermanence according to early Buddhism is that whatever is characterized by origination, is characterized by cessation ("*yat samudayadharmaṃ tat nirodha-dharmam*"). This implies that in fact there are things which have origination and destruction. According to Nāgārjuna, on the other hand, things have no origination at all. Thus, he argues, when origination is denied, cessation automatically gets denied.³⁴
3. In chapter 7 (*Samskṛta-parīkṣā*), Nāgārjuna examined the definition of a conditioned thing as that which has origination, stability, and destruction (*utpāda-sthiti-bhaṅga*) and denies all three with many arguments.
4. In Chapter 15 (*Svabhāvaparīkṣā*), Nāgārjuna considered eternity (*śāśvataṭva*) as an undesirable consequence (MMK, 15.11b). However, he also denied change (being otherwise, '*anyathāṭva*').³⁵
5. Nāgārjuna devoted the whole chapter 21 (*Sambhāvavibhāvaparīkṣā*) to the critical examination (and subsequent rejection) of both arising and dissolution and also of transmigration (series of births, '*bhavasantati*'). The above evidences show how Nāgārjuna's position is in favor of the non-essentiality of everything, rather than impermanence and change characterized by origination and destruction as the nature

of reality. In fact, Nāgārjuna seems to be arguing that non-essentiality is the Buddha's original position, rather than impermanence or non-substantiality.

3.3.2. Kātyāyanāvavāda-Sūtra

In support of his position, Nāgārjuna refers to *Kātyāyanāvavāda-sūtra* of the Buddhist canons, where the Buddha denies both existence and non-existence.³⁶ Candrakīrti, the commentator, quotes from the *Kātyāyanāvavāda-sūtra*:

“This world is not liberated, Oh Kātyāyana, because it dogmatically adheres very much to existence or non-existence, . . . ”³⁷

In this dialogue, the Buddha is talking about dogmatic adherence (*abhiniveśa*) to existence and non-existence as the cause of bondage. There is no explanation of the problem about existence and non-existence. We find an explanation of it in the Pāli analogue of the sutta, viz. *Kaccānagottasutta* of *Samyuttanikāya*:

“ . . . Venerable sir, they say, right view right view. In what way is there right view?” “The world in general, Kaccāna, inclines to two views, to existence and to non-existence. But when one sees with right discernment the things in the world as they actually originate, ‘non-existence’ with reference to the world does not occur to one. And when one sees with right discernment the cessation of the things in the world as they actually take place, ‘existence’ with reference to the world does not occur to one.

It is in this way, Kaccāna, that there is right view. ‘All exists’, Kaccāna, is one extreme. ‘All does not exist’ is the second extreme. Avoiding these two extremes, the Realized One teaches Dhamma by the middle way . . . ”³⁸

Here, the Buddha is explaining how we cannot focus on existence or non-existence of a changing thing. A changing thing is that which has origination and cessation. However, if we focus on its origination, we cannot say that it is non-existent; and if we focus on its cessation, we cannot say that it is existent. In other words, a changing thing is not existent in the sense of permanent existence, nor is it non-existent in the sense of absolute non-existence. Nāgārjuna, however, seems to interpret the Buddha's argument differently. The Buddha in this sutta was denying existence and non-existence in the context of origination and cessation of changing things, whereas Nāgārjuna is denying them context-freely. The Buddha was expounding the dialectics of change, whereas Nāgārjuna is denying existence and non-existence along with change.

3.3.3. Argument from Dependent Arising

Lastly, it is often argued that Nāgārjuna's Mādhyamika philosophy is continuous with early Buddhism, because the doctrine of dependent arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*) has a central position in both. The fact is that though the notion of dependent arising is accepted as central in both, it means two different things in the two contexts. ‘Dependence’ in the early Buddhist concept of ‘dependent arising’ is causal dependence. It refers to arising of any phenomenon from its causes and conditions. In Nāgārjuna's philosophy, however, it does not mean causal dependence. In the first chapter and many other chapters, Nāgārjuna criticized the cause–effect relation from different angles.³⁹ He gives a more basic formula, according to which whatever arises depending upon anything, does not arise essentially.⁴⁰ Any dependence for him, causal or otherwise, implies non-essentiality. Hence, Candrakīrti interprets the term *pratītya* (‘depending upon’) as *apekṣya* (‘relative to’).⁴¹ and states as an example of the dependence relation, “The long arises depending upon the short”.⁴² Obviously, though the notions of long and short are relative to each other, there is no causal relation between the two.

4. Conclusions

I have tried to argue that the Buddha's approach to impermanence can be called 'phenomenal' in the sense that he was concerned with the objects of experience and not with what the things are in themselves independently of their empirical nature. The Buddha, while presenting the doctrine of impermanence, was not talking about the ideal or abstract nature of things. Even when he talked about Nirvāṇa, which was for him the state of cessation and the highest happiness, he did not treat it as a positive eternal entity such as the *Brahman* of Vedānta.

After the demise of the Buddha, many of his followers wanted answers to the questions which the Buddha had deliberately kept unanswered. Hence, we find a tendency to absolutize the early Buddhist concepts of *dhamma/dharma* (eternal *svabhāva*, *paramāṇu*), time (*kṣaṇa*), *nirvāṇa* (*asaṃskṛta-dharma*), and so on. Dharmakīrti, the Buddhist epistemologist, transformed the Buddha's doctrine of impermanence into the radical thesis that every real thing is momentary. Whereas Buddha's doctrine of impermanence was empirical or inductive, Dharmakīrti's doctrine of momentariness is more conceptual and abstract.

With regard to Nāgārjuna, I have suggested that while criticizing the Sarvāstivādin's doctrine of '*svabhāva*', he went to the other extreme by denying every *svabhāva* and advocating *niḥsvabhāvatā* or *śūnyatā* of all things. This approach tries to transcend both permanence and impermanence. I have included it under the Naumenal approach insofar as it seeks for ultimate truth (*paramārthataḥ satya*) beyond the empirical existence.

A widely accepted view is that Nāgārjuna's arguments are not aimed at questioning early Buddhism as such, but they are aimed at refuting the essentialism (*svabhāvavāda*) of Sarvāstivādins. It is held that Nāgārjuna, through his non-essentialist arguments, carries forward and strengthens the non-essentialism of early Buddhism. I have presented a different view here.

I want to claim that the non-essentialism of early Buddhism and that of Nāgārjuna's Mādhyamika Buddhism are not of the same type. The position of early Buddhism can be called anti-eternalist, but not anti-essentialist in the strictest sense of the term. The doctrine of *tilakkhaṇa/ trilakṣaṇa*, which asserts impermanence, non-substantiality, and un-satisfactoriness as the three characteristics of all conditioned things, implies that this is the own nature (*svabhāva*) of those things. This implies essentialism (*svabhāvavāda*) in its minimal sense. It is important to note that the right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) meant understanding the things as they are (*yathābhūta-vastu-darśana*), which included understanding impermanent things as impermanent. This can be called an essentialist understanding of empirical reality in its minimal sense. The essentialism involved in this can be called 'logico-linguistic' in the sense that while attributing properties to things one is not necessarily giving ontological status to the properties; however, one is following the rules of language such as the subject-predicate structure of sentences and the rules of logic such as identity, non-contradiction, and bivalence.⁴³ In comparison to this logico-linguistic essentialism, the essentialism advocated by Sarvāstivādins and Pudgalavādins can be called ontological, as it gives an ontologically real status to the essences.⁴⁴

Arguably, Nāgārjuna was critical about the essentialism of both these types: logico-linguistic and ontological. Although he made compromises with essentialism at the level of conventional truth (*lokasaṃvṛti-satya*), he advocated an extreme form of anti-essentialism at the level of the ultimate truth (*paramārthataḥ satya*).

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Abbreviations

AKB	<i>Abhidharmakośabhāṣya</i> of Vasubandhu as in Pradhan and Jayaswal (1967)
BGB	<i>Bhagavadgītābhāṣya</i> of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya as in Warriar (1983)
HB	<i>Hetubindu of Dharmakīrti: A Point on Probans</i> as included in Gokhale (1997)
MMK	<i>Mūlamadhyamakakārikā</i> as in Vaidya (1960)
MPS	Mahāparinibbānasuttanta, as in Davids and Carpenter (1995)
PP	Prasannapādā by Candrakīrti as included in Vaidya (1960)
SN	Samyuttanikāya, Part II, as in Feer (1994)
TAS	Tattvārthasūtra as in Tatia (2007)
TS	The Tarkasaṅgraha as in Mehendale (1893)
VD	<i>Vaiśeṣikadarśanam with Praśastapādabhāṣyam</i> as in Shrikrishnashastry (1890)

Notes

- ¹ “*yaṃ samudayadhammaṃ, taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*” Mahāvagga (Oldenberg 1879, p. 11).
- ² “*Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā tesam hetuṃ tathāgato āha | tesam ca yo nirodho evaṃvādī mahāsamaṇo |*”, Mahāvagga (Oldenberg 1879, p. 40).
- ³ “*Handa dāni, bhikkhave, āmantayāmi vo, vāyadhammā saṅkhārā appamādena sampādethā*” ti. MPS, p. 156.
- ⁴ Kalupahana (2011, p. 80) called Buddha a radical empiricist. Gombrich (2013, pp. 114–15) understood the five skandhas as the processes which are the constituents of experience.
- ⁵ As Kalupahana (2011, p. 53) put it, “Abandoning the search for ultimate objectivity, the Buddha had to renounce most explanations of reality presented by his predecessors. The Brahmanical notion of self (*ātman*), the Materialist and Ājīvika conceptions of nature (*svabhāva*) and even the Jaina theory of action (*kiriya*), appeared to him too metaphysical”.
- ⁶ I think that for a proper understanding of the twelve-linked chain, links such as misconception (*avijjā*), formation (*saṅkhāra*), consciousness (*viññāna*), etc. up to suffering should be regarded not as objects or events but as tendencies or processes.
- ⁷ These questions were asked to the Buddha with minor variations in the suttas *Aggīvacchagottasutta*, *Cūlamalun̄kiyasutta*, and *Potthapadasutta*.
- ⁸ Humphreys (1987, pp. 54–55) (Based on Samyuttanikāya, Avyākatasamyutta (XLIV), Section 10 called Ānando or Atthatto).
- ⁹ Walpola Rahula understood Nirvāṇa as the Truth which is beyond cause and effect. (cf. Gombrich 2013, p. 156). Gombrich disagreed with him for his use of the word ‘Truth’, which according to Gombrich should have been replaced by ‘reality’. However, Gombrich, too, regarded Nirvāṇa as real and unconditioned, as something beyond experience and language. He explained Nirvāṇa as a mystical experience and suggested that the Buddha was influenced by Upaniṣads in this approach. I have tried to argue that these interpretations do not capture the so-called permanence of Nibbāṇa.
- ¹⁰ This idea was later on conceptualized by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers, when they discussed absence (*abhāva*) as a category. They accepted four types of absence: prior absence (absence of a thing before it is produced), destructional absence (absence of a thing subject to its destruction), absolute absence (unconnected-ness of a thing with another thing), and mutual absence (difference). *Nirodha* (cessation) of a thing is comparable with destructional absence. According to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas, the destructional absence of a thing, as Annambhaṭṭa defines it, has a beginning, but no end. (“*sādir anantaḥ pradhvaṃsaḥ*”, TS, p. 30). However, the major difference between the ‘destructional absence’ of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas and the *nirodha* of Buddhists is that the former is regarded as an ontological entity (*padārtha*, which exists), whereas Buddhists do not regard absence to be so.
- ¹¹ “*yaṃ ca kāmasukhaṃ loke, yaṃ ca divyaṃ mahat sukhaṃ | tr̄ṣṇāḥkṣayasukhasyaite nārhatāḥ ṣoḍaśiṇi kalāṃ*”, *Udānavarga* (Barnhard 1965, XXX.31).
- ¹² Dharmakīrti, in his theory of ‘real as momentary’, seemed to have developed the concept of *kāritra* into arthakryākāritva (causal efficacy).
- ¹³ Buddhadeva’s view is understood as relativistic, which can be compared with the view of the Jainas. It can also be compared with the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika view, according to which a thing is described differently depending on the qualifying condition (*viśeṣaṇa* or *avacchedaka*). Ghoṣaka’s view that some qualities of a changing thing are manifest (*vyakta*), whereas others remain latent (*avyakta*), can also be found in Sāṅkhya.
- ¹⁴ Lysenko (2016) was probably right in her disagreement with ‘molecule’ as the translation of the term ‘*saṅghātaparamāṇu*’. She understood *saṅghātaparamāṇu* as a complex organic entity, incorporating the sense modality of its experiencing (*sensibilia*).
- ¹⁵ For my discussion of the doctrine of three constitutive elements of *hetu* as understood by Dīnāga and differently interpreted by Dharmakīrti, see Gokhale (1992, pp. 37–46, 87–90).

- 16 The term *svabhāva* here means own nature or a natural aspect or an essential aspect of a thing. In the inference of this type, both probans and probandum are *svabhāvas*. The pervaded (*vyāpya*) *svabhāva* is probans and the pervader (*vyāpaka*) *svabhāva* is the probandum. Hayes (1987, p. 323) claimed that the expression “*svabhāvahetu*” should be analyzed as a *saptami tatpurusa* compound: “*svabhāve hetuḥ iti svabhāvahetuḥ*”. This is not necessary. Dharmakīrti describes both probans (*gamaka*) and probandum (*gamyā*) as *svabhāva* as in (Pandeya 1989, 3.192cd-193ab) (“*siddhaḥ svabhāvo gamako vyāpakas tasya niścitaḥ | gamyāḥ svabhāvas tasyāyaṃ . . .*”).
- 17 “*na caivā kṣaṇikasya kvacit kācit śaktir asti kramayaugapadyābhyām kāryakriyāśaktivirahāt*”, HB, p. 50. Dharmakīrti gave a detailed argument for momentariness in (HB, pp. 16–50). Dharmakīrti’s method here was not empirical but that of conceptual analysis. This raises a doubt about Steinkellner’s (1974, p. 127) claim: “we cannot but say that an inference from the concept of an essential property (*svabhāvah*) is as empirical as the inference from the concept of an effect (*kāryam*)”.
- 18 Here, I differ from Steinkellner (1974), who in opposition to Stcherbatsky’s suggestion that the inference based on *svabhāvahetu* has an analytic character, argued that Dharmakīrti, while establishing the necessity of the pervasion, refers to the identity between *hetu* and *sādhya* as essential properties, but does not refer to the containing relation between the two concepts. The following points need to be considered in this context: 1. The object of inference is not a real particular object (*svalakṣaṇa*), but a conceptually constructed object which can be expressed by a word. Hence, even if ‘*svabhāva*’ as *hetu* is understood as ‘essential property’ as Steinkellner does, the essential property there is to be understood as a conceptual property. 2. The identity (*tādātmya*) between the two essential properties, namely *hetu* and *sādhya*, is to be understood not as absolute, but qualified identity. Basically, it is unilateral and not bilateral. For example, every *śiṃśapā*, by its very nature, is a tree; however, every tree is not by its very nature a *śiṃśapā*. Hence, there is a containing relation between the two concepts, namely *hetu* and *sādhya*, where the *hetu*-concept is supposed to be pervaded by the *sādhya*-concept. 3. Moreover, the relation between them is supposed to be an internal relation as against the cause–effect relation, which is external. This is suggested by Dharmakīrti by the expression *svasattāmātrabhāvin* as the adjective of *sādhya* in the case of *svabhāva-hetu*, which suggests that *sādhya* can be derived from the very being of *hetu*. Hence, just saying that there is a factual identity between *svabhāva-hetu* and *sādhya* does not capture what Dharmakīrti wanted to say. 4. Lastly, Steinkellner considered for comparison only Kantian formulation of analyticity. We come across some other formulations also. Quinton (1964), for instance, discussed at least three formulations of analytic necessity (which is *the* necessity according to him), one of them being that “necessary truth depends on identity or repetition”. The point is that analyticity should be considered in a wider perspective in order to appreciate Dharmakīrti’s theory of *svabhāvahetu* better.
- 19 As Śāṅkara said in his commentary on *Bhagavadgītā* 2.16 “The real is that the cognition of which does not deviate and unreal is that the cognition of which deviates. In this way, when the distinction between real and unreal is governed by cognition” (*yadvaiśayā buddhir na vyabharati, tat sat, yadvaiśayā vyabharati, tad asat, iti sadasadvibhāge buddhitantre sthite . . .* BGB, 2.16). “*utpādayayadhrauvayayuktaṃ sat*” TAS, 5.29.
- 20 “*ṣaṅṅāmapī padārthānām sādharmyamastitvābhīdheyatvajñeyatvāni*”, (VD, p. 13).
- 21 “*draavyādīnām trayāṅām api sattāsambandhaḥ*”, Ibid.
- 22 The statement “Whatever is real is momentary” can be called analytic, as it is true by virtue of the definitions of the terms involved in it. This is consistent with one of the formulations of Quinton’s (1964, p. 45) analytic necessity that “if necessity depends on meaning it depends on logic and definitions”.
- 23 Steinkellner (1974, p. 129) regarded the essential properties, namely existence (what I have called realness) and ‘having origin’, as a pure generic property and particular property where a certain exclusion is referred to, respectively. This does not seem to be correct, as even the ‘pure generic property’ refers to a certain exclusion. Since every meaningful word refers to the exclusion of what it is not, the word real (*sat*) cannot be an exception to this rule. ‘*Sat*’ would refer to the exclusion of unreal objects, such as God and soul. Secondly, treating different essential properties as on par with each other does not explain why Dharmakīrti took up realness and not either originated-ness or made-ness for analytically deriving momentariness from them.
- 24 The Buddhist conception of momentary is more radical than that of the Vaiśeṣikas. According to the Buddhists, a momentary thing exists for only one moment. It comes into existence (and that is its moment of existence) and then ceases to exist. According to Vaiśeṣikas, a momentary object exists for two moments. It comes in to existence, stays for a moment and ceases.
- 25 That the doctrine of momentariness is not found in the early stage of Buddhism is clearly borne out by Von Rospatt (1995, pp. 14–16). According to him (Ibid., p. 18), the oldest testimony to the theory of momentariness is the Khaṇīkathā of the *Kathāvatthu*, where the doctrine is refuted that “all phenomena (*dhamma*) are as momentary as a single mental entity (*ekacittakkhaṇika*)”.
- 26 Von Rospatt (1998, p. 470) seems to be right when he said “. . . since only advanced yogins seem to have been able to perceive momentariness directly, the soteriological significance of this doctrine remains very limited. This explains why it only played a marginal role in the wider context of Buddhist spirituality”.
- 27 In Dhammapada, (Buddharakkhita 1985) verse 277 it is said that all conditioned things are impermanent, in verse 278 it is said that all conditioned things are unsatisfactory, and in verse 279 it is said that all things are not-self (non-substantial).
- 28 “*ātmano’stīvanāstīve na kathañcicca sidhyataḥ | taṃ vināstīvanāstīve kleśānṃ sidhyataḥ katham | |*”.
- 29 “*svabhāvato na vidyante śubhāśubhavīpariyayāḥ | pratītya katamān kleśāḥ śubhāśubha-vīpariyayān | |*”.
- 30 “*anītye nītyam ityevaṃ yadi grāho viparyayaḥ | nānītyaṃ vidyate sūnye kuto grāho viparyayaḥ | |*”.
- 31 “*anītye nītyam ityevaṃ yadi grāyo viparyayaḥ | anītyam ityapi grāhaḥ sūnye kiṃ na viparyayaḥ | |*”.
- 32

- 33 “na svato nāpi parato, na dvābhyāṃ nāpy ahetutaḥ | utpannā jātu vidyante bhāvāḥ kvacana kecana | |” MMK, 1.3.
- 34 “anuppanneṣu dharmeṣu nirodo nopapadyate”, MMK, 1.11ab (Cessation is not tenable with respect to the things which have not arisen).
- 35 “prakṛtau kasya cāsatyām anyathātvam bhaviṣyati | prakṛtau kasya ca satyām anyathātvam bhaviṣyati | | MMK, 15.9 (If intrinsic nature is not there, what will undergo change? And if there is an intrinsic nature, what will undergo change?).
- 36 “kātyāyanāvavāde cāstīti nāstīti cobhayam | pratiṣiddham bhagavatā bhāvābhāvāvibhāvinā | |” MMK, 15.7 (In “The Admition to Katyāyana” the venerable one denied both “it exists” and “it does not exist”, who clearly perceives the existent and the non-existent).
- 37 “yad bhūyasā kātyāyana ayam loko’stitām vā abhinivīṣto nāstītām ca. tena na parimucyate”, PP, p. 118.
- 38 “... Sammādiṭṭhi sammādiṭṭhī”ti bhante vuccati, kittāvata nu kho bhante sammādiṭṭhi hotīti? Dvayaṇṇissito kho’yaṃ kaccāna loko yebhuyyena atthitañceva natthitañca. Lokasamudayañca kho kaccāna yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya passato yā loke natthitā, sā na hoti. Lokanirodham kho kaccāna yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya passato yā loke atthitā, sā na hoti. Ettāvata4 kho kaccāna, sammādiṭṭhi hoti. Sabbamatthī’ti kho kaccāna, ayameko anto. Sabbam natthī’ti ayam dutiyo anto. Ete te kaccāna ubho ante anupagamma majjhena tathāgato dhammaṃ deseti”, Kaccānagottasutta, SN, p. 17.
- 39 For example, Chapters 8 (*Karmakāraparīkṣā*), 10 (*Agnīndhanaparīkṣā*), and 20 (*Sāmagrīparīkṣā*).
- 40 “tat tat prāpya yadutpannam notpannam tat svabhāvataḥ”, PP, p. 3.
- 41 Candrakīrti in PP (pp. 2–3) interprets *pratītya* as *prāpya* and *prāpya* as *apekṣya*.
- 42 “asmin satīdam bhavati, hrasve dīrgham yathā sati”, PP, p. 3.
- 43 Hence, the following extreme claim of Kalupahana (2011, pp. 45–46) about the Buddha’s approach to truth is not acceptable: “Absolute truths had no place in Buddha’s view of experience and reason ... The explanation of experience and reason left no room for a sharp dichotomy between the true and the false” etc. Would not the statement “Everything conditioned is impermanent” be absolutely true (or timelessly true) according to the Buddha?
- 44 The argument advanced here is continuous with my other paper, “Essentialism, Eternalism and Buddhism”, see Gokhale (1996). I had made a distinction there between *svabhāvavāda* in a logical sense and in a metaphysical sense. The distinction is parallel to the one I am making here: logico-linguistic essentialism and ontological essentialism.

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