

Reflection on Mādhyamika Philosophy and Japanese Buddhism

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Abstract

This paper tries to explore the Reflection on *Mādhyamika* Philosophy and Japanese Buddhism. Buddhist philosophy declares that all worldly things are impermanent and full of suffering. Nāgārjuna was the systematic expounder of *Mādhyamika* Philosophy. He emphasizes middle view and avoids all extreme or absolute “ism”(void). And he admits *śūnyatā* which has two sense *svabhāva śūnyatā* and *prapañca śūnyatā*. According to *Mādhyamika* Philosophy *śūnyata*, *nirvāṇa*, *samsāra* have the same meaning that everything is *śūnya*. That's why highest truth or absolute is *śūnya*. This is non –conceptual and non conventional. It is peaceful and highest wisdom(*prajñā – pāramitā*) which can be realized by the practice of *vipaśyanā* meditation. Buddhism was established into Japan in seventh Century. Japanese Buddhism is an umbrella term for a number of Buddhist schools of thought and practice. Such as - Shingon Buddhism, Nichiren Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, Tendai Buddhism and so on. The object of our study is to explore the relation between *Mādhyamika* system of Buddhism and the Tendai and Zen schools of Buddhism of Japan. The Buddhist idea of Tendai and Zen are completely same as *Mādhyamika* Point. Tendai believes that all things are *śūnya* and Zen believes that only absolute is true and realization of absolute is possible only through meditation. Besides that modern Japanese Buddhism also emphasizes on *Prajñā-pāramitā*. Therefore this paper is humble attempt to show the importance of *Mādhyamika* Philosophy in the Context of Japanese Buddhism.

Keywords: Japanese Buddhism Mādhyamika Philosophy, Meditation, Nāgārjuna, Zen

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Introduction

Buddhism is one of the most major religions in the world. The entire things in this world are impermanent and these things of phenomenal world appear only due to wrong knowledge about the world of objects. That is why the burden of sufferings and sorrows hand heavy upon human society and in man. But the true pathfinder of happiness discover the way out from this predicament. Lord Buddha was an ethical teacher who prescribes the real remedy to remove suffering from every human being. Though this Buddhist religion was born in Indian soil but gradually it was spread all over the World.

According to historical view Gautama Buddha died at the age of eighty. He established a association before his death and this association was purely based on democratic principles. But after two hundred yrs of his passing away the association was divided. There are mainly three phases in Buddhism- 1) Theravāda (Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika) 2) Mahāyāna (Madhyamaka or śūnyavāda and yogācāra or vijñānavāda) 3) Tantra (Vajrayāna, saḥajayāna, kālacakrayāna). In this way the development of the different sects of Buddhism and their thoughts emerge.

Nāgārjuna is the first systematic expounder of Madhyamaka Philosophy and the followers of this schools are known as *Mādhyamika* (One of the branches of Mahāyāna school). *Pratītyasamutpāda* is mainly a causality principle of Buddhist Philosophy. It is actually a combination of two terms that is *pratītya* and *samutpāda*. The term *pratītya* means- ‘depends on another’ and *samutpāda* means – ‘Condition coproduction or interdependent origination’.¹ For the *Hīnayāna* point of view *Pratītyasamutpāda* means- “temporal sequence of real entities between which there was a causal relation.”² *Mādhyamika* holds the meaning of ‘*pratītyasamutpāda*’ that implies relativity³ which means everything in this world is depended on another.

Pratītyasamutpanna advocates the law of dependable origination of thing. According to Nāgārjuna –*yah pratītyasamutpādah śūnyatām tām pracakṣmahe* (MK 24.18).⁴ That is why *pratītyasamutpāda* and the term *śūnya* are same.

The term ‘*śūnya*’ has come from the root *śvī* which means ‘to swell or to expand’⁵ and it has various signification, ontological, soteriological, axiological etc. Ontologically it means void which indicates fullness. Axiologically, it indicates that the worldly things are transcendent or impermanent. But due to our deficiency of Knowledge we are attached so much to the things. But once this realization of *śūnyatā* happens the ignorance vanishes. Soteriological significance of *śūnyatā* means the realization of *śūnyatā* which leads one to the wisdom of *prajñā*.

¹ Eng Trans by Jaidev Singh in Introduction to the conception of Buddhist Nirvāṇa by Th. Stcherbatsky.

² Ibid p-23

³ All dharmas are relative(śūnya)but they are grounded in the absolute(śūnya).Relativism is not the absolute truth.The relative is the way to the Absolute which cannot be attained without the help of absolute. Nirvāṇa cannot be attained without knowledge the Absolute.MKV pp -445,491,500,539 and outlines of Indian Philosophy by Jadhunath Singha p 118

⁴ That we call śūnyatā which is pratītyasamutpāda. The conception of Buddhist Nirvāṇa by Th.stcherbatsky p-39

⁵ Ibid p-36

śūnyatā does not lead us to the concept of nihilism. It does not negate all reality but it shows that reality is neither *sat* nor *a-sat* and this reality is unattainable in our thought.

Some Buddhist scholars opine that *śūnyatā* is a theory. *śūnya* or *śūnyata* is not itself a theory. Actually it is the real knowledge of the understanding of truth. *Mādhyamika* philosophers have accepted the two concepts of truths. These are *saṃvṛti satya* (empirical truth) and another is *paramārtha satya* (absolute truth).

Candrakīrti in *prasaṅgapañcāśikā* explain *saṃvṛti* in the following way⁶. *Samvṛti* is that which veils the real nature of things. It is *ajñāna* (the primal ignorance). It is the primal ignorance as because it shrouds the reality.

Samvṛti is *vyavahārikā satya*. It is *upaya* for reaching the reality (*upeya*). Nāgārjuna focused on the importance of *saṃvṛti* in attaining *paramārtha*. *Paramārtha satya* is absolute reality. It is devoid of completely free thought construct. *Paramārtha satya* is indescribable in word. In this sense it is *śūnya*. So, *paramārtha satya* is *prapañcha śūnya*. *paramārtha satya* or absolute reality is *nītārtha* (primary or direct) the ultimate goal of life and *saṃvṛti satya* is *neyārtha* (secondary or common sense).

Besides these two kinds of truths to understand *śūnyatā* there are also twenty types of *śūnyatā*. It is described in the *pañcaviṃśati* (one of the important *sūtras* of *prajñā parāmitā*) and in T.R.V Murti's 'The Central Philosophy of Buddhism'. These twenty types of *śūnyatā* are : 1) *adhyātma śūnyatā*, 2) *bahirdhāśūnyatā*, 3) *adhyātma bahirdhāśūnyatā*, 4) *śūnyatā śūnyatā*, 5) *mahā śūnyatā*, 6) *paramārthaśūnyatā*, 7) *saṃskṛtaśūnyatā*, 8) *asaṃskṛtaśūnyatā*, 9) *atyanta śūnyatā*, 10) *anavarāgra śūnyatā*, 11) *aravakāraśūnyatā*, 12) *Prakṛti śūnyatā*, 13) *Sarvadharmasūnyatā*, 14) *lakṣaṇaśūnyatā*, 15) *anupalambhaśūnyatā*, 16) *abhavāśvabhāvaśūnyatā*, 17) *bhāvaśūnyatā*, 18) *abhāvaśūnyatā*, 19) *Svabhāvaśūnyatā*, 20) *parabhāvaśūnyatā*. So various types of *śūnyatā* are accepted in the area of Buddhism. But from Nāgārjuna's point *śūnya* means which is not describe in word that's why it is indescribable (*avācya*)⁷.

Japan is the land of Mahāyāna Buddhism. So Japanese Buddhism is an umbrella term for a number of Buddhist schools of Thoughts and practice such as –Zen, Tendai etc. This Mahāyāna Buddhism spread in Japan through China via Korea and Vietnam. From the historical point of view Japanese Buddhism was divided in following manner along time accesses.

- 1) Asuka and Nara period.
- 2) The Heian and Kamakura period.
- 3) The Muromachi, Momoyama and Edo period.⁸

⁶ *Samatādvaraṇam Saṃvṛtiḥ. Ajñānam hi Samantāt Sarva*(MMK p-249)

⁷ *Anirodham anuṭpādam anucchedom aśāśvatam*

Anekārtham anānartham anāgamam anirgamana(MMK)

⁸ The first manifestations of Buddhism in Japan Consisted chiefly in adapting into Shintoism. The Heian and Kamakura period is the period of nationalization from 9th century to 4th century A.D. The second period of Japanese Buddhism began with the founding of two new sects the Tendai and Shingon by Saicho(767-822A.D)and Kukai (774- 835 A.D) The last period was the period of Continuation. There was no significant development in Japanese Buddhism other than the expansion of various sects. (2500yr of Buddhism by P.V.Bapat)

In Kamakura period the most important sects of Japanese Mahāyāna Buddhism was born and that is Zen. Eisai was the first to introduce Zen Buddhism in Japan. The word 'Zen' comes from Chan which in Sanskrit means dhyana or meditation in Japanese it means –Zazen. Zen prescribes to remove all kind of obstacles from our mind and to control our mind and to realize our inner voice of mind. That's why Suzuki says –“Look into your own being and seek it not through others. Your mind is above all forms; it is free and quiet and sufficient”.

So, Zen actually means-the realization of our inner being.

The two major groups of Zen Buddhism are- Rinzai and Soto. These two schools both have the same aim and that is to attain liberation but their methods are different from each other. In the book *Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen An Introduction to their meaning and their Arts* describes-“In the Rinzai sect we find the dynamic character of the daring koan experiment and of lightning like enlightenment while soto school is characterized by a preference for silent sitting in zazen and the quiet deeds of everyday life”. Dogen was the real founder of soto school in Japan. He also focused on our mind and he prescribes our minds as they really are. The main aim of our life is to attain enlightenment.

The technique of this realization is happen through the practice of meditation or Zazen⁹. Zazen is mixed with one criteria and that is 'koan'. Koan is originated from the word 'kung-an'¹⁰ means “an announcement that is public”¹¹. But usually this type of announcement is different from ordinary type of announcement. In koan there is no meaning of this kind of public announcement. Koan is one kind of question or question series method or rather we can say conversation method between Guru and disciple. But the main aim of the Koan is to complete inner moving discourse and In this way satori happen. Satori means –sudden enlightenment. Lord Buddha himself attained Nirvāṇa and these Nirvāṇa is known to us as 'Satori' in Zen.

Satori is not dhyana or meditation. But it is the footsteps of realization. This realization cannot be describe in words it is indescribable. It cannot be explain by our intellect or logical method.

Zen actually teaches us nothing. But this nothing is usually not vacant rather it has its great implication and that comes out from our own mind. We teach, practice and guide ourselves. Zen helps our minds to concentrate and to explore the proper way to reach our perfect goal. That's why there is a certain differences between Zen and fundamental philosophical system. Actually Zen does not emphasize on any particular principle or Theory.

Zen is free from all kind of religious systems because Zen has no worship of God, no ceremony is perform in this system.

⁹ Za means 'to sit' and Zazen may be summarily taken as meaning 'to sit in meditation' p-34(*An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* by DT Suzuki).

¹⁰ *Zen Buddhism A History India and China* by Heinrich Dumoulin p-245

¹¹ *Ibid* p-245

In common sense of thinking Zen means Dhyana. But it is not dhyana. It is above dhyana or meditation that's why we can say—

“Zen purposes to discipline the mind itself to make it its own master through an insight into its proper nature. This getting into the real nature of one's own mind or soul is the fundamental object of Zen Buddhism”¹².

Zen is mystic. It is mystic in its own manner. The famous Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore also believed in mysticism. He said —“There is always however a small group of man who teach religion from experience. They are called mystic, and these mysticism is there in every religion and speak the same tongue and teach the same truth. ”Zen is also like these kind of religion and it also teaches religion from experience. That's why —“Zen systematically trains the mind to see this ;it opens a man's eye to the greatest mystery as it is daily and hourly performed; enlarges the heart to embrace eternity of time and infinity of space in its every palpitation; it makes us live in the world as if walking in the garden of Eden; and all these spiritual feats are accomplished without resorting to any doctrines but simply asserting in the most direct way the truth that lies in our inner being”¹³.

So when this inner realization happens all the miseries, pain, sufferings are removed. Zen does not emphasize on sutra, scripture but it evokes our hidden –treasure.

There is a great similarity between Nāgārjuna's śūnyatā and Zen Buddhism. Nāgārjuna explore that the highest wisdom or bodhi is *Prajñāpāramitā*. Zen also leads one to the śūnyatā and the highest wisdom is *Prajñāpāramitā*.

Prajñāpāramitā is actually combination of two words *prajñā* and *pāramitā*. *Prajñā* means Wisdom and *pāramitā* indicates -perfection. There are six types of *pāramitās*. These are- *Dāna* (Charity) *Śīla* (Moral Conduct), *Khānti* (Forbearance), *Vīrya* (enthusiasm and exertion) *Dhyāna* (Concentration) and the last but not the list the main *pāramitā* is *prajñā*. All the five *pāramitās* have only one aim that is to purify the mind and to prepare for the attainment of highest Knowledge. *Prajñāpāramitā* is the chief of all other *pāramitās* and that is why it is

Called as the mother of all other *pāramitās*¹⁴. *Prajñāpāramitā* is a highest kind of knowledge which is free from everything and which is non-dual, transcendental Knowledge. It has no origination or beginning and also it has no decay or death. It has neither existence nor non –existence. It may be compared with space or *ākāśa*.

Mahāyāna Buddhism is based on several *sūtras* and *prajñāpāramitā* is one of the most important *sūtras* of *Mahāyāna*. *Sūtras* are mainly dialogue between lord Buddha and other disciples. *Astasahasrika prajnaparamita* is like this kind of sutra. Other important sutras are Heart sutra, Diamond sutra, etc. The term *Śūnyatā* or *śūnya* has played an important role in the context of *prajñāpāramitā*. The *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* used the term *gaṃbhirā* (Deep) as the synonym of *Śūnyatā*. There are other several term used as synonym of *gaṃbhirā* or *Śūnyatā*. These

¹² An Introduction to Zen Buddhism

¹³ Ibid p-45

¹⁴ *esā hi prajñā-pāramitā Sannāmparamitānāṃ pūrvamgamā nāyikā parināyikā saṃdarśikā anayitṛī dhātṛī* ASP-P-398

are *ānimitta* (signless), *apraṇihita* (wishless), *anutpāda* (unproduced) *ajāti* (un birth) etc. The *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* text also says that-----

‘*rūpaṃhi subhūte gaṃbhirām*’ *rūpa* is *Śūnya* and similarly *vedanā* (Feeling) *Samjñā* (perception) and *saṃskāras* are also deep. In this context Lord Buddha told Subhuti (great disciples of Buddha) that ‘*Sarvadharmāṇāmśūnyatā*’.

In the stage of *prajñāpāramitā* all kinds of ego consciousness, feeling, experiences do vanished. So it is also a kind of *Śūnya* stage¹⁵.

Śūnyatā leads one to the highest goal of life which is *prajñāpāramitā*. One who realizes *śūnyatā* they also realizes the meaning of the *prajñāpāramitā*.

In Heart *Sūtra* which is the heart or the main essence of *prajñāpāramitā* where we also found important discussion between *Avalokiteśvara* [One of the ideal of *bodhisattva* and a *bodhisattva* is an important part of *Buddhahood*] and *śāriputra* (the great disciples of Lord Buddha) about *Śūnyatā* which ultimately leads one to the *prajñāpāramitā* which is also *Śūnya*. Here *Avalokiteśvara* tells *śāriputra* that if any one tries to meditate on *prajñāpāramitā* then one feels that the five *skandhas* are empty. So the nature or the *svabhāva* of the five *skandhas* are empty or *svabhāva śūnya*. That’s why everything like *rūpa*, *saṃjñā*, *vedana*, *saṃskāras*, *viññāna* constituted by five *skandas* are also empty.

Similarly Zen also stresses on *prajñāpāramitā* Heart sutra. The Mantras of *prajñāpāramitā* Heart sutra chanted daily many times in their shrines of Japan. In Japanese the term *śūnya* means –‘Ku’. The *prajñāpāramitā* Heart sutra also emphasizes on these emptiness. That’s why they also believe-‘’ In this emptiness there is no form, no perception, no name, no concepts, no knowledge. No eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind. No form, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch, no objects¹⁶.

Prajñāpāramitā Heart sutra also used as Koan in Zen Buddhism. Sutra short version turn into koan for the attainment of enlightenment.

So the Heart of the *Prajñāpāramitā* finally came to the ends with this mantra. That means –gone from everything like conditioned (phenomenal world), unconditioned (*nirvāṇa*) beyond from both conditioned and unconditioned and even *śūnyatā* then in fact realizes enlightenment the eternal bliss¹⁷.

Zen also believes that perfect wisdom is leading one to the path of enlightenment and this enlightenment is not described in words.

Therefore Lomotte says in his book ‘Monumental study and translation of East Asian Buddhism’ that –

¹⁵ The prajnaparamita revolutionised Buddhism in all aspects of its philosophy and religion by the basic concepts of sunyata. The Central philosophy of Buddhism TRV Murti

¹⁶ An Introduction to Zen Buddhism p-51

¹⁷ *Gate gate pāragate pārasaṃgate bodhisvābha*. Buddhist Wisdom books p-103

“Perfect wisdom is not being in the metaphysical order nor is it a subsistent absolute to which one can adhere. It is rather a spiritual state Transcending the categories of existence and non existence empty of every quality, perfect wisdom can be neither affirmed nor denied. It is excellence in which nothing is lacking”.

Not only Heart sutra Diamond sutra also prescribes on emptiness or thusness and Perfect wisdom. This Diamond sutra also placed a great role in Zen Buddhism. Diamond sutra is based on the principle of negation. In this way perfect wisdom is also turns into the way of emptiness.

Emptiness is a very common factor from both the schools i.e. Zen and *Mādhyamika*. But it does not mean that *śūnya* indicates –nothingness. From Nāgārjuna’s point of view *śūnyatā* emphasizes on realization. The famous book of ‘An Introduction to Zen Buddhism’ where D.T.suzuki said –“There is no negation in this, nor any contradiction. What Zen aims at to realize this form of unification in one’s everyday life of actualities and not to treat life as a sort of Metaphysical exercise. There are no quibbling, no playing at words, no sophistry, Zen is the most serious concern in the world”(page56-57).

Zen is same as *Mādhyamika* stand point. *Mādhyamika* does not believe in the theory of nihilism and Zen is also like that. Zen is not nihilism but ignorant people who are covered by the ignorance does not realize Zen in true sense. Zen is affirmative and it affirms our true nature. That’s why Suzuki says –“Zen is a live fact, it is not like an inorganic rock or like an empty space. To come into contact with this living fact –may to take hold of it in every phase of life is the aim of all Zen discipline”(page-53).

Word is sometimes insufficient to describes things. Lord Buddha was sometimes remain silent. On particular metaphysical questions like –Is life after death is possible or not? Is the world eternal or non eternal etc. Once upon a time several disciples of lord Buddha gathered for listen to the preach of lord Buddha. But he maintained complete silent and pick up one lotus flower. No one could understand this except Kashyapa. Kashyapa who understood lord Buddha and his smile.

So everything cannot be described in word. Here the smile had great meaning which was understood by Lord Buddha.

Silence is the essential feature of both two followers like Nāgārjuna zen also believe in the twenty type of *śūnyatā*. The famous Buddhist Monk Husang Chuang’s describes 18 types of *śūnyatā* in his version of *Mahaprajñāpāramitā*.

In this way technique of silence which was used by Buddha and later it was followed by Mahāyāna school of Buddhism, Zen and several schools of Buddhism.

The main aim of both Nāgārjuna and Zen are to achieve the supreme wisdom or enlightenment. This enlightenment is also *śūnya*. *śūnyatā* or emptiness finally leads one to *prajñāpāramitā* which is also *śūnya*. The *Aṣṭasāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā* and emptiness on Meditation says-

“Subhuti, one who wishes to realize the enlightenment of a Hearer is to learn just this perfection of wisdom”.

Nāgārjuna and other *Mādhyamikas* are also focused on perfect wisdom and *śūnyatā*. *Mādhyamika* is mainly divided into two schools –prāsaṅgika and svāntarika. From the *Mādhyamika* point of view wisdom or *prajñā-pāramitā* arises in our mind by the practice of meditation Bhāviviveka who was the founder of svāntarika *Mādhyamika* said that-

“With the mind in meditative equipoise
Wisdom analyzes in this way
The entities of these phenomena
Apprehended Conventionally.”

There are several steps used in the practice of meditation. At first one must be concentrated on something. After that mind become calm and quite then the meditation starts and gradually comes to the point of insight which is formally known to us as ‘*vipaśyanā*’. And Zen and Tendai school of Buddhism also accepts this type of meditation to attained the highest kind of knowledge. From the Tendai point The practice of samatha –*vipaśyanā* meditation help to realize oneness of the mind and the world. *Vipaśyanā* is a combination of two terms. Pasyana implies seeing the prefix vi means in a special way. So actually *vipaśyanā* means –seeing in a special manner.

Meditation is mainly divided into two divisions---Samatha and *Vipaśyanā*. Samatha indicates tranquillity, Concentration, Calmness *Vipaśyanā* meditation or insight perception helps to grow our mental power and this mental power helps to drawn right concentration and to realizes that all the things in this world are a combination of anicca,dukkha and anatta. By the practice of *Vipaśyanā* meditation the eternal laws of Buddhist philosophy can be easily realize. These are the law of impermanence and the law of dependent origination.

Vipaśyanā reduces all kind of differences between mind and matter. and to develop our mind become free from self and ego. So it is a complete silent type of condition of mind where emptiness is the main essence. without the realization of emptiness one cannot attain perfect wisdom.

At the end of the stage when one completely deep with meditation and the awareness of insight perception all the affairs becomes *śūnya*. In Indian Context of yoga philosophy where we also found the practice of meditation and which helps to look at the insight.

Through the process of meditation we really know our self –image. The technique of insight perception or *vipaśyanā* also helps to do this.

So, *Vipaśyanā* is a mirror of self image. The main tents of *Upaniṣhad* is “*Ahaṁ Brahmāsmi*”-1.4.10. I am Brahman. There is no difference between Brahman and self. So to perceive our self. This perception happens only when our mind is control by the practice of meditation. Because Meditation is nothing but the art of training to control our mind. Mind is everything.¹⁸

¹⁸ *Manopubban gammā dhammā manosesthā manomaya*(Dhammapada verse no 2)

In this present world all of stress, anxiety, fear, depression, greed, violence are removed through the practice of meditation. Tibetan Dharma guru Dalai lama also said that meditation is valuable for all of humanity or mankind as because it involves looking inward.

Zen also practices Meditation to discover the real nature of absolute. Actually by the real nature of silent meditation one must observe his mind. Zen has the power to show our own nature. By this time Koan is given to check his development for enlightenment. When this Koan is given one should observe silence and seat properly like the gesture of meditative way. This meditation is goes for long time day after night. Besides this all other activities like sitting(,)drinking(,)([!])sleeping performing by their time. But silence is maintain in all along. This is Zen which is not beyond our life. All the time our mind is control by the practice of meditation and to know the inner voice of our soul.

There is a common thing between Nāgārjuna and Zen Buddhism as because these two school of philosophy emphasis on the realization of absolute truth. Which cannot be expresses through sound. Nāgārjuna also say in self same way –

‘The ultimate truth is impossible to explain through logic, reason, words, example etc. No one can tell another what the ultimate truth is. It can only be seen through one’s own realization which is termed the ‘self –seen wisdom’¹⁹.

In Zen we also find this similarity a famous Zen poem says that –

‘Sitting quietly doing nothing
Spring comes and the grass grow by itself’²⁰

Therefore the main aim of our life is to attain enlightenment. This realization happens in its own way.

Another school of Japanese Buddhism Tendai is also very closed to Nāgārjuna’s philosophy. The word Tendai is coming from the Chinese word ‘Tien –tai’ which actually means a mountain which is situated in south china. The Tendai school first originated in china. Then it came to Japan. In Japan this Tendai school was established by saicho. Japanese Tendai school was greatly influenced by Lotus sutra in previous Chinese tradition. and it based on ekayana doctrine of the lotus sutra. Ekayana doctrine actually indicates ‘one truth’ (eka-satya). Here one does not indicates the chronological one but here one actually mean –supreme. The main aim of one’s life is to realize *paramārtha* satya or highest truth. The Great scholar of *Mādhyamika* Philosophy Nāgārjuna himself believe in concept of truth theory and the Shadow of the concept of truth theory also shows in Tendai Buddhist school. They trust in these kinds of truth.

¹⁹ Nagarjuna’s letter to king Gautamiputra by Venerable Lo Zang Jamspal Venerable Ngaweang Samterchophelpeter Della Santina p-16

²⁰ Hinduism ,Buddhism ,Zen An Introduction to the meaning and their arts by Nancy Wilson Ross Faber and Faber.

- 1) Truth of Void
- 2) Truth of Temporariness.
- 3) Truth of Middle.

Everything is void and nothing is permanent in this world. That's why everything is momentary from both phenomenal and transcendental standpoint. In this way the concept of 'middle' introduce. Here middle means –“neither emptiness nor temporariness and yet includes both”.²¹ The ultimate truth is Thusness or suchness. Here Thusness means-“The true state of things”²².

The Philosophy of Tendai school of Japan has great affinity to Nāgārjuna's thought. Śūnyata has placed a very great role in the context of lotus sutra. Here *śūnyata* and dharma connected with each other. Dharma has carries several meanings. But here dharma means “elements of existence”. This meaning of dharma is very much attached with *śūnyata* that's why lotus sutra said that-
‘Be he who perceives

That the dharmas are void, devoid of substantiality.

Knows according to truth

The enlightenment of the perfectly enlightened Bhagavans’

In Japan Saicho Tendai schools are based on four elements- 1) Tien-tai proper.

2) Esoteric Buddhism

3) Zen

4) Bodhisattva percepts

Tien –tai school is mainly focused on perfect teachings on lotus sutra. Another Esoteric Buddhism is emphasis on Tantric system of Buddhism. This school is known to us as shingon Buddhism and it based on Mahavairocana sutra.

Mahāyāna school of Buddhism believes in the theory of Bodhisattva. Japanese Tendai school is also accepts these concepts to attain Buddhahood. In saicho school of Japanese Tendai school emphasises on Bodhisattva concepts. Bodhisattva here is a sage and the characteristic of these Bodhisattva are unity, harmony etc.

The concept of bodhisattva is based on two things Concentration (Samadhi) and wisdom(prajña).

Besides these Bodhisattva has going through several process to attain Buddha hood. Buddha hood is the main aim of one's life.

And to attain this kind of stage one must focus on meditation throughout the practice of meditation the realization happens.

Here we also found the similarity between Nāgārjuna's philosophy and Tendai Buddhism. Nāgārjuna focused meditation to know the real and eternal truth of the world. It is nothing but *śūnya*. Attainment of *nirvāṇa* can be possible by the process of meditation which is the ultimate goal of our life.

²¹ Japanese Buddhism p-431

²² The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy by Takakusu p-142

Nirvāṇa is *śūnya* and both are inexpressible in word. There is no difference between *śūnyata* and *nirvāṇa*. They are same in reality. *Nirvāṇa* the state of consciousness where mind is concentrated through meditation realizes *śūnyata* in a deep sense and to originates the highest wisdom or bodhi.

On the other hand lotus sutra where we also found that –

“when O monks, The Tathagatha perceives (that)the moment, the occasion of his *parinirvāṇa*(has arrived)and sees (that) the assembly is completely pure, full of faith expert in (the knowledge of) dharmas being void, devoted to meditation, devoted to great meditation(He enters *Nirvāṇa*)

In Tantric School of Tendai Buddhism mainly shingon school emphasis on the practice of lotus womb meditation.

The main aim of lotus –womb meditation is to empty our heart and soul. And when the heart and soul are empty then the realization of absolute is possible.

Therefore Zen and Tendai both the school have the same view like Nāgārjuna. Emptiness is the inner essence for all these school. In Nāgārjuna’s philosophy also reflects that –‘One has to meditate on *śūnyata* as the absence of selfhood.’²³ Swami Vivekananda was a renowned Vedantic monk of India. He believes in the concept of oneness. This oneness therefore is also applicable in the nature of absolute or Brahman. That’s why absolute is also void. He said in his book The Hymn of Samadhi that –

“Void merged into void –beyond speech and mind.
Whose heart understands, he verily does”.

The concept of *śūnyata* is not only in Nāgārjuna Philosophy but also in Vivekananda monistic concept. Here *śūnyata* theory merges with Vedantic concept and at the same time Japanese Buddhist Concept also goes along the same path.

²³ The conception of Buddhist Nirvana by Theodore Stcherbatsky p-10

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