

The problem of reality in Mahāyāna Buddhism

(Summary of a lecture note in Santiniketan)

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Mahāyāna Buddhism gives us a positive philosophy in concerned with reality. Various expressions are used. In Madhyamika they expressed this reality as śūnyatā. But this term connotes not unreality but also reality. Reality is śūnya since it cannot be expressed by concepts (dṛiṣṭiśūnyatvat). Though this gives an indeterminate ground to Buddhist reality, even then we can see some attempts to express it from a positive view-point. Let us try to observe these.

There are many words used for reality or the absolute in Mahāyāna philosophy. Excluding negative indications, these are Tathatā (suchness), Dharmatā (the essence of being, the true nature of dharma), Dharmadhātu (the totality of things), Yathābhūta (that which really is), Bhūta-tathatā or Bhūtātā (the true reality), Bhūta-koṭi (reality-limit), Dharmakāya etc., each term is used from a particular standpoint. We can arrange these according to their root words into three groups. That is, (A) Dharma base, (B) Bhūta base and (C) Indeterminate base.

(A) Dharma base.

The Ultimate Reality or Absolute is indescribable in terms of empirical discourse. However it is not a mere bundle of negatives. It is very positive in itself. The negatives are required to show its transcendent nature. Śūnyatā also is taught not for its own sake, but as a method which leads the mind to true reality. It opens the way to a direct approach to the true nature of things (dharmatā) by restraining the conceptualizing tendency of mind¹⁾. “Śūnyatā is negative only for thought: but it is the non-relational knowledge of the absolute. It may even be taken as more universal and positive than affirmation.”²⁾ While reality itself is unutterable, undivided and unconditioned, the reality reveals itself in existence.³⁾ Again the final and most fundamental experience of the reality which is beyond our intelligible thought demands to be revealed in the intelligible world⁴⁾. This is the character of reality. The way in which the inexpressible and unutterable is expressed, is shown by these terms.

Dharma has various meanings, but it is certain that the conception of dharma

has a close connection with reality in its original meaning. It is a transcendental reality which is real in the absolute and the ultimate sense⁵). The immutable concept of dharma is consistently that which maintains all existence as it is. From the opposite side it shows that all existence has this dharma as its essence at bottom. Accordingly, to speak ontologically, the essence of all existence is nothing but existence itself. Here we can see the dharma as existence. But again a radical analysis was applied to existence, because Buddhists are concerned with existence ; all existence is originated in dependence and consists of elements (dharmas). Philosophically, a synoptic view leads us to some infinite indeterminate apperception in a higher sense which is also purely empirical ; on the other hand an analytical views lead us to some finite, determinate apperception which is opposed to the limitation of our intelligence. These two natures of Reason are used in parallel in those positive expressions.

Dharmatā is the essence of dharmas (elements of existence) and it means also the essence of everything (dharmānām dharmatā⁶). Each of the dharmas is the ultimate real entity from the analytical view and the dharmatā is found to be the essential unity underlying them. In this meaning it is an ultimate reality. Why is the ultimacy necessary, when the dharmas are ultimate entities ? In Mahāyāna Buddhism which maintained dharmanairātmya (non-substantiality of everything) these dharmas were regarded as fictitious, mere concepts, mere talk, without any substance of their own which could be used in obtaining a realization of the ultimate reality by direct peception⁷). But they had to use the term dharma as the element of all existence after the Vaibhāsika's establishment. They applied their unitive intuition to the dharma system. The totality of these fictitious dharmas was then contrasted with dharmatā which was further identified with śūnyatā into which all dharmas are absorbed. Though for the Mahāyānists, it was a matter of necessity to use the same term "dharmas" to express the elements of existence or all empirical existence, it became more meaningful in their system. The secret of their two-fold truth is hidden here.

Nāgarjuna says phenomena have a sort of reality, though they are unreal in a higher sense. They are appearances of a Reality. They are samvṛiti-satya (conventional truth)⁸). Appearance points to that which appears. The construction of this philosophy is accomplished by using the idea of śūnyatā. Dharma can be real so far as it shows the true nature of existence. It is useful for the searcher of the truth. Dharma as samvṛiti-satya is śūnyataniḥsvabhāva. But at this stage also, so far as we understand this dharma as śūnyatā (dharmanāiratmya) in its true nature, it is quite objective to our intelligence. Then śūnyatā as a concept enters our mind as something intellectual with a risk of being divided into subjective and objective. Then they applied śūnyatā śūnyam to this problem⁹). Śūnyatā is not an end in itself. It is only a means to lead the mind up to transcendental insight

(*prajñā*), and should not be bolstered up as an end in itself¹⁰. That which remains after complete “*śūnyatā śūnyam*” is the only absolute, which is clear only to an Enlightened Being. This pure absolute *śūnyatā* is *dharmatā*¹¹. In the realm of pure subjective *dharmatā* we have nothing further to divide into subjective and objective. It is indeterminate to our discriminating intellects, it is undivided one. There is no duality. The cognition is not different from that which is cognized but completely identical with it. It is only in the realm of Buddha that this *dharmatā* can be the object of *prajñā* (supreme wisdom) as the means by which the supreme one shows the reality of the world to us subjectively.

To our philosophical thinking, on the other hand this *dharmatā* is a buddhist principle which one comes to know through experience with *yathā-bhūta-dṛṣṭi* (perceiving the actuality). This can be called the mundane *dharmatā* in Nāgarjuna’s philosophy¹². In this sense it is a synoptic principle as the reality of all existence (*dharmāṇām dharmatā*). And it seems to be an aim and end which should be realized. Here *dharmatā* is expressed in an epistemological form.

Though *Dharmadhātu* is synonymous with *dharmatā* in its ultimate sense, its character is ontological.

The direct meaning of *dharmadhātu* is the sphere of all that which is the object of perception of mind. All that is the object of perception of mind is conditioned and contingent, i.e., phenomena. Thus the idea of the dharma in this compound, though it is apt to be considered as all existence simply, is phenomena as reality itself¹³.

Dhātu conveys the sense of the essential, inmost nature, the fundamental, ultimate essence¹⁴. At first the term “*dhātu*” has a sense of inclusion. Accepting and including and setting something is the original sense. The concept of inclusion contains a sense of limitation.

All meanings which we can apply to this term ; class, category, sphere, etc. naturally have a connection with these two concepts. When this is used in the division of the elements of existence in the *Abhidharma* system it shows a category of their classification to be a postulate of the system. *Caḥsur-dhātu* is the sense of vision and the field of vision. It is the only category of vision as an *indriya*. Against this *rūpa-dhātu* is the only category of *rūpa* as *viśaya* and *caḥsur-vijñāna-dhātu* and ending with *mano-vijñāna-dhātu*. This is the classification into 18 *dhātus*¹⁵. Apart from this division we can observe 6 *dhātus* beginning with *caḥsur-vijñāna-dhātu* and ending with *mano-vijñāna-dhātu*. This *dhātu* is the most inclusive, because it is possible to understand in this way how the *dhātu* synthesizes the *indriya* and the *āyatana* in each horizontal relation ; such as in *caḥsur-vijñāna-dhātu caḥsu* is *indriya*, *rūpa* is its *viśaya*, and *caḥsur-vijñāna* is *vijñāna*, and their relationship seems to be anticipated¹⁶. If so, *dhātu* will show the fundamental base of each line. Then it is a basic concept in which all elements of the system stand.

When these elements came to be expressed as dharmas, dhātu will become the basis of dharma. It is dharma-dhātu. While dharma is existence or phenomena dharma-dhātu shows the ground of existence. In relation to dharmatā which is intended to express reality from the point of view of the nature or character of dharma, this is intended to express the noumenal base of dharma. Dharmadhātu is the Noumenal Ground of phenomena : the basic fundamental source of all things is what is called dhātu¹⁷⁾. In this sense this is the reference to ultimate reality. It is not an entity but that on which all things are dependent and to which everything returns ultimately. It must not be forgotten that Dharma-dhātu retains the original significance of dhātu as a container. That is to say, that which contains difference as difference, unique as unique and conditioned as conditioned but keeps itself unconditioned in as much as it is dharmadhātu itself.

Dharmatā is related to reason and dharmadhātu to existence itself of Noumenon. The former expresses the real nature or essence of things to our mind¹⁸⁾ and the latter the fundamental source of all things. In reality these are undivided and one, the greater which includes the less. In this way the ultimate reality is called Dharma-kāya. It is not too much to say that the system of reality in Buddhism did not accomplish itself till this dharma-kāya had been set forth.

Dharma-kāya is the ultimate universal whole. Though it implies the whole sense of dharma, "dharma" in the word dharma-kāya is used in the sense of one Ultimate Reality, which is both transcendent and immanent to the world, and also the governing law within it. The word "kāya" in this context is here taken in a special sense and means "support" (āśraya),¹⁹⁾ i.e., the support of the mastery over reality itself. Moreover it is used in the sense of substratum. So dharma-kāya means the principle of cosmic unity or Absolute whole. The dharma-kāya is not merely an abstract philosophical concept, but is a part of the religious consciousness. Let us examine it as a metaphysical principle.

As the dharma-kāya, Buddha was fully identified with the Absolute (dharmatā, śūnyatā) and also unified with all beings (śamata). When the dharma-kāya is identified with dharmatā it is the real essence of dharmas. As we have considered, objective dharmatā is the essence of being and is the object of our intellectual consciousness (vijñāna). It is the ultimate reality expressed or established with reference to our intellect. It is an idea ; it contains no facts. The identification of dharmatā and śūnyatā shows this. When dharmatā is grasped as an object of our intellect, in a higher sense it is śūnyatā (unreality). Remove all thought categories, and the basic reality, the dharmatā of things, shines forth.

In contrast, subjective dharmatā, which is in Buddha's enlightenment, is reality itself. In his enlightenment Buddha fully realises his identity with dharmatā. This is the dharma-kāya. Here, therefore, Buddha, dharmatā and enlightenment are

the same. But that which this identification or realization indicates should be clearly understood. It shows that what has not so far been identified or realized has been so now in his enlightenment. Again it is the identification between one form of dharmatā which is defined (prajñapti) and another which is not set forth. However we must understand this identification as an explanation produced by the Sūtras or Buddhist scholars, because it would be completely one and the same in the transcendental pure experience of Buddha.

Now, so far as we use our intellect to comprehend the reality, it appears as the problem of a conception and its contents. Objective dharmatā, i.e., that which was set forth is abstract, though it seems to be concrete as an object. It may be mere hollow ideal. Then as the dharma-kāya this concept and contents are unified by pure complete knowledge (prajñā) which is free from the duality of subject-object. In this realm, if we can apply our objective thinking, dharmatā is the object of prajñā. Considering this together with the facts that the final goal of a bodhisattva's career is always indicated by such words as buddha-jñāna²⁰ (knowledge of Buddha), sarvajñātā²¹ (Omniscience), sarvākārajñātā²² (the quality of knowing things as they are), anuttara-jñāna²³ (supreme knowledge) adityam jñānam (inconceivable knowledge)²⁴ it is certain that dharmatā is reality as conceived by consciousness. In other words dharmatā stands for the total, pure knowledge in Buddha's Enlightenment and also stands for reality as it is set forth to our intellect. Thus dharmatā is the thing which should be realized by our deepened consciousness.

On the other hand, dharma-kāya has a close connection with dharma-dhātu. Against dharmatā, this as the Noumenal Ground of phenomena is the quite empirical and ontological principle. It is the ultimate base of both transcendental and phenomenal existence. In the meaning of dharma-kāya, especially "kāya" indicates the connection with dharma-dhātu. It shows that the dharma-kāya also is not separate from beings at base. It clearly supports the dharmatā in the dharma-kāya, i.e., it gives ontological contents to dharmatā²⁵. Then as Ultimate Reality (Dharma-kāya) these two natures of reality which seemed to be separate to us as defined are united in one²⁶. This is the Absolute Reality which transcends our words, imagination and any other attempts to discriminate. It comprises all beings of the world, but as they are blinded by avidyā, they do not realise this fact.

Thus as the dharma-kāya, the Buddhist Reality at which the stand point of Yathā-bhūta-dṛṣṭi (faithful attitude to the truth) aimed is the absolute whole in which our knowledge and existence are unified completely²⁷. This total pure knowledge is called perfect wisdom (prajñā)²⁸. Then Buddha is identified with his knowledge. This is Buddha's dharma-kāya (Cosmic, spiritual Body). A Buddha is the embodiment of dharma, which is his real body. He is also identified with all the constituents of the universe (form, thought, etc.). This body, which is also

called sad-dharma-kāya, bodhi-kāya, buddha-kāya, prajñā-kāya and svabhāvika-kāya (essential body), is invisible and universal. It is imperishable and perfectly pure. All beings live and move and have their being in it. It is the same as the Absolute Reality (tathatā), which is also one and indivisible for the entire universe. It is immutable and undifferentiated.

The other importance of dharma-kāya is as in its religious function. The doctrine of the Trikāya, the three bodies or the three aspects of Buddha, is one of the most fascinating features of Mahāyāna. But we shall not deal with this problem in this paper.

Now we have considered Reality on the basis of the category of dharma. We can apply our method in a similar way for the others also.

(B) Bhūta Base

The original meaning of bhūta is "what has actually happened", "an actual occurrence", "that which has come into being". Thus it means being or existing. In the Buddhist thought this bears a very important relation to "bhava" and "bhāva" as the terms which clarify the conception of being or existence. Bhūta itself already signifies conditioned being. Accordingly, if we comprehend a thing as bhūta, our understanding of it will be true. Bhūta is the pratīyasamutpanna (originating by the law of dependent origination) and pratīyasamutpāda is the true nature of all existence²⁹). In this sense bhūta stands for reality in general. This is the same case as that dharma which means existence and includes the sense of reality in its basic form.

Bhūtata takes the place of dharmatā and is the essential nature of bhūta. It is actuality, thus also reality. But it cannot be a positive factor, for in that case it would be subject to origination, decay and death : no empirical existence is free from that. Therefore when it is grasped as something positive, then again śūnyatā may be applied to it, for the real is only a relative concept in as far as it is distinguished from the concept of the unreal. This happens in our subject-object observation. Even then it plays an important part in the conventional world as the reality as manifested, for it has a conclusion, which is the ultimate Reality in Buddha's pure experience, as paramārtha.

Bhūta-koṭi is the other expression of reality. In the term "bhūta-koṭi", bhūta should be comprehended at first as bhāva existence, becoming existence. In its ordinary sense, grasping all existence as becoming is truthful (Yathā-bhūtam) in Buddhism. By understanding thus one can realize the law of pratīyasamutpāda which is the real nature of everything. If this fact were understood, then it could be said to be reality. "Koṭi" means literally "end," "top" and "limit". Then bhūta-koṭi stands for the boundaries of bhāva existence or the limit of true existence. We can easily appreciate the sense of this term in the following way.

The “koṭi” as the meaning of edge or limit again shows the bottom or ground of all things, which is the same as dharma-dhātu. It is reality. When our intellect is directed towards the essence of things, it means that our consciousness is going to the root of them. Then we can realise their true noumenal ground. This ground is the essence of being and the extremity of reality.

The Bhūta-koṭi is the apex or the summit of reality which all beings reach³⁰⁾, and, when its ontological aspect is taken account, it is the essence of being³¹⁾.

In our consideration it takes the place of dharma-dhātu³²⁾.

We pass on now to the most difficult and important portion of this bhūta system, Bhūta-tathatā. This theory is fully developed and explained in Aśvaghoṣa’s well-known systematical work, the “Awakening of Faith”³³⁾.

The literal significance of bhūta-tathatā is generally as “suchness of existence”. So according to our understanding of bhūta.

Bhūta is actual being, real being, and tathatā stands for “thus always” or “eternally so”³⁴⁾. Then, in total, it is the eternal nature of real being. But again “real being” which is identical with tathatā may also be understood. The former sense can be said to be the ultimate nature of all actual beings. This is the same as bhūtata and dharmatā³⁵⁾. In the latter sense it corresponds to a Soul³⁶⁾ according to Aśvaghoṣa. Both meanings of bhūta-tathatā are involved in one Soul³⁷⁾. Aśvaghoṣa says : -

“In the one soul we may distinguish the aspects. The one is the Soul as suchness (bhūta-tathatā)³⁸⁾, the other is the soul as birth and death (saṃsāra). Each in itself constitutes all things, and both are so closely interrelated that one cannot be separated from the other”³⁹⁾.

Here saṃsāra clearly means pratīyasamutpanna, so bhūta. As to the real nature of bhūta-tathatā, again Aśvaghoṣa says : -

“Bhūta-tathatā implies oneness of the totality of things or dharma-dhātu, the great all-including whole, the quintessence of the doctrine. For the essential nature of the soul is uncreated and eternal.”⁴⁰⁾

Thus the bhūta-tathatā is the ultimate reality as a Soul. But we must not conclude from this that it is separate from all things. For it is within them. All things, simply on account of our confused subjectivity (smṛiti), appears as individualized forms. If we could overcome such confused subjectivity, the signs of individuation would disappear, and there would be no trace of a world of (individual and isolated) objects⁴²⁾. From these qualities, we can now understand bhūta-tathatā as synonymous with dharma-kāya. Dr. D. T. Suzuki suggests this :

“the Dharma-kāya is suchness (bhūta-tathatā) itself, which transcends the limits of time and space as well as the law of causation”⁴²⁾.

That which itself is in causation (Pratītyasamutpanna) and is free from it will express the pratītyasamutpāda itself. The immortal (i.e. suchness) and the mortal (i.e. all phenomena) coincide each other. Though they are not identical, they are not dual. Enlightenment is the realization of this ultimate nature of bhūta-tathatā.

(C) Tathā Base (Indeterminate Base)

In the terms "tathatā", "tathāgata" and "tathāgatagarbha", the word "tathā" is the base. Tathā is indeclinable and means "so" or "thus". But it is usually used correlatively with "yathā". In such a case "tathā" implies all meanings which are stated in the "yathā" clause. Though we cannot get any sure reference to this, it would not be altogether in the wrong to suppose that "tathā" has a connection with "yathā-bhūtam", which demonstrates the fundamental attitude of Buddhism⁴³.

"Yathā bhūtam" literally means "as things are". Then the term "tathā" which follows this means "thus" and implies the significance of the preceding. Therefore "tathā" means "as things are". It does not allow of any definite description. This problem is to be settled only by appealing to experience, i.e., to direct perception, when the truth has been grasped as such. In this respect Buddhist terminology is often graphic and full of power ; for example, such terms as tathatā (suchness or thusness), bhūtatā (suchness of things), tatvam (thatness), which are used to designate the content of the inner perception (Pratyātmajñāna)⁴⁴.

If we try to comprehend "tathā" in other words, it is the pratītyasamutpanna ; that which arises according to the law of dependent origination.

Tathatā is the highest Truth or Reality which takes the place of dharmatā and bhūtatā. Now let us observe its particular nature ; tathatā has two aspects viz., conditioned as the mundane truth and unconditioned as the ultimate. The former describes the natures of things as pratītyasamutpanna, impermanence, relativity and non-substantiality, and the latter means the unconditioned, unborn and unconceptualizable. The one is the essence of relativity, and the other is the ultimate essence of all that exists. The essence of relativity is so only in name ; it is only mundane truth⁴⁵. Here the reality of the empirical existence of the perceptive mind and the perceived subject is not denied, but their ontological reality is denied.

Conditioned suchness is manifested in the empirical sphere. It is phenomenal relativity and dualism of subject and object, and is comprehended by the discriminating intellect. But that suchness, whether conditioned or unconditioned, remains unchanged⁴⁶.

We have applied such considerations to dharmatā and bhūtatā. One of their aspects is unconditioned and the other is the conditioned, phenomenal world.

Tathāgata harmonizes all contradictions and directs the cause of events in the world. The one nature of tathatā which is immanent in the phenomenal world is

emphasised in the Tathā-gata-garbha. Garbha is generally given the meaning “womb”, that is container, or again the great all-including whole (dharma-dhātu). In this sense it especially refers to bhūta-tathatā as the source of all things ; whether compatible, or incompatible, whether forces of purity or impurity, good or bad, all created things are in it, which is the womb that gives birth to them all. It has an important sense in that it is the womb where the Tathāgatas (Enlightend Ones) are conceived and matured⁴⁷).

Tathāgata literally means the “one who has thus or truly gone” or the “One who has thus or truly come”. From the historical stand-point we can also define it as one who comes in the same way as do all other Buddhas⁴⁸). But the more important meaning to us is that the tathāgata realized the ultimate reality (tathatā) and attained to perfect wisdom⁴⁹). He is the embodiment of tathatā. Tathāgata is equated with perfect wisdom⁵⁰). He is the perfect being. The tathāgata is a being who enjoys a sort of dual existence, who is partaking of both the phenomenal and the absolute⁵¹. He alone is able to know the Absolute and reveal it to others. Therefore a distinction may be made between tathatā (ultimate Reality or Absolute Truth) and Tathāgata who knows the truth⁵²).

Tathatā is impersonal reality on the other hand tathāgata is the reality personified. This personification as we saw when we considered dharma-kāya has great significance philosophically as well as religiously.

To be a person means among other things to be a living being, to have a feeling heart, to live among the ignorant and confused, and not to remain isolated in one’s own intellectual transcendentalism. All beings are essentially similar (śamatā)⁵³). Since they are one with the dharma-dhātu all beings are in essence the same. This is also the meaning of tathāgatagarbha. To possess supreme knowledge means that one has realized tathatā and has identified oneself with it as the inner true nature of things. Here again we see the same pattern as in the Dharmabase and the Bhūtabase ; Tathāgatagarbha takes the place of dharma-dhātu and bhūta-koṭi as the noumenal background of everything, as the great including-whole which is universal, and is the ultimaterality. And Tathatā also defines dharmatā and bhūtātā as the ultimate reality. And it may be also seen that there is an identification of these in the Absolute, Dharma-kāya, Bhūta-tathatā and Tathāgata. Likewise from this standpoint the supreme wisdom (āryajñāna) by which tathāgatas are able to realize in themselves the inner truth of things must not be merely intellectual ; there must be an element of compassion. Therefore in a Tathāgata’s enlightenment, tathatā is not the thing by which he realizes his identity by intellect alone. It is the tathāgata’s tathatā (suchness). According to Aṣṭasahasrikā-prajñā-pāramita Sūtra, “As the Tathāgata’s suchness is changeless, free from change not discriminating, free from discrimination, so is indeed, Subhūti, thusness changeless,What is the Tathāgata’s thusness and what is the thusness of all things, that is

just one thusness ; this thusness is not two, is not duality, it is not a twofold thusness ; this thusness is nowhere, is from nowhere, and belongs to nobody"⁵⁴). This is the nature of the ultimate Reality.

But we must pay full attention to the point that this identification has been made from the standpoint of established (prajñapti) reality, as far as it is maintained, which the Absolute, the Buddha taught for the sake of leading beings to their ultimate enlightenment. The Tathāgata is an Absolute, identical by its own nature with the Ultimate Reality. Therefore what the ultimate reality is own only problem.

This problem which is that of the conflict and harmony between our reason and existence. And this is the problem of the two aspects of the ultimate reality of all systems which we have observed, that is, to dharma, dharmatā and dharmadhātu, to bhūta, bhūtātā and bhūta-koṭi, to tathā, thatatā and tathāgatagarbha in our paper.

- 1) Atra brūmaḥ śūnyatāyām na tvam vetsy prajñānam śūnyatām śūnyatārtham ca tat evam vihanase, M (adhyamika) K (ārika). 24.7.
- 2) Central Philosophy of Buddhism. ed. T. R. V. Murti, p. 160.
- 3) Dharma Lakṣaṇa. Lakṣaṇa means assign or mark in its original meaning, then character of things and essential nature. Though Dharma Lakṣaṇa is thought of as the true, essential nature of dharma, the meaning of lakṣaṇa itself is intended to show the nature which dharma reveals.
- 4) So dharma lakṣaṇa is divided into two, the mundane and the trans-mundane. Trans-mundane dharmalakṣaṇa is a synonym of dharmatā, tathatā. See "Nāgarjuna Philosophy," ed. K. V. Ramanan.
- 5) Prasannapada (Bibliotheca Buddhica IV) p. 304, cf. p. 592.
About this we can see in the early text Sn. 30 -- Dharmatā, which is firmly established whether Tathāgatas are produced or not produced. . . .
- 6) Prasannapada p. 40, Ya sā dharmāṇām dharmatā nāma saiva tat svarūpam atha keyam dharmāṇām dharmatā, dharmāṇām svabhāvaḥ / keyam svabhāvaḥ, prakṛtiḥ.
- 7) This trend began already with the Mahāsaṅgikas. All dharmas, both conditioned and unconditioned, was called into question, on the ground that, like the things of the common sense world, they represent only a conventional reality. said by Edward Conze in his "Buddhist Thought in India" p. 195 - Part -III, The Mahāyāna.
- 8) Dve satye samupāsṛitya buddhānām dharmadesanā Lokasaṃvṛitisatyam ca satyam ca paramarthaḥ (MK. 24.8) (Ye' nayorna vijānanti vibhāgam satyayordvayoḥ te tattvam na vijānanti gambhīram buddhaśāsane)
- 9) Cf. "Central Philosophy of Buddhism" p. 351 appendix.
- 10) Śūnyatā sarvadrīṣṭinām proktā niḥsaraṇam jinaiḥ. Yesām tu śūnyatā dṛīṣṭitan asādhyān babhaṣre. M. K. 13.8.
- 11) Cf. Nirvītamabidhatavyam nirvṛitte cittagocare. Anutpannāniruddhā hi nirvānamiva dharmatā. Prasannapada p. 493.
- 12) Cf, "Nāgarjuna's philosophy" ed. K. V. Ramanan p. 259.
- 13) In dharmadhātu "dharma" stands for Nirvāna. It stands also for prajñāpāramitā which is the ultimate reality, the same as Nirvāna "Nāgarjuna's philosophy" ed. K. V. Ramanan p. 261.
- 14) As to these meanings of dhātu, I totally depend on K. V. Ramanan "Nāgarjuna's

- Philosophy” p. 261.
- 15) About dhātu in this classification see “The central conception of Buddhism” p. 9, its note and appendix II.
 - 16) If the term “dhātu” were used only to classify the elements of existence as the meaning of elements, it would be no use. The division of indriya, viśaya and vijñāna would be enough. But actually they use indriya, āyatana and dhātu. Āyatanas include indriya and viśayas and dhātus include indriya, viśaya and vijñāna.
 - 17) Cf. “Nāgarjuna’s philosophy” ed. K. V. Ramanan p. 261.
 - 18) About this problem we can consider two different levels of dharma-lakṣana. One is the unique, distinct, nature and capacity of a thing which we can examine to the end. The other is the unconditioned, undistinguished dharma which should be realized as dharma itself, dharmatā or dharmadhātu—Cf. “Nāgarjuna’s Philosophy” p. 259.
 - 19) Cf. Triṃśikā ed. S. Levi, p. 44.
 - 20) Mahā-vastu ed E. Senart (Paris 1882-97) Vol. II p. 341. 2, p. 397.2 Samādhirāja Sūtra (Royal Asiatic Society) fol. 1a, 1 Lankāvatāra-sūtra ed B. Nanjo, p. 299.
 - 21) Śata-sāhasrikā prajñā-pāramitā (Bibliotheca Indica) p. 64, 174, 682.
Aṣṭa-sāhasrikā prajñā-pāramitā (Bibliotheca Indica) p. 397.
Divyāvādāna ed E.B. Cowell and R. A. Neil p. 143, Saddharma-puṇḍarīka ed H. Kern and B. Nanjo p. 41.5, Lankāvatāra-sūtra, p. 256, Daśa-bhūmika-sūtra, ed. J. Rahder p. 97.
 - 22) Śata-sāhasrikā pra-pa. 1326, 137 3, 499, Aṣṭa-sāhasrikā pra-pa 281, 19, Daśa-bhūmika sūtra 95. 25, Mahāvīyutpatti I (p. 2a), Karuṇā Puṇḍarīka ed S. C. Das 9.11.
 - 23) Divyāvādāna 127. 13 ; 205, 120.
 - 24) Saddharma puṇḍarīka, 308. 9.
 - 25) Triṃśikā explains the Dharmakāya as the transformed āśraya (substratum) - Triṃśikā, p.44 and also see Āloka on the Abhisamayālaṅkārikā J. A. 1913. According to it, there are two kinds of Dharmakāya, one being the Bodhipaśika and the other dharmas, which are themselves pure and productive of clear knowledge (niṣpra-pāñcajñāātmanā) and the other the transformed āśraya of the same, which is then called Svabhāvakāya. About this note I quoted from N. Dutt “Mahāyāna Buddhism” p. 172.
 - 26) Chinese commentators on the Siddhi state that Dharma-kāya is the metaphysical principle of real citta and rūpa of the Tathāgata. It is the real nature of things and can be equated with Tathatā, Dharmadhātu or Tathāgatagarbha, see “Mahāyāna Buddhism” N. Dutt p. 173.
 - 27) Dharma-kāya refers to the pure ideal conceived in his enlightenment, not merely to his teachings, i. e., his ideal as expressed in words. Cf. “The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy”. p. 49
 - 28) About prajñā and prajñāpāramitā K. V. Ramanan describes in detail in his work “Nāgarjuna’s Philosophy” see especially p. 276.
 - 29) Prasannapada p. 358.
 - 30) About this meaning I have derived from K. V. Ramanan “Nāgarjuna’s Philosophy”. Index.
 - 31) Shogen Yamakami indicates this meaning in his “The systems of Buddhist Thought”. p. 254.
 - 32) T. R. V. Murti gives the meaning of “the sphere of the ultimate (Absolute)” in the Glossary of Sanskrit Terms of “The Central Philosophy of Buddhism”. p. 344.
 - 33) Unfortunately the Śanskrit text of this book, śraddhotpāda-sūtra is irrecoverably

- lost. Only we have two Chinese versions and two English translations, one by Dr. T. Suzuki, and the other by Rev. Timothy Richard. The significance of bhūta-tathatā can be seen mostly in this text.
- 34) "A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms" Buddhist Culture Service, Taiwan p. 331.
- 35) Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra 144-4f (by Bunyu-Nanjo 1923), cf "Studies in the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra" by Dr. D. T. Suzuki. p. 429, Glossary.
- 36) Hṛdaya and citta, See "The Awakening of Faith" by D. T. Suzuki. p. 53, Note 1.
- 37) D. T. Suzuki's translation. p. 53 "The Soul in itself, involving as it does, quintessence of the Mahāyāna, is Suchness (bhūtatahatā), but it becomes (in its relative or transitory aspect, through the law of Causation) birth and death (saṃsāra).
- 38) In this case bhūtatahatā is the about synonym with tathatā and bhutā. Th. Stcherbatsky also suggests in his work "Discourse on discrimination between middle and extremes (Madhyānta Vibhanga)" p. 179, note : "there is not much difference between tathatā and bhūta-tathatā,..."
- 39) Ibid. p. 55.
- 40) D. T. Suzuki, English translation p. 55-56.
- 41) Ibid. p. 69, Note 3.
- 42) Ibid. p. 69, Note 3.
- 43) D. T. Suzuki also suggests this connection in his "Studies in the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra". p. 341.
- 44) Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra. (with or without Sva). p. 2, line 7, 98-2, 228-4, 231-10, etc also see Suzuki's "Studies in the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra" Glossary p. 422.
- 45) "Nāgarjuna's Philosophy". p. 255.
- 46) According to Candrakīrti: - "tathābhāvo vikāritvam sadaiva sthāyitā" (The suchness of Reality (or true being) consists in its invariability, in its remaining for ever as it is) Prasānapada p. 116.
- 47) Tathāgata garbha is a state of suchness as containing every possible merit "Awakening of Faith" ed. D. T. Suzuki, Glossary.
- 48) "Thathā" means "thus". Tathāgata can be divided into tathā and gata, or into tathā and āgata : In the first case, gata is "gone" or "departed" and in the second case, if it is āgata it means "come" or "arrived". This problem has been much discussed by scholars but so far nothing conclusive has been reached. This, however, does not throw much light on the concept of Tathāgata. We can also comprehend it has "thus become" and also as the "one who realized truth and found path" : he is the "Truth finder" and "Path-finder" as B. M. Barua discusses (Studies in Buddhism p. 189)
- 49) This is stated in Mahāprajñāpāramitā-Śāstra (Nāgarjuna Philosophy p. 269 when the Bodhisattva realizes this reality (tathatā) he is called the Tathāgata (563b)
- 50) Aṣṭa sāhasrika prajñāpāramitā Sūtra (Bib. Indica) p. 94.
Also see "The Central Philosophy of Buddhism". T. R. V. Murti p. 224.
- 51) Catuḥ Śataka Vṛitti by Chandrakīrti p. 32. atita tathatā yadvat pratyutpannāpy anagata : sarvadharmaḥ tathā dṛṣṭaḥ tenoktaḥ sa tathāgataḥ.
- 52) Abhisamayālamkāraḥ G. O. S. Baroda p. 62.
- 53) Bodhi Carya Avatara Pañjika (Bibliotheca Indica) p. 590, buddhānām sattva-dhatoś ca Yenabhinnaṭvam arthataḥ : ātmanas ca paresām ca śamata tena te mata.
- 54) The interpretation of Tathāgata as the thusness of things is given in Aṣṭasāhasrika-prajñāpāramitā Sutrā ed. Rajendratara Mitra pp. 306-309.