

Chapter V

A Study of Differences between Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣika Schools of Buddhism on the Notion of Person

5.1 Introduction

In Buddhism 'person' embodies philosophy of each school, in practice a person is given so much importance that most of the time they remain silent about metaphysical discussions. The suffering of person, its causes, and how one ends this suffering are the basic problems for Buddhism. The moral philosophy is the path by which one can understand the twelve links that produce suffering, and achieve *Nirvāna*, which is the complete cessation of suffering. All Buddhist philosophical schools accept the Buddha's basic teaching of *Anātmanvāda* (Non-soul theory), *Anityam* (Non-permanent) and *Aniśwaratavam*, they interpreted these theories with partial or complete modification according to their own way of thinking, philosophy. Accordingly, the four main schools of Buddhism developed their concept of person. In this chapter my intention is to critically examine the concept of person, as developed in four schools of Buddhism, pertaining to the notions of dharma, morality and *Nirvāna*.

Vaibhāṣika suggested that the real existence of person is a collection of aggregates and denied the existence of self in person. For them self is only an idea (*viññaptisat*) that is a compound of *skandhas* and has no reality apart from them. Rejecting the Pudgalvādins and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika view about self, Vaibhāṣika said that all phenomena are selfless. They argue that if self is conceived as a person, it has to be identified independently, but there is nothing existing apart from the aggregates. Suffering arises from the mistaken view of the collection of impermanent aggregates. This mistaken view yields the false appearance that we are selves and of our aggregates as in possession of selves. *Nirvāna* can be achieved by understanding the Buddha's teaching of the selfless person, which leads to freedom from suffering in *samsāra*. Vasubandhu concludes his theory of person

by saying that a person is real by a way of conception, and yet it is a collection of aggregates.

Sautrāntika, like Vaibhāṣika, understands the selfless person to be constituted by the five aggregates, twelve *āyatans* and eighteen *dhātus*. But Sautrāntika does not believe in the real existence of person and also reduces the number of *dharma*s after critical examination. Sautrāntika is similar to Vaibhāṣika, nearly the same arguments are forwarded against the existence of a soul, they rejected the Vātsīputriyas and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory of self and said that belief in the soul arises by clinging to the soul, by which defilements are generated which produce suffering. *Nirvāna* is understood as the complete cessation of suffering, which is *abhāva*, and can be achieved by the knowledge of selfless person.

Yogācāra admits consciousness as the only reality; on this basis they developed their concept of person. Person is nothing other than a series of experiences. What we describe as real is an ever-changing flow of perception. *Dharma*s are not real; they have existence in relation to consciousness. Pure consciousness harbors no *dharma*s. Yogācāra rejects anything other than a continual transformation of consciousness (*vijñāna-pariṇāma*) to explain the transition from one state to another. While analyzing the consciousness, Yogācāra adds another two types of consciousness (*kliṣṭa manas* and *Ālaya-vijñāna*) in the list of six kinds of consciousness of Buddhism. *Ālaya-vijñāna* is the repository of the seeds left by the past karmic actions. These karmic seeds gradually come to fruition in the form of six consciousness-events. “Thus, when one become conscious of something, this is said to be a fruition consciousness (*vipāka-vijñāna*), being the coming to fruition of a previously developed karmic seed embedded within the store consciousness.”¹ Yogācāra

accepts ‘Three-Own-Being’ (*trīsvabhāva*) of a person on the basis of which he experiences the world. First is *Parikalpita Svabhāva*; this is the experience of a false picture of the world as consisting of subject and object. The second is the *Paratantra Svabhāva*; it is the experience of real nature of momentary *dharmas*. The last one is *Pariniṣpanna Svabhāva*, the perfect realm of experience; “it is the same causal flow of consciousness-events, but without the error and false attribution which constitute the *Parikalpita* realm.”²

For Yogācāra the experience of ignorance and enlightenment are both present in consciousness. Due to ignorance we construct the momentary perception into enduring subject and object, which leads to attachment and suffering. By the ‘revolution of foundation’ (*āśryappravṛtti*) one can purify the store-consciousness of all karmic defilement, it is the transformative experience of enlightenment and tantamount to liberation (*Nirvāna*).

The Mādhyamika School developed their concept of person on the basis of *Śūnyatā* theory. According to Mādhyamika, which means the dependence of things on each other, their having no nature or reality of their own (*nissvabhāvatva or śūnya*) (MKV 504). It is the universal relativity or the non-existence of anything-in-itself. Mādhyamikas do not admit the real existence of five aggregates (*skandhas*) and *dharmas* are relative and produced by cause. For them the cause and effect, substance and attribute, whole and part, subject and object etc. are mutually dependent, relative; hence they are not things-in-themselves. A person only has existence in the sphere of *saṃvṛtisat*, in *Parmārthika* stage it has no existence.

Nāgārjuna using his Dialectical method, criticized different *Brāhmanical* schools regarding their belief in an eternal existence of self, other Buddhist schools who regard self is identical with *skandhas*, and another Buddhist conception of self as a conventional name (*prajñaptisat*) for a series of discrete momentary states (*skandhas*). After examining these views Nāgārjuna concludes “The self is not different from the states, nor identical with them; (there) is no self without the states, nor it is considered nonexistence” (MK XXVII, 8). “It shows that Mādhyamika position regarding self is different from the teaching of Buddha; on several occasion he seems to have asserted the existence of the self.”³ Nāgārjuna says “The self does exist the Buddha have declared; they have taught the ‘no-self’ too; they have (finally) taught that there is neither self nor non-self” (MK XVIII, 6).

According to Mādhyamika, the root cause of pain and imperfection is *avidyā* or the tendency to conceptualize the real. Mistaking as this or that do we get attached to things and evince aversion towards them. Freedom comes from the cessation of acts and the roots of evil which can be achieved by the *prajñā*, the real understanding of the *Śūnyatā*, the universal relativity of things.

5.2 Existence of Person: In Different Schools of Buddhism

Regarding the existence of person disagreement is found among the Buddhist schools. James Darlinger says “Although most Indian Buddhist Philosophers agree that what exists can enter into causal relationship with other things, they do not define existence in this way. Different conceptions of existence play a crucial role in Buddhist debates about the existence of person.”⁴

Vaibhāṣika admits the existence of *dharmas* (elements) in three phases of time: past, present and future. Hence, person has real existence as it is constituted by *dharmas*. However, it is not permanent or eternal as it undergoes the phenomena of change, everything is momentary. Vasubandhu from the Vaibhāṣika position says “our ultimate existence-the existence we possess apart from being conceived is the existence of the bodies and minds in dependence upon which we are conceived.”⁵

For Sarvāstivāda an element in itself means that the element exists potentially eternal. Accordingly, “the Sarvāstivādins maintain that all elements exist on two different planes, the real essence of the element (*dharma svabhāva*) and its momentary manifestation (*dharma-lakṣana*). The first exists always in the past, present and future. It is not eternal (*nitya*) because eternality means absence of change, but it represents the potential appearance of element into phenomenal existence, and its appearance as well. The potentially is existing forever (*sarvadā-asti*).”⁶ By this Sarvāstivāda tries to synthesis the problem of momentariness and the real nature of elements. Sarvāstivāda maintains four characteristics of conditioned elements: birth (*jāti*), persistence (*sthiti*), decay (*jarā*) and impermanence (*anityatvā*).

Sautrāntika does not admit the Vaibhāṣika point that *dharmas* exist in three phases of time. *Dharmas* exist but we do not know them directly. Sautrāntika restores the *dharma* theory to the notion of a series (*saṃtāna* or *pravāha*). Being a critical realist, Sautrāntika rejects the Sarvāstivāda view and holds that the so-called characteristics of conditioned elements have no real existence. “Continuous existence of entity (*dravya*) is fragment of imagination. They are series rather than to the moment.”⁷

Mādhyamikas deny the ultimate existence of person because they deny the existence of a collection of aggregates (*skandhs*). For them everything is *sūnya* or void. Candrakīrti claims that persons are conventional realities. By the *Sūnyatā* theory Nāgārjuna rejects the Sarvāstivāda view. “He showed that the very concept of existence and non-existence is wrought with such contradiction that very concepts lose its meaning and significance. An entity what has arisen dependently suffers from the lack of being (*svabhāva*). The essence of being in an entity denotes its emptiness (*sūnyatā*).”⁸

Candrakīrti following Nāgārjuna says that if we ultimately exist, and so, cannot enter into the causal relationships with other phenomena, for which reason we could not come to be, cause to be, change, or perform any of the functions we as persons, are believe to perform. He thinks that we are known to exist only as part of the conceptual scheme that creates us.⁹

An analysis of the four schools of Buddhism reveals that ‘person’ for all schools is a conventional reality under the universal change. It is because that all schools believe in momentariness (*pratityasamutpāda*) theory. Suffering comes from ignorance about the real nature of *dharmas* and worldly objects. It is the *prajñā* that makes enlightenment, unveils the real nature of the things and ceases the suffering and one can attain *Nirvāna*.

5.3 Critical Analysis of *Dharma* Theory in Four Schools

Dharma is a very important notion in Buddhist philosophy. In general *dharma* refers to the categories that constitute the physical world and the person. However, different schools of Buddhism have given different interpretations regarding the nature of *dharma* and its kinds on the basis of their own philosophy. Sarvāstivāda maintains the real

existence of *dharma* and admits that the world (*Loka*) and objects are combination of *dharmas* which combine into matter (*Rūpa*) and mind (*Citta*), and the personality phenomenon (*pudgala*). Except the three unconstituted (*Asaṃskṛta*) *dharmas*, *Ākāśa* (*Anāvṛti*), *Pratisaṃkhyā Nirodha* and *Apratisaṃkhyā Nirodha*, which are pure in nature, the other 72 *dharmas* are under the existence and decay. They are causes of suffering and subject to suffering. The actual Sarvāstivāda position on *dharma* is that they are real in the present and meeting point of past and future.

Vaibhāṣika is of the opinion that *dharmas* exist in three phases of time. They argue that if *dharmas* do not exist in past and future the learned holy *Śravaka* would not take them into consideration of them. Furthermore, if past and future *dharmas* do not exist, mental consciousness which has them for its object would not arise. Moreover, it is because of the past that good and bad actions give result in the future (AKB V- 25a-b).

Sautrāntika, criticizing the Vaibhāṣika position questions, if past and future things exist as they are present why they are thus qualified as past and future? Also, if it always exists why not *dharmas* always exercise its activity? It cannot be said that it sometimes produces and sometime does not produce its action. If the unique self nature of a *dharma* continues to exist, how can this *dharma* be non-arisen or destroyed? If one does not admit that the *dharma* exists after having been non-existent and no longer exist after having existed, the three time periods cannot be established (AKB V-27a-c).

Sautrāntika claims that when the Blessed One taught of the existence of past and future, it means “past action exists and future results exist”. “Past is that which is existent and future is that which given its cause, will exist. But they do not exist as substantial entities

(*dravyatas*) as does the present.”¹⁰ Regarding the claims of Sarvāstivāda, if past and future *dharma*s do not exist, how they can be the objects of consciousness, Sautrāntika argues that because of memory a person remembers the past things and foresees the future as coming into existence.

Yogācāra advocates an idealistic view and maintains consciousness as the only reality, and that the objective world is only an appearance. For them *dharma* has no real essence, like the objects have no independent existence. *Dharma*s are not real; they have existence as pertaining to consciousness. Diversification of consciousness moment to moment cannot be explained without an object. For the individuality of consciousness *dharma*s are required. Thus, the external *dharma*s pertain to consciousness only in its infected or bifurcated aspect; they are evolved only in its phenomenal state. But for Yogācāra, these *dharma*s have no ultimate reality; they belong only to the empirical realm.

The fundamental doctrine of the Mādhyamika School is *Śūnyatā* that expresses “the ever-changing state of the phenomenal world or absolute unrestrictedness of the noumenal side of the universe.”¹¹ Thus, in the phenomenal world nothing is permanent. Everything produced depends upon cause, so they are changeable. The Mādhyamikas do not admit the real existence of *dharma*s. “There is no *dharma* which is not produced by cause and condition. Therefore no *dharma* exist which can be called not ever-changing or *aśūnya*” (MK XXIV-19). Aryadeva says that whatever is produced by cause and condition is *śūnyatā*, as they are limited by the law of causation. They are devoid of any particularity, hence they are *śūnyatā*. Criticizing Sarvāstivāda, Nāgārjuna says that if any phenomenon possesses its own self essence, it can neither be produced nor destroyed; such a thing is independent of cause and condition. But all things are dependent on cause and condition;

they cannot possess self-essence (*svabhāva*) (MK XXIV-16). Nāgārjuna claims that both *Samskṛta* and *Asamskṛta dharmas* are relative and existence of the latter are dependent on the former. As they are relative they are also *Śūnya*. “The real state of dharma is like *Nirvāna*, indescribable, incomprehensible, without birth and death. It is beyond the reach of thought or language for it is Absolute” (MK XVIII-7).¹²

Mādhyamika also criticizes the Vaibhāṣika theory of *āyatana*, *skandha* and *dhātu*. They argue that *āyatanas* are as discrete and momentary, emerging and subsiding without any activity or agent. From the phenomenal point of view to transcription of what obtains in everyday experience, their existence can be accepted but from the noumenal point of view they have no real existence. “The correct Mādhyamika stand point is that the modes by themselves cannot offer an adequate explanation of phenomena. Substance too must be accepted. Both, however, are of empirical validity only (*samvṛta*).”¹³

Skandhas have two distinctions: primary and secondary. *Rūpa (bhūta)* is primary and its derivatives are secondary. Likewise, *viññāna* as citta is pure consciousness or mind and other *vedanā* etc. are mentals (*caittas*). Nāgārjuna criticize *skandha* from two points: first, the division into primary and secondary is untenable; and secondly the causal principle which is at the basis of this classification is unintelligible (MK IV 2, 3).

The same criticism applies for *dhātus*, “they do not have a *svabhāva*, an immutable absolute nature of their own. Without *svabhāva*, when there is nothing as itself, how can there be an other; for an other is but the *svabhāva* of the different (MKV pp 262-6).”¹⁴

5.3.1 Kinds of Dharmas

The numbers of *dharmas* differ in various Buddhist schools. Sarvāstivāda or Vaibhāṣika admits 75 kinds of *dharmas* under two headings: 72 *Saṃskṛta dharmas* and 3 *Asaṃskṛta dharmas*. The 72 *Saṃskṛta Dharmas* are classified under four different categories-(a) *Rūpa* (matter) 11 items, (b) *Citta* (mind), (c) *Caitta* or *Cittasamprayukta* (mind derivatives) 46 items and (d) *Citta Viprayukta* (mind dissociated) 14 items.

After critically examining the view of Sarvāstivāda, Sautrāntika reduced the number of elements (*dharmas*) to forty three from seventy five. First they omit *avijñapti* from *Rūpaskandha*. They objected the existence of ten *Parittakleśas*, *Middha* (absent-mindedness), *Vitarka* (discussion), *Vicāra* (judgment), from the list of 49 mental states which came under the *Citta Samprayukta Dharma* of *Saṃskāraskandha*. Sautrāntika also eliminated 14 *Cittaviprayuktasaṃskāra* from the *Saṃskāraskandha* and rejected three kinds Pure (*asaṃskṛta*) *dharmas*: space, *pratisaṃkhyānirodha* and *apratisaṃkhyānirodha*.

Sautrāntikas do not accept *avijñapti* as *rūpa* and argue that the term ‘*avijñapti*’ merely connotes/denotes inactivity, an absence, so it does not involve any karmic result. They do not admit past factors, since such a stream cannot exist. Finally, such kinds of karma cannot be called material as they are unmanifested matter and to be matter it has to be destroyed at the next moment.

Sautrāntika said that *avijñapti* is not *rūpa* as it is devoid of resistance. According to Vaibhāṣika, *avijñapti* is produced from *vijñapti*, bodily and vocal action, thus *avijñapti* is *rūpa*. Therefore, *avijñapti* is not subject to modification, and it should perish as *vijñapti*

perishes. Vaibhāṣika said *avijñapti* is *rūpa* as its constituent points of support are the primary elements. According to this principle, Sautrāntika remarked, the five kinds of consciousness would be *rūpa*, for their point of support is *rūpa* (AKB 71).

Vaibhāṣika holds that the each atom of colour that constitutes shade exists dependent upon a tetrad of primary elements. “And even supposing that the shadow is dependent upon the tree, since the shadow is dependent on the primary elements which are proper to it, and these are dependent upon the tree.”¹⁵ The comparison of the shadow with *avijñapti* is inadmissible. “The Vaibhāṣika admits that *avijñapti* does not perish when the primary elements which serve as its point of support perish” (AKB iv 4c-d). Thus Sautrāntika refutation is worthless. Vasubandhu support the second explanation of Vaibhāṣika.

Upekṣā, for Vaibhāṣika is a mental indifference, because of which the mind remains equal, even free from modification. Sautrāntika objected that all mind associated with attention and by nature it ‘inflexion’. Then how can all good mind associated with equanimity, which non-inflexion? Same mind cannot have the mental states, modification and non-modification (AKB 192).

Sautrāntika omits torpor or inactive (*styāna*) from the list of *Kleśamahābuūmika*. They explain the omission: “torpor should be named; but it is not named because it is favorable to *samādhi*. In fact, they claim, person with a torpid disposition (*styānacārīta*) or dull person realizes meditation sooner than do dissipated persons.”¹⁶

According to Vaibhāṣika, *vitarka* and *vicāra* are gross and subtle states of mind. Sautrāntika says that *vitarka* and *vicāra* are the ‘factors of voice’. In fact the *Sūtras* say “It is after having examined, after having judged (*vitarkya*, *vicārya*) that one speaks, not

with having examined, not without having judged” (*Majjhima* I 301, *Samyutta* V 293). The factors of voice are called *vitarka*; those that are subtle are called *vicāras*. From this explanation it is clear that *vitarka* and *vicāra* are not two distinct *dharmas*, but rather a collection of mind and mental states which provoke speech, which are sometimes gross and sometimes subtle.¹⁷

The ten *Prittakleśabhūmiks* admitted by Sarvāstivāda are rejected by Sautrāntika, who holds that they are the out flowing of the *kleśas*, and hence are not separate *dharmas*.

Sautrāntika also rejects the existence of the 14 kinds of *Cittaviprayukta saṃskāras* admitted by Sarvāstivāda with proper justification (AKB 206-237).

Sarvāstivāda maintains that only conditioned things have cause and result (AKB II 5c). Unconditioned things have neither cause nor result. “Any unconditioned thing is *kāranahetu*, for it does not create an obstacle to the arising of any result, for being outside of time, it can neither project nor produce a result” (AKB II 55d4).

Sautrāntika denied Sarvāstivāda’s view and said that an unconditioned thing is a cause. They affirm that the three kinds of unconditioned things are not real. They are not distinct and real entities (AKB II 55d iii).¹⁸

(a) Space is solely the absence of any tangible thing, the absence of a resistant body.

Persons say, in their obscurity, that there is space when they do not encounter any obstacle.

(b) *Pratisamkhyānirodha* is the absence of any other defilement or any other existence, by reason of the force of the consciousness.

- (c) When independent of the force of consciousness (*pratisamkhyā*) and by reason of the mere absence of causes there is an absence of arising *dharmas*, this is what is called *apratīsamkhyānirodha*.

Yogācāra accepts all the *dharmas* admitted by Sarvāstivāda and added 25 more *dharmas* to their list. The one hundred *dharmas* of Yogācāra can be classified into five headings: (a) the *citta-dharmas* (8), (b) the *caittas* (51), (c) *rūpa dharmas* (11), (d) *citta-viprayuktasamskāradharmas* (24) and (e) *asṃskṛa dharmas* (6).

We can point out some important differences between Yogācāra and Hinayāna, basically Sarvāstivāda, regarding the number of *dharmas*.¹⁹

- (i) Regarding consciousness Yogācāra and Hinayāna put forward different views. For Vijñānavāda consciousness is the only reality and also one of the ultimate factors of existence. Hinayāna admits consciousness as *dharma*, not the only reality, and enumerates six kinds of consciousness produced from the six sense organs, including *manas*. Yogācāra accepted these six kinds of consciousness and added other two consciousnesses: *kliṣṭa manas* (subconscious *vijñāna*) and *Ālaya*.
- (ii) *Caittas* are, for Sarvāstivāda, really distinct realities from *citta*. They are ultimate existence, independent and absolute. But for Yogācāra they are merely the phases in which the complexity of consciousness is exhibited. In the Sarvāstivāda 46 numbers of *Caittas* approved, Yogācāra added another five to make it 51.

- (iii) The ten Mahābhūmikas of Sarvāstivāda are analyzed by Vijñānavāda in to two groups: *Sarvatraga* and *Viniyata caittas*, and each group contains five members. According to Vijñānavāda, the later groups are not as universal in scope as the former; they are peculiar to some kinds of consciousness.
- (iv) In the list of the ten kinds of *Kuśala Mahābhūikas* of Vaibhāṣika Yogācāra added *amoha* to make it eleven.
- (v) Sarvāstivāda admits 18 kinds of *Akuśala caittas* which were increased by Yogācāra to 26 and divided into two classes: *kleśa* (6) and *upakleśa* (20). From the Sarvāstivādin list of *kleśa* only *Moha* is classed as a *kleśa* by Yogācāra and in their list they added another five: *rāga*, *pratigha*, *māna*, *dṛk* (*dṛṣṭi*), and *vicikitsā*. In the Yogācāra's list of *upakleśa* includes Sarvāstivāda 10 *upakleśa*, 2 *akuśla mahābhūmikas* and 5 *kleśas*. There are another three (*muṣitā*, *vikṣepa*, *asamprajanya*) which are not figured in the Sarvāstivāda classification of *akuśala caittas*.
- (vi) The Yogācāra in their list of *aniyata dharma* reduces four *dharmas* from the Sarvāstivāda list. The excluded *dharmas* of *aniyata* of Sarvāstivāda are elevated to the rank of *kleśa* by Yogācāra.
- (vii) Yogācāra, like Sarvāstivāda, accepts eleven kinds of *rūpa* with similar explanation. Only *avijñaptirūpa* is replaced by *rūpa* included in *dharmadhātu*.
- (viii) Sarvāstivāda admits 14 kinds of *citta Viprayukta-saṃskāra-dharma* where Yogācāra adds another 10 to make it 24.
- (ix) Sarvāstivāda accepts three *Asaṃskṛta dharmas*, Yogācāra increases their number to six. They add *Acala-nirodh*, *Samjñā-vedayṭ-nirodha* and *Tathatā*

in their list. Among them the *Tathatā* is very important; it is the ultimate essence of everything, the unconditioned absolute.

5.4 Critical Analysis of Morality in Hinayāna and Mahāyāna

In Buddhism morality is given utmost importance as a way towards the cessation of suffering and achievement of *Nirvāna*. Leading a strict disciplined life along with *prajñā* gives way to liberation. Hinayāna and Mahāyāna both insist on cultivating good virtues to lead a moral life. Regarding morality both schools offer almost the same description, but some modifications and detailed elaborations are found in Mahāyāna school. On this basis we can point out some differences among two schools.

The Hinayāna threefold discipline is modified and elaborated by Mahāyanists into a six folds *Pāramitā* discipline. The early Buddhist moral discipline of *śīla*, *samādhi* and *prajñā* are elaborated in Mahāyāna by addition of another three virtues: *kṣānti*, *virya* and *dhyāna*. “This gives greater prominence to the preparatory stage, and emphasizes certain virtues as charity and forbearance, and enjoins ceaseless and enthusiastic effort as essential for attaining *Buddhahood*.”²⁰

The Hinayānists recognize four stages of progress towards the attainment of *Nirvāna*: *Sotāpatti*, *Sakadāgāmi*, *Anāgāmi* and *Arhatta*. They mention specifically that attainments of and adept as they pass from one stage to another, obtaining in the last stage, the complete knowledge, which according to them is the same as that attained by Buddha. The Mahāyāna recognizes ten stages of progress (*bhūmis*), which a *Bodhisattva* possesses in order to have complete emancipation and become a Buddha.

Mahāyānists hold that to attain highest knowledge and *Nirvāna* insight into *Pudgalaśūnyatā* and *Dharmaśūnyatā* are essential. Accordingly, they divide their stages of progress into two sections. To realize the *Pudgalaśūnyatā*, one has to acquire the first six *bhūmis* (*Pramudita*, *Vimalā*, *Prabhākari*, *Arciṣmati*, *Sudurjayā*, and *Abhimukhi*), and in having the last four *bhūmis* one acquires the real knowledge of *Dharmaśūnyatā*. Hinayānists admit only *pudgalaśūnyatā*, which is achieved by the four stages, they do not admit *dharmaśūnyatā*. The last four *bhūmis*, *Dūraṅgama*, *Acalā*, *Sādhumati*, and *Dharmamegha* are the additions of Mahāyānists, the cultivating of which allows the Bodhisattva to attain the highest knowledge (*paramārthasattva*), the real *Nirvāna*.

For both Hinayāna and Mahāyāna the journey from the state of a layman to an *Ārya* is a difficult path. Mahāyānists insist on developing Bodhicitta before one can be entitled to commence the practice of *Bhūmis*. “While the Hinayānists hold that one must understand the Four Truths and have faith in the teaching of Buddha, or in other words, he must complete the fifteen *kṣaṇas* of the *Darśanamāga* to be able to drift himself the stream (*sota*) of sanctification- the Eight Fold Path (*Smayukta* V-347).”²¹

Mahāyānists pre-*Bodhisattva* is divided into two stages: *Gotravihāra* and *Abhimukticyāvihāra*. *Gotravihāra* is a noble person, endowed with the qualities, high aims, and good *dharma*s of a *Bodhisattva*. He performs good deeds naturally with a certain amount of wisdom and feeling of charity. *Abhimukticyāvihāra* is the first attempt made by *Bodhisattva* to develop *bodhicitta*. In this stage the aspirant practices *bhāvanā* to a limited degree and is capable of retraining what is required. “He may have reverential faith (*śradhā*), but no innate knowledge of truth. He possesses only

limited *śrutamayi* and *cintāmayi prañā* and he follows the *Bodhisattva* path with great difficulty and sluggish knowledge (*dhandha-abhijñā*).”²²

Hinayāna maintains that in the *prthagajana* stage a person, due to false knowledge, attaches themselves to things and thereby produces *kāma* (desire), *bhāva* (desire for existence) and *avijjā* (ignorance) (*Majjhima* I PP7, 239). Hence the *Prthagajana* must possess some *kuśalamula* before he can enter in the path of an *Ārya*. *Gotrabhū* is the next stage of *Prthagajana* that makes one fit to commence the works which make a person an *Ārya*. “*Gotrabhū* is a person who is on the way to *Arhathood* and may be in possession of one of the eight *mārgas* and *phalas*.”²³

The ascetics who are between *Gotrabhū* and *Sotāpanna* are divided into two classes: *Sradhānusāri* and *Dharmānusāri*. The former is of mild (*mṛdu*) and the latter is of sharp (*tikṣna*) faculties. *Śradhānūnusāri* follows the *dharma* through faith in their spiritual guide, and the *Darmānusāris* practice the *Bodhipaksika* dharma through the study of the scriptures (*dvādaśāṅga*) (*Kośa* VI-29). “The former endowed with the faculty of faith (*sradhindriyam*) in a great measure and the latter endowed with the faculty of *paññā* (*paññindriyan*) with great measure. Both are make eligible to enter the *āryamārga*, *Sotāpatti-phala*.”²⁴

5.4.1 Arhat and Bodhisattva

Arhat and *Bodhisattva* are two important stages of a person on the way to *Nirvāna* according to the moral philosophy of the Hinayāna and Mahāyāna respectively. According to Hinayāna after completing the preparatory stages the ascetic enters into the fourth stage of progress, and this is called *Arhatta*. Hence, for Hinayānists *Arhathood* is

the highest stage of moral life and by attaining this stage he acquires complete knowledge (*prajñā, pudgalaśūnyatā*), which is same as that attained by Buddha. For Mahāyānists, the *Bodhisattva* is understood as a more complex stage than *Arhat*, and is attained by cultivating ten *Bhūmis* after completing preparatory stages. The adept possesses both knowledge of *Pudgalaśūnyatā* and *Dharmaśūnyatā*. *Arhat* and *Bodhisattva* have been given equal status by Hinayāna and Mahāyāna in their respective ideology and admit that a person attaining this stage can achieve the highest goal, *Nirvāna*. We find some basic points of difference regarding the two concepts.

The goal of the *Arhat* is individual *Nirvāna*, but the *Bodhisattva* places importance more on others *Nirvāna* than his own. “While an *Arhat* exert for his individual liberation and is content with its achievement, a *Bodhisattva* is moved to place the liberation of other as the primary goal of his spiritual exertion in preference to which his individual liberation comes to have a secondary place.”²⁵

The Hinayāna concept of *Arhat* according to the *Mahāyāna*, is a lower ideal of perfection and is purely negative, “the cessation of suffering (*kleśāvaraṇa-nivṛttiḥ*) and *Nirvāna* is conceived by them is almost a blank state of annihilation.”²⁶ *Bodhisattva* is considered the perfect being that is realized by the spiritual discipline. In all beings *Bodhi* implicitly exists. It is a positive ideal of the unity of all beings as the Buddha.

The *Arhat* is satisfied with achieving his own salvation; he is not necessarily and actively interested in the welfare of other. “There is even a lurking fear that the world would take hold of him if he tarried here too long.”²⁷ The *Bodhisattva* first makes the salvation of his own good, and then he, by his own free choice, works for the good of others and tries to

make them free from suffering. The salvation of a *Bodhisattva* is not dependent on the freedom of all beings; his freedom is full and complete by itself but he condescends to raise others to his level. “There is nothing which the *Bodhisattva* cannot sacrifice for the good of others. He dedicates his present and future lives unreservedly in the service of all beings.”²⁸

5.5 A Critical Analysis of *Nirvāna*

In Buddhism *Nirvāna* means cessation of suffering and this suffering is produced from ignorance. Regarding the nature and attainment of *Nirvāna* different schools advocate different views. Vaibhāṣika maintains that *Nirvāna* is real, good and eternal. As it is an *Asaṃskṛta dharma*, it has real existence and it can be achieved by following certain disciplines (*śīla*, *samādhi* and *prajñā*). In *Abhidharmakośa*, from the stand point of Vaibhāṣika, Vasubandhu describes *Nirvāna* as one of the *Asaṃskṛtas* (unconstituted). Furthermore in opposition to Sautrāntika he says that *mārga* leads to the attainment or possession of *Viśaṃyoga* (disconnection), or *Nirvāna* and that it is self existent and not the fruits of *mārga* (Kośa II-5). *Viśaṃyoga* or *Pratisaṃkhyānirodha* is a dharma, the nature of which is real and inexpressible; only the *Āryas* realize it inwardly and individually. “It is an entity (*dravya*), real, good, eternal and distinct from other.”²⁹

Nirvāna for Sautrāntika is only the cessation of suffering, hence it is *abhāva* (absence of passion etc), and a result produced by the *mārga*. *Nirvāna* is not real or eternal. *Pratisaṃkhyānirodha* is destruction of present *anuśayas* (desires) and the non-origination of any further *anuśayas* that are produced from the arising of knowledge (*pratisaṃkhyā*). *Apratisaṃkhyānirodha* is the absence or non-origination of dharma on account of the

complete absence of cause independent of knowledge. In reality both of them have no real existence.

The Mādhyamika position on *Nirvāna* is different from the Hinayāna. For them *Nirvāna* is beyond the limits of *bhāva* or *abhāva*. “According to Mādhyamika, *Nirvāna* is that indefinable essence which can neither be extinguished as, e.g. a desire, nor which can be attained as, e.g. a reward for renunciation, nor which can be annihilated, as, e.g. all the active elements of life, nor which is eternal, as, e.g. an absolute principle, which cannot really disappear, nor which can be produced. *Nirvāna* really means the Quiescence of all plurality (*Prapancopaśama*).”³⁰

The Vaibhāṣika maintains that *Nirvāna* is not mere negation; it is a *dharma* in which there is the absence of *Samskāras*; in itself it is a positive entity. It is the destruction of *kleśa* by *prajñā* and freedom from suffering. Nāgārjuna criticizes Vaibhāṣika’s position that *Nirvāna* is *bhāva*. He argues that *Nirvāna* cannot be a *bhāva* and *asaṃskṛta* (*anutpāda*) at once. For that very reason “it cannot be taken as a destruction of *kleśas* and karma superventing at a particular stage in the course of things. *Nirvāna* would then become transitory and accidental (conditioned as it is by cause) (MK-XXV 5-9).”³¹ The Mādhyamika points out that if *kleśas* are real they cannot be destroyed. “Nāgārjuna says that Hinayānist believe on the *Nirvāna* is unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*), and yet a positive entity (*bhāva*) amounts to self-contradiction, for a positive entity which is not dependent on conditions cannot be discovered.”³²

Nalinaksha Dutta, in his book “*Aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism and its Relation to Hinayāna*”³³ points out some important Sarvāstivādin criticism to Sautrāntika concept of *Nirvāna*.

- (a) Criticizing Sautrāntika view that *Nirvāna* is simply the non-production (*anutpāda*) of *dharma* Sarvāstivādin argues that in *Samyukta Āgama* (26.2), it is said that by practicing five faculties, faith etc. one can abandon *duḥkha* past, present and future. In fact this abandonment refers to *Nirvāna* which is a future *dharma*, and not a past or present *dharma*. Sautrāntikas do not agree with the Sarvāstivāda and interpret the use of ‘abandonment’ as referring to the abandoning of passion (*kleśa*) relating to *duḥkha* past and present, which produces in us some germs to originate future passion. By abandoning the past and present *duḥkha* we are abandoning the germ for future *duḥkha*.
- (b) Sarvāstivāda asked why, if the *Pratisamkhyānirodh* or *Nirvāna* is non-existent is mentioned as one of the Truth. The Sautrāntika answers that truth (*satya*) is taken in the sense of “not-inexact” (*aviparita*). The *Ārya* realize what exists and what does not exist in a “not-inexact” manner.
- (c) Sautrāntikas criticizes Sarvāstivādin’s theory that unconditioned things are real by saying it is unreasonable. Sarvāstivāda argues that they say the unconditioned can neither be apprehended by senses (*pratyakṣa*), nor by inference.
- (d) Sautrāntika asked if saying *Nirodha* is a thing-in-itself like ‘*duḥkhasya nirodha*,’ can be justified. Sarvāstivādin replied that destruction is a thing in itself. *Nirodha* with reference to a thing indicates ‘obtaining possession’ (*prāpti*) of the ‘destruction’ at the moment when one is disposed of the thing.

- (e) Sarvāstivādins ask Sautrāntika if *Nirvāna* is non-existence, only *abhāva*, then what is the thing obtained by a *bhikṣu* in this life? The Sautrāntika explains that a *bhikṣu* in *Nirvāna* attains a state in which neither passion (*kleśa*) nor a new existence is possible.
- (f) Sautrāntika referring to *Samyukta* (13.5) argues that *Nirvāna* is the destruction of and detachment from *duḥkha*, hence it is *abhāvamātara*. Sarvāstivādins, criticizing Sautrāntika, states that the passage refers to *Nirvāna* as real, in which there is no appearance (*aprādurbhāva*) of *duḥkha*.
- (g) Referring to *Abhidharma* Sautrāntika says that the *Asaṃskṛta dharmas* are called *avastuka dharmas*. The term ‘*avastuka*’ signifies for them ‘unreal’ without true nature. Sarvāstivāda replied that the term ‘*avastuka*’ signifies that which has no cause. The unconditioned, although real, being always devoid of any activity, is neither subject to any cause which reduces them nor any fruit produced by them.

Nirvāna, according to the Hinayāna consists of liberation from the three kinds of *duḥkhatā*, is identical to the three *laukikadhātus*. It is obtained by realizing *anityatā*, *duḥkhatā*, *anātmatā* as well as *pratityasamutpannatā* of the world. Mahāyānists claim that realization of non-existence of a soul and the existence of *dharmas* by Hinayānists lead only some distance towards the Truth; in real sense *Nirvāna* cannot be attained by them. Without understanding the *Dharma-nairātmya* one cannot attain *Nirvāna*.

The *Nirvāna* of Hinayāna is only the removal of *Kleśāvarana*, not *Jñeyāvarana*. “The realization of two forms of *Nairātmya* is needed for the removal of the two screens (*āvarana*) viz. that of passion (*kleśa*) and hindering true knowledge (*Jñeya*).”³⁴ The passion like desire, attachment etc can be eliminated by the realization of non-existence

of self, because they are aroused on account of a belief in a self. The realization of the things of this world (*dharma-nairātmya*) removes the screen over true knowledge. Real *Nirvāna* is attained according to Mahāyāna only after removal of both the screens (*āvarana*). Hīnayānist remove only *kleśāvarana*; hence they attain only partial *Nirvāna*.

But Hīnayānist, against Mahāyāna claims that they also remove *Jñeyāvarana*. “They content that by the removal of the screen of action (*karmāvarana*), of the effect of karma (*vipākāraṇa*) and of afflictions (*kleśāvarana*), the *Arhat* attains full knowledge without any veil (*anāvarana*). They completely eradicate from their mind the *āsavas* including *avijjāsava*.”³⁵

Another important point of difference between the two schools, as discussed by Stcherbatsky, is: “According to Hīnayāna, *Nirvāna* means a veritable change of the discrete, conditioned existences (*saṃskṛta dharmas*) and defilements (*kleśas*) into unconditioned (*asṃskṛta*) and undefiled *dharmas*. The Mādhyamika says that *Nirvāna* does not mean a change in the objective order, the change is only subjective. It is not the world that we have to change, but only ourselves. If the *kleśas* (defilements) and the *saṃskṛta dharmas* (conditioned existences) were ultimately real, no power on earth could change them.”³⁶

Some other points of difference regarding the concept of *Nirvāna* in Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna are:³⁷

1. Hīnayānist maintain that *Nirvāna* exists, eternal (*nitya*), blissful (*sukha*) and pure.

The Yogācāra subscribes to this statement when they identify *Apratiṣṭhita Nirvāna* with *Dharmakāya*. But in a strict sense Mahāyānist do not predicate

such qualities. For them *Nirvāna* is beyond all predication and hence cannot be called *nitya*, *anitya* and so forth.

2. Hinayānists consider *Nirvāna* a thing to be acquired (*prāptam*) while Mahāyānists consider it to be unobtainable (*asamprātam*).
3. Hinayāna defines *Nirvāna* as a *lokottara* (transcendental) state, and that it is the higher possible state conceivable by them. Mahāyāna recognizes *Nirvāna* is a state higher than *lokottara*, in this state *Sarvajñatā* (omniscience) is obtained. Yogācāra claims that Hinayānists attain only *Vimuktikāya* or *mokṣa*, while the Mahāyānists attain *Dharmakāya* and *Savajñātva*.
4. Hinayāna admits two forms of *Nirvāna-Pratisamkhyā* and *Apratisamkhyā* where Yogācārin add to them *Prakṛtisuddha-Nirvāna* and *Apratiṣṭhita-Nirvāna*.
5. The Hinayānists think that *Nirvāna* is the opposite of *samsāra*. Nāgārjuna says there is no difference between *Nirvāna* and *samsāra*.

Thus, regarding the concept of person all four schools offer nearly same views in rejecting a permanent entity in person. Existence of *dharma* in time is different in different schools according to their philosophy which made a difference in the existence of person in the schools. However different numbers of *dharmas*, which constitute a person, are given differently by four schools. In the context of moral life Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣika advocate same view and Mahāyāna morality is slightly modified and elaborated by sixfold *pāramitā* discipline. Vaibhāṣika maintains that *Nirvāna* is real, good and eternal, but for Sautrāntika *Nirvāna* is only the cessation of suffering, hence it is *abāva* (absence of passion etc). In contrast to the Hinayāna, the Mādhyamika maintains that *Nirvāna* is beyond the limits of *bhāva* or *abhāva*. From the discussion, it is clear that

different schools accept Buddha's main teachings but some modifications are done to develop their philosophy. Accordingly we find differences among four schools of Buddhism regarding the concept of person.

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