



Nāgārjuna's devotional practices: a closer look at the *Paramārthastava*

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Introduction

The art-historical, epigraphic and textual evidence from the centuries surrounding Nāgārjuna provides overwhelming support for the claim that devotion and visions of the Buddha were dominant concerns among Buddhists in India, both monastic and lay.¹ In fact, the evidence is overwhelming that during the centuries surrounding Nāgārjuna India was experiencing a wave of devotionism. It is in this environment that in the *Ratnāvalī*, verses 231-2, Nāgārjuna suggests to his addressee, the king, to construct images of Buddha and stūpas² and in verse 465 to worship in the presence of an image or stūpa.³ Again, it is in this environment that *Niraupamyastava*, 23, mentions *bhakti* in the same verse with seeing the Buddha.⁴ Two more hymns attributed to Nāgārjuna refer explicitly to the practice of devotion: the *Paramārthastava*, 2,⁵ and the *Stutyāfitastava*, 1.⁶ Yet, that fact attracted very little attention among Western scholars. The role of devotion in Nāgārjuna's religious practice remains unexamined. Arguably, such attitude is the consequence of the peculiar feature in Western academic studies of Nāgārjuna – giving primacy to the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and Nāgārjuna's other analytical works, devoid of any devotional references. The method of analytical meditation, employed in the analytical works, has been taken as most representative for Nāgārjuna, celebrated not only as philosophical tool through which one derives the final consequences of logical propositions but also as his chief religious practice the final result of which is realization of emptiness. Nāgārjuna largely continues to be studied as if he were completely unaffected by the religious environment





in which he lived.

In this paper I propose to take a close look at one of Nāgārjuna's hymns, the *Paramārthastava*, with purpose of shedding some light on his devotional practices and thus providing much needed complement to the overemphasized concerns for his method of analytical meditation. I will argue that in it Nāgārjuna employs specific type of devotional practice elsewhere named "*buddhānusmṛti samādhi*," consisting of commemorating the names of the Buddha without objectifying him. Very similar practice has been described in a sūtra predating Nāgārjuna as effective means of coming face to face with the Buddha. It is very likely that Nāgārjuna used this method as means for bridging the gap between the conventional and the ultimate, hence, as means for realizing emptiness.

Basic structure of the hymn

Despite its brevity, the *Paramārthastava* is a complete work with well-defined structure containing three sections. The first two verses compose the first section which offers salutation to the Buddha and sets the stage on which the devotional practice is introduced. The second section, verses 3 to 10 contains the details of the actual practice. The last section consists of the last verse, the dedication of merit. We will examine the main points of the first two sections in more detail.

Opening section: setting the stage for introduction of the practice

The first two verses set the stage: Nāgārjuna describes himself as someone coming from the world of conventions, thus, resorting to means on disposal in that world, and describes the Buddha as being in the domain of true reality. From such position he asks: how can someone resorting to the world of conventions praise the Buddha (or establish any sort of relationship with the Buddha) who has passed beyond all comparison and is beyond the path of speech? His question emphasizes the ultimate incomparability of the two realms, the realm of *prajñāpti* (conventions) and that of *tathāta* (suchness, true reality). Without much controversy, the question can be interpreted as: How can the gap between the conventional and the ultimate be bridged? This is the central concern in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, too, except there the proposed method is the analytical meditation. In this hymn, however, the answer is different: Nāgārjuna announces that he will praise the Master out of devotion. In the context in which is placed,



the devotion seems to be the method for crossing the unbridgeable gap. Verses 3 to 10 will give the details.

Second section: the practice

Structurally, this section is divided into two subsections: a) verses 3-8, and, b) verses 9-10. Verses 2-8 enumerate the epithets (as well as the qualities) of the Buddha:

3. Salutation to the Buddha who is without inherent existence (*asvabhāva*)
4. Salutation to the Buddha who is without duality (*advaya*)
5. Salutation to the Buddha who is without colour (*avarṇa*)
6. Salutation to the Buddha who is without measure (*apramāṇa*)
7. Salutation to the Buddha who is without place (*asthīta*)
8. Salutation to the Buddha who is in the state of *dharmadhātu* and has reached the highest profundity (*gambhīra*).

After the enumeration, in the following two verses Nāgārjuna issues the statement about emptiness of all phenomena, thus subjecting the whole previous subsection to the critique from the point of view of emptiness:

*Thus praised, praised again, but what, indeed, has been praised?
All dharmas being empty, who has been praised and by whom has he
been praised? (9)*

*Who can praise you, devoid of arising and passing away,
Of whom there is no end or middle, no perception or perceptible
object? (10)*

The structure of the central section of the hymn and the relationship between its two subsections is very formal, suggesting that we are dealing with a highly elaborate method of devotional worship. Unfortunately, we have no canonical commentaries on disposal that can provide details. The only commentary we possess at the moment, that of *Amṛtākara*⁷ is directed towards explaining the organic unity of the collection of four hymns called "*Catuḥstava*" and argues that each is written from the position of one of the stages 7-10 of the bodhisattva path (*Paramārthastava* corresponding to the 10th stage). It is not very helpful for the details we seek.

The structure of the section has largely escaped attention of the modern scholars. One of the rare ones who commented on it is Paul Williams.⁸ He interprets the hymn as follows:

In another of Nāgārjuna's hymns, the Paramārthastava – Hymn to the Ultimate – Nāgārjuna speaks of the Buddha in his ultimate aspect, to all intents and purposes the ultimate, true way of things itself. Almost the entire hymn is composed of negatives – the Buddha is neither non-being nor being, neither annihilation nor permanence, nor non-eternal, not eternal. He falls into no category of duality (Tucci 1932:322, v.4). He has no colour, no size, no spatial location and so on (vv.5-7). He cannot therefore be praised (vv.9-10). And Nāgārjuna ends with another of his gentle jokes: 'I have praised the Well-gone [Sugata – an epithet of the Buddha] who is neither gone nor come, and who is devoid of any going' (v.11, Tucci's trans.).⁹

Williams emphasizes that the Buddha is described mostly with negatives, therefore, he understands verses 9-10 literally saying that he cannot be praised. Of course, he notices that the final verses undoubtedly praises the Buddha but explains that as Nāgārjuna's gentle joke. Responding to his thesis, I should first note that verse 8, conspicuously omitted by Williams, describes the Buddha in positive terms: one who has gone to the state of *dharmadhātu* and one who has arrived at the highest profundity. Arguably, both *dharmadhātu* and *gambhīra* as technical terms refer to the *aśūnya* aspects of the *dharmakāya*. Even if that is not the way in which Nāgārjuna is using them, they are sufficient proof that we are not dealing with negatives but with something else. As I proposed earlier, we are dealing with the enumeration of epithets or qualities of the Buddha. Verses 9-10 could not be taken literally as saying that the Buddha cannot be praised because that would not only contradict verses 1-2 and verses 11 but would be an extreme position, incompatible with the Middle Way. If the Buddha cannot be praised, then the gap between the conventional and the ultimate cannot be bridged. In light of the above, Williams' final remark that the hymn ends with the "gentle joke," can also not sustain.

To explain the structure I propose a hypothesis that in the verses 3 to 10 we are looking at the expression of the very formal practice of *buddhānusmṛti samādhi* with features closely resembling the same practice as described in the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra*. Harrison explains the purpose and the focus of the practice in the following way:

The purpose of the pratyutpanna-samādhi, very briefly, is to enable practitioners to have audience with these buddhas and hear their

teachings in this very life, and, secondarily, to achieve rebirth in their buddha-fields on their death. The primary focus is on vision and hearing, that is, on an authentically transformative experience of a reality that must be taken seriously but at the same time subjected to the thoroughgoing critique of the "perfection of wisdom" (prajñā-pāramitā) approach with its core doctrine of universal "emptiness" (śūnyatā).¹⁰

Harrison suggests that the point of the practice is not only vision or hearing of the Buddha but, also, subjecting the vision and what is heard to the thorough critique from the point of perfected wisdom. And, how is that thorough critique manifested, we see from the following description:

What then, sons of good family, is the calling to mind of the Buddha [buddhānusmṛti]? It is when one concentrates on the Tathāgata in this way: "He, the Tathāgata Arhat, Correctly and Fully Awakened One, Perfected in Knowledge and Conduct, the Sugata, the Knower of the World, the Trainer of Men Capable of Training, the Supreme One, the Teacher of Devas and Humankind, the Buddha and Lord, endowed with the Thirty-two Marks of the Great Man and a body with a colour like gold, resembling a bright, shining, and well-set golden image, and well adorned like a bejewelled pillar, teaches the Dharma in the midst of an assembly of disciples, that is, teaches to the effect that nothing perishes. What does not perish? Earth does not perish. Water, fire, air, beings (Skt. bhūta), the Devas, Brahmā and Prajāpati do not perish. Form does not perish. Feelings, perception, predispositions, and consciousness do not perish," and one does not misconceive, does not objectify, does not fixate on, does not falsely perceive, does not falsely imagine, does not falsely discriminate, and does not review the Tathāgata: when in this way one obtains the samādhi of emptiness by concentrating on the Tathāgata without objectification, that is known as the calling to mind of the Buddha. ¹¹

In the first part of the description we see that the practitioner is instructed to commemorate the Buddha by enumerating his epithets and visualize him in his physical form and in full glory, teaching the Dharma in the midst of the assembly. Then the practitioner commemorates the dharma itself. In the final part, the practitioner is instructed not to objectify the visualised Buddha, not to fixate on it, not to falsely imagine or discriminate. Only after this final twist – subjecting the whole practice to the critique from the point of view of perfected



wisdom, thus not objectifying and not misconceiving the Tathāgata - the practice of *buddhānusmṛti* is properly conducted. As the description states, only when the practitioner concentrates on the Tathāgata without objectification, he properly obtains the *samādhi* of emptiness.

Through its history, the practice had gone through many adaptations but it seems that in the case of the *Paramārthastava* its basic features can be clearly observed. Structurally, the central section of the hymn represents a variation of the above description. Verses 3-8 are commemoration of the epithets (referring to particular enlightened qualities) of the Buddha, thus praising each of them. That subsection would correspond to the first part of the above description. The statement about the emptiness of all phenomena, expressed in the verses 9-10, corresponds to the prescriptions about not objectifying the worshipped Tathāgata, as seen above. Overall, in its key points, the practice in the *Paramārthastava* seems strikingly similar to the one observed above.

The line of reasoning presented above does not establish direct relationship between the two texts nor does provide an explicit evidence of the practice of *buddhānusmṛti samādhi* in the *Paramārthastava*. After all, the name was nowhere used nor was the practice described in any of Nāgārjuna's works. The resemblance could, therefore, be coincidental. Yet, without the proposed hypothesis it would be difficult to explain the content of the verses.

a. Evidence for employment of the practice of *buddhānusmṛti* in other Nāgārjuna's works

But, even though Nāgārjuna never uses the word *buddhānusmṛti*, the *Paramārthastava* is not the only work where he seems to have employed this type of devotional practice. Even the most basic examination of the form of the *Lokāṭīastava*, *Niraupamyastava*, *Acintyastava* and *Stutyāṭīastava* will show that majority of the verses are direct references to the Buddha as he were personally present and Nāgārjuna spoke directly to him.¹² Furthermore, the hymns are particularly concerned with commemorating qualities of the Buddha.¹³ And, as noted above, *Niraupamyastava* 23, and *Stutyāṭīastava* 1, refer to devotional worship (*bhakti*) of the Buddha while *Niraupamyastava* 23 also refers to seeing the Buddha. All these features, according to Harrison, are typical for the practice of *buddhānusmṛti*.¹⁴



b. The purpose of the practice of *buddhānusmṛti*

There should not be much doubt that Nāgārjuna used the practice of *buddhānusmṛti*. However, it is not clear for what purpose he employed it and what level of efficacy he gave it. One would assume that his understanding was no different than that expressed in the sūtras dealing with the same matter. The *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra*, which predates Nāgārjuna,¹⁵ uses the practice for gaining audience with various buddhas and hearing their teaching in this very life and for achieving rebirth in their buddha-fields after the death. Another sūtra that employs the same practice and postdates Nāgārjuna for few decades is *Śrī-Mālā*. As I discussed in another occasion,¹⁶ Nāgārjuna's *Niraupamyastava* shows close similarities in several key features with the *Śrī-Mālā* and was, arguably, composed in the same area of Andhra among the Buddhist schools known collectively as Andhakas. The *Paramārthastava* shows unique similarities with the *Niraupamyastava* in references to *bhakti*, the *dharmadhātu*,¹⁷ and in employment of the *buddhānusmṛti*. The similarities are not just further proof of the authenticity of the hymn but also support for the claim that the two hymns are produced in the same area and for the same audience which was sympathetic, probably very enthusiastic for the type of doctrines and practices that eventually found their articulation in the *Śrī-Mālā*.

At the beginning of the first chapter of this sūtra we read that the queen Śrīmālādevī evokes the Buddha (*buddhānusmṛti*) who approaches in his inconceivable body. She praises his two bodies which are the form body and the dharma body. After she takes the ten vows, she prays for the Tathāgata's power to make her eloquent (*pratibhāna*) to teach in the scope of the great aspirations, to teach the far-ranging meaning, to teach the great meaning (constituting ascending levels of the "three all-inclusive aspirations" of the Bodhisattva), to preach eloquently the embrace of the Illustrious Doctrine that was held and explained by all Buddhas, and to still further explain the faultless meaning. It is through the practice of *buddhānusmṛti* that the queen meets the Buddha – he appears in his dharma body – and, subsequently, through his grace he gives her inspired eloquence (*pratibhāna*) to teach the faultless meaning of the illustrious doctrine. The casual manner in which the practice is introduced suggests that it was well known.¹⁸ Hence, it is possible and, judging by the presence of all recognizable features of this practice in Nāgārjuna's works, even very likely that he knew and employed it.



Both *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* and *Śrī-Mālā-sūtra* testify of employment of the practice of *buddhānusmṛti* with purpose of coming face-to-face with the Buddha. It seems that the practice is the method for achieving such meeting the benefits of which have been celebrated by many sūtras. For example, the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*,¹⁹ composed between the first and the third century,²⁰ claims that seeing the Buddha leads to liberation.²¹ The *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*, of which Nāgārjuna has most likely known a version,²² seems to say that the power of the Buddha is one that actually brings the bodhisattva to liberation.²³ Another consequence from seeing the Buddha is hearing his word. Many sūtras describe hearing his word (*buddha-śabda*) as immersement into his knowledge (*buddha-jñāna*).²⁴ Hence, the face-to-face meeting with the Buddha results in achieving the spiritual goal. It is reasonable to assume that Nāgārjuna is using the practice of *buddhānusmṛti* with the same expectations - gaining proper vision of the Buddha. Seen in context of the first two verses, it is almost certain that the practice was used for bridging the gap between the conventional and the ultimate. And, after reviewing the context and application of the practice in other works, it seems not too wild of assumption to suggest that in the *Paramārthastava* we see another method for realising emptiness – through proper worship of the Buddha as described in the verses 3-10 – complementing the analytical meditation presented in the analytical works.

Conclusion

This analysis shows that Nāgārjuna was very much involved in devotional practices. Arguably, in *Paramārthastava* he used his elaborate method of *buddhānusmṛti* as means for coming face to face with the Buddha. From Eckel we learn that Bhāvaviveka considered seeing the Buddha as equal to realising emptiness.²⁵ Whether Nāgārjuna had the same view we cannot tell with certainty but it seems certain that he introduces the practice of devotion in context of his quest for bridging the gap between the conventional and the ultimate. Hence, arguably, we are dealing with another method for realising emptiness, complementing the analytical meditation employed in his analytical works.

The practice presented in the *Paramārthastava* is strikingly different than anything we have seen in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. The question arises, to what can we attribute such differences? One answer, or part of it, could be that



Nāgārjuna changed his place of residence and with it changed the real audience of his works. Hence, in the new environment he needed to address the concerns of the different mainstream audience. Another answer, or part of it, could be that the two works are composed in different periods or Nāgārjuna's authorship and correspond to different personal concerns. Joseph Walser's recent work proves that such scenarios are feasible since we seem to be able to provide solid evidence that Nāgārjuna has been changing his residence and his works reflect the concerns of the mainstream Buddhist group in the area of composition. Walser shows that the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* is distinctly concerned with Pudgalavāda audience and is arguably composed where this school had strong presence partly in purpose of showing doctrinal compatibility in order to forge strategic alliance.²⁶ The *Ratnāvalī*, however, shows no concern for the Pudgalavāda but very distinct concern for not disagreeing with the doctrinal tenets of the Andhaka schools (Pūrvaśāila, Aparāśāila, Caitīya). According to Walser, the *Ratnāvalī* was composed in the Andhaka environment.²⁷ By comparing the style and doctrinal content, he shows that the *Ratnāvalī* is more mature work than the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. Hence, he concludes that Nāgārjuna moved from Māthura (the most likely place of composition of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*) to Andhra.²⁸

Elsewhere I have examined another work of Nāgārjuna, the *Niraupamyastava*, and concluded that it is very closely related to Pūrvaśāila, hence, like *Ratnāvalī*, most likely composed among the Andhakas.²⁹

The *Paramārthastava* shows very close similarities with the *Niraupamyastava* in terms of reference to *bhakti*, *dharmadhātu* and buddhānumṛti. The three elements are very much within the Andhaka *Buddhological* framework but are not present in the *Ratnāvalī*. Hence, I would argue that these two hymns are composed later than the epistle. That, of course, does not mean that Nāgārjuna abandoned or altered his previous views. After all, the views and practices are compatible and complement well each other. But it does mean that the hymns should not be seen as subordinate or auxiliary to the analytical works. As this analysis of the *Paramārthastava* would hopefully show, they are worthy to be studied independently for their own merits and best to be approached in context of similar works of the similar time and place.



Paramārtha stava³⁰

katham stoṣyāmi te nātham anutpannam anālayam/
lokopamām atikrāntam vākpathātātagocaram//1

How shall I praise you, the protector, unborn, without foundation,
Who has passed beyond all comparison with the world, whose domain is
beyond the path of speech.

tathāpi yādṛśo vāsi tathatārtheṣu gocaraḥ/
lokaprajñaptim āgamyā stoṣye vhaṃ bhaktito gurum//2

Nevertheless, whatever you may be in the domain of the true reality,
I, having resorted to the world of conventional designations, shall praise the
Master out of devotion.

anutpannasvabhāvena utpādas te na vidyate/
na gatir nāgatir nāthāsvabhāvāya namo v̄stu te//3

Of you there is no origination since your nature is un-arisen.
Not going or coming, o protector, I salute you, the one without inherent
existence (svabhāva).

na bhāvo nāpy abhāvo v̄si nocchedo nāpi śāśvataḥ/
na nityo nāpy anityas tvam advayāya namo v̄stu te//4

You are not an existent being nor a non-existent, not [subject to] destruction
nor everlasting,
you are not eternal nor impermanent. I salute you, the one without duality.

na rakto haritamāṃjiṣṭho³¹ varṇas te nopalabhyate/
na pītakṛṣṇaśuklo vā v̄varṇāya namo v̄stu te//5

Your colour is not perceived as red, greenish, brown yellow,
not pale, dark or bright. I salute you, the one without colour.



na mahān nāpi hrasvo v̄si na dīrghaparimaṇḍalaḥ/
apramāṇagatiṃ prāpto v̄pramāṇāya namo v̄stu te//6

You are neither big nor small, neither long nor round;
You have reached the immeasurable state. I salute you, the one without
measure.

na dūre nāpi cāsanne nākāśe nāpi vā kṣitau/
na saṃsāre na nirvāṇe v̄sthitāya namo v̄stu te//7

Neither far nor near, neither in the space nor on the earth,
Not in saṃsāra nor in nirvāṇa. I salute you, who are without place.

asthitaḥ sarvadharmeṣu dharmadhātugatiṃ gataḥ/
parāṃ gaṃbhīratāṃ prāpto gaṃbhīrāya namo v̄stu te//8

Not located in any dharmas, you have gone to the state of dharmadhātu;

You have arrived at the highest profundity (gaṃbhīra). I salute you, the
profound one.

evaṃ stutaḥ stuto bhūyās athavā kim uta stutaḥ/
śūnyeṣu sarvadharmeṣu kaḥ stutaḥ kena vā stutaḥ//9

Thus praised, praised again, but what, indeed, has been praised?
All dharmas being empty, who has been praised and by whom has he been
praised?

kas tvāṃ śaknoti saṃstotum utpādavyayavarjitam/
yasya nānto na madhyaṃ vā grāho grāhyaṃ na vidyate//10

Who can praise you, devoid of arising and passing away,
Of whom there is no end or middle, no perception or perceptible object.



na gataṃ nāgataṃ stutvā sugataṃ gativarjitam/
tena puṇyena loko vyaṃ vrajatāṃ saugatīm gatim//11

Having praised the well-gone, neither gone nor come, devoid from going;
By that merit [accumulated from such praises], may this world go to the state
of the well-gone.

Notes

- 1 The monuments in Sāñcī and Bharhut, both predating Nāgārjuna, clearly show that among the most common activities are acts of devotion. Lotus Sutra, a text that was completed by the first or second century gives extravagant praise to the importance and efficacy of worship. Similar is *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* (The meditation sūtra on the direct encounter with the buddhas of the present), first translated in Chinese made by the Indo-Scythian Lokakṣema in 179 CE; similar are the hymns by Mātṛceṭa, also predating Nāgārjuna. The list can go on. Postdating Nāgārjuna, in this context it should suffice to mention that very similar conclusion we receive from the records of the Chinese pilgrims Fa-Xian and Xuanzang. Bhāvaviveka's devotion and practice of vision of the Buddha was beautifully brought to light by Malcolm Eckel (see note 25 below for details).
- 2 *Ratnāvalī*, (translation by Jeffrey Hopkins, *Buddhist Advice for Living & Liberation*, Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publication, 1998), verses 231-2:
You should respectfully and extensively construct
Images of Buddha, monuments, and temples
And provide residences,
Abundant riches, and so forth.
Please construct from all precious substances
Images of Buddha with fine proportions,
Well designed and sitting on lotuses,
Adorned with all precious substances.
- 3 *Ratnāvalī* (Hopkins' translation), verse 465:
Therefore in the presence of an image
Or monument or something else
Say these twenty stanzas
Three times every day.
- 4 lokadhātuṣv ameyeṣu tvadbhaktaiḥ punar ikṣase/
cyutijanmābhisambhodhacakanirvṛtilālasaiḥ/23
But in the countless worlds you are seen anew by your devotees
Eagerly longing [for] your descent, birth, perfect enlightenment, teaching and [entering into the final] cessation.
- 5 See the appendix for translation of the whole hymn.
- 6 bla med lam las gshegs pa yi/ de bzhin gshegs pa bstod v̄das kyang/
gus shing spro baḥi sems kyis ni/ bdag gis bstod v̄das par bhyi//
Although the Tathāgata, who has gone by the usurpassed path, is beyond praise,
I, with the mind inspired by devotion, praise one beyond praise.
- 7 *Catuḥstavasamāśārtha* of Amṛtākara, In Giuseppe Tucci, *Minor Buddhist Texts, Part I & II*, Kyoto:



- Rinsen Book Co., Ltd, 1978 (first ed. 1956), pp. 235-246
- 8 Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, London and New York: Routledge, 1993 (first published 1989), p. 174.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 Harrison, "Commemoration and Identification in Buddhānusr̥ti," 1992, pp. 220-221
- 11 Harrison, "Commemoration and Identification in Buddhānusr̥ti," 1992, p. 221
- 12 *Lokāṭīstava*: out of 28 verses (the first being salutation and the last dedication of merit), 18 are direct references to the Buddha.
Acintyastava: out of 59 verse (the first being salutation and the last dedication of merit), 29 are direct references to the Buddha with verses 52-58 being worship of the Buddha.
Nirauṇḍastava: out of 25 verses (the first being salutation and the last dedication of merit), 22 are direct references to the Buddha.
Stutyāṭīstava: most of the 19 verses are direct references to the word of the Buddha – verses 2-10, 16-17 directly address the Buddha evoking his marvellous teaching, words spoken by him, doctrines thoroughly realized by him, etc. Verses 11-14 seem to be different since they do not mention the Buddha but verse 15 summarises the whole group by explaining that all those were words spoken by the Lion of speech.
- 13 *Nirauṇḍastava* 6, 7, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24 is particularly good example of commemorating the virtues of the Buddha, while *Acintyastava* and *Lokāṭīstava* are good examples of evoking the superiority and profundity of Buddha's teaching. Listing the types of *buddhānusr̥ti* as found in the old sūtras, Harrison (Paul Harrison, "Commemoration and Identification in Buddhānusr̥ti," *In the Mirror of Memory: Reflections on Mindfulness and Remembrance in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism*, Janet Gyatso, ed. [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992], 216) writes: "By performing this recitation in a meditational context, practitioners are encouraged to recall or call to mind (1) the virtues of the Buddha, (2) the superiority and profundity of the Buddhist teachingā"
- 14 Harrison, "Commemoration and Identification in Buddhānusr̥ti."
- 15 *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* (English translation: Paul Harrison, *The Samādhi of Direct Encounter with the Buddhas of the Present: An Annotated English Translation of the Tibetan Version of the Pratyutpanna-Buddha-Saṃmukhāvasthita-Samādhi-Sūtra with Several Appendices relating to the History of the Text*, Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1990) was first translated in Chinese by the Indo-Scythian Lokakṣema in 179 CE.
- 16 Drasko Mitrikeski, "Nāgārjuna and the Tathāgatagarbha: Closer Look at Some Peculiar Features in Nirauṇḍastava," *Journal of Religious History*, forthcoming.
- 17 Verse 21 of the *Nirauṇḍastava* and verse 8 of the *Paramārthastava*.
- 18 At the very beginning of the first chapter we read that the queen receives a letter from her parents praising the infinite merit of the Tathāgata. Convinced that the message has an auspicious meaning, she says: It is said that the voice of a Buddha is most rare in the world. If this saying be true, I must serve thee. If the Lord Buddha may come for the sake of the world, may he, with compassion, come here on behalf of the teaching for me (Wayman and Wayman, 60). Without any further introduction to the practice of evoking the Buddha, the sūtra continues: At that very instant, the Lord approached in the space [in front], and she saw the inconceivable body of the Buddha seated there, emitting pure light rays (Wayman and Wayman, 60).
- 19 *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*, ed. D. T. Suzuki, Kyoto, 1934-36 ; ed. P. L. Vaidya, Darbhanga, 1960; partially ed. And tr. L. O. Gomez, Selected Verses from the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, Yale doctoral dissertation, 1967; partially ed. And tr. J/ A. Jastram, Three Chapters from the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*, Berkeley doctoral dissertation, 1975.
- 20 For discussion on the dates of *Gaṇḍavyūha* see Gomez's dissertation, pp. lxxviii-lxxiv.
- 21 As the water of the ocean, immeasurable (*aprameya*) and clear (*anāvīla*), is the sight of the Buddha (*buddha-darśana*) and it cuts through the world's craving (*trṣṇā*). (Gv, Gomez 25 v. 32; V 19, 21; S 27) Having seen (*dṛṣṭvā*) the Jina, all suffering (*duḥkha*) is destroyed and there is an entry (*avatāra*) into the knowledge of the range of the perfectly enlightened one (*sambuddha-gocara-jñāna*). (Gv. Gomez, 35 v. 99) The *Buddha-darśana* makes beings of the colour of enlightenment (*bodhi-varṇam prajam kurute*).

- (Gv, Gomez 27 v. 41) Furthermore, 100) Having seen the Awakened one, the Best of men, one destroys all hindrances and increases the measureless merit by which Awakening is obtained (Gomez, p. 36).
- 22 Throughout his *Nagarjuniana* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1982), Christian Lindtner points at verses that have close resemblances to verses found in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*. Paul Williams, in his "Review Article" (*Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 12 [1984] 73-104), makes the case that even though it seems plausible that Nāgārjuna knew of some version of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, there is no evidence that he knew of the doctrine of *trīsvabhāva* (pp. 87-95). Significant is Lindtner's further study on the same topic, "The *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* in Early Indian Madhyamaka Literature," *Asiatische Studien* (46 [1992] 244-279).
- 23 *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, Chapter XL, 101-103: Further, Mahāmati, there are two kinds of the sustaining power which issues from the Tathagatas who are Arhats and Fully-Enlightened Ones; and sustained by this power [the Bodhisattvas] would prostrate themselves at their feet and ask them questions. What is this twofold power that sustains the Bodhisattvas? The one is the power by which they are sustained to go through the *Samādhis* and *Samāpattis*; while the other is the power whereby the Buddhas manifest themselves in person before the Bodhisattvas and baptise them with their own hands. The passage tells us about the twofold power that sustains the bodhisattvas. First, it is the power by which the bodhisattvas are sustained to go through their *samādhis* and, second, the power by which buddhas manifest themselves in person before the bodhisattvas and baptise them with their own hands. But, even the first power, in the ultimate analysis, emerges from the buddhas. Only by this twofold power the bodhisattva ascends through various levels of *samādhi* to the point of establishing himself in the presence of the Buddha. We can assume that the same understanding as in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* applies here: meeting with the Buddha liberates.
- 24 The word of the Buddha is not only true but the truth itself. Upon hearing it, one is amazed, feels no doubt any more, feels matured for the supreme wisdom, astonished, the word of the Buddha dispels all doubt and pain of living beings, all āsra are destroyed and all pain gone (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* ed. H. Kern and B. Nanjio, St. Petersburg, 1912 [= KN]; ed. V. Wogihara and C. Tsuchida, Tokyo, 1933-35 [= WT]). Buddha's word is boundless (*Aṣṭa* 477), sweetly resounds and is radiant with the ocean of the sounds of the qualities of a beautiful voice (Gv, Gomez 42 v.9; V 186.21; S 240). So, we see here that the *Buddha-śabda* is the Dharma or the *prajñāpāramitā* itself, it is sweet and powerful, and transports those who hear it; it removes pain because to hear it is to understand it – the Buddha is master of skill in means so, he speaks what is best for understanding, removing ignorance and acquiring wisdom. One can find much of the same description and status of the word of the Buddha not only in *Aṣṭa*, Gv or Sad, but throughout the Mahāyāna literature – all doubts are scattered, perplexity vanishes and one is established in knowledge upon hearing the word of the Buddha. Hearing the word of the Buddha (*buddhavacana*) means hearing the dharma – the message of truth: sound and meaning fuse (thanks to the best qualities of the Buddha as a teacher, i.e. speaker of the syllables of enlightenment), that is to say, to hear the word is to receive the teaching. The word of the Buddha is simultaneously a teaching that is completely convincing and overwhelming ũ we learn from Mahāyāna sūtras. To hear the word is to receive the Dharma, the revelation of truth and to be transformed by it.
- 25 Malcolm David Eckel, *To See the Buddha: A Philosopher's Quest for the Meaning of Emptiness*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 7:

When Bhāvaviveka has the opportunity to define Buddhist philosophy (or, in Bhāvaviveka's words, the Buddhist "vision of reality") without having to comment on the works of someone else, he brings his account of Madhyamaka thought to a climax with a devotional vision of the Buddha ... his final description of the Buddha bespeaks all the majesty and power of great divinity. There may ultimately be no difference between the Buddha and the world, but the Buddha without qualities and distinctions is not the one that appears at the end of Bhāvaviveka's argument. Instead, it is a Buddha who overwhelms the gods with his power, cools the fire of suffering in the minds of sentient beings, plucks beings from the ocean of samsara, illuminates their minds with his radiance, and wakes them from the sleep of ignorance with the sound of his teaching. To all outward appearances (and the word "appearance" is a crucial qualification), Bhāvaviveka's Buddha is the apotheosis of power and grace.

- Analysing Bhāvaviveka's work, Eckel discovered that "For Bhāvaviveka, the concept of Emptiness and the concept of the Buddha were inseparable: to see Emptiness was to see the Buddha, and vice versa" (p.3). Therefore, the doctrine of emptiness works for Bhāvaviveka as metaphor for the Buddha. Furthermore, the doctrine works as the metaphor for the structure for the Path and, despite Bhāvaviveka's insistence on rational analysis, the *logos* of his rational investigation is embedded in its own *mythos* (p. 7).
- 26 Joseph Walser, *Nāgārjuna in Context*, 2005, pp. 228-258. On the relationship between the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and the Puḍgalavāda also see Tilman Vetter, "Zum Problem der Person in Nāgārjunas Mūla-Madhyamaka-Kārikās" (in *Offenbarung als Heilserfahrung im Christentum, Hinduismus, und Buddhismus*, Walter Strolz and Shizuteru Ueda, eds., Freiburg: Herder Press, 1982, pp. 167-185) who identifies that *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* chapters IX, X, XVIII, XXIII and XXVII are not only echoing Puḍgalavāda doctrines but are fully in accord with tenets of this school.
- 27 Joseph Walser, *Nāgārjuna in Context*, 2005, pp. 228-258.
- 28 For detailed discussion see Joseph Walser, *Nagarjuna in Context*, Appendix: The Authorship of the Ratnāvalī, pp. 271-278.
- 29 Mitrikeski, "Nāgārjuna and the Tathāgatagarbha."
- 30 According to T/D's manuscript.
- 31 Must be a corruption in the text since the *pāda* has nine syllables – unusual for otherwise perfect style. Lindtner has it: *na raktō harin māñjiṣṭho* (*Nagarjuniana*, p. 121, note 147), in which case the metre is regular *pathyā*.