Nagarjuna's Religious Practices Seen Through the Analysis of His Hymns

Drasko Mitrikeski

Submitted on 3 January 2008 in fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Sydney
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Abstract

Most Western studies of Nāgārjuna have approached his work from the point of view of doctrine or philosophy and are concerned with logic and critical analysis of his arguments and propositions. Hardly any attention has been given to the social setting in which the arguments were delivered and the use of the doctrine in Nāgārjuna's religious praxis within the larger context of the praxis of his religious community.

This dissertation is primarily concerned with questions regarding the relationship between Nāgārjuna's doctrine and his religious praxis. In particular, the focus is on uncovering how the doctrine was transmitted and how was it used in the religious environment in which he lived. Uncovering these relationships sheds light on Nāgārjuna's religious life in general, helping us gain more information about his ritual and symbolic universe and how he perceived the Buddha and his relationship with him.

A preliminary study showed that the best source of information for these questions was Nāgārjuna's hymns. However, the preliminary study also showed that the hymns were the least studied of all works attributed to the master. In fact, the most prominent features in them - worship, devotion, commemoration, merit accumulation - have not entered the mainstream of critical scholarly discussion on Nāgārjuna but have been marginalised and often consciously ignored with primary status given to the analytical works and the philosophical concerns.

In order to better understand Nāgārjuna's religious life in its wider context, a close study of the eighteen hymns attributed to him by the Tibetan canon has been
made. The hymns have been edited and translated (many of them for the first time into a Western language), their authenticity investigated and their content analysed.
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Chapter I

Introduction

Nāgārjuna, who probably lived in South India in the second to third century C.E., has been considered “the most important Indian scholar of any persuasion” (Huntington, 1989:32), “undoubtedly the most important, influential, and widely studied Mahāyāna Buddhist philosopher” (Garfield, 1995:87), “the single most interesting and important thinker in the Buddhist tradition” (McCagney, 1997:xii), “a giant among giants” (Inada, 1970:3, Kalupahana, 1986:2), and has been addressed with many more superlatives. His locus classicus, the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, is probably the most widely studied Buddhist philosophical work in the West and has fascinated and perplexed scholars for decades.¹ Yet, despite all the scholarly activity on Nāgārjuna, which can be measured in dozens of books and hundreds of articles, we know almost nothing of him as a person or of his religious practices and the real audience of his works.² Regardless of whether he is considered an epistemological sceptic (Matilal, 1986, Hayes, 1988), or a mystic who claimed that the ultimate reality is knowable but

¹ The manuscript of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā was found in Nepal in 1833 by Mr. Brian Houghton Hodgson. It was published for the first time by Eugene Burnouf (1844). Richard Robinson suggests considering this event as the first introduction of Mūlamadhyamakakārikā to the West (1967 [1976]:3). But, it was Theodore Stcherbatsky’s book, The Conception of Buddhist Nirvāṇa (1927; Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989), that officially marked the beginning of critical studies of Nāgārjuna. Since then, critical editions and translations of many works attributed to Nāgārjuna were published in Western languages. Beside the root texts, we now have editions and translations of many of the important classical commentaries such as Āryadeva’s, Bhāvaviveka’s, Buddhāpālita’s, Candrakīrti’s, etc., as well as numerous studies on various aspects of Nāgārjuna’s philosophy. For an overview of recent scholarship on Nāgārjuna: Andrew P. Tuck, (1990), Thomas E. Wood (1994), and David Burton (1999).

² Ian Mabett (1998: 332 – 346) shows how little, if anything, we actually know at present.
only by a non-conceptual gnosis (Inada, 1970, Bhattacharya, 1990), whether he only refuted wrong ontological presuppositions but accepted conceptual knowledge as valid (Ruegg, 1977, Hopkins 1983, Burton 1999, Williams, 2000), whether his critique was a critique of only directed to “showing the fly a way out of the fly-bottle” (Huntington, 1989), whether he was a deconstructionist (Matilal, 1992, Hayes, 1944, Magliola, 1999, Loy, 1999), and regardless of whether his doctrine of emptiness is considered as sophistry or as most profound, the point made by Luis Gómez remains:

Nāgārjuna has been studied mostly from the perspective of the “philology of doctrine” or a history of philosophy content with a gloss of arguments, postulations, and propositions. This is an approach that forgives our inability to locate the work in any kind of social setting, perhaps forbids us to investigate this location... (2000a:98).

Too often the tendency of scholars has been to understand Nāgārjuna’s philosophy or system by focusing on the logical consistency and the doctrinal value of his analytical works. Unfortunately, not enough attention has been paid to the social setting and the religious function of the arguments. By focusing on and favouring philosophical aspects, as if Nāgārjuna composed his works unaffected by the social and religious context in which he lived, important aspects of his religious life have been ignored, as have other voices in his texts which could offer valuable clues to the social, psychological and religious functions of the doctrine, and could illuminate the role of his arguments in his own religious praxis and within the larger context of the praxis of his religious community.

This dissertation attempts to answer some of the questions regarding the relationship between Nāgārjuna’s doctrine and his religious praxis. In particular, the focus is on uncovering how the doctrine was transmitted; the means by which it was
communicated; and how it relates to the religious context in which Nāgārjuna lived. Uncovering these relationships will shed light on Nāgārjuna’s religious life in general, helping us gain more information about his ritual and symbolic universe, the locus of power and authority in that universe and how he perceived the Buddha and his relationship with him.

The interest in Nāgārjuna’s analytical works has been so great that it has overshadowed the interest in other genres of literature he produced, particularly the hymns. Yet, it is precisely in these works that we find the best source for material concerning the use of the doctrine in his religious praxis. Even a basic examination shows that he employs ritual techniques as vehicles for transmitting the doctrine, an obvious example being the practice of commemoration of the Buddha (buddhānusmṛti). Doctrines presented through independent logical arguments in his analytical works are delivered in the hymns in the context of praise of the Buddha. For example, the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, XVIII:24 offers the following statement:

We state (tāṁ pracakṣmahe) that whatever is dependent arising, that is emptiness. That dependent upon convention, is the middle way.³

Doctrinally the same statement is repeated in two of the hymns:

Lokātitastava, 22: What is dependent arising, that itself is emptiness, you maintain (saiva te matā). There is no independently existent being – that is your incomparable lion’s roar (siṃhanādas tavātulaḥ).⁴

Similarly, Acintyastava, 40:

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³ yaḥ pratityasamutpādaḥ śūnyatāṁ tāṁ pracakṣmahe/sa praṇāptaḥ upādāya pratipat saiva madhyamā/MMK, XXIV, 18
⁴ yaḥ pratityasamutpādaḥ śūnyatā saiva te matā/bhāvaḥ svatantro nāstīti siṃhanādas tavātulaḥ//LS, 22.
What is dependent arising that itself is emptiness, you maintain. Of that kind is the true doctrine and the same as that is Tathāgata.\(^5\)

The doctrinal statements in the first lines of each are identical: equating dependent arising and emptiness. The difference is that the hymns attribute the statement to the Buddha while the Mūlamadhyamakārikā offers it without reference to the Buddha.

Another good example comes from comparing the Mūlamadhyamakārikā XII, 1 and Lokātāstava, 21:

\[\text{Mūlamadhyamakārikā XII, 1}\]

Caused by itself, by other, by both, without a cause –

This is what some think of as suffering. That conclusion is indeed not logical.\(^6\)

\[\text{Lokātāstava, 21}\]

Caused by itself; by other, by both, without a cause –

This is what dialecticians have thought about suffering. But, you have stated that it is dependently originated.\(^7\)

The first line is exactly the same in both works. However, in the second line, the Lokātāstava attributes the statement to the Buddha ("you have stated"), while the Mūlamadhyamakārikā takes it as conclusion from Nāgārjuna’s own analyses ("that is not logical"). The language, form and structure in these works are too formal to allow the conclusion that the differences are accidental. The least one could say is that in the hymns Nāgārjuna makes a conscious effort to establish the doctrine presented

\(^5\) yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatā saiva te matā/
thathāvidhaś ca saddharmas tatsaṁsaḥ ca tathāgataḥ//AS, 40

\(^6\) svayaṁ kṛtāṁ paraṁ kṛtāṁ dvābhyaṁ kṛtāṁ abetukāṁ/
dukhham ity eka icchanti tac ca kāyaṁ na yuyate// MMK. XII, 1

\(^7\) svayaṁ kṛtāṁ paraṁ kṛtāṁ dvābhyaṁ kṛtāṁ abetukāṁ/
tārkkikair īṣyate dukhham tvayā tūktāṁ pratītyajam// LS, 21
as the word of the Buddha (*buddhavācana*), thus fully in accord with orthodoxy. The language, form and structure of the hymns give the strong impression that they were delivered or meant to be used in a ritual context and, arguably, as part of a specific ritual practice, the *buddhānusmṛti*.

There should be no doubt that Nāgārjuna used this practice. Even the most basic examination of the form will show that in five of his hymns most of the verses are direct references to the Buddha as if he were personally present and Nāgārjuna spoke directly to him. It seems as if Nāgārjuna was sitting in front of an image of the Buddha or visualizing the Buddha in his meditation and, inspired by eloquence, recited the verses in front of him or used them in a daily ritual as morning or evening recitation. To be more precise:

In *Lokātītastava*, out of 28 verses (the first being salutation and the last dedication), 18 verses are direct references to the Buddha.

In *Acintyastava*, out of 59 verses (the first being salutation and the last dedication), 29 are direct references to the Buddha, with verses 52–58 being pure worship.

In *Niraupamyastava*, out of 25 verses (the first being salutation and the last dedication), 22 are direct references to the Buddha.

In *Paramārthastava*, 11 out of 11 verses are direct references to the Buddha, all expressing worship.

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8 The authenticity of the hymns attributed to Nāgārjuna will be established later in this study. The five that I mention here are the *Lokātītastava, Acintyastava, Niraupamyastava, Paramārthastava* and *Stutyātātastava*. Even if the reader is reluctant at this point to accept the authenticity of the last, the same conclusions can be drawn from the first four, which have been considered by most scholars as Nāgārjuna's.
In *Stutyaśītastava*, out of 19 verses (the first being salutation and the last dedication), 12 are direct references to the Buddha.

These five hymns are full of references such as: “you have said,” “it is your word,” “it is your utterance,” “it is your lion’s roar”... All doctrines in these hymns are evoked, not derived at through personal analysis, as in Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, Śūnyatāsaptati or Vighrahavyāvartani.⁹

It should be noted that the *Niraupamyastava*, verses 6, 7, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24, and the whole of the *Paramārthastava* provide particularly good examples of evoking the virtues of the Buddha, while *Acintyastava*, *Lokāśītastava* and *Stutyaśītastava* are good examples of evoking the superiority and profundity of his teaching. These are two commonly used ways of practising buddhānusmṛti.¹⁰

The above-mentioned hymns show elements of worship of the Buddha. Three hymns – *Niraupmyastava*, *Paramārthastava* and *Stutyaśītastava* - refer explicitly to the practice of religious devotion (*bhakti, gus pa*).¹¹ The *Niraupamyastava*, 23, refers to seeing the Buddha – a practice connected with devotion.

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⁹ Even the verses that are not direct references to the Buddha (except for introducing and concluding ones) must be understood as evoking his word. For example, in *Stutyaśītastava*, verses 11-14 do not refer to the Buddha. But, verse 15 says: “When you, the lion among speakers, speak thus, it is like the lion removing the arrogance of the words of the Vindhyā-mountain elephant.” Obviously, the previous four verses are to be understood as repetition of the statements made by the Buddha.

Furthermore, in *Lokāśītastava*, verses 13-16 contain no references to the Buddha. Verse 17, however, is the continuation on the same theme but it ends with the words, “you maintain.” The context suggests that, even though the previous verses do not refer to the Buddha explicitly, such reference is assumed.

*Acintyastava* provides another characteristic example. In this hymn it is very common that one verse will refer to the Buddha with words, “said by you” or, “proclaimed by you,” then the next one or two verses will be continuations of the same idea. Verses 3-6 are a good illustration of this.

¹⁰ Listing the types of buddhānusmṛti found in the old stūtras, Harrison (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 teaching...”

¹¹ *Niraupamyastava* 23:

lokadhātuṣv ameṣeṣu tvadbhaktaiḥ punar īkṣase/
cyutijanāṁbhisarpbhodhicakranirvṛttilāsaiḥ//
Chapter I: Introduction

The features examined above – commemoration and worship, particularly devotion - are typical of ritual practice and the hymns were most likely part of it. The evidence of enumeration of the epithets, teachings and the enlightened qualities of the Buddha that we find in each hymn leads to the same conclusion.\(^\text{12}\)

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.

*Paramārtha*stava 2:

tathāpyāyādō vāsti tathātārtheśu gocarāḥ/
lokaprajñāaptim āgamyasya stoeṣe 'ham bhaktō gurum/

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

*Stutya*stava 1:

bha med lam las gshegs pa yi
de bzhin gshegs pa bstod 'das kyang
gus shin spro ba'is sems kyis ni
bdag gs bstod 'das bstod par bgyi

Although the Tathāgata, who has gone by the unsurpassed path, is beyond praise, I, with the mind inspired by devotion, praise the one beyond praise:

\(^\text{12\ Nirmaṇpayastava.}\) There are three major sections in the hymn, the first dealing with the qualities of Buddha’s mind, the second with the qualities of his body and third, together with the conclusion, dealing with the question of his real body and the highest practice. Practically every verse enumerates some of his enlightened qualities, whether of his mind or of his body.

*Paramārtha*stava. the central section of the hymn, comprising the main content, verses 3-8, are all devoted to praise of one epithet of the Buddha describing his enlightened qualities.

*Lokā*stava, *Acintya*stava and *Stutya*stava are similar in their praise of Buddha’s teaching, and the enumeration of the various teachings of the Buddha. In each of these three hymns several verses compose a subsection devoted to one particular aspect of the Buddha’s teaching. For example, *Lokā*stava, verses 2-10 are devoted to the refutation of *skandhas*, verses 11-20 to refutation of the world as illusion and verses 21-27 to the teaching fully taught in Mahāyāna that liberation is in realizing the signless. *Acintya*stava, verses 3-18 deal with the teaching that the dependently originated things are empty, verses 19-36 with the liberating knowledge (*jñāna*) of the truth, verses 37-50 with the teaching on the characteristics of the true dharma (*saddharma*) where the final section, verses 51-58 are praise of the Buddha, the greatest of teachers. *Stutya*stava elaborates on the dependent origination, progressively giving further details towards perfection of this teaching.

Looking at the doctrine, these three hymns appear very philosophical, even analytical. But, when seen in the context of other hymns, it is apparent that they are enumerations of particular aspects of Buddha’s teaching. Indeed, there is a lot of doctrine, a lot of evidence of rhetorical strategies, perhaps even polemical stands. But, in their form, they are enumerations and recitations of particular qualities of the Buddha as a teacher.

Two more hymns can, arguably, be considered authentic:

*Asañamahāsthānacaitiyastotra* enumerates the eight great deeds of the Buddha, commemorated by eight *caityas* erected on the places where the great events supposedly took place. In fact, the hymn is a praise of Buddha’s *dharmakīya* and an enumeration of the magical shows that the Buddha performed in order to advance beings on the path.

*Dvādaśakāraṇayanastotra* is also an enumeration of the deeds of the Buddha – the 12 great deeds; also praise of his skillful means for advancing beings on the path, as well as praise by enumeration of his enlightened qualities.
All of the hymns examined above end up with verses dedicating merit. They all say, in one way or another, that merit is accumulated by praising the Buddha. The merit is accumulated not through analyses, not through composition of independent works, but through praise (worship) of the enlightened qualities of the Buddha manifested through his teaching or deeds for advancement of beings on the path.

These first glimpses into the hymns show that Nāgārjuna presented his doctrine in the context of worship, devotion and merit accumulation, in other words, that he used his doctrine in a ritual context. But, what significance did he give to these practices? How important were they in comparison to the method of analytical meditation he applied in the Mālamādhyamakakārikā? What was their efficacy? What was the ultimate goal he was seeking to achieve by performing them? Were they considered effective as means of realising emptiness? How do these practices relate to the practices of other Buddhists of his time?

The features examined above—commemoration, worship, devotion, merit accumulation—are dominant concerns in the Buddhist practices, as the art-historical, epigraphic and textual evidence from the centuries surrounding Nāgārjuna suggests. The monuments in Sāñcī and Bhārhat, both predating Nāgārjuna, clearly show that among the most common activities are acts of devotion. The Lotus Sūtra, a text that was completed by the first or second century, gives extravagant praise to the importance and efficacy of worship (Chang, 1982:166-7). The Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthitasa-mādhi-sūtra is similar, as are the hymns by Mātrceṭa, also

This practice is not surprising since Buddhist hymns historically developed from the practice of enumeration (which is very old and even present in the Vedas). For detailed discussion see Ernst Waldschmidt (1979:1-19).

A good overview of the evidence for the Buddhist devotional practices in the early centuries C.E. is provided by Egil Fronsdal (1998:3-22).
predating Nāgārjuna. From the records of the seventh-century Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (Beal, 1968:180) we arrive at a similar conclusion. Bhāvaviveka’s worship and practice of visualizing the Buddha is similar and was beautifully brought to light by Malcolm Eckel. In fact, the evidence is overwhelming that, during the centuries surrounding Nāgārjuna, India was experiencing a wave of devotionalism. It is in this environment that in verses 231-2 of the Ratnāvali, Nāgārjuna suggests to the king whom he is addressing that he construct images of Buddha and stūpas and in verse 465 that he worship in the presence of an image or stūpa. Again, it is in this environment that Niraupamyastava evokes the virtues of the Buddha and on one occasion, in verse 23 (discussed earlier), directly refers to seeing the Buddha.

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 a metaphor for the Buddha. Furthermore, the doctrine works as a 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).

Ratnāvali, 231-2 (translation by Hopkins, 1998):
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.

Ratnāvali, 465:
Therefore in the presence of an image Or monument or something else Say these twenty stanzas Three times every day
Chapter I: Introduction

The practice of commemorating the Buddha (buddhānasmyṭī) produces the effect of seeing the Buddha as present before one's eyes. The consequences of that meeting have been described by many sūtras and in various ways. Some of these sūtras, like the Pratyutpanna-buddha-sāṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra, predate Nāgārjuna, others are roughly contemporary, at least in some versions. The Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra, composed between the first and the third century, claims that seeing the Buddha leads to liberation. The Lankāvatāra sūtra, a version of which Nagārjuna may have known, seems to say that the power of the Buddha is one that actually brings the bodhisattva to liberation. Another consequence from seeing the

17 Pratyutpanna-buddha-sāṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra (The meditation sūtra on the direct encounter with the buddhas of the present) was first translated in Chinese by the Indo-Scythian Lokakṣema in 179 CE, hence, it predates Nagārjuna. English translation: Paul Harrison, 1990.


19 As the water of the ocean, immeasurable (āprameya) and clear (anuśīla), is the sight of the Buddha (buddha-darsana) and it cuts through the world’s craving (tr̥ṣṇa). (v. 32, translated by Gomez, 1967: 25)

Having seen (dṛṣṭvā) the Jina, all suffering (duḥkha) is destroyed and there is an entry (avaśāra) into the knowledge of the range of the perfectly enlightened one (sambuddha-gocara-jñāna). (v.99, translated by Gomez, 1967:35)


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 (v.100, translated by Gomez, 1967:36).


21 Lankāvatāra 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
Buddha is hearing his word. Many sūtras describe hearing his word (buddha-śabda) as immersion in his knowledge (buddha-jñāna).22

Another sūtra that mentions the same practice and postdates Nāgārjuna by some decades but is possibly composed in the same environment where he lived, is the Śrī-Mālā. At the beginning of the first chapter of this sūtra we read that the queen 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 give her eloquence (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 (in his dharma body) and, subsequently, through his grace he gives her inspired eloquence (pratibhāna) to teach the faultless meaning of the illustrious doctrine.

In Nīrāupamayastava, 23, Nāgārjuna refers to bhakti in the same sentence as to

the presence of the Buddha. We can assume that the same understanding as in the Gaṇḍavyūha applies here: meeting with the Buddha liberates.

22 The Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra tells us that 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 āśrava are destroyed and all pain gone. One can find much of the same description and status of the word of the Buddha not only in Aṣṭasāhasrika, Gaṇḍavyūha or Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, 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). The word of the Buddha is simultaneously a teaching that is completely convincing and overwhelming according to the Mahāyāna sūtras. To hear the word is to receive the Dharma, the revelation of truth, and to be transformed by it.
seeing the Buddha. The question arises whether there is a relationship between that statement and the position taken in the Šrī-Mālā. Furthermore, the structure of the Paramārthastava resembles closely the description of the proper application of the buddhanusmṛti samādhi as given in the Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthitasamādhi-sūtra. Once again, the question arises whether Nāgārjuna is applying the practice with similar understanding. If so, it can be argued that he is applying another method for bridging the gap between the conventional and the ultimate, another method for realizing emptiness apart from analytical meditation.

The questions asked above have not been addressed by scholars. In fact, the most prominent features in the hymns - worship, devotion, commemoration, merit accumulation - have not entered the mainstream of critical scholarly discussion on Nāgārjuna. On the contrary, they have often been consciously ignored or marginalised due to attributing primary status to the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā and the arguments found there.

It is my contention that the questions asked above deserve serious consideration and that the best places for studying them are the hymns. My preliminary examination quickly showed how much preparatory work was needed. First of all, the Tibetan tradition attributes eighteen hymns to Nāgārjuna but there seems to be no agreement as to which ones are to be considered authentic. Moreover, there seems to be no agreement on the criteria for determining authenticity. The most common case is to refer to the collection known as the “Catuhṣṭava” (“Four Hymns”) and approach it as an organic unit, often listing it among the authentic works as one entry. The other hymns, several of which are arguably authentic, have received much less or no attention. When commenting on the Catuhṣṭava, the most common practice
Chapter 1: Introduction

is to focus on the "philosophical aspects" that find their parallels in the analytical works. Many of the eighteen have never been edited or translated into any Western language. I became aware that if my intention is to be realised, I would first have to establish comprehensive criteria for authenticity, edit and translate all eighteen hymns and then critically examine them in order to establish their authenticity and at the same time bring to the surface the religious and social voices that may provide answers to the questions and concerns outlined above. This dissertation is structured accordingly.

Chapter 2 offers a detailed account of the methodological considerations, where the limitations will be addressed. At the same time, the chapter serves as a review of the existing scholarship. There are four sections in this chapter discussing the criteria for authenticity, the historical and geographical location of Nāgārjuna, methodological choices in editing and translating the hymns, and the theoretical background for the method of analyzing the content of the hymns. With those preliminaries, the ground is paved for the study of the hymns.

Chapter 3 focuses on the four hymns belonging to the collection called "Catuhstava." They are considered separate not because I see their content as an organic unit - I do not - but because we possess critical editions of several manuscripts, and hence I am using the Sanskrit texts. That is a particular advantage, since it allows comparison of the style with other authentic works preserved in Sanskrit. Each hymn is examined in terms of its style, structure and content where the specific doctrinal, social and religious aspects are illuminated. The discussion ends with the establishment of authenticity.

Chapter 4 examines five other hymns likely to be authentic. Unfortunately, we do not possess Sanskrit versions for them apart from fragments or single verses. They
are edited and translated from the Tibetan and available Sanskrit verses are given in footnotes. The standard procedure of examination remains, with omission of the discussion of style due to the unavailability of Sanskrit manuscripts.

Chapter 5 deals with the nine hymns that I consider dubious or spurious. In order to provide a clear picture of the reasons for not accepting them as authentic and with the idea of contributing to the field of study of Buddhist hymns in general, I have edited and translated all nine. The discussion on their content follows the same procedure as in the previous two chapters, but not in the same depth and detail.

Chapter 6 is the concluding part of the dissertation, offering a summary of the findings in terms of the place of the doctrine of emptiness in Nāgārjuna’s religious praxis. It answers the questions posed in this introduction. In addition, the criteria for authenticity receive another look and the most plausible reading for Nāgārjuna’s location is supported with more evidence.
Chapter II

Methodological considerations

The discussion on the content of the hymns would not be a meaningful task without first establishing the parameters of the discourse. Accordingly, this chapter will address the methodological concerns regarding the criteria for authenticity, the historical and geographical location of Nāgārjuna, the methodological choices made in regards to editing and translating the hymns, and the theoretical background for the method of analyzing the content of the hymns. In addition, each section will be accompanied with the review of the existing scholarship as well as with the discussion of the limitations that the available evidence imposes on drawing definite conclusions.
1. Criteria for authenticity of the works attributed to Nāgārjuna

a. The problem with the criteria

Any attempt to reliably attribute works to Nāgārjuna runs into special difficulties. First of all, the Buddhist tradition attributes to him so many works (more than 100 in the Tibetan canon) of various genres, styles and contents, that it is difficult to establish any internal criteria on which they can be convincingly attributed to the same author. For example, there is a real challenge in establishing what the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* has in common with the *Niraupamyastava*, (not to mention more controversial works such as the *Dharmadhātustava*). The *Niraupamyastava* treats reality in a cataphatic manner coming very close to the doctrine of the *Tathāgatagarbha*, in contrast to the apophatic manner of the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*. It makes clear references to “Mahāyāna,” a word which is never used in the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*, and speaks of worshiping the Buddha as a practice of the true devotees (*bhakta*), the bodhisattvas. The *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* is completely devoid of any sacralization and pays no heed to the bodhisattva ideal (even though it mentions the word once). The *Niraupamyastava* seems to be influenced by the Pūrvaśāila school while *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* contains many Pudgalavāda references and endorses some of its key doctrines without reference to Pūrvaśāila. Both works are attributed to Nāgārjuna by “trustworthy witnesses,” to use Lindtner’s expression, but here we come to another setback: each of those witnesses lived at least 300 years later! Fortunately, a comparison of the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* and the
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Nirahapamyastava is still relatively easy since both works are preserved in Sanskrit, the original language of composition. Hence, we can compare the style and the use of specific technical terms. Most of the works attributed to Nāgārjuna are preserved only in Chinese and/or Tibetan translations and the comparison of style becomes problematic or simply impossible. But, even if we do possess indubitable evidence of differences in style, genre and doctrinal content between the two works and determine that they were composed in different geographical areas (as most likely is the case with the two under consideration), it is by no means ascertained that they are necessarily products of different authors. People can change their place of residence, as they often do, they can change their styles, philosophical views and doctrinal vocabulary, or they can choose, for whatever strategic reasons, to approach one problematic topic from various angles or through various genres. The challenge is to find criteria for evaluating those differences which allow attribution to the same person. The ideal solution would be “to determine what styles an author has employed and what religious and philosophical ideas he has accepted on the basis of the entire corpus of his works” (Ruegg, 1982:510). Of course, if we know exactly the styles and philosophical ideas Nāgārjuna employed (in short, if we know his teachings exactly) we would be able to establish which texts are authentic. But the problem lies precisely here. As Paul Williams notes, “only when we know which texts are authentic we can establish Nāgārjuna’s teachings.” (Williams, 1984:73). Hence, we are caught in a vicious circle: in order to establish which works are authentic we need to know Nāgārjuna’s teachings but in order to know his teachings we need to know which works are authentic.
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The way out of the circularity would be to establish a good starting point from where gradually we would be deriving more and more knowledge about the general and specific features of Nāgārjuna’s opus. Fortunately, we do have such a starting point: we call the author of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā “Nāgārjuna,” so we shall axiomatically take this work as a primary criterion. And, of course, Indian, Chinese and Tibetan traditional sources all regard it as Nāgārjuna’s main work. From there we shall proceed by means of comparison with other works. Of course, we must proceed with much caution. We have to avoid the narrow view that only works that match the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā doctrinally are accepted because such a conclusion is based on the unfounded presupposition that Nāgārjuna was perfectly consistent in his doctrine throughout his literary opus, and that all of his doctrinal features were laid out in this work. As the example above shows, it will not be a straightforward task to establish similarities with the Niraupamyastava. Furthermore, basic agreement in terms of the doctrine ultimately means non-disagreement but that is precisely what all Madhyamaka works have, even those composed centuries later. We must also be aware of the fact that the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā does not offer much material for studying Nāgārjuna’s religious practices or his social setting. To rely heavily on the basic doctrinal features of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā presents the danger of depriving Nāgārjuna of any context, as if he lived completely unaffected by the politics of the social and religious struggles of his time and was only concerned with abstract philosophical thought. We need to examine the style of the work looking not for the basic features but for specifics that are typical for one author and not present in other authors of the same time. We must look at the doctrinal features not only regarding the presence of specific tenets – as said above, that is what all Madhyamaka
works have in common and ultimately amounts to non-disagreement – but for specifics such as the logical syntax that is typical for one author, the presence of tenets that are not present in other authors, reference to sūtras not quoted by others, and as many specific elements as possible that will establish a reasonable starting point. We must also pay careful attention to other voices apart from the doctrinal that are interwoven in the text and could give us glimpses into the author’s daily routine, his place of habitat (or place of composition of the work) and his community (his real audience). We need to look for specific problems he faced, his agendas and rhetorical strategies in his own social and religious environment and how they influenced his religious practice and writing. After we ascertain the authenticity of another work, we need to focus on doctrinal and other differences between the two so gradually we can build understanding of the full scope. The process as is laid out here will be long and difficult but it is a challenge that has to be accepted if we are to avoid the often repeated practice of picking verses from various works as if their authenticity were proven and using them in support of some philosophical position as if it is self-evident that they refer to this. We must consider the specific context in which the arguments appear, notice the differences in terms of audience to which they were addressed, the time and place of composition, the use of sūtras and the presence of other doctrines.

In order to establish criteria and to demonstrate the method of analysis which will later be applied to all hymns, this chapter will examine the authenticity of the Ratnāvali in comparison with the Mūlamadhyamakārikā.
b. Attribution by the tradition

Any examination of the work attributed to Nāgārjuna must start with the attribution by the tradition. After we conduct our analysis we may agree or disagree with this attribution but the simple fact is – that without the tradition we wouldn’t know where to start.

Thanks to Christian Lindtner’s (1982) meticulous work we now have sufficient material for study of the traditional sources attributing works to Nāgārjuna. Lindtner consults all the extant works of Candrakīrti and Bhāvaviveka, Śāntarakṣita’s Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti and Tattvasiddhi, and Kamalaśīla’s Madhyamakālaṃkārapaṇijīkā, Madhyamakāloka and Bhāvanākrama (I&III). Furthermore, he lists quotations of particular verses by less known Indian commentators. He notes that he could not prove that these authorities possess any objective means of deciding what Nāgārjuna wrote but all of them are very learned and meticulous in dealing with their texts and any misquotation on their part would certainly expose them to censure from their peers (Lindtner, 1982:10-11, n.9). Hence, he considers them as “trustworthy witnesses.”

The biggest problem with this criterion is not only the temporal distance of at least 300 years between Nāgārjuna and the earliest of the “witnesses.” During this-time India went through enormous social, political, intellectual and religious changes, as Williams (1984:74) points out. Consideration must also be given to the autonomy and originality of these commentators. In the final analysis, the burden of proof of authenticity must lie in a detailed comparison with the primary criteria. Nevertheless,
we should not ignore the weight of authority of the “witnesses” for the reasons stated by Lindtner. Their testimonies cannot be considered definite proof but certainly merit serious consideration and add weight on the scale.

Having said that, the *Ratnāvali*, a work of 500 verses partly extant in Sanskrit but fully extant in Chinese and Tibetan,\(^{23}\) is ascribed to Nāgārjuna by Bhāvaviveka, Candrakīrti and Śāntarakṣita and quoted by many other later authors.\(^{24}\) Lindtner also states that it is ascribed to Nāgārjuna in the colophons of the Tibetan and Chinese versions. However, the Chinese version does not mention the name of the author.\(^{25}\)

c. Style

Many of the works attributed to Nāgārjuna are preserved in translation but not in Sanskrit, the original language of composition. Translations never perfectly match the style of the original and our case is no exception.\(^{26}\) Paul Williams points out three additional difficulties: first, styles in India were often copied, since the “great Master could form a model for succeeding generations”; second, “similarity in style between texts is only to be expected when members of the same school or tradition approach


\(^{25}\) This was discussed on H-Buddhism forum (H-BUDDHISM@H-NET.MSU.EDU), 17-18 October, 2006, under the subject “The authorship of the Ratnāvali from Chinese materials” (query posted by Stuart Young).

\(^{26}\) Making the same point, commenting on *Vaidalyaprakāraṇa* (*VP*) and complimenting Lindtner for his sensitivity, Williams (1984: 96-97) writes:

Lindtner’s study and summary of *VP* is noteworthy for the way in which he brings out the humour of Nāgārjuna’s text. This is no mean achievement since a number of the jokes are almost totally lost in the Tibetan translation, and to grasp them indicates a rare ability to systematically read through the Tibetan to the Sanskrit original. Thus, Nāgārjuna comments that there can be no द्वितीयता (lit. ‘sean end’) because there is neither a beginning nor a middle! The Tibetan translation has this all very faithfully: था मा दंग दुबै मेद पाँि प्यिङ्ग म्तहा यांग म्थोंग बा मा यिं नो। However the Tibetan completely misses the Sanskrit joke, since ‘द्वितीयता’ in Tibetan is translated not by its etymology but by its meaning, as ‘dpe’, example.
the same topic”; and third, “when different topics are involved then even the same writer may change his style quite dramatically” (Williams, 1984:75). His opinion is that even if one can successfully discover the style of the work written in one language but extant only in another, it is questionable how credible the evidence would prove for attributing that work to a particular author. Hence, Williams does not give much attention to this criterion.

Still, being mindful of the limitations and focusing on Nāgārjuna’s works preserved in Sanskrit, one can deduce valuable conclusions by studying the style. Tilman Vetter’s (1992) study is a good example.

Vetter limits the comparison to the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā and the Sanskrit fragments of the Ratnāvalī as they appear in Michael Hahn’s edition and later amendments, which constitute 60% of the 500 verses. He compared metrics as well as the presence of particles and compounds.

First, regarding the metrics: both the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā and the Ratnāvalī are written in anuṣṭubh metre and both regularly have some kind of vipulā. According to the theory of anuṣṭubh, there are two main types of this metre: pathyā, which is the “ordinary” or regular form, and vipulā, which is the “expanded” or irregular form. An anuṣṭubh stanza is called pathyā if the fifth, sixth and seventh syllables of the two hemistichs show the jagal pattern: v - - (short, long, long).27 According to Pīnagala, the oldest authority on the field of metrics, only four deviations from the regular pattern were allowed:
bha-vipulā (- v v) the fifth syllable is long, sixth and seventh are short

27 Rules: the syllable is long if it contains vowels ā, ī, e, ai, o, au, anusvara (ฑ), visarga (ः). The vowel before double consonant is also counted as long (for example: agni).
ra-vipulā (- v -) where the fifth and seventh syllables are long, sixth being short

na-vipulā (v v v) where the fifth, sixth and seventh syllables are short

ta-vipulā (- v) where the fifth and sixth syllables are long, and the seventh is short

The Buddhist metrician Ratnārakṣānti also admits

ma-vipulā (- - -) where the fifth, sixth and seventh syllables are long.

Theoretically, we can further distinguish

ca-vipulā (v - v) where the fifth and seventh syllables are short, the sixth is long, and

sa-vipulā (v v -) where the fifth and sixth syllables are short, and the seventh is long.

According to Vetter, in Mūlamadhyamakakārikā (out of 884 lines [(one line contains two pādas)]:

45 have na-vipulā, which is 5.1%
17 have bha-vipulā, which is 1.9%
40 have ma-vipula, which is 4.5%
48 ra-vipulā, which is 5.4%
6 ja-vipulā
3 sa-vipulā
1 ta-vipulā

In total, there are 160 instances of vipulā in 884 lines, which is 18%.

In the Ratnāvalī, according to Hahn’s analysis taken by Vetter, out of 605 lines,

29 have na-vipulā, which is 4.8%
22 have bha-vipulā, which is 3.6%
29 have ma-vipulā, which is 4.8%
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7 have ra-vipulā, which is 1.2%

There are no ja, sa or ta vipulās.

In total, 14.4% of the lines have some vipulā. The number does not differ significantly from that in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā.

The analysis of the vipulā does not offer definite proof of the authorship of the work. However, it seems to have the power to eliminate possible authors. For example, Āryadeva’s Catuhṣataka (Lang, 1986) contains only 2.3% vipulā — 7 of a total of 303 Sanskrit fragments — and all are ma-vipulā (Vetter, 1992:501). Therefore, as Vetter concludes, “Āryadeva, so it seems, may be safely eliminated as a possible author of the Ratnāvalī, while the traditional attribution to the author of the Kārikās remains possible” (1992:501).

Next, Vetter compares the use of particles and compounds in both works. Here the attribution becomes a little doubtful because percentages do not match closely, but that opens an interesting possible conclusion which will be discussed a little later. In brief, the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā shows presence of roughly twice as many particles as the Ratnāvalī. For comparison: in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, according to Vetter: ca is present in 41% of the lines, eva in 16.4%, api in 9.4%, iti in 7.5%, hi in 7.5%, vā in 5.2%, punah in 4.1%, tu in 2.6%. All together, 94% of the lines contain some particle. In the Ratnāvalī, in 605 lines existing in Sanskrit: ca is present in 126 lines, eva in 41, api in 74, iti in 43, hi in 7, vā in 15, punar in 8, tu in 22. All together, 336 or 55% of the lines contain some of the particles.

The percentage of particles seems to have some relation to the more frequent occurrence of compounds in the Ratnāvalī (in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā 79% of all
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*pādas* do not have compounds, versus 51.5% in the *Ratnāvali*. Furthermore, not only is there a higher frequency of *pādas* with compounds in the *Ratnāvali*, but there are also regularly lines where “the caesura between the *pādas* a and b or *pādas* c and d is formed by a juncture between two stems of a compound. This never happens in the *Kārikās*” (Vetter, 1992:503).

Before offering our opinion, we can compare the style of the *Lokātāstava* and the *Nirupamyastava* with the two above-mentioned works.28

The *Lokātāstava* contains 28 verses also written in anuṣṭubh metre. Analysis of *vipulā* shows that 10 out of 56 lines contain some kind of *vipulā* (3 ra-vipulā: 8c, 10a, 18a; 3 na-vipulā: 13c, 19a, 22c; 1 hva-vipulā: 5c; and 3 ma-vipulā: 8a, 11c, 17c), which is 17.8%. The percentage is close to that in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and the *Ratnāvali*.

Regarding particles: *ca* is present in 5, which is 9%, *eva* in 2, which is 3.6%, *api* in 6, which is 11%, *iti* in 2, which is 3.6%, *hi* in 4, which is 7.2%, *vā* is absent, *punar* is absent, and *tu* in 1, which is 1.8%. All together, particles are present in 36% of the lines. The percentage is lower than in the *Ratnāvali* and significantly lower than in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*.

Regarding compounds: 21 out of 56 lines do not contain compounds, which is around 36%. Furthermore, on one occasion (3 c-d) the hymn contains a caesura formed by a juncture between two stems of a compound.

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28 Other authentic works cannot be examined. The *Vigrahavyāvartanī* is not written in anuṣṭubh, while the *Śūnyatāsaptati* and the *Yuktiśāstika* are not extant in Sanskrit.
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After the analysis of the style we can conclude that there are similarities between the 'Lokūtīstava and the other two works by Nagārjuna. The percentage of vipulā closely matches the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā and is not far away from the Ratnāvali, while regarding particles and compounds, the hymn shows a slightly more refined style than the Ratnāvali and a significantly more refined one than the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā.

In the Nirupamyastava – a work containing 25 verses, 24 of which are in anusṭhūb metre: 7 out of 48 lines contain vipulā (4 na-vipulā: 6a, 7a, 13a, 14a; 1 bha-vipulā: 13c; 1 sa-vipulā: 11c; and 1 ma-vipulā: 8a), which is 14.7%. The percentage is close to that in Mūlamadhyamakakārikā and almost identical to that of the Ratnāvali.

Regarding particles: in 50 lines, ca is present in 18, which is 36%, eva in 3, which is 6%, api in 2, which is 4%, iti in 4, which is 8%, hi is absent, vā is absent, punar is absent, and tu in 1, which is 2%. All together, particles are present in 56% of the lines. Again, the percentage is almost identical to that in the Ratnāvali.

Regarding compounds: in the Nirupamyastava, 15 lines, which is 30%, do not contain a compound. On two occasions (verses 10 a-b and 23c-d) the caesura is formed by a juncture between two stems of a compound. This shows a considerable similarity with the Ratnāvali. Overall, the Nirupamyastava shows very close stylistic similarities to the Ratnāvali.

As we can see, in all four works the percentage of vipulā is very close but in terms of the presence of particles and compounds we see considerable differences between the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā and the other three. This could be explained by the possibility that Sanskrit was a second language for Nagārjuna and the Ratnāvali
and the two hymns were his more mature work. Hence, the lower frequency of particles and the higher frequency of compounds could be the result of a more refined style, something to be expected from a later work in somebody’s literary career. For the moment we shall leave this remark as only a possibility but will offer a full discussion later, after an examination of all the criteria.

In any case, the analysis of the style seems to be able to give valuable information that, cross-checked with all other evidence, will provide solid criteria for the authenticity of a work attributed to Nagarjuna.

d. Doctrine

Once again, it is necessary to first determine the parameters of the discourse. To simply assert agreement in doctrine (finding works that are “saying the same thing” or “covering the topic in the same way”) amounts to non-disagreement and does not help to establish the authenticity of a work since that is the distinguishing feature of a school of thought, not of the individual author. Hence, the presence and identical treatment of the doctrines of emptiness, nīḥsvabhava or dependent origination, is what the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā has in common not only with the Ratnāvali but with hundreds of other texts. The challenge is to find doctrinal specifics that are typical for one author. Also, it would not help to focus our attention too much on the absence of some doctrines, such as the tathāgatagarbha, because, first, the time of appearance of this doctrine is problematic, second, Nagarjuna may have deliberately avoided discussing it even if he knew of it and, third, even though it is obvious that the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā shows no signs of knowledge of this doctrine, we should not
make that a criterion because it would imply the presupposition that the whole doctrinal position of the author was laid out in this work. A better way of proceeding is to examine the logical syntax of the arguments. Here, again, not all arguments are equally helpful. For example, both the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* and the *Ratnāvalī* have lengthy refutations of the three times (past, present and future) and apply the method of *catuskoti* in refuting a proposition that is common for dozens of Mādhyamaka works and many authors, and not a peculiar feature for Nāgārjuna. There is, however, one type of argument that is not found in the works of Aryadeva, Nāgārjuna's immediate disciple. There seems to be an idiosyncratic element characteristic of the individual style of our author: the form "if *a* not *b*; if not *a* also not *b" present in both works. A further specific element, noted by Walser, is the scripture reference in the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* and the *Ratnāvalī*. In the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* XVIII, verse 6, Nāgārjuna writes:

The Buddhas have provisionally employed the term ātman and instructed on the true idea of anātman. The have also taught that any... entity as ātman or anātman does not exist.

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29 We owe gratitude to Joseph Walser (2005:273) for pointing to this unusual phrasing of the argument. For comparison, Walser offers *Ratnāvalī* 356:

Past and future objects and the senses are meaningless, [due to the preceding argument]. So too are present objects since they are not distinct from these two.

Similarly, in *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*, chapter 2:

What has been traversed is not being traversed. What has not yet been traversed is not being traversed. What is being traversed, apart from what has been traversed and what is not yet traversed, is not being traversed (both are Walser's translations, 2005:273).

And further, *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* chapter 20, verse 15:

Without partaking of a union, how could cause give rise to an effect? But again, with the partaking of a union, how could cause give rise to an effect?

To compare with *Ratnāvalī* 68:

If momentary, then it becomes entirely non-existent; hence how could it be old? Also, if non-momentary, it is constant; hence, how could it become old? (both Walser's translations, 2005: 273-274).
A comparable verse is the *Ratnāvali* 103:

Thus neither the self nor non-self are said to be apprehended as real. Therefore the Great Subduer rejected views of self and non-self.\(^{30}\)

Of course, commentators took notice of these verses and were quick to locate the canonical source of reference. However, as Walser (2005:275-6) shows, they seem to have missed the mark. The *Akutobhayā* and the *Budhapālita-vṛtti* identify Sāleyyaka sutta of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. Yet, the *Sāleyyaka sutta* never mentions ātman and anātman as beliefs to be abandoned (2005:275). Bhāvaviveka locates the source in the *Suvikrāntavikramin Sūtra* but, as Walser points out, referring to de Jong, that text can be dated no earlier than the time of Bhāvaviveka (sixth century). Candrakīrti suggests *Kāṣyapaparivarta Sūtra*. This one is early, predating Nāgārjuna. However, the passage in question does not occur in the earliest translations but only in the next extant translation completed sometime between 265 and 420, thus, postdating Nāgārjuna (2005:276). The examination allows Walser to conclude:

The fact that Nāgārjuna refers to a scripture with which other members of the early Mādhyamika school were unfamiliar means that access to his version of that scripture was limited to a few members of the early school – perhaps even limited to Nāgārjuna alone since Āryadeva makes no references to this passage. The fact that the *Ratnāvalī* refers to a *sūtra* of which other early Mādhyamikas seem to have been unaware increases the likelihood that Nāgārjuna wrote it (2005:276).

\(^{30}\) Both translations Walser’s (2005:274-275).
In conclusion, the specific logical syntax, the scripture reference and the similarities in style seem to be productive of criteria for attributing works to Nāgārjuna and, more specifically, to ascertain that the Ratnāvalī and the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā are written by the same author.

In addition, we shall now examine the rhetorical strategies in employment of some doctrinal topics and technical terms. This will be a lengthy discussion but well worth the space.

e. Rhetorical strategies

A groundbreaking work bringing to surface Nāgārjuna’s rhetorical strategies is Joseph Walser’s Nāgārjuna in Context (2005). This book aims to achieve recovery of the social and institutional context in which Nāgārjuna, as early champion of the Mahāyāna movement, lived and worked at the time when its institutional boundaries were being negotiated. The focus of the book is not on Nāgārjuna’s doctrinal concerns and the logical consistency of his arguments but the social and institutional forces at work. The centre of the book, therefore, is not so much the doctrine of emptiness but the “rather strange way that he goes about arguing for it” (2005:2). The key question, Walser asks, is “Why this particular argument and not some other?” He proposes a thesis and argues convincingly that, “Many of the peculiarities of Nāgārjuna’s writings can be more adequately understood if read as strategies devised to respond to the specific demands of the social and institutional context in which he wrote” (2005:2). In order to fully appreciate this approach we need first to consider the state of Mahāyāna as a movement at the time of Nāgārjuna.
There are hundreds of inscriptions from the second to the fifth centuries recording gifts to monastic orders of land, money, slaves, villages, relics, etc., but not a single reference to gifts or patronage to the Mahāyāna as a group until the end of the fifth or beginning of the sixth century.\(^\text{31}\) Obviously, Mahāyāna was not an independent Buddhist institution but a marginalized minority and quite often (as we can see from some passages in Nāgārjuna’s *Ratnāvali*) an embattled movement.\(^\text{32}\) Since there is no evidence of Mahāyāna monasteries, the only reasonable solution is that Mahāyānists lived in the same monasteries with the members of the mainstream (śrāvaka) Buddhist school who controlled the economic resources and the monastic law. Thus they were economically and legally dependent on others. The economic dependence, as Walser clarifies, resulted from the fact that, being ensconced in monasteries already affiliated with one of the established sects, Mahāyānists could not independently secure lay support and meritorious donations needed to propagate their own ideas (most notably, the proliferation of their scriptures). Legal dependence stems from the fact that all monks living in one monastery would take the same ordination vows and be accountable to the same rules which, among other things, means they would have to accept the same criteria as to what constitutes buddhavacana and establish that their scriptures are acceptable by the standards of the monastic mainstream.\(^\text{33}\)

\(^{31}\) For good discussion and summary of existing evidence see Gregory Schopen, (1979), (1990), and (2000).
For the list of sources giving an approximate idea of the number and sorts of inscriptions that record donations see Schopen, 2000:13, n17.

\(^{32}\) *Ratnāvali*, Chapter IV, particularly verses 79-89, analyzed by Schopen, 2000:7-10, clearly show great effort on the part of Nāgārjuna to secure acceptance of Mahāyāna in the suspicious, if not hostile environment.

\(^{33}\) See Walser (2005:58).
Walser, in the abovementioned study, starts from the obvious but rarely considered fact that Nāgārjuna, as a Buddhist monk, had to live in a monastery affiliated with and dominated by one of the śrāvaka Buddhist schools. Naturally, the proponents of these schools controlled all resources and controlled the religious law, which means they controlled the criteria of what could be considered the Word of the Buddha (buddhavacana) and which texts would deserve to be copied and preserved in the monastery's library. The question that Walser asks is: how could Nāgārjuna, as an advocate of a minority movement, secure the preservation and proliferation of his texts, and how (by what means and strategies) could he establish a favourable position for his brand of Buddhology? He simply could not have succeeded on his own, while ignoring the opinions of the dominant mainstream schools that hosted him. In such circumstances, Nāgārjuna would have to devise strategies for the acceptance of his brand of Buddhology and for the proliferation of his treatises. His most important audience—the one he would need to persuade—would be the one that controls the resources and controls the opinion of what is legitimately buddhavacana. And, here we see the importance of Walser's book: most Western scholarship on Nāgārjuna assumes that his intended audience is either his Mahāyānist supporters or his philosophical opponents (i.e., the Sarvāstivadins, the Sāṃkhyaists, etc.). However, Walser says, "what is elided by such arguments is a third and functionally more important audience—those monks and laypeople in control of the resources that the Mahāyānists needed" (2005:3). Walser argues that Nāgārjuna needed to win over this third audience either by securing alliances (presenting arguments that would defeat the opponents of the third audience) and thereby securing a place for Mahāyāna within the monastery, or by devising strategies for incorporating Mahāyāna texts into
the monastic industry of text reproduction and preservation by making a strong case that he is only following the word of the Buddha. With numerous examples Walser shows that Nāgārjuna was very well aware of his predicament and used various strategies to align his doctrines with those of the dominant schools of the time and place (such as Prajñāaptīvāda and Pudgalavāda). These schools make the “third audience.”

After these preliminary observations we can examine two examples in order to illustrate the influence of the “third audience” on the Mūlamadhyamakārīkā.

That the voices of other schools are present in Nāgārjuna’s Mūlamadhyamakārīkā is well documented. What had not been considered before Walser is that Nāgārjuna often makes a significant effort to harmonise his doctrines with those of the mentioned schools, so much so that this becomes his primary objective while the consistency of his doctrine is secondary. For example, in Mūlamadhyamakārīkā VI, Nāgārjuna argues with Sarvāstivāda on the emptiness of the material form, claiming that rūpa is conceptual designation (prajñāpti). At one point (verse 6), however, he makes a subtle but unexpected shift in terminology: “The verses up to this point had examined the relationship between rūpa (form) and kāraṇa (cause). Verse 6 slips in kāraṇa (future passive participle of the root kr [to make, lit. ‘that which is to be caused,’ i.e., effect]) for rūpa” (Walser, 2005:238). Walser comments:

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34 Tilman Vetter (1982) identifies that Mūlamadhyamakārīkā chapters IX, X, XVIII, XXIII and XXVII are echoing Pudgalavāda doctrines and are fully in accord with tenets of this school, Walser (2005: 228-258) finds verses in Mūlamadhyamakārīkā VI to be in accord with Prajñāaptīvāda and verses from Mūlamadhyamakārīkā XVII in accord with Pudgalavāda.
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We now have three things. There is the dharma, rūpa that is prajñāpti depending on two other prajñāptis – kārya and kāraṇa. The later two prajñāptis, however, are designated depending on each other, thus the three are each prajñāptis based on a necessary relationship to something else within the triad. And yet the system does not seem to require an ultimate basis in something substantial. This triadic structure is surely reminiscent of the Prajñāaptivādins thesis that all conditioned (saṃskṛta) dharmas are reciprocally designated (anyonya prajñāpti) and that suffering is designated on this basis.

That his argument would have been acceptable to the Prajñāaptivādins is further aided by the fact that one of their cardinal theses, according to Vasumitra, was that none of the aggregates (e.g., rūpa) existed ultimately in the first place. Hence, Nāgārjuna is arguing for a thesis that the Prajñāaptivādins already held, using a concept of prajñāpti that they were already using (2005:239).

But why did Nāgārjuna have to make these additions in terminology? For, as Walser observes, “surely the conundrum that Nāgārjuna raises could be solved by admitting a simple identity between the material cause and the form, in the same way that the cloth is nothing other than the threads that comprise it” (2005:239). Furthermore, David Burton, studying the same passages, observes that, from the Sarvāstivāda point of view, Nāgārjuna’s argument is ultimately unconvincing and, drawn to the final consequences, enters nihilism (Burton, 1999:109ff). Walser’s answer is that Nāgārjuna’s interlocutor is not Sarvāstivādin but only appears to be so. Looking at the manoeuvres that Nāgārjuna takes and his subtle shifts in terminology, his argument is
designed to convince Prajñaptivādins that his doctrine is fully in accord with theirs. In other words, the real audience for Nāgārjuna is Prajñaptivāda. But, why would Nāgārjuna want to convince Prajñaptivāda that he is in accord with them? Walser suggests that Nāgārjuna might have been writing the Mūlamadhyamakārikā while staying in the monastery affiliated with the Prajñaptivāda school or at the place where Prajñaptivāda views were quite influential, and consequently, being the mainstream or exercising considerable influence over the mainstream most importantly in regards to the criterion for what could be considered as buddhavacana. If Nāgārjuna wanted to secure transmission of his writings, he would have had to convince his hosts that the doctrines he proposed were fully in accord with the law.

Another very specific example offered by Walser is worth reviewing. In Mūlamadhyamakārikā XVII 12, Nāgārjuna has a speaker objecting that the Mahāsāṃghika’s metaphor of the seed and the sprout is not appropriate to explain karma. The speaker claims that a more appropriate metaphor would be one that comes from the scriptures themselves. Here the doctrine of “indestructible” (avipraṇaśa) is introduced. At this point, Walser observes, a problem emerges:

Nāgārjuna has just introduced theories of the way that karma works belonging to two different Buddhist sects. In his response (verses 21 through 33) he would be expected to refute both positions. Indeed, he could have easily dispensed with the seed-sprout theory using arguments similar to the ones he used in chapter 8. By the same token, he could have just as easily refuted the theory of avipraṇaśa that bears it. His response in verses 21 through 33 does neither. Instead, he discusses the implications that would accrue if karma had
an essence (*svabhāva*). The problem is that it is not immediately obvious how, or even if, Nāgārjuna’s arguments establishing karma’s lack of *svabhāva* pertain to either of the prior points of view. Neither the Sautrāntikas nor the Mahāsāṅghikas in their articulation of the first position ever assumed the seed or sprout to have *svabhāva* (2005:245-6).

So, how to explain the fact that Nāgārjuna’s arguments in verses 21 to 33 seem to miss the mark? Was Nāgārjuna merely defeating a “straw-man”? Before we go any further we should note that the theory of the indestructible entity (*aviprapāśa*), the equivalent of which is nowhere to be found in the Theravāda *Tripiṭaka*, is one of the “brand name” doctrines of Sāṃmitiya – a Pudgalavāda school.35 According to Walser, Nāgārjuna’s targeted audience was the Sāṃmitiya school and the purpose of the verse is to explain to Sāṃmitiyas that their position is defensible if, and only if, they acknowledge the doctrine of emptiness. In defence of this proposition, Walser provides a few more examples and concludes with the following:

Instead of directly refuting the Sāṃmitiya doctrine of *aviprapāśa*, he reinterprets it. Karma is “imperishable” (*aviprapāśa*) because it is “nonarisen” (*anutpāda*, a Mahāyāna synonym for emptiness).

Nāgārjuna’s position *vis-à-vis* the doctrine of *aviprapāśa*, is… thus not one of either opposition or adoption but of rehabilitation. Although it is not possible to know whether at the time the Sāṃmitiyas found Nāgārjuna’s

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solution to their taste, his treatment of their doctrine in this chapter is relatively noncombative compared to his treatment of Sarvāstivādin doctrines elsewhere. If he had written the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā to a Saṃmitīya audience, he would have needed to show that Mahāyāna supported their doctrines against the Sarvāstivādins in order to secure monastic reproduction of Mahāyāna sūtras. As a strategy, this works something along the lines of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." Because the Sarvāstivādins attacked the doctrine of pudgala in many works dating from this period, Nāgārjuna's ability to defeat their arguments is more likely to have been a demonstration of his allegiance to the Saṃmitīyas than a threat to the Sarvāstivādins (who, in their literature, seem to have mostly ignored both Nāgārjuna and the Mahāyānists). Although he probably could not take the Saṃmitīya doctrines at face value, he does show how the doctrine of avipraṇāśa would be acceptable (and safe from the Sarvāstivādin criticism) if and only if they adopt the Mahāyāna doctrine of emptiness (2005:248).

In the two examples, Walser shows that Nāgārjuna makes shifts in terminology that can be explained only if his purpose was to align himself with the doctrines of a particular school (in the first case the Prajñāaptivāda, in the second the Saṃmitīya). Why was he compelled to do so? Logically speaking (from the point of view of presenting a consistent Mādhyamaka doctrine), the shifts are unnecessary and are, arguably, not contributing positively to the consistency of the doctrinal position. The most reasonable answer is that without the endorsement of the "third audience" he
would not have been able to secure proliferation of his texts or secure a favourable position for his minority orientation.

In summary, parts of Nāgārjuna’s arguments in *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* cannot be explained satisfactorily doctrinally but the purpose of broader rhetoric of apologetics for particular social causes must be taken into account; parts of the arguments prove that philosophical consistency is not always the primary concern. Furthermore, those parts show that concerns for the "third audience" directly influences the overall doctrinal argument since often the proof relies on acceptance by this audience.

Through this theory we may now explain a few other peculiarities in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. We may begin with the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. Tilman Vetter, analyzing the structure and internal coherence of the work, finds that the last two chapters do not fit well with the first twenty-five (a point made by other scholars as well but not explained\(^{36}\)):

XXVI never refers to the absence of a svabhāva of things, their śūnyatā, a subject that is discussed or mentioned in other chapters. It explains the twelvefold chain of dependent origination (*pratityasamutpāda*) of suffering. A conspicuous feature is the masculine gender in the explanation of several links of the chain. This points to a person which causes and undergoes suffering. Other Buddhist masters usually give emphasis to the absence of an agent or patient when explaining the twelvefold chain of dependent origination (1992:494).

\(^{36}\) For example, Keneth Īnada (1993:160) considers chapter XXVI an analysis of Hinayānistic doctrines. That may be too strong a judgment but it illustrates the difficulty that the author faced about harmonizing the chapter with the rest of the work. Even Lindner, in the mentioned work, writes: "... at first, the final chapters XXVI-XXVII dealing with traditional Buddhist ideas in a relative sense may seem to form a curious anticlimax. In my opinion the author appended them..." (1982:27-28, n81).
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In Vetter's view, chapter XXVI is thematically not coherent with the preceding chapters. He concludes, therefore, that it was written before the rest as probably an early work of Nāgarjuna, “a ‘student essay’ echoing some kind of Pudgalavāda milieu in which Nāgarjuna probably grew up” (1992:496). He supports this view with the observation that “XXVI does not refer to a condition of avidyā itself, while such a condition can be found in XVIII 5 (vikalpa, which is itself conditioned by prapañca) and XXIII 1 (saṃkalpa/viparyāsa, cf. Śūnyatāsaptati 10 and 62)” (1992:496, n.11).

Given this explanation, he accepts the chapter as authentic. He then proceeds to the final chapter which, like chapter XXVI, causes him doubts. He explains:

Only in one stanza (29) is the doctrine of the śūnyatā of all things mentioned, namely as (a better) alternative – introduced by atha vā – for overcoming such opinions. This stanza and the last one (30) remind us of XIII 8. But the preceding stanzas try to overcome opinions by pointing to a kind of middle way between the eternity and the annihilation of a person, the infinity and finiteness of the world. It cannot be described by one of the four positions (catuskoti), but seems to allow the use of the term saṃtati (stanza 16) / saṃtāna (22). This middle way is near to the middle way preached in Saṃyuttanikāya (PTS I p. 17). If we knew only the preceding 28 stanzas, the main thesis of D.J. Kalupahana’s book, Nāgarjuna. The Philosophy of the

37 He excludes, however, two stanzas – 4 and 11 because:
Both have been omitted in Kumārajīva’s Chinese translation (T. 1564 f. 36b 20-c 8). The explanation given in stanza 4, though well known, does not make sense in this place, whereas stanzas 3 and 5 when read without interruption give a good understanding. Verse 11 would be the only place in the Kārikās where bhāvanā of jñāna was commended (bhāvanā of the fourth truth as mentioned in chapter XXIV is rather a reference to a traditionally accepted tenet). As there are no strong parallel passages in the Kārikās which suggest that the omission of verse 11 in the Chinese translation is due to neglect, it is better dismissed as not genuine (1992:497).
Middle Way, viz. that Nāgārjuna only refers to an old message of the Buddha and initiates no new developments, would be no great problem (1992:497).

To Vetter, the first twenty-eight stanzas of the final chapter, like chapter XXVI, seem to refer to the old doctrines. Therefore, he considers them written at earlier times. In that context, the final two verses, 29-30, of the final chapter seem to Vetter to have been added later. Without them, chapter XXVII would not have belonged to the series. He also notes that chapter XXVII deals with the same ideas as chapter XXV. That similarity allows a comparison about which he writes:

Regarding this comparison, the same opinions as those which were dealt with in XXVII occur in XXV, but they now follow upon a critical review of ideas hypostatizing nirvāṇa. In both chapters the catuṣkoti is employed. But in XXV the negation of the four positions seems to be much stronger, leaving no room for a compromise, as e.g. the idea of a saṃtāna. As stanzas 22-24 show, chapter XXV has only one solution for overcoming the old questions about eternity and annihilation, infinity and finiteness, namely to regard all things as śūnya. This is not introduced as an alternative as it was in XXVII 29. Moreover, XXV 24 shows that not only opinions about eternity, etc., known from the ancient texts, should be overcome, but all ideas and doctrines whatsoever (and maybe even all diversity offered to the senses, as the parallel in V 8 suggests by using draṣṭavya instead of upalambha) (1992:498).

The last quotation, especially the last sentence, shows in Vetter's opinion not only that Mulamadhyamakakārikā would lead to quite different conclusion without the final two chapters but that the conclusions from chapter XXV and chapter XXVII do not harmonize well.
Vetter suggested that the last two chapters were written at earlier times as a student essay echoing the Pudgalavāda milieu in which Nāgārjuna probably grew up. But, even if that assessment is correct, it still does not answer the critical question: why are the two chapters incorporated in the text? What purpose do they serve? In the light of Walser’s study, it seems quite plausible to conclude that the last chapters are there because Nāgārjuna had Pudgalavāda as his audience and felt the need to explain that his doctrine of emptiness is harmonious with Pudgalavāda views. The last two verses of chapter XXVII seem to be an attempt to harmonise the Pudgalavāda with the Madhyamaka: after two chapters of a Pudgalavāda type of discussion, he quickly connects all with the preceding doctrines. It is open to discussion whether the doctrines of the last two chapters harmonize well with those of the first twenty-five but, in any case, they seem to prove Walser’s thesis that Nāgārjuna’s principal motivation was to show to his actual audience how well his doctrines harmonise with the mainstream views.

Vetter found peculiar the use of the masculine gender in explaining several links of the chain. He also found the same use of gender as implying an agent or patient of activities (as for example kartā in Chapter II, verse 19 and chapter XXIV, verse 17).

Walser’s hypothesis can also provide an answer to the question about the relation between the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā and the Sarvāstivāda. As noted before, in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, Nāgārjuna appears to directly criticize the Sarvāstivāda, as many scholars have concluded. However, Sarvāstivādins did not honour the critique with a reply. The reason may be because they did not consider
themselves refuted. As Burton’s study shows, if Nagarjuna really attacked the Sarvāstivādins and used their own tenets to show them their internal inconsistencies, his own arguments taken to final consequences end in advocating nihilism. Walser’s proposition seems to offer a plausible alternative. That is, in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā Nagarjuna engages the Sarvāstivādins in conversation not in order to defeat them but to show his allegiance to his real audience of Mahāsaṅghikas (probably Prajñāaptivādins) and Pudgalavādins (most likely Śāmmitiyas) through appropriating and rehabilitating certain of their key concepts and using these key terms to find fault with the Sarvāstivadin’s concept of svabhāva (Walser, 2005:261). This strategy, as we observed earlier, allows him to forge alliances within the host monasteries. Therefore, the critique of Sarvāstivāda appears to be a rhetorical strategy. Nevertheless, the strategy only makes sense in the area where his hosts were under threat or criticism by the Sarvāstivāda.

To summarise, it appears obvious that, even though many doctrinal propositions in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā do not make logical sense, they do make sense as rhetorical devices for social and strategic purposes. The main point to be drawn from this examination is that the meaning of many arguments offered by Nagarjuna is related more to the social setting than it is to logical consistency. Hence, the most appropriate method for analysing the meaning of those arguments is not the trans-cultural method of rational scrutiny but the method of analysis of the argument in its own context. This study will be mindful of the social setting of the arguments. The presence of the “third audience” can be detected by examining subtle shifts in the terminology and the presence of tenets of other schools.

Let us now examine whether the same audience is present in the Ratanāvali:
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First: Relation to Pudgalavāda. As we observed earlier, referring to Vetter’s two articles, many chapters of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā have similarities to Pudgalavāda ideas. To that we added Walser’s analysis of several verses in the seventeenth chapter. In the Ratnāvali, however, Nāgārjuna seems to criticise Pudgalavāda tenets directly. Verses 61-62 read:

Ask the Śāṅkhyas, the followers of Kaṇḍa, Nirgranthas,
and the worldly proponents of a person and aggregates,
whether they propound
what passes beyond “is” and “is not.”
Thereby know that the ambrosia
of the Buddha’s teaching is called profound,
and exclusive doctrine passing
far beyond “is” and “is not.”

Fortunately, these verses are preserved in Sanskrit. In Hahn’s edition, the compound used for “the worldly proponents of a person and aggregates” is pudgalaskandhavādin and I agree with Walser (2005:262) that it is most likely a variation of the common designation: pudgalavādin.

Furthermore, Ratnāvali makes no reference to the doctrine of avipranāśa and, as Walser observes, “at least one verse (chapter I, verse 82) appears to refute the Pudgalavādin’s analogy of the fire and fuel, instead of supporting it” (2005:262). In light of these notes Walser’s analysis of the phrase prajñaptir-upādāya from the

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famous verse XXIV, 18 of the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* seem justified. In his translation:

That which is dependent-origination, that is what we call emptiness.

It is *prajñaptir-upādāya* and this indeed is the middle way.

Walser observes that “Most schools of *abhidharma* had a concept of *upādāya prajñapti*, but many features of Nāgārjuna’s use of this term in relation to emptiness and dependent-origination conform more closely to a Pudgalavādin usage than to that of any other school (2005:258). It seems likely that Nāgārjuna uses this phrase to better address the audience of this school. When we turn to the *Ratnāvali*, however, the situation is different: we find many verses assuming equation between dependent origination and emptiness but the celebrated phrase *prajñaptir-upādāya* is completely omitted. This comes as no surprise after ascertaining that the *Ratnāvali* is not sympathetic towards the Pudgalavāda but, on one side, challenges Vetter’s choice for a specific feature in ascertaining the authenticity of Nāgārjuna’s work and, on the other side, shows that the specific feature Vetter selected was context-applicable, that is, for works composed in the Pudgalavāda environment. In a different environment, as we can see through analysis of *Ratnāvali*, Nāgārjuna is not making any effort to align his doctrines or terminology with those of Pudgalavāda. In fact, he is not hesitant in criticizing that school.

Second: Relationship to Sarvāstivāda. In contrast to the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*, in the *Ratnāvali* we find no references to Sarvāstivādin doctrines at all.
Third: The doctrine of momentariness and possible connection to Pūrvaśaila. 

_Ratnāvali_, verse 63, begins a discussion of the three times. The argument is similar to those in the _Mūlamadhyamakakārikā_ until verse 66, when the discussion shifts to the status of the moment (kṣaṇa). Verses 66 through 70 refute the possibility of momentariness in much the same way as each of the three times is refuted in the _Mūlamadhyamakakārikā_. The concept is wholly absent from the _Mūlamadhyamakakārikā_ (Walser, 2005:271). Walser refers to _Ratnāvali_, I, 66-70 (2005:271) and comments:

> In these verses, Nāgārjuna argues that momentariness can be neither affirmed nor denied – thereby avoiding any direct contradiction with the school that advocates momentariness. In his summary verse, verse 70, he alludes to the canonical passages discussing dependent-origination as a production neither from one’s self nor from another. In doing so, he ties the doctrine of momentariness to authoritative discussions of dependent-origination, a move that allows him to suggest that the doctrine of momentariness is valid only if those moments are empty. In other words, his audience must accept the Mahāyāna doctrine of emptiness to make their own doctrines coherent (2005:263).

In the last sentence Walser refers to what he understands to be Nāgārjuna’s strategy: the use of doctrines of other schools not simply to show that he is in accord with _buddhavacana_, but more than that, to advocate his brand of Buddhology and make his audience understand that only by accepting it do their own doctrines become coherent. It is significant to note here that, although many schools held the doctrine of
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momentariness, Buddhaghosa mentions the names of two: the Pūrvaśaila and the Aparaśaila. "Because Nāgārjuna treats the doctrine of momentariness in the Ratnāvali in the same manner as he treats the doctrine of pudgala in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, it is reasonable to surmise that the holders of this doctrine had taken the place of the Pudgalavādins as the ones whom Nāgārjuna needed to convince" (2005:263).

We should return briefly to Vetter’s assessment that the treatment of person was a most specific feature in Nāgārjuna’s works and offer an important addition that will result in reinterpretation: the treatment of the person is connected to the audience for which the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā was intended and that was the Śaṅkiritīya. The Ratnāvali, as we saw, was not intended for the Śaṅkiritīyas but most likely for the Pūrvaśailas. Hence, the treatment of the person is definitely very different than in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā. What remains constant, however, and emerges as the most distinct characteristic is the specific manner in which Nāgārjuna shows allegiance to his real audience. It is in that specific manner of applying rhetorical strategies that we ought to look for a criterion for authenticity. Hence, while evaluating the authenticity of works attributed to Nāgārjuna, apart from the analysis of style and doctrine, we must look for shifts in the vocabulary and examine the rhetoric of persuasion (particularly if at the expense of the style and natural flow) and apparent incoherencies. We must resist the temptation to look for a perfect doctrinal consistency in the works and quickly exclude those that show the presence of strange phrases or technical terms until we consider the possibility of a specific rhetorical strategy at play.
Summing up the discussion, we can ask the question: what evidence do we have so far for attributing the Ratnāvali to Nāgārjuna? First, we have attribution by the tradition. Second, the two works, the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā and the Ratnāvali, are in close agreement on all major points regarding the doctrine of emptiness and the way of arguing about it. Third, both works use the same peculiar logical syntax. Fourth, both works refer to the scriptural source unknown to the commentators. Finally, both show evidence of the employment of a specific rhetorical strategy. All together, the evidence seems heavy enough to convince us that the two works are written by the same author, namely, Nāgārjuna. If the above conclusion is acceptable, it should also be acceptable that the stylistic differences between the two works are the result of the different times of composition: the Ratnāvali, having been written at a later date, naturally has a more mature and refined poetical style.

f. Location of the place of composition of Mūlamadhyamakakārikā and Ratnāvali

As discussed earlier, in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā we find the presence of Pudgalavāda (most likely Sāṃmitīya), Prajñāptivāda and a polemical stand on Sarvāstivāda. All these schools were present in Mathurā in the second century. Evidence provided by Walser further strengthens the case:

In Mathurā, on the Lion capital inscription, dating from the time of Śodāsa in the Kuśana era, is an inscription recovering a rivalry between the Mahāsāṅghikas and the Sarvāstivādins. The latter school had sent a prominent debater to Mathurā to teach the Mahāsāṅghikas the truth.
Better yet, the only inscription mentioning the Saṃmitīyas during the Kuśāna era also hails from Mathurā. Furthermore, the Saṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra (T.1649) actually uses Mathurā as an example in one of its discussions – further suggesting a connection between the Saṃmitīyas and Mathurā (2005:269).

In short, judging by the references to schools in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, the text could have been composed in Mathurā.

In the Ratnāvalī I could not detect any reference to the Sarvāstivāda and I found no favourable treatment of any Pudgalavāda themes. I concluded that those two schools were likely not present or influential where the Ratnāvalī was composed. However, we found references to the doctrine of momentariness, associated with the Pūrvaśāilya and the Aparaśāilyas by Buddhaghoṣa – treated by Nāgārjuna in the same fashion as the doctrine of pudgala in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā. That gave Walser reason to conclude that the Pūrvaśailas and the Aparaśailas have taken the place of the Pudgalavādins as the ones whom Nāgārjuna needed to convince (2005:263). We find such an hypothesis well founded and accept that the Ratnāvalī was written in the lower Krishna River Valley, among the Andhakas. This is in accord with other evidence found in the work that allowed Mabbett and Walser to establish the time of composition as being during the reign of Yajñā Śrī (175-204).39 As further support we take the absence of the Pudgalavāda from Amarāvatī in the Nāgārjunakoṇḍa

region. This would explain the open criticism of some tenets of this school in the *Ratnāvalī*. Likewise, the absence of the Sarvāstivāda in the region explains the absence of any mention of this school.

g. Scope

As a criterion for authenticity, scope is a controversial category. If we start from the axiomatic authenticity of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārīkā* and judge the scope and doctrine of other the text accordingly, i.e., as “covering the same topic” and doctrine as “covering topics the same way” or “saying the same thing,” then except for some of the analytical works, the rest, including the hymns, would have to be rejected. Matching the hymns with the *Mūlamadhyamakakārīkā* in terms of doctrinal consistency will not work. After all, even the tradition recognized serious doctrinal differences between the analytical corpus and the hymnic corpus. Yet, if we are prepared to go outside the scope of *Mūlamadhyamakakārīkā*, then two dangers are present. First, we would be ascribing authenticity on the basis of attribution by certain trustworthy witnesses, in which case the secondary criterion becomes more important than the primary and, second, we would be in danger of falling into the trap of circularity where we would be ascribing precisely what we would have to examine. For those reasons many authors have dismissed scope as a valid criterion.  

Nevertheless, it is important to examine the scope of individual works and analyze its relationship with other factors such as the influence of other schools, geographical location and the employment of rhetorical strategies. In the same

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context, it is important to analyze specific differences between two works, particularly those written in different geographical areas and under the patronage of different Buddhist schools. We must be prepared to recognize the fact that different works have different scope and resist the temptation to establish one criterion for all. If we are interested in finding the full scope of Nāgārjuna’s literary opus, then we must be prepared to wait until the process of ascertaining authenticity is completed. In the meantime, the best we can do regarding the scope is to list specific similarities and differences. Having said that, we shall review two more differences between Mūlamadhyamakārikā and Ratnāvalī.

First: Bodhisattva practices. Another major difference between the Ratnāvalī and the Mūlamadhyamakārikā is in the employment of Mahāyāna ideals and Bodhisattva practices. The Mūlamadhyamakārikā never uses the word “Mahāyāna” and only once mentions the word “bodhisattva” (in the Chapter XXIV, verse 32\(^41\)) but, as Vetter points out, Nāgārjuna never propagates this ideal further.\(^42\) In Ratnāvalī, however, the bodhisattva practice has the central place in all five chapters. Of course, the quintessential bodhisattva practice is advancement through the ten grounds towards full buddhahood, which takes eons and a countless number of lifetimes. The Ratnāvalī acknowledges this practice but it also suggests a daily prayer\(^43\) that the

\(^41\) \(\text{tas cābuddhāḥ svabhāvena sa bodhāya ghaṭam api na bodhisattva caryāyam bodhiṃ te} \ \text{dhiṇam} \ \text{isīyati}.\) (Whoever is by self-nature unenlightened, even though he were to contend for enlightenment, would not attain enlightenment through a career of a bodhisattva).

\(^42\) In that sense, Warder’s (1973) famous question “Is Nāgārjuna a Mahayanist?” is not surprising.

\(^43\) In Hopkins’ (1998:159-160) translation:

465. Therefore in the presence of an image
Or monument or something else
Say these twenty stanzas
Three times every day:
466. Going for refuge with all forms of respect
To the Buddhas, excellent Doctrine,
Supreme Community, and Bodhisattvas,
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bodhisattva must perform three times a day in the presence of an image or statue of the Buddha, with bowed head and joined palms. This prayer is better known as the seven-fold bodhisattva practice: confessing one’s sins; going for refuge with all forms of respect to the Buddhas, excellent Doctrine, Supreme Community, and

For comparison, we find matching section in Bodhisambhāra (The [two] collections for enlightenment) – another works attributed to Nāgārjuna and endorsed by Lindtner. Relevant verses in Lindtner’s translation (1982:223 – 224):
48. In front of the fully enlightened Buddhas who are present (pratyutpanna) in the ten regions I entirely confess my sins (pāpa).
49. If the Buddhas who have attained bodhi in the universe of ten directions (daśadigdhatu) are reluctant to expound their teaching (dharmaśāstra) I entreat them to turn the dharmacakra!
50. If the samyaksambuddhas present in the universe of ten directions desire to give up their life (jīvitasāṃskāra) [in saṃsāra], I bow my head and request them to remain.
51. The merit of liberality and good morals (dānaśīlāpuṇya) and [good] thoughts and actions produced by living beings by means of body, mouth and mind –
52. We all rejoice in the merit (puṇya) accumulated by holy men (ārya) and common people (prthogjana) of the past, present and future.
53. If only I could make all the merit I have into a lump (pitṛ-kr-ṇa) and pass it on to the living beings so that they may obtain saṃbodhi!
54. In this way I repent, exhort [the Buddha to preach], request [the Buddha to remain], and turn [my merit] over to bodhi. One must know [that thus I will be] like the Buddhas.
55. One [ought to] express remorse for one’s unwholesome sins, request the Buddhas [to abide in saṃsāra], rejoice in merit and transfer it to bodhi as the Jinas have stated.
56. One must do so every third hour, day and night, joining palms (kṛṣṭījali), with the right knee-cap touching the ground, and the upper garment arranged on one’s shoulder.

Bodhisambhāra 48 clarifies: In front of the fully enlightened Buddhas who are present (pratyutpanna) in the ten regions.

Bodhisambhāra 56 adds: with the right knee-cap touching the ground, and the upper garment arranged on one shoulder.

Ratnāvali begins with going for refuge without mentioning confession of one’s sins, which Bodhisambhāra has as the first practice (but omitting the going for refuge part). It is possible that the two different accounts are referring to the same practice but it is also possible – and that is the preferred version we adopt here – that they are two different practices. Hence, we’ll list as the first practice confession of one’s sins, preserving the analogy with the ancient Vinaya rule that during the uposatha ceremony one first confesses own sins and then goes for refuge to the three jewels.
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Bodhisattvas, promising to turn away from all ill deeds, thoroughly taking up all meritorious deeds; rejoicing all the merits of all embodied beings; petitioning the perfect Buddhas to turn the wheel of doctrine; petitioning the perfect Buddhas to remain in saṃsāra as long as there are transmigrating beings; and, finally, transferring the merit accumulated by this practice for saṃbodhi of all beings.

Many scholars, including Lindtner and Williams, see unity in Nāgārjuna’s thought and propose the development of bodhicitta and the sevenfold bodhisattva practice as Nāgārjuna’s key themes. However, the evidence does not support such a conclusion for the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, even if it does so for the Ratnāvalī. Therefore, the unity of Nāgārjuna’s thought is not necessarily obvious. More obvious is the great difference in scope between the two works.

Second: The importance of merit accumulation. According to Ratnāvalī, the goal of Mahāyāna practice is the attainment of Buddhahood. That is achieved through accumulating limitless merit (punyasaṃbhāra) and limitless wisdom (jñānasamānābhāra). Through limitless merit the bodhisattva acquires the physical body of the Buddha (rupakāya) and through limitless wisdom the dharma body of the Buddha (dharma-kāya). Hence, as Lindtner determines, the practice of Mahāyāna, according to Ratnāvalī is punyajñānasamānābhāra which results in Buddhahood. Of the two, wisdom is taught to be the chief. However, when we look closely at the text, a

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47 The first refuge is not the historical Buddha Shakyamuni but all Buddhas. Also, the fourth refuge is added: Bodhisattvas.
48 Bodhisatvabhāra 51—52 specified: rejoicing in the merit accumulated by holy men and common people of the past, present and future – the merit of generosity, morality, good thoughts and actions produced by all living beings by body, mouth and mind.
greater emphasis on the accumulation of merit is evident. For example, when Nāgārjuna addresses the incompleteness of the Lesser Vehicle, he does not speak about wisdom but about the merit generated by the compassionate deeds of the Bodhisattvas. Furthermore, in the Ratnāvalī the accumulation of jñāna is always given in the context of the accumulation of punya. For example, verses 277 – 300 describe the benefits accruing to one who amasses merit. Wisdom is placed in that context. In fact, wisdom is placed in the context of the ten bodhisattva grounds (summary in verses 441-460), and is not separated from the rest. If anything, it is on

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50 Ratnāvalī 390-393 (Hopkins’ 1998:165-147 translation): Bodhisattvas’ aspirational wishes, deeds, and dedications [of merit] Were not described in the Hearers’ Vehicle. Therefore how could one become A Bodhisattva through it? [In the Hearers’ Vehicle] Buddha did not explain The foundations for a Bodhisattva’s enlightenment. What great authority for this subject Is there other than the Victor? How could the fruit of Buddhahood be superior [If achieved] through the path common to Hearers Which has the foundations [of the Hearer enlightenment], The meanings of the four noble truths, and the harmonies with enlightenment? The subject concerned with the Bodhisattva deeds Were not mentioned in the [Hearers’ Vehicle] śāstras But were explained in the Great Vehicle. Hence the wise should accept it [as Buddha’s word]. And, furthermore, identifying the unique practices of the Mahāyāna, Ratnāvalī 435-438 lists the six perfection and compassion, saying that compassion fulfills all aims. In Hopkins’ translation, pp. 154-155: Briefly the good qualities Observed by Bodhisattvas are Giving, ethics, patience, effort, Concentration, wisdom, compassion, and so forth. Giving is to give away one’s wealth. Ethics is to help others. Patience is to have forsaken anger. Effort is enthusiasm for virtues. Concentration is unafflicted one-pointedness. Wisdom is ascertainment of the meaning of the truths. Compassion is a mind having the one savor Of mercy for all sentient beings. From giving there arises wealth, from ethics happiness, From patience a good appearance, from [effort in] virtue brilliance, From concentration peace, from wisdom liberation, From compassion all aims are achieved. 51 See Hopkins, 1998:130-133. 52 Hopkins, 1998:155-159.
the basis of compassion (or, rather, merit that comes from compassionate activities) that the aims of the practice are achieved (as in the verse 438 quoted above). It should also be mentioned that at the very beginning of the work, Nāgārjuna singles out faith (as a meritorious quality) as the quintessential means for achieving high status which is a foundation for definite goodness, i.e. the foundation through which wisdom becomes possible.\(^{53}\) So, once again, it is merit that enables wisdom to arise.\(^{54}\)

Discussing the importance of merit accumulation we should not miss the concluding verses to the seven-fold practice of the Bodhisattva (almost identical in the \textit{Ratnāvalī} and the \textit{Bodhisamābhāra}). Verses 465 to 487 of the \textit{Ratnāvalī} offers what we could name “perfect prayer” since it brings the bodhisattva the accumulation of immeasurable merit. The first five verses, as we saw above, describe the seven-fold practice. From there, verses 470 – 476 express further wishes for all sentient beings in a most compassionate manner, and, from 477 – 485 wishes for oneself to generate the perfect qualities of a bodhisattva, ending with a wish to remain in the world as long as any sentient being anywhere has not been liberated even though personally the

\(^{53}\) Hopkins’ (1998:94) translation:
In one who first practices high status
Definite goodness arises later,
For having attained high status,
One comes gradually to definite goodness.
High status is considered to be happiness,
Definite goodness is liberation,
The quintessence of their means
Is briefly faith and wisdom.
Due to having faith one relies on the practices,
Due to having wisdom one truly knows.
Of these two wisdom is the chief,
Faith is its prerequisite.
One who does not neglect the practices
Through desire, hatred, fear, or bewilderment
Is known as one of faith,
A superior vessel for definite goodness.

\(^{54}\) It is perhaps worth noting that Āryadeva in his \textit{Catuḥśatakaśastrakārikā}, P5246, vol. 95, stanza 280 (chapter 12), unlike his teacher who singled out faith, makes effort to show how faith can depend on wisdom. See also comments by Hopkins, 1998:37-38. As Hopkins notes, the Tibetan tradition has taken Āryadeva’s type of reasoning. The fact remains, however, that unlike the \textit{Mūlamadhyamakaśārikā}, the \textit{Ratnāvalī} is very sympathetic towards faith as a meritorious activity.
bodhisattva has already attained highest enlightenment (and, in fact, has already become a Buddha).

The last two verses of the perfect prayer (486 – 487) are, actually, an explanation of the immeasurability of the merit acquired by the prayer. In Hopkins’ (1998:162) translation:

If the merit of saying this
Had form, it would never fit
Into realms of worlds as numerous
As the sand grains of the Ganges.
The Supramundane Victor said so,
And the reasoning is this:
[The limitlessness of the merit of] wishing help limitless realms
Of sentient beings is like [the limitlessness of those beings].

Because living beings are limitless in number, the wish to liberate all of them is also limitless. That limitlessness, being beyond quantification, is equal to the virtue of the Buddha. Therefore, the merit from the perfect prayer actually brings Buddhahood through the logic of equating its limitlessness with the limitlessness of the Buddha.

We find a similar explanation in the Ratnāvalī 216-220. Hence, on two critical

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55 For comparison, we have a matching verse in Bodhisambhāra 57:
If the merit created [in this way] in one hour had outward form [then realms amounting to] many thousand [times the] number of grains of sand in the Ganges still could not contain it.

Through their compassion
Bodhisattvas are determined to lead
These limitless sentient beings out of suffering
And establish them in Buddhahood.
[Hence] whether sleeping or not sleeping,
After thoroughly assuming [such compassion]
Those who remain steadfast –
Even though they might not be meticulous –
Always accumulate merit as limitless as all sentient beings
Since sentient beings are limitless.
Know then that since [the causes] are limitless,
occasions the *Ratnāvali* emphasizes limitless merit as a consequence of which one attains Buddhahood.

Obviously, merit accumulation has a very prominent role in the *Ratnāvali*. It can be argued that, on close reading, the accumulation of merit has the most prominent role in achieving Buddhahood in this text. Doctrinally, this appears very different from the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* or the *Śūnyatāsaptati*, where wisdom acquired through analytical meditation is most heavily accented as the means for achieving the aim of the practice. It can be argued that ultimately there is no fundamental distinction in the doctrinal position but only in the audience for which the work was addressed. Be that as it may, the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* never emphasizes the importance of merit. Therefore, it may be productive to examine whether the heavy emphasis on merit accumulation in the *Ratnāvali* may be related to some extent to Nāgārjuna’s strategy for aligning with the doctrinal position of his real audience. A lead may be provided by Vasumitra (Masuda 1925) who, as one of the key tenets of the Prajñāaptivāda lists:

By (the commission of) meritorious acts (lit. virtue, - puṇya) one attains the āryan path (ārya-mārga): the path is not to be arrived at through the cultivation of knowledge (lit. the path is not to be cultivated, - bhāvayitavya.).

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Limitless Buddhahood is not hard to attain.  
[Bodhisattvas] stay for a limitless time [in the world];  
For limitless embodied beings they seek  
The limitless [qualities of] enlightenment  
And perform limitless virtuous actions.  
Hence though enlightenment is limitless,  
How could they not attain it  
With these four limitless collections  
Without being delayed for long?  

Vasumitra, himself Sarvāstivādin, listed the tenet as common for all members of the Prajñāpāramitā school. However, it is possible that this was also accepted by Caitiyas, Pūrvaśailas and Aparaśailas since many of the Mahāsāṅghika schools had almost identical tenets. Unfortunately, we do not have sufficient material for verifying this claim at this time. Nonetheless, the fact remains that the scope of the Mūlamadhyamakārikā and that of the Ratnāvalī are very different.

h. Summary of the discussion on the criteria for authenticity

Now that we have observed the main criteria for authenticity and tested them by comparison of the Ratnāvalī and the Mūlamadhyamakārikā, we can summarize the whole discussion.

The starting point for evaluating the authenticity of the works attributed to Nāgārjuna was the tradition. We warned that the earliest “trustworthy witness” lived more than 300 years after Nāgārjuna, strongly suggesting that the burden of proof must lie on the primary criteria while accepting the value of the sources. Regarding primary criteria, it seems productive to analyze the metrics of the works. As in the example of the presence of vipulā in the Ratnāvalī and the Mūlamadhyamakārikā, whereby Āryadeva was excluded as a possible author. Furthermore, analysis of the presence of particles and compounds can be significant. It did not prove to be very significant regarding comparison of the Mūlamadhyamakārikā and the Ratnāvalī in terms of ascertaining authorship but, since authorship was ascertained by other evidence, the valuable conclusion was drawn that the Ratnāvalī, having a more mature style, was composed later, when the author’s style was more refined. Significant
criteria were drawn from the analysis of the intersection between geography and doctrine. Some doctrines present in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* suggested concerns with the Pudgalavāda, Prajñāaptivāda and Sarvāstivāda. That allowed us to locate the work in the areas where these schools were present. The *Ratnāvali* showed the presence of Pūrvaśaila themes but absence of Pudgalavāda themes (in fact, direct criticism of Pudgalavāda doctrines). Hence, it was possible to suggest that the work was written in the area dominated by this school, an area where Pudgalavāda was not present, Andhra. Doctrinally, we were looking for features specific for the text, not generally accepted as Madhyamaka features (which would prove non-disagreement but would not prove authorship). In the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* such features were Pudgalavāda elements, in the *Ratnāvali* Pūrvaśaila elements. Also, we concluded that, judging by the evidence, there was no support for the assumption of doctrinal unity in all Nāgārjuna's works. Furthermore, we concluded that Nāgārjuna employed strategies for forging alliances with the mainstream Buddhist schools in the monasteries where he lived and composed his works. Since he changed his place of residence, the religious environment changed: in Andhra Pūrvaśailas were dominant and in Mathurā Pudgalavādins. Thus the specific doctrinal features changed but the rhetorical strategy remained the same. Nāgārjuna continued to employ the same strategy for forging alliances, continued the strategy of harmonizing his doctrines and his brand of Buddhology with that of the dominant school in control of resources and in control of monastic law. We found that the employment of rhetorical strategies (terminological shifts) to align with the audience from the host monasteries was very characteristic of Nāgārjuna. We also arrived at the conclusion that the
Mūlamadhyamakakārikā alone cannot be accepted as a primary criterion. We determined that the Ratnāvalī and the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā were written at different times and in different places, having enough similarities to ascertain authorship by the same person but also enough differences to conclude that a single work cannot be a criterion for the authenticity of all Nāgārjuna’s works. In fact, it seems that we have two authentic works from two different times and places so that both could and should be employed as primary criteria. And, if the analysis of the hymns shows close similarities with the Ratnāvalī in terms of style, doctrine, scope and other distinct features determined here, and differences from the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā in line with the Ratnāvalī, it could mean that the hymns were composed by the same author as Ratnāvalī and at the same time and place as Ratnāvalī. In other words, it seems reasonable to propose taking the Ratnāvalī (and not the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā) as the primary criterion for the works that show evidence of being composed among the Andhakas.

Some final observations: Nāgārjuna has often been described as a “radical innovator.” He appears to be so if his doctrine is compared to that of the Sarvāstivādins or the Theravādins. However, when compared with the Mahāsāṅghikas, there is hardly anything that was not previously accepted, including his doctrine of emptiness, nihsvabhāva, analysis of dependent origination, understanding of the bodies of the Buddha, etc. It is also unfounded to describe him as “reformer of Abhidharma.” In Mūlamadhyamakakārikā he appears to attempt a radical reform of the Sarvāstivāda but that is most likely a rhetorical strategy to win favor with his real audience and not a direct refutation. The evidence suggests that he
was careful not to offend the host śrāvaka schools: in the case of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* the Pudgalavāda and Prajñaptivāda, and in the case of the *Ratnāvalī* the Pūrvaśāila and other Andhra schools. There is no evidence at all that he attacked their Abhidharma or doctrinal equivalent. Finally, we must resist the temptation to speak of the unity of his thought and to freely quote verses from various works in order to support one narrative about his philosophy. Each work must be first thoroughly examined in its own context and among similar works of the same group. A group should be determined not only on the basis of the genre (analytical, epistles, hymns) but also based on the evidence for geographical area of composition and the influence of other schools.
2. Nāgārjuna's historical and geographical location

When speaking of Nāgārjuna's biography, the first thing to keep in mind is that there are no records of contemporary witnesses. The earliest biography is authored by Kumārajīva, who lived in the fourth and fifth century CE. If Nāgārjuna lived at some time in the second or third century, then between him and the earliest biography at least one hundred years elapsed. Having given this preliminary caution and in light of the fact that much has been written on the field, we can proceed with a review of the last and most comprehensive attempts to locate him historically.

The most comprehensive review of available textual, historical, legendary and archaeological evidence is offered by Ian Mabbett (1998). His study shows the state of confusion caused by the lack of method, scholarly rigor and the inadequacy of the evidence. Mabbett concludes that the claims commonly made are not well founded. Mabbett finds that Nāgārjuna, the founder of Madhyamaka (to distinguish him from other persons with the same name) is still an enigma: based on the evidence it is not possible to locate his place and time with certainty; none of the arguments about his place and habitat can be proved; and the only certain conclusion to be drawn is about the severe limitations imposed by the evidence. Nonetheless, he finds that in all the evidence, incomplete as it is, one claim stands out and is repeated over and over


59 Kumārajīva's biography does offer a chronology. Mabbett (1998:333) quotes Lamotte's Traité: “Since Nāgārjuna left the world up to the present, more than a hundred years have passed.” He adds: “However, it is not clear whether these should be seen as words of Kumārajīva, or of an earlier work which he passed on, or of his disciples who edited the material he bequeathed them.” The last was suspicion expressed by de Jong and echoed by Robinson and Murti (see Mabbett, 1998: n59).
again, linking Nagarjuna with the Sāthavāhana dynasty from Southern India. Mabbett notes that for the first time the connection has been established by the sixth century translator Paramārtha.\textsuperscript{60} Examining that biographical claim through analysis of all available evidence and through a process of comparison and elimination of many possibilities, Mabbett concludes that there is "a chain of circumstantial connections fastening Nagarjuna to the Nagarjunakonda–Amaravati region in late Sāthavāhana (or possibly Ikṣvāku) times" (1998:345). Of all the Sāthavāhana kings that ruled the Nagarjunakonda–Amaravati region, Mabbett considers Yajña Śrí Śatarkāri (variously dated, but most likely 175–204 CE) as the most likely candidate. He is careful to point out that the associations of the elements he uses are ultimately inconclusive, but maintains that his theory makes as much sense as the other theories advanced about Nagarjuna. He establishes the link in the following way:

Despite the austere rationalism of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikās and the other philosophical works, Nagarjuna’s Dharmadhatustava, if correctly attributed to him, represents a devotional strain of Buddha worship, in which, as Ruegg argues, one can see elements of the tathāgatagarbha doctrine. The tathāgatagarbha doctrine was emerging in association with devotional Buddhism. Elements of it have been discerned in the Śrīmālāsūtra, which has been tentatively attributed to the Buddhists of Ikṣvāku Nagarjunakonda, partly because of the active role of women as Buddhist donors there and the importance of the ideal woman portrayed in the Śrīmālāsūtra. Some of the

monasteries of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, according to H. Sarkar, represent the early influence of devotional religion with the incorporation of stūpas inside vihāra enclosures. Nāgārjuna is widely held to have resided at Śri Parvata for at least a part of his career, and there was a Śri Parvata at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. The Pūrvaśaila sect flourished in the Sātavāhana dominions in Andhra, particularly at Amaravati, and Candrakīrti in his Madhyamakāvatāra cites verses described as “following the Pūrvaśailas,” which indicate the influence of Prajñāpāramitā ideas and have been associated by La Vallée Poussin with the emergence in the south of the dharmaḥṭūtgarbha doctrine.

Mabbet’s argument linking Nāgārjuna with Nāgārjunakoṇḍa-Amaravati region in late Sātavāhana (or possibly Ikṣvāku) times ultimately rests on the presence of a devotional strain in the works reliably attributed to him. And, the work he refers to as evidence is the Dharmadhūtastava. This is, arguably, not the most felicitous choice of evidence in an otherwise very well executed paper, considering that the Dharmadhūtastava (not yet edited in any Western language, discussed by Ruegg but not translated) – whose authenticity will be defended later in this study – is not the most illustrative for the devotional strand in Nāgārjuna. It is a description of the path of the bodhisattva from the very beginning of the training to the realisation of the ultimate goal but it can be considered devotional only implicitly. Yet, this is not to say that Mabbet missed the point but only that the argument must be supported by more illustrative evidence. Such evidence will be offered later in this study.

Taking Mabbett’s summary of the available scholarship as a starting point, Joseph Walser (2002, 2005) goes one step further to support and upgrade “the most
likely reading, given our current state of knowledge.” His thesis relies on two propositions: that Nāgārjuna was also the author of the *Ratnāvalī*, and that the Sātavāhana king was Nāgārjuna’s patron. Many scholars take both of these propositions for granted but Walser offers extra evidence to strengthen the argument.

The first proposition is supported by a comparison between the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* and the *Ratnāvalī* in three areas: logical syntax (phrasing or form of the argument), use of scriptures (reference to sūtras) and metrics (poetic style) (2005:271-8). Walser shows that elements of these three areas are present in the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* and the *Ratnāvalī* but not in the works of Āryadeva (commonly accepted as Nāgārjuna’s immediate disciple), nor in the *Acutobhayā* or the *Buddhapiilitavīrtti*. In all, Walser shows strong evidence in support of the claim (held by most scholars in the field) that Nāgārjuna is the author of the *Ratnāvalī*. He is aware that there is a divergence (stylistic and doctrinal) between the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* and the *Ratnāvalī* but he explains them by pointing at Vetter’s conclusion that the *Ratnāvalī* (if it is indeed Nāgārjuna’s work) must have been written in the later period of the master’s life.  

The second premise is that the addressee of the *Ratnāvalī* is indeed a Sātavāhana king. Walser offers two lines of evidence in support of the claim. First, the earliest and latest dates for Nāgārjuna coincide almost exactly with the range of dates

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*Ratnāvalī* is poetically a more mature work than the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*. Walser reminds us that, most likely, Sanskrit was a second language for Nāgārjuna and his style developed over the years. Another argument in support of the idea that the *Ratnāvalī* is a later work than the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* is the fact that *Ratnāvalī* contains at least two doctrinal elements absent in the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*: the doctrine of momentariness (*Ratnāvalī* 66) and the argument asserting that the object of desire must be a false construction since the image one attaches to it is unitary while the senses that actually perceive it are five-fold (*Ratnāvalī* 351-352) (2002:222-223).
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for the Sātavāhana dynasty (the period that starts in the first century and ends sometime in the first two quarters of the third century [Walser, 2002:226]). Second, the specific way the hagiographical tradition has developed points to associate Nāgārjuna with a Sātavāhana king suggests that the information was assumed to be common knowledge. Thus, after considering a mass of detail and through a process of elimination, Walser concludes that the best of the possible readings is to associate Nāgārjuna’s residence with the Deccan during the reign of a Sātāvahana king (2002:249).

The next task that Walser faces is to narrow the field and locate Nāgārjuna precisely in terms of the date and residence. He does that with impressive detective work combined with great elegance. First, he starts with three verses of Ratnāvali where the king is instructed to construct images of the Buddha sitting on lotuses and, later, in the presence of the image, to say a certain ritual formula.62 Accepting that Nāgārjuna authored the Ratnāvali and a Sātavāhana king was his benefactor and addressee, Walser’s argument suggests that the work must have been written at the time and in a region where Buddhas sitting on lotuses was a motif in use; at a time and region where Buddha images were objects of veneration; and to a king who could have had access to an appropriate Buddha image. Next, through the examination of archaeological and historical evidence, Walser concludes that the only Sātavāhana

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62 In Hopkins’ translation, used by Walser:
231. You should respectfully and extensively construct Images of Buddha, Monuments, [stūpas] and temples
And Provide residences, abundant riches, and so forth.
232. Please construct from all precious substances
Images of Buddha with fine proportions,
Well designed and sitting on lotuses,
Adorned with all precious substances.
465. Therefore in the presence of an image [of the Buddha]
Or monument [stūpa] or something else
Say these twenty stanzas
Three times every day (Walser 2002:251).
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king meeting these criteria was Yajña Śrī Śatakarni, who ruled between 175 and 204 A.D. because prior to his reign there is no evidence for the motif of Buddhas on lotuses in the Sātavāhana kingdom. Therefore, Walser locates that as the period when the Ratnāvali was written.

Walser’s upgrade of Mabbett’s evidence can be further supported and, hopefully, further upgraded with evidence provided by the hymns. For now we can accept the hypothesis tentatively and will return to it in the concluding chapter.
3. Methodological considerations regarding editing and translating of the hymns

a. List of hymns attributed to Nāgārjuna:

The Tibetan canon ascribes 18 hymns to Nāgārjuna. They are listed in the Tantric section of the bsTan-'gyur as follows:

1. chos yi dbyins su bstod pa (Dharmadhātustotra), Tangyur (bsTan-'gyur), 2010, folio 70a -- 74b.
2. dpe med par bstod pa (Niraupamyastava), Tangyur, 2011, folio 74b -- 75b.
3. 'jig rten las 'das par bstod pa (Lokāītastava), Tangyur, 2012, folio 76a -- 77a.
4. sems kyi rdo rje'i bstod pa (Cittavajrastava), Tangyur, 2013, folio 77a -- 77b.
5. don dam par bstod pa (Paramārthastava), Tangyur, 2014, folio 77b -- 78a.
6. sku gsum la bstod pa (Kāyatrasyastotranāma), Tangyur, 2015, folio 78a -- 78b.
7. sem chen mgu bar bya'i bstod pa (Sattvārādhanastava), Tangyur, 2017, folio 82b -- 83b.
8. shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin ma'i bstod pa (Prajñāpāramitāstotra), Tangyur, 2018, folio 83b -- 84b.
9. bsam gyis mi khyab par bstod pa (Acintyastava), Tangyur, 2019, folio 84b -- 87a.
10. bstod pa las 'das par bstod pa (Stutyañītastava), Tangyur, 2020, folio 87a -- 88a.
11. bla na med pa'i bstod pa (Niruttarastava), Tangyur, 2021, folio 88a -- 88b.
The first methodological question is how to approach these hymns. The Tibetans, obviously, approached them individually. Western scholars, however, have shown a peculiar tendency to refer to the collection called "Catuvahastavas" ("Four Hymns") and, when listing Nāgārjuna’s works, to list this collection as one entry, assuming that the four individual hymns make an organic unit, explicitly or implicitly suggesting that the author himself placed them together. The most comprehensive discussion of Nāgārjuna’s works in general and his hymns in particular, that of Christian Lindtner
(1982), is a good example of the above approach. Lindtner defends his choice with these comments:

Though the question which of the numerous hymns ascribed to Nāgārjuna belong to ‘The four hymns’ has given rise to some controversy, such hesitation is, however, unwarranted for at least three reasons.

First, the Sanskrit text of CS is available in four Mss. The titles and order of the hymns given here are without exception: Lokātitatava, Niraupamyastava, Acintyastava & Paramārthastava. This coincides with the testimony given by the Catuhstavasamāsārtha by a certain Amrtakara. Finally, precisely these four hymns are in fact those that are quoted by the commentators, not only Bhavya, Candrakīrti and Śāntarakṣita, but also several lesser-known Indian authors.

Since the doctrine and, to a certain extent, the style of the hymns – especially I & III – matches well with that of MK etc., I see no reason to dispute the authenticity of CS.

I shall confine myself to some remarks concerning I & III of which I subjoin an edition princes of the Sanskrit text and which are also the philosophically most significant of all the hymns ascribed to Nāgārjuna, and even of all ancient Buddhist hymns at large.

The content of these two hymns is too reflective and abstract to render it credible that they were composed with some ritual objective in mind. Nor should we attach too much importance to the motive of obtainment of puṇya (1982:121-123).
Lindtner begins with the recognition that there has been some controversy as to which four hymns belonged to the collection called \textit{Catuhstava}, upon which he gives his reasons for including the \textit{Lokātittastava}, \textit{Niraupamyastava}, \textit{Acintyastava} and the \textit{Paramārthastava}. He opts for these four because he found four manuscripts of the \textit{Catuhstava} with the same four hymns and all in the same order, which coincides with the only surviving commentary on the four hymns, by Amṛtkara, as well as because the four were quoted by the traditional commentators. Furthermore, Lindtner compares the hymns with his primary criterion, and finds that to a certain extent their style, especially that of the \textit{Lokātittastava} and the \textit{Acintyastava} matches the \textit{Mūlamadhyamakakārikā}. Based on these similarities, Lindtner accepts the whole collection as authentic.

Interestingly, the styles of the \textit{Niraupamyastava} and the \textit{Paramārthastava} are not compared. It is precisely in these hymns that we find great differences, as will be soon illustrated. But, more importantly, Lindtner applies a procedure of authenticating that a) assumes the organic unity of the \textit{Catuhstava} in a sense that if one of the hymns is proven to be authentic, all four must be authentic and, b) even though nowhere spelled out, he clearly implies that Nāgārjuna must have placed these four in a collection.\footnote{Such assumptions are not uncommon among scholars. Luis Gomez (2000a:104, n.14), listing Nāgārjuna's works also considers the \textit{Catuhstava} as one work.}

It is also significant to observe that Lindtner focuses his attention on the two "philosophically most significant" hymns as if they are the most representative of Nāgārjuna's style, scope and doctrine. Indeed, it is not difficult to establish parallels between them and the \textit{Mūlamadhyamakakārikā} but two problems must be noted: a)
the other two do not harmonize well with Lindtner’s primary criterion and, b) the emphasis on the philosophical aspects, notorious for Western studies of Nāgārjuna, fails to recognize or ignores the distinctly religious elements even in the “philosophical hymns” such as the ritual setting and the motive of obtaining *punya*.

This dissertation will not give specific status to the collection called the "Catuhstava" but will approach each of Nāgārjuna’s hymns individually. The decision is made because all evidence suggests that the four were placed together by a much later commentator. This is not to say that they are not authentic but it is to say that there is no methodological advantage of treating them as a unit. The examination of the evidence will prove the point.

b. Preliminary discussion on the collection called *Catuhstava*

From early in the twentieth century, scholars have been aware of several traditional commentators quoting verses from individual hymns attributed to Nāgārjuna and referring to a collection called “Catuhstava.” Of the earliest references, Candrakīrti, in his *Prasannapadā* and *Madhyamakāvatāra* ascribes the *Niraupamyastava* and the *Lokārītastava* to the master Nāgārjuna. Prajñākaramati does the same in his *Pañjikā* but also ascribes the *Acintyastava* to Nāgārjuna. Early twentieth century scholars of Mādhyamaka accepted the *Niraupamya* and the *Lokārīta* but debated about the remaining two. Louis de La Valée Poussin (1913) included the *Cittavajra* and the *Paramārtha* – an opinion accepted by Giuseppe Tucci (1932:311). Prabhubai Patel (1932), however, accepted the *Stutyaśīta* and the *Acintya*. In 1956, Tucci published a
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Sanskrit edition of a manuscript containing the Mahāyānavinīśikā, a work which in the colophon is said to be the Catuḥṣtavasamāsārtha, a commentary to the four hymns attributed to the great ācārya Nāgārjuna. The manuscript was incomplete; the commentary on the first stava was missing. It did have an almost complete commentary of the remaining three hymns which were: Niraupamyastava, Acintyastava and Paramārthastava. The manuscript contained no reference to the name of the first hymn but, since both Candrakīrti and Prajñākaramati included the Lokāṭitastava, Tucci accepted that hymn as the first in the set. With that, for the first time, the set of four was determined: the Lokāṭitastava, Niraupamyastava, Acintyastava and Paramārthastava. Etienne Lamotte, who objected to the conclusion, opted for La Vallee Poussin’s version. The matter remained open for debate until 1982 when Christian Lindtner provided convincing reasons for accepting Tucci’s determination. Lindtner found four manuscripts containing the same four individual hymns which coincided with the testimony given by the Catuḥṣtavasamāsārtha. He also claimed that precisely those four hymns were quoted by Bhāvaviveka, Candrakīrti and Śāntarakṣita, and also by several less-known Indian authors (Lindtner, 1982:121-122). Since then, there has been no discussion on the issue.

We do not disagree with Lindtner about the composition of a collection called the “Catuḥṣtava” but feel that his evidence can only prove that, from a certain point in time, in some circles there was a collection of these four hymns attributed to Nāgārjuna. However, that does not mean that Nāgārjuna composed only four hymns

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64 Except for the first two-three sentences, according to Tucci.
or that he personally included the above-listed four in one group called "Catuḥstava."

There seems to be several reasons to the contrary.

Candrakīrti, in the Madhyamakaśāstrastruti,stanza 10, in the list of treatises ascribed to the master Nāgārjuna, includes one entitled Sanjñastuti (bstod pa in Tibetan translation). As Tola and Dragonetti (1985:1) explain, this is a generic term to designate the hymns (stava, stotra). However, Candrakīrti makes no reference to four hymns.

The Tibetan canon makes no reference to the Catuḥstava. It is not very likely that, if Nāgārjuna really grouped four hymns, the Tibetan translators would not have known of the collection or would have broken it up.

In 1932 Tucci published editions of two of the four hymns – Niraupamyastava and Paramārthastava – which he found independently and found no reference to the other two or to the Catuḥstava.

In their article on the four hymns, Tola and Dragonetti (1985:2) refer to the personal letter by Lindtner from 1984 who kindly informs them that none of the manuscripts in his possession containing the four hymns speaks of the Catuḥstava as a whole.

According to Lindtner, the collection of four hymns is referred to by the name Catuḥstava for the first time by Vairocanaraksita in his Bodhisattvacaryāvatārapaṇījīka. He further notes that Prajñākaramati in his Bodhicaryāvatārapaṇījīka also refers to the Catuḥstava (Lindtner, 1982:121, n.144). Lindtner places Prajñākaramati in the eleventh century CE which is slightly later than

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Ruegg who has Prajñākaramati flourishing c. 950-1000 and Vairocanakṣita in the eleventh century (Ruegg, 1981:116). Be that as it may, the first datable reference to the Catuḥṣṭava is from the tenth or eleventh century. Furthermore, a work titled Catuḥṣṭvasamāsārtha is attributed to a certain Amṛtākara,\footnote{66 Sanskrit edition of the text is published by Giuseppe Tucci (1978).} of whom nothing is known but who, according to de Jong (1972:12), lived much later than Candrakīrti (seventh century CE). It could well be that Amṛtākara lived before Prajñākaramati but at the moment we cannot prove such a hypothesis since the manuscript found by Tucci is of more recent date. Hence, the earliest references to Catuḥṣṭava cannot be dated earlier than the tenth century.

Lindtner claims that the four hymns composing the Catuḥṣṭava are precisely those quoted by early commentators such as Bhāvaviveka, Candrakīrti and Śāntarakṣita. Two points must be made here. To begin with, the Paramārthastava has not been quoted by early commentators such as Buddhapālita, Bhāvaviveka or Candrakīrti.\footnote{67 Lindtner's Conspectus testium (1982:126-127).} The Acintyastava has been quoted only in the Madhyamakaratnapradīpa, a work attributed to Bhāvaviveka, which is for Paul Williams another indication of the later date of composition of this hymn.\footnote{68 Lindtner's Conspectus testium (1982:126), and Paul Williams (1984:93).}

Other hymns have also been quoted by early commentators and attributed to Nāgārjuna. To take just one example, the Dharmadhūtastava (which doctrinally does not go any further than Niraupamāyastava, verses 21-23) has been quoted by Bhāvaviveka (Lindtner, 1982:17, n.46). Hence, it is not evident that all hymns of the Catuḥṣṭava have been quoted by early commentators of Nāgārjuna. Thus, it is not
proven that they are all of early origin, much less that they are authentic. Even if they have been quoted, that does not prove that there were no other hymns also quoted and attributed to the master.

Amṛtākara’s Catuḥstavasamāśārtha, the only existing commentary on the Catuḥstava, places the four hymns in the context of the path of the Bodhisattva through ten grounds (bhūmi) of perfection where the Lokātitastava corresponds to achieving the seventh ground, the Niraupamyastava to the eighth, the Acintyastava to the ninth and the Paramārthastava to the tenth ground. Obviously, Amṛtākara has the Daśabhūmikasūtra as a model and he frequently quotes it. There are many objections one could address to Amṛtākara’s approach but for the purposes of the present discussion it is sufficient to limit ourselves to a few observations about the style. If the hymns make an organic unit with one underlying message, they would have been written within a short period of time (while the author carried the unifying idea) and they would have close similarities in style. However, the four hymns have significant differences in style. For example, 17.8% of the lines in the Lokātitastava and 14.7% in Niraupamyastava contain some kind of vipulā. The number matches closely to that in Mūlamadhyamakakārikā (18%) and in Ratnāvalī (14.9%). However, in the Acintyastava, out of 118 lines we find only 3 where there is any kind of vipulā. This is approximately 2.5%, while Paramārthastava is perfect stotra kāvya with no vipulā at all. This difference alone is not strong enough to question the authenticity of the hymns but it does raise significant doubts that the Acintyastava and the Paramārthastava have been written at the same time as the Lokātitastava and the Niraupamyastava. If Nāgārjuna had a collection in mind, it is unlikely that he would
have offered the public the first two hymns separately. And, even if we accept that
after he wrote the *Lokāññastava* and the *Nirupamyastava* his competence in poetic
expression improved dramatically, it is only to be expected that he would have
polished the metre in the first two and made the whole set uniform. Given the fact that
there are these significant differences in style, along with specific different doctrinal
features in each of the hymns, there seems sufficient reason to conclude that they are
not an organic unit.

After examining the evidence we are left with the following alternatives: either
Nāgārjuna composed a work titled "Catuhstava" containing the four hymns but part
of the tradition lost count; or, at some time before Prajñākaramati and/or Amṛtākara
(that is, before the tenth century) the four hymns were arranged together and became
known as "Catuhstava." If the second alternative is correct, as the evidence outlined
above suggests that it is, then the question "Which four hymns compose the
Catuhstava?" is not a question directly concerning Nāgārjuna. In that sense,
Lindtner's evidence that there was a collection of four hymns including the
*Lokāññastava, Nirupamyastava, Acintyastava* and *Paramārthastava*, existent at the
time of Amṛtākara/Prajñākaramati (and probably only in their circles) is convincing,
but it does not and cannot prove that there were no other hymns composed by

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69 For example, *Nirupamyastava* 21 uses the word *dharmadhatu* and the following verse, 22, offers a
description of the reality in positive ontological terms. This two points led David Seyfort Ruegg to
remark that the hymn is "not far removed from the theory of the absolute expounded in the doctrine of
the *tathāgatasagarbha*" (Ruegg, 1981:116). The *Acintyastava* 45 contains the phrase "paratantras tu
vidyate" ("dependent on another, however, is found.") The Mādhyamikas held that the
paratantrasvabhāva only exists *samvṛtiṣaḥ* and not *paramārthaḥ*, but Yogācārins, as *Lankāvatāra*
sūtra states, held that *paratantra* exists. The quoted *pāda* of *Acintyastava* seems to make a claim in line
with the latter.

70 Tola and Dragonetti (1985) prefer the second option.
Nāgārjuna circulating independently, and it does not and cannot prove that Nāgārjuna grouped four of his hymns in a collection now known as the \textit{Catuḥśtava}.

In the light of the above it now seems that there is no obvious advantage in studying the four hymns composing the \textit{Catuḥśtava} for a better understanding of Nāgārjuna. Also, if one of the hymns belonging to the collection is proven to be authentic, that does not prove the authenticity of the others. The authenticity of each one would have to be established individually through analysis of the style, structure, content, doctrinal specifics and then through a comparison of all those features with other works reliably attributed to Nāgārjuna. It is an unfortunate fact that excessive focus on the question “Which four hymns compose the \textit{Catuḥśtava}” has hindered proper consideration of other hymns attributed to Nāgārjuna.

c. Choices in editing and translating

This study will not consider the four hymns composing the \textit{Catuḥśtava} as organically connected or more important than others and will approach each of them individually. The reason that they are analysed in a separate chapter is that, of the nine hymns considered authentic, the four comprising the \textit{Catuḥśtava} – the \textit{Niraupamāyastava}, \textit{Lokāśūtastava}, \textit{Paramārthastava} and \textit{Acintyastava} – exist in Sanskrit and the manuscripts have been critically edited. For the other five, the \textit{Dharmadātustotra}, \textit{Cittavajrastava}, \textit{Stutyāśūtastava}, \textit{Aṣṭamahāśāhānaçaityaśastotra} (2024) and \textit{Dvādaśakarṇayastotra}, Sanskrit manuscripts are not available. Hence, the reason for
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separating the authentic hymns in two groups is linguistic – those existing in Sanskrit offer the opportunity for an analysis of style as discussed above in the context of criteria for authenticity. For those four I use the critical edition provided by Tola and Dragonetti (1985) and translate them from Sanskrit. The remaining five authentic hymns are edited in Tibetan with all available Sanskrit verses or fragments listed in the footnotes. The translation, however, is only from the Tibetan. All significant differences between the Sanskrit and the Tibetan are noted but no effort is made for critical editing. As discussed earlier, the analysis of the style is one of the criteria for authenticity. Unfortunately, that can play no role here. There are, however, many other criteria that can still be successfully employed and cumulatively still give a satisfactory level of confidence in deciding authenticity. As will be seen in Chapter 4, the doctrinal content and the presence of voices of other schools is obvious in these five hymns. Hence, valid conclusions are still possible.

After the edition and the translation, each hymn has been commented upon following the same procedure: discussion of the style (where Sanskrit is available), structure, general content, specifics of the content (doctrinal, social and religious) and decision on the authenticity.

The remaining nine hymns, the Aṣṭamahāsthānacaitya-stotra (2025), Vandānāstotranāma, Niruttarastava, Āryabhāṭarakamaṇījuśrīparamārthastutināma, Āryamaṇījuśrībhāṭarakakarunāstotra, Sattvārādhana-stava, Prajñāpāramitā-stotra, Kāyatrayastotranāma and Narakoddharastava, have not been considered to be authentic. The first five of them exist only in Tibetan. The Sattvārādhana-stava and the Prajñāpāramitā-stotra exist in fragments in Sanskrit. The existing fragments of the former have been edited by Etienne Lamotte (1970), while fragments of the latter
have been edited by Sylvain Levi (1929). The *Narakoddharastava* exists in Sanskrit and the manuscript has been critically edited by Lindtner (1979). The *Kāyatrayastotranāma* exists in two different Sanskrit versions (Baron A. von Stael-Holstein, 1911 and Mario E. Carelli, 1941) and they are significantly different from each other. Given the specific purpose of this study and given that these hymns have not been considered authentic, I decided simply to translate them from the Tibetan. To make the work slightly easier to anyone who takes the task of critical editing, I list all available Sanskrit verses in the footnotes under the corresponding Tibetan verse.
4. Methodological considerations regarding approaching the content of the hymns

After all that has been said so far, hopefully it is obvious that the method to be applied in examining the religious function of the doctrine of emptiness would have to be sensitive to the interrelatedness between the doctrinal, social and religious aspects (voices of authority) present in Nāgārjuna’s texts. To articulate this more theoretically, this study will depart from the “system approach” which focuses on logic, consistency and rationality of the arguments and propositions, treating them in isolation from the social and religious aspects as if they can be separated and as if they can be approached through the trans-cultural method of rational scrutiny. Instead, each of Nāgārjuna’s works in general and the hymn in particular will be approached as “work of religion.” The term is borrowed from Luis Gomez,\(^{71}\) and is used not only to designate the social function of religion (as Bourdieu) but also all cultural activities and psychological effects of religious practices.\(^{72}\) The approach taken in this study will look at Nāgārjuna’s hymns as complete social and religious phenomena where doctrinal, social, theological and psychological aspects are not separated and should not be separated. The question of meaning will be studied by careful examination of all above-mentioned aspects together.

\(^{71}\) Luis O. Gómez (2000a:100, n. 5). He, in turn, adapted it from Pierre Bourdieu’s idea of “le travail religieux” explicated in two (1971, 1975) articles.

\(^{72}\) In several papers Gomez studied the rhetorical and apologetic voices signifying transactions of power and location of authority, as well as the convictions and commitments and the manner in which they are reworked and made accessible and intelligible. Apart from the (2000a) article, particularly interesting are his (2006b) article on the logic of myth, metaphors and creation of authority through myths, rituals and metaphors, his (1999) article on the connection of the abstract idea with the social ranking and, the resulting process of creation of authority, and his (1995) article on the authority and legitimisation.
Chapter III

The four authentic hymns existent in Sanskrit

This chapter will discuss the four authentic hymns extant in Sanskrit that, coincidently, have also been grouped in the collection known as the “Catuhstava.” However, the four will be treated individually, without following Amṛtākara’s order. Given the purpose of this dissertation, the two religiously most significant of all the hymns attributed to Nāgārjuna, the Niraupamyastava and the Paramārthastava, will be examined first, followed by the Lokātātastava and the Acintyastava.

Each hymn will be examined in terms of its style, structure, content (doctrinal, social and religious) and authenticity.
Chapter III: The four hymns

Niraupamyastava

Hymn to the Incomparable One

niraupamyā namas tubhyam niḥsvabhāvārthavedine/

yas tvāṁ dṛṣṭīvipannasya lokasyāsyā hitodyataḥ//1

O incomparable one, homage to you who knows the meaning of inexistence of own-being, [homage to] you intent on the benefit of this world gone wrong by views.

na ca nāma tvayā kinicid dṛṣṭāṁ buddhena cakṣusā/
anuttarā ca te nātha dṛṣṭis tattvārthadarśanī//2

Nothing has been seen by you with your Buddha eye,
but your supreme vision, o protector, perceives the truth.

na bodhā na ca boddhavyam astiha paramārthatah/
aho paramadurbodhāṁ dharmatāṁ buddhavān asi//3

There is neither knower nor thing to be known from the standpoint of the ultimate truth, o, you know the reality most difficult to know.

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No dharma has been caused to rise nor caused to cease by you.
By perceiving the universal sameness of everything the supreme station has been reached by you.

Nirvāṇa has not been desired by you through elimination of saṁsāra.
You have realised peace, o protector, through non-perceiving of saṁsāra.

You know the sameness in taste (nature) of impurity and purity.
Because there is no differentiation in the reality (dharmadhātu) you are completely pure.
Chapter III: The four hymns

Not a single syllable has been uttered by you, o Lord, [yet] all people fit to be trained have been gladdened by the rain of your doctrine.

na te 'sti saktih skandhesu dhatuśv ayatenesu ca/
ākāśasamacittas tvam sarvadharmesv anisritaḥ/

You are not attached to the aggregates (skandhas), elements (dhātuḥ) and sensory spheres (āyatanaḥ); [with your] mind the same as space, you are independent of all dharmas.

sattvasaṃdpnā ca te nātha sarvathā na pravartate/
duḥkhaṁṛteśu ca sattvesu tvam atīva kṛpātmakaḥ/

Perception of beings [as anything other than empty] in no way occurs in you, o protector, and [yet], you are exceedingly compassionate towards all beings tortured by suffering.

sukhaduḥkhaṁrmanairātmayanītīnītīdīṣu prabho/
iti nānāvikalpēṣu buddhis tava na sajjate/

"Happiness, suffering, self, absence of self, eternal, not-eternal," etc.

your mind, o splendid one, is not attached to those various mental notions (vikalpa).
Chapter III: The four hymns

na gatir nāgatiḥ kācid dharmāṇāṁ iti te matih/

na kvacid rāśībhavo 'to 'si paramāṛthavit//11

“For the dharmas there is no going nor coming at all” – thus you think.
Nowhere is there existence of conglomerates (rāṣṭī). Therefore, you are the knower of the ultimate truth.

sarvatrāṇugataś cāsi na ca jāto 'si kutracit/
janmadharmaśarīrābhyyāṁ acintyas tvam mahāmunc//12

You arrive everywhere but you are born nowhere.
In terms of the two bodies of birth and dharma, you are inconceivable, o great sage.

ekānekatvarahitaṁ pratiśrutkopamaṁ jagat/
saṅkrāntināśāpagataṁ buddhavāṁs tvam aninditah//13

You who are beyond reproach know the world as without unity or multiplicity, resembling an echo, neither subject to change nor destruction.

śāśvatocchedarahitaṁ lañṣyalakṣaṇavirjitam/
saṁsāram avabuddhas tvam svapnamāṣyādivat prabhō//14
Devoid of eternity and destruction, lacking characterised and characteristic, *samsāra*, you know, is similar to dream and illusion, o splendid one.

vāsanāṁulparyantāḥ kleśās te ‘nagha nirjitāḥ/
kleśapradhītiṣṭ saiva tvayāṁtam upājitam//15

The defilements up to the roots, the subliminal impulses have been, o faultless one, subdued [by you]. And, indeed from the original nature of defilements you have obtained immortality.

alakṣāṇāṁ tvayā dhīra dṛṣṭam rūpam arūpavat/
lakṣaṇojoṣjvalaṁtrāṣ ca dṛṣye rūpagocare//16

By you, o sage, form has been seen as without characteristics, as not possessing form. But you are seen in the realm of form, your body resplendent with.

na ca rūpeṣa dṛṣṭena dṛṣṭa ity abhidhiyaye/
dharme dṛṣte sudṛṣṭo ‘si dharmatā na ca dṛṣyate//17

You are not declared “seen” because your form is seen. When *dharma* is seen you are properly seen. The reality (*dharmatā*), however, is not visible.
Chapter III: The four hymns

śauṣīryaṁ nāsti te kāye māṁsāsthirudhirāṁ na ca/
indrāyaudham ivākāśe kāyaṁ darṣītvān asi//18

In your body there are no holes, flesh, bones or blood;
You manifested a body like a rainbow in the sky.

nāmayo nāsuciḥ kāye kṣūṭrṇāsambhavo na ca/
tvayā lokānuvṛttyartham darṣītā laukikī kriyā//19

There is no disease or impurity in your body, no arising of hunger or thirst, either
[but], for the sake of conforming yourself to the world, you have shown worldly
behaviour.

karmāvaraṇadoṣaś ca sarvathānagha nāsti te/
tvayā lokānukampārtham karmapultiḥ pradarṣītā//20

In no way do you have the faults [caused by] the obstacles of actions, o faultless one,
[but] because of the pity for the world you have shown [yourself] as submerged in
action.

dharmadhātoraśaṁbhedād yānabheda 'sti na prabho/
yānantritayam ākhyātaṁ tvayā sattvāvatārataḥ//21
Chapter III: The four hymns

Since the dharmadhātu cannot be differentiated, there are no different vehicles, o Lord. [But] the three vehicles have been preached by you for the sake of ushering the beings into [the path] (avatāratah).

nityo dhruvaḥ śivaḥ kāyas tava dharmamayo jinaḥ/
vineyajanaheitoś ca darśitā nirvṛtis tvayā//22

Your body made out of dharma is eternal, imperishable, auspicious, victorious.
But, for the sake of the people who need to be trained, [entering into the final] cessation (nirvṛti) has been shown by you.

lokadhātuṣv ameyeṣu tvad bhaktaiḥ punar īkṣase/
cyutijanābhisanbhodhicakranirvṛtālālasaiḥ//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.

na te 'sti manyanā nātha na vikalpo na ceijanā/
anābhogenā te loke buddhakṛtyaṃ pravartate//24

In you, o protector, there is no thought, no mental creation, no motion.
Without any effort on your part, in this world your Buddha-deeds occur.
Chapter III: The four hymns

iti sugatam acintyam apramcyam

gunakusumair avakirya yan mayaptam/

kusalam iha bhavantu tena sattvah

paramagabhiramunindradharmabhajah//25

Thus, I have spread the flowers of his good qualities over
the well-gone, the unthinkable, the immeasurable.

Through the merit I have obtained [by doing so]

may all beings participate in the profound doctrine of the best of sages.
Chapter III: The four hymns

Comments

The *Niraupamyastava* has received considerable attention from Western scholars. The Tibetan manuscript was edited by Louis de la Vallee Poussin (1913) and Prabhupai Patel (1932) reconstructed a Sanskrit version from this. The same year Giuseppe Tucci published an edition of the Sanskrit and Tibetan manuscripts that he had found in Gilgit. This edition was reproduced by Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti (1985). English translations have been offered by Tucci (1932) and Tola and Dragonetti (1985). The hymn has been translated into French by la Vallee Poussin (1913) and Lilian Silburn (1977), into Italian by Raniero Gnoli (1961), into Spanish by Carmen Dragonetti (1982) and into Russian by Valeri Androsov (2000). The content of the hymn has also been a subject of discussion. Most significant is Seyfort Ruegg’s (1971) review of several verses in the context of his discussion of the *Dharmadhātustava* and Nāgārjuna’s devotional practices. He (1981) observed that the hymn contains elements resembling closely the doctrine of *Tathāgatagarbha*. Tola and Dragonetti provide valuable notes with their translation but they do not comment on the religious content. Androsov comments on the hymn following Amṛtākara’s commentary. Lindtner’s (1982:124-6) references to the existing manuscripts and to works by traditional commentators where verses of this hymn are quoted are extremely valuable.
Chapter III: The four hymns

Style

As with the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and the *Ratnāvali*, we shall review the metrics, the presence of particles and the presence of compounds. The details of the analysis have been given in Chapter II and it will be sufficient only to repeat the conclusions.

Vipulā. In *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 18% of the lines contain some kind of *vipulā*, while in *Ratnāvali* the percentage is 14.4%. In *Nirupamyastava* 14.7% of the lines contain *vipulā*. The percentage is close to that in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and almost identical to that of the *Ratnāvali*.

Particles. In the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 94% of the lines contain some particle. In the *Ratnāvali* the percentage is 55% while in the *Nirupamyastava* it is 56%. Again, the percentage is almost identical to that in the *Ratnāvali*.

Compounds. In the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 21% of the lines contain a compound while in the *Ratnāvali* the number is 48.5%. Furthermore, in the *Ratnāvali* there are regularly lines where the caesura between the *pādas* a and b or *pādas* c and d is formed by a juncture between two stems of a compound, something which never happens in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. In the *Nirupamyastava*, 35 lines, which is 70%, contain a compound. In two occasions (verses 10a-b and 23c-d) the caesura is formed by a juncture between two stems of a compound. That shows considerable similarity with the *Ratnāvali*. Overall, the *Nirupamyastava* shows very close stylistic similarities with the *Ratnāvali*.
Chapter III: The four hymns

Basic structure of the hymn

The *Niraupamyastava* is a text with a well defined structure. Excluding the first verse of salutation and the last verse, dedication of merit, the rest falls into three distinct categories: verses 2 to 15 on the qualities of Buddha's mind, verses 16 to 20 on the qualities of Buddha's body and, verses 21 to 24 is the conclusion of the discussion on the Buddha's real body. The details suggest that the hymn is structured as an enumeration of the qualities of Buddha's mind and body. The concern for enumerations of the qualities of the worshiped person is typical for Indian hymns but

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74 First major section, verses 2 to 15 on the qualities of Buddha's mind:
- 2. Buddha's supreme vision
- 3. Buddha's perfect knowledge: ultimately, there is neither knower nor known
- 4. Buddha's perfect accomplishment
- 5. Buddha's perfect non-desiring
- 6. Buddha's perfect purity
- 7. Buddha's perfect teaching
- 8. Buddha's perfect non-attachment
- 9. Buddha's perfect compassion
- 10. Buddha's perfectly immovable mind
- 11. Buddha's perfect knowing (of the ultimate truth): dharmas are neither going nor coming
- 12. Buddha is unthinkable, unborn
- 13. The irreproachable's perfect knowledge: ultimately there is no unity or multiplicity, the world is as echo, neither subject to change nor destruction
- 14. Perfect knowledge of the splendid one: *Saṁsāra* is like a dream and illusion, lacking characterised and characteristics, deprived of eternity and destruction
- 15. Buddha is the perfect subduer, immortal

Together with the list of perfect qualities such as vision, non-desiring, teaching, non-attachment, compassion etc., several verses give the content of Buddha's perfect knowledge.

75 Second major section, verses 16 to 22, dealing with the qualities of Buddha's body:
- 16. Buddha's body is seen in splendid form (reference to the thirty two marks of bodily perfection)
- 17. Buddha's real body is his *dharma*-body. By seeing the *dharma*, the Buddha is seen. But, *dharma* is not visible
- 18. Buddha's body is perfect: has no holes, flesh, bones, blood
- 19. Buddha's body is perfect: is not subject to disease, impurity, hunger, thirst. The worldly behaviour has been shown only as skilful means (*upāya*) for the sake of helping the world
- 20. There are no faults (karma residues) in Buddha's body. Yet, action has been shown due to pity for the world (*upāya*)

76 Third major section, verses 21-24, conclusion on the question of his real body and the highest practice with references to the three vehicles:
- 21. Since in *dharmadātu* there is no differentiation, there can be no different vehicles. But, for the sake of advancement of beings (*upāya*), three vehicles have been preached
- 22. Buddha's real body is made of *dharma* (hence, it is immortal).
- 23. Some see his true body. They – his devotees, the bodhisattvas – long to generate his perfect enlightenment described in its qualities by the 22 verses above.
- 24. Buddha's deeds are accomplished without any effort on his part.
it is also very closely related to the Buddhist practice of buddhanusmṛti, which will be discussed shortly.

**Doctrinal content**

**General observations**

Most of the verses follow the same, seemingly paradoxical logic, as that found in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā. The logic is, of course, related to the fundamental Madhyamaka doctrine of the two truths. From the point of view of emptiness, there is no differentiation of reality so dualities are not perceived. Conventionally, however, one could speak of seeing, things to be seen, knower, things to be known, etc.

According to the hymn, the Buddha has two bodies. The dharma body is his true body and that is not visible by conventional means. The physical body is that which he shows to the world through his skilful means (upāya) out of compassion and with the purpose of advancing beings spiritually.

Verse 17 establishes the equation between the Buddha and the dharma, which implies that seeing the dharma is equal to seeing the Buddha (or vice versa).

The physical body of the Buddha is understood as perfect in every way. The same position is also held by most Mahāsāṅghikas but not by the Sarvastivādins, for whom the body of the Buddha is subject to karmic residue, illness, old age and death.

For the first time in any of the above reviewed works attributed to Nāgārjuna we see explicit reference to devotion (bhakti, bhaktaiḥ – devotees). By itself this is

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77 For example, verse 2: “Nothing has been seen by you... but your supreme vision perceives the truth,” or, verse 3: “There is neither knower nor thing to be known... you are knower of the truth.”
not surprising, but it may offer some clues for Nāgārjuna’s religious practices in the context of the religious practices of the time and place.

Like the Ratnavali, the Niraupamyastava makes references to the three vehicles, explaining that the differentiation between them was made only conventionally. However, in providing the reason for non-differentiation – because the dharmadhātu cannot be differentiated – the hymn uses a technical term not used in any of the previously examined works.

Verse 22 adds that the dharmamaya kāya (obviously, the dharmakāya) is permanent/eternal (nitya), stable/imperishable (dhruva) and peaceful/auspicious (śiva). This and the reference to non-differentiation of the dharmadhātu led David Seyfort Ruegg to remark that on these two points the hymn is “not far removed from the theory of the absolute expounded in the doctrine of the tathāgatabarbha” (Ruegg, 1981:32). However, the theory of tathāgatagarbha was not used or mentioned in any of the works reliably attributed to Nāgārjuna and, according to many scholars, was unknown to him. Jikido Takasaki, after reviewing the Ratnagotravibhoga and all known Tathāgatagarbha sūtras preceding it, writes, “They seem to have appeared after Nāgārjuna, and the Tathāgatagarbha theory, like the Vijñānavāda, is an entirely new and later theory of Mahāyāna Buddhism” (Takasaki, 1966:33). Hence, the relationship between the Niraupamyastava and the tathāgatagarbha theory requires explanation.
Doctrinal specifics

At first glance the *Niraupamystava* is very unusual when compared with the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and the *Ratnāvalī*: it evokes the qualities of the Buddha (his body and his teaching), grounds ekayāna (one vehicle) in the dharmadhātu, comes very close to the *Tathāgatagarbha* doctrine, refers to bhakti, etc. The hymn is attributed to Nāgārjuna by the tradition and we can observe very close similarities in style with the *Ratnāvalī*, but how to explain the differences? Comparison with already established authentic works will not be sufficient but it seems that comparison with works from other schools will shed light on the rhetorical strategies employed.

One striking feature of the hymn is the close relationship it appears to have with the Pūrvaśaila. In fact, some verses, particularly the more obscure ones, can be illuminated through comparison with works attributed to the Pūrvaśaila. Those similarities are the subject of the next section.

Connections with the Pūrvaśaila

Analysing the *Lokānuvartana sūtra*, one of the earliest Mahāyāna sūtras translated into Chinese, Paul Harrison finds that it has distinct echoes in the *Niraupamystava* and thinks that Nāgārjuna must have been familiar with some form of it (Harrison, 1983:224). From his article we learn that the text of the sūtra falls into two halves, the first dealing with the Buddha’s person and the second with his teaching. In the first half we find references to his daily activities (cleaning his teeth, bathing, dressing, etc.), but, despite the appearance of humanity, the Buddha remains supramundane or transcendent. The illusion he creates is only for the purpose of furthering the salvation
of sentient beings. In the second half we find the teaching of emptiness, “the merely conventional validity of verbal distinctions as opposed to the true undifferentiated nature of the dharmadātu, and so on” (Harrison, 1983:212). The procedure throughout the work, as Harrison describes, is the same: “each verse contrasts a particular aspect of the ‘show’ with the reality behind it, after which comes the refrain... ‘it is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show’” (Harrison, 1983:212).

Even at first glance we can detect several striking similarities with the Niraupamyaṣṭava. Doctrinally, in both works we observe the standard discussion of the emptiness of all dharmas and in both cases reference to the non-differentiation of the dharmadātu. In terms of the structure, the Lokānuvartanasūtra has a section dealing with the teaching and a section dealing with the person of the Buddha, while the Niraupamyaṣṭava has a section dealing with the qualities of Buddha’s mind (verses 2 – 15, where the teaching is exposed) and a section on the qualities of Buddha’s body (verses 16 – 24) where it is stated that his physical appearance was shown only for the advancement of beings. In both cases the Buddha is supramundane and perfect in every way and a particular aspect of the “show” is contrasted with the reality behind it. Harrison (1983:224) quotes two verses of Niraupamyaṣṭava that resemble the Lokānuvartanasūtra in every detail described above:

There is no disease or impurity in your body, no arising of hunger or thirst either [but], for the sake of conforming yourself to the world, worldly behaviour has been shown by you (19).
Chapter III: The four hymns

In no way do you have the faults [caused by] the obstacles of actions, o faultless one, [but] because of the pity for the world you have shown [yourself] as submerged in action (20). 78 Both verses refer to the show performed by the Buddha in order to conform to the world. Verse 19 even uses the word \textit{lokanuvṛtti}, from which \textit{lokanuvartana} derives.

We do not find it surprising that Nāgārjuna might have been familiar with some form of the \textit{Lokānuvartanasūtra} tradition because, even though the \textit{Lokānuvartanasūtra} presents doctrinal tenets which are trade-marks of the Lokottaravāda school, we must remember that this school was an offshoot of the Mahāsāṅghikas and, as such, shared many tenets (arguably whole sūtras) with other schools of the same origin. One such school is the Pūrvaśaila, active in Andhra at the time of Nāgārjuna. Since Lokottaravādins were not active in Andhra, it is reasonable to assume that Nāgārjuna’s version of the \textit{Lokānuvartanasūtra} comes from Pūrvaśaila circles. To further support this thesis we can refer to Candrakīrti who, we learn through Harisson’s critical analysis, quotes eight verses that closely resemble the sūtra, on one occasion naming the source as the \textit{Lokānuvartanasūtra} and ascribing it to Pūrvaśaila. 79

\footnote{Apart from \textit{Lokānuvartanasūtra}, these verses closely resemble a section of an unnamed sūtra quoted in the \textit{Mahāvastu}, where around 20 verses discuss the daily routine of the Buddha such as washing his teeth, wearing robes, taking medicine, drinking etc., ending regularly with “this... is mere conformity with the world” (J. J. Jones, 1949:132-134).}

\footnote{Harrison writes: “Now these seven verses in the \textit{Madhyamakāvatārā}, which are introduced with the words ‘As is stated at length in the Verses according to the Pūrvaśailas...’, are all to be found in the \textit{Lokānuvartanasūtra}, although not in the order in which Candrakīrti has quoted them.” (1983:226). Furthermore: If we now put our findings together, we have Candrakīrti (late 6th, early 7th century) citing in various works of his a total of eight different verses – three of which appear more than once – from a sūtra, apparently in Prākrit, which he at one point names as the \textit{‘Jig rten mthun ‘jug}
Further similarities with the Pürvasailas: relationship with the Śrī-Mālā sūtra

The influence of Pürvaśaila circles on the Niraupamyastava seems to provide a clue for understanding the peculiar doctrinal features, particularly those contained in verses 21 and 22, that leads Ruegg to refer to similarities with the Tathāgatagarbha. It seems that the statements can be best understood through comparison with another work coming from the same circles and composed in the third century: the Śrī-Mālā sūtra. The Śrī-Mālā also advocates the “One Vehicle,” but takes the embryo of the Tathāgata (tathāgatagarbha) as the basis. Even more significantly, it has a passage translated by Alex Wayman and Hideko Wayman: “Lord, this Tathāgatabarbha is the embryo of the Illustrious Dharmadhātu, the embryo of the Dharmakāya, the embryo of supramundane dharma, the embryo of the intrinsically pure dharma” (1974). Here the Śrī-Mālā equates the tathāgatagarbha with the dharmadhātu and with the dharmakāya. After establishing these equations, the statement about the ground on which the “One Vehicle” can be established becomes identical. Furthermore, regarding the positive description of the dharmakāya, the Śrī-Mālā uses exactly the same three stock terms to describe the tathāgatagarbha (adding one as fourth - śāśvata – “eternal”). In short, we see a very close resemblance both in terminology and in logic behind some doctrinal claims between the Niraupamyastava and the Śrī-Mālā

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* mdo (= Lokāmārvaramasūtra), twice refers to as āgama or luī, and which he also ascribes to the Pūrvaśailas. These same verses are found in the Lan (Harrison, 1983:227).

* The same verses quoted by Candrakīrti are discussed by Ruegg (1971:459-460) in the context of the relationship between the Dharmadhūstavā and Pūrvaśaila.

* Wayman and Wayman (1974:45) offer extensive discussion on the four stock terms.
Chapter III: The four hymns

Mālā, that is, between Nāgārjuna’s doctrine of dharmadhātu and the Śrī-Mālā’s doctrine of tathāgatagarbha.

In their study of the Śrī-Mālā sūtra, Wayman and Wayman discuss the approximate dates of composition. As an early Mahāyāna sūtra, they place the Śrī-Mālā soon after the early Prajñāpāramitā sūtras the most important of which, such as the Aṣṭasāhasrikā, were written in the period between 100 BCE to 200 CE. These early Mahāyāna sūtras refer only to two bodies of the Buddha, the rūpakāya and the dharmakāya. Later Mahāyana sūtras, such as the Avataṃsaka (c. 200 – 400 CE) and the Laṅkāvatāra (4th century CE) refer to a third body, the saṃbhogakāya. The Śrī-Mālā clearly refers to the first two bodies but shows no signs of knowledge of the third. Of course, the Śrī-Mālā could be concurrent with the Avataṃsaka but definitely predates the Laṅkāvatāra sūtra since the latter quotes it. Hence, the terminus ad quem is the fourth century CE (Wayman and Wayman, 1974:1).

Wayman and Wayman find clues for more definite placement of the sūtra “in the Śrī-Mālā’s glorification of the Buddhist Queen and the stress on the ‘good

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81 Lindtner’s (1982) evidence concerning similarities between numerous verses of Nāgārjuna’s works and the Laṅkāvatāra must be taken seriously. It seems beyond doubt that Nāgārjuna knew certain version of the Laṅkāvatāra sūtra, even though not in the form in which we know it today. (For further discussion on the relationship between Nāgārjuna and the Laṅkāvatāra sūtra the reader is refered to Paul Williams (‘1984:89-94) and Lindtner (1992). It seems unlikely, however, that the version of Laṅkāvatāra known to Nāgārjuna included quotations from the Śrī-Mālā. On that point we should be mindful of the note given by Wayman and Wayman:

The Laṅkāvatāra had been profoundly influenced by the Śrī-Mālā, partly for its “embryo of the Tathāgata” which the Laṅkāvatāra equates with the “store consciousness” (ālaya-vijñāna), and partly for its “three bodies made of mind” which the Laṅkāvatāra develops at length and in a manner inconsistent with the Ratnagotramahāvīhāra. This indicates that the Laṅkāvatāra was composed outside of the Mahāsāṅghika circle which had given rise to the Śrī-Mālā, and was freely syncretising the Śrī-Mālā with doctrines of other Buddhist sects. The fact that the Ratnagotramahāvīhāra does not cite the Laṅkāvatāra, which may have already been written, is possibly due to a disagreement over interpreting the Śrī-Mālā (1974:6-7).
daughter of the family’ side by side with the ‘good son of the family’” (Wayman and Wayman, 1974:1). To them, this fact points to a period when the prosperity of the Buddhist community depended heavily on the patronage of royal ladies. According to Wayman and Wayman, “the only known area that could apply is South India, especially the Andhra country where there are celebrated Buddhist remains, Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa” (1974:1). In light of the historical and epigraphic evidence from major Buddhist centres in India between the 2nd and 4th centuries, particularly centres where Mahāyāna ideas could have been comfortably expressed, we find the above claim well founded. As we learn from Indian historians, a very interesting feature of Buddhism in Andhra is that to a very large extent it progressed independent of the patronage of kings. In fact, almost all Buddhist monuments restored or constructed during the 3rd century were the result of donations made by the royal ladies and pious private citizens. We learn from Hanumantha Rao that, “After the death of Aśoka, all the dynasties that ruled over Andhra, with the exception of one or two individual rulers, were Brāhmanical in religion” (1973:61). During the period under consideration, there appears to have been a synchronised and vigorous religious policy of the Sātavāhanas for the revival of Vedic ritualism, restoration of the caste system and for upholding the superiority of the Brahmin (Rao, 1973:61-2). There is a strong possibility that Nāgārjuna addressed his Ratnāvalī to one of the Sātavāhana kings, Yajña Śrī, and persuaded him not only to be tolerant to Buddhism but to patronise it (Rao, 1973:62). From that time there appears to be a change in the attitude of the Sāthavāhanas to Buddhism. Rao informs us that, “One of the last Sāthavāhana kings, Vijaya actually visited Śrīparvata on Vaiśākha-Pūrṇima” (Rao, 1973:62). But,
the situation quickly changed with the fall of the South Indian Sāthavāhana empire, around 220 CE. Several smaller kingdoms emerged, including Ikṣvāku, ruling over the Kṛṣṇa-Guntar region of Andhradeśa. The founder of the dynasty is said to have been Vāsiṭhīputa Śrī Chāntamūla who “was a devotee of Mahāsenā-Virupākṣa and was a performer of Vedic sacrifices including Aśvamedha, Agniṣṭoma and Vājapeya” (Rao, 1973:62). It is during this time that we see evidence of Brahmanical antagonistic and even vindictive reaction towards the pro-Buddhist Sātavāhana. We cannot say that the king led this reaction but he did perform the Aśvamedha in the Nagarjunakōṭa valley, just under the shade of the Mahācaitya that enshrined Dhiituvara, which for Rao is sign of “the spirit of vengeance exhibited by the revived Brāhmanism under royal patronage” (Rao, 1973:62).

Seven kings are said to have ruled the Ikṣvāku kingdom in fifty-seven years and it seems that they were all supporters of the Brahmanical tradition. Interestingly, during this time Andhra become a flourishing centre of Buddhism, where old monuments were renovated and enlarged and several new ones constructed. One only needs to take a brief look at the inscriptions from the Buddhist site at Nagarjunakonda and nearby areas – now well documented by Vogel (1929-1939) and Rao et al. (1998) - to see the character and the magnitude of this support. Especially during the reign of Śrī Virapurīṣadatta, the son of Śrī Chāntamūla, royal ladies “vied with one another in making donations to the Buddhist Church” (Rao, 1973:64). The king himself does not seem to have had an active part in obtaining religious merit by founding the religious monuments of Nagarjunakonda, but all the highest ranking ladies from the royal
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court, including his mother, his aunt and his wife, obviously had a very active role. From Vogel’s and, especially from the Rao et al. (1998) edition and translation of the text of the inscriptions we find these ladies’ names, ranks and their relationships to kings. Practically each pillar of the monument of Nāgārjunakoṭḍa is erected through their devoted patronage.

The flourishing of Buddhism under the lavish support of royal ladies at the time when all kings were supporters of Brahmanical tradition is, indeed, an uncommon occurrence among Buddhist centres. In comparison, on the inscriptions from Mathurā in the Kuśāna period (Ram, 1927-1928:65-69) one finds the names of merchants, nuns, sons of ordinary people, daughters of ordinary people, but nothing that brings the attention to queens and ladies from the court.

Wayman and Wayman postulate that the Śrī-Mālā, a sūtra in which the main character, the princess Śrīmālādevī, evokes the Buddha who appears in front of her in his dharmakāya and, after properly worshiping him, is granted eloquence in exposition of the most profound doctrine, “was composed partly to honour the eminent Buddhist ladies who were so responsible for this glorious period of South Indian Buddhism” (1974:2). That places the composition of the sūtra tentatively within the Ikṣvāku dynasty of the third century Andhra or, more precisely, during the fifty seven years of their reign, approximately 220 to 277 CE, in the same region and only a few decades after Nāgārjuna.

Historians tell us that at the time and place, the dominant Buddhist schools were the Mahāsāṅghika sects, particularly the Pūrvaśaila, Aparaśaila and Caitīya. Thus, Wayman and Wayman conclude that, “The Śrī-Mālā is a Mahāyāna outgrowth of the later Mahāsāṅghika” (1974:2). To further support this claim, they refer to the
Mahāvastu, a text of the Lokottaravādins, another sub-school of Mahāsāṅghikas. Comparison of the two works has led them not only to discover that several difficult terms in Śrī-Mālā can be clarified through the Mahāvastu but also that the latter provides a set of Bodhisattva career-phases that neatly fits the chapter division of the first part of the former, which also contains various special tenets of the Mahāsāṅghikas. In the final analysis, Wayman and Wayman are firm in their conclusion that, “The Śrī-Mālā is a production of the Mahāsāṅghika sect in third-century Andhra” (1974:3). Based on the evidence examined above, we find this thesis acceptable, but with a proviso: since there is no evidence of donations to Mahāyāna prior to the fifth century in any of the known inscriptions, it is most likely that Śrī-Mālā was a product of one of the Mahāsāṅghika schools of the region. It may have been a Mahāyāna outgrowth of the later Mahāsāṅghika, as Wayman and Wayman consider it, but it would have had to be in accord with the understanding of budhavaccana by the dominant śrāvaka school of the time and place – the Pūrvaśaila, Aparaśaila or the Caitīya.

Considering that Nāgārjuna lived in the same region most likely during the last quarter of the second to the first quarter of the third century, he may well have been exposed to the doctrines that found their final formulation in the Śrī-Mālā. We cannot tell when this doctrine appeared or started gaining popularity among Andhakas, but the ease with which the Śrī-Mālā speaks of the tathāgatagarbha suggests that it is not treated as a new and potentially controversial topic but as one to which the audience is quite open and receptive. Hence, there is no reason to exclude the possibility that
some form of the theory of tathāgatagarbha could have been popular among Andhakas at the time of Nāgārjuna.

To summarise, through a comparison with the Śrī-Mālā, the peculiar verses become easier to understand. If we assume that Nāgārjuna was responding to the doctrinal understanding of his host audience and was using doctrinal terms and phrases well suited to forge alliances with his hosts, the Pūrvaśailas, the content of the two verses becomes clear.

Before we continue to the next section, it is worth making another point which grounds the composition of the Śrī-Mālā more firmly in Ikṣvāku era. Ikṣvāku kings were no doubt staunch supporters of Brahmanical ritualism and devotionalism but, because of the royal ladies, were tolerant towards Buddhism. However, during their time, as Rao observes, “Buddha came to be looked upon as Bhagavān both by the Theravādins and Mahāsāṅghikas and was invoked to fulfil the desires of the devotees” (Rao et al. 1998:134). It is exactly the evocation of the Buddha and the devotion to him that characterises the Śrī-Mālā sūtra and that provides another point of interest for our analysis.

**Further similarities with the Pūrvaśaila: bhakti and buddhānusmṛti**

The content of the verse 23 of the Nīrapapamyastava is also not easy to grasp:

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.
The words *bhakti* (devotion) or *bhakta* (devotees) are not used in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* or the *Ratnāvalī*. Here not only is *bhakta* used but it also stands in the same sentence with *seeing* the Buddha. It cannot be the case that the verse offers a simple thesis that *śrāvakas* in general cannot really see the Buddha because they do not understand his body as transcendent. That would perhaps make sense in polemics with Sarvāstivādins, who considered the body of the Buddha as a human body, subject to illness, deterioration and death. There is not the slightest evidence anywhere else in the hymn that Nāgārjuna is addressing Sarvāstivādins and there is no reason to assume he is doing that here. It would be difficult to maintain that the verse is polemical because Mahāsāṃghikas accepted the doctrine of the two bodies, the physical body being perfect in every way. So, the statement in the verse must refer to something else. Perhaps the Śrī-Śālā can provide insight: *bhakti* is exactly the relationship that the queen has with the Buddha. Again, this is not to say that there exists a direct relationship between the *Niraupamyāstava* and the Śrī-Śālā but we can detect some ideas towards which Andhakas were sympathetic. In this case it seems that it can be safely assumed that the Pūrvaśailas saw devotional worship as very important. It is possible that Nāgārjuna responds to that notion. It is also possible that *seeing* the Buddha refers to the practice of evoking the Buddha (*buddhānusmṛti*) similar to the one described in the Śrī-Śālā. At the beginning of the first chapter we read that the queen 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 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 buddhanusmṛti 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.

It is beyond doubt that the Andhakas, who authored the Śrī-Mālā, endorsed the practices of buddhanusmṛti and related it to the accumulation of the immeasurable merit necessary for travelling the bodhisattva path to its final fruition. The casual manner in which the practice is introduced suggests that it was well known.°

Buddhanusmṛti may have not been Nāgārjuna’s own practice or maybe not his chief practice — personally he may have been primarily concerned with reasoning into emptiness, even though in the Ratnāvalī he pays attention to generating merit more than to anything else. Nonetheless, it is certain that he makes clear allusions in the Niraupamyastava to employing it.°° It seems fair to assume that in the environment in

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° 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).

°° Even the most basic examination of the form of the Niraupamyastava will show that most of the verses are direct reference to the Buddha as if he were personally present and Nāgārjuna spoke directly to him. Out of 25 verses, the first being salutation and the last dedication of merit, 22 address the Buddha directly. Furthermore, the majority of the verses evoke qualities of the Buddha (one section dedicated to the qualities of his mind, the other to the qualities of his body) — one of the most commonly used ways of practicing anusmṛti. Listing the types of buddhanusmṛti as found in the old sūtras, Harrison (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
which he composed the *Niraupamyastava* such allusions would have been seen favourably as an approved method of hearing *buddhavacana*. It could be another instance of rhetorical strategy but, even if that is the case, the fact that he would employ it proves that this practice was accepted and valued at that time and place.

**The *Niraupamyastava* and the *Tathāgatagarbha***

The question arises – could Nāgārjuna have known the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine? Accepting that the *Śrī-Mālā* might postdate Nāgārjuna by a few decades, one possibility would be that at his time only the *dharma-dhatu* doctrine was known and he endorsed it. Yet, by its content, this doctrine has very close similarities to *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine and is only a few short steps removed from it (even though those steps might have been unacceptable from Nāgārjuna’s Madhyamaka point of view). Another possibility is that the doctrine of *tathāgatagarbha* had been known to Andhakas at the time of Nāgārjuna and that he knew about it and had to address it in order to align himself doctrinally with the mainstream Buddhism of the time and place, which he did by this hymn. If that is the case, then the *Niraupamyastava* can be seen as Nāgārjuna’s very clever attempt to address a difficult topic, pleasing his audience by using stock phrases they would understand and accept, while not compromising his own Madhyamaka position. In other words, if that is the case, then Nāgārjuna conveniently endorses the non-controversial doctrine of *dharma-dhatu*, describes it in *tathāgatagarbha* terms to which his audience is accustomed (presuming

and profundity of the Buddhist teaching...” That is exactly what our hymn does. Finally, verses 17 and 23 directly refer to seeing the Buddha, while the latter, as we saw, refers to devotional worship (*bhakti*) of the Buddha. That is another link to *buddhānusmṛti* since the practice was in Mahāyāna directly related to vision and worship of the Buddha.
that would bring him their acceptance), but never actually endorses the new doctrine. Perhaps, between the lines we should read caution for the new doctrine and attempt to illustrate how all the positive content of the doctrine can be retained (through dharmadhātu) without endorsing something with such a close resemblance to atman.

If such was the case, it seems fair to say that the genre (stotra kāvyā) and the content (worship of the qualities of the Buddha) were very well chosen: a hymn in praise of the Buddha and the qualities of the Buddha is not expected to attract as much doctrinal criticism as would an analytical and polemical treatise. Be that as it may, the point remains that in the religious environment in which the hymn was composed, an environment dominated by schools sympathetic (possibly strongly enthusiastic) towards the doctrine of tathāgataagarbha, Nāgārjuna chooses the genre of devotional poetry to introduce for the first time an important, possibly controversial, topic, dharmadhātu, in terms so close to the new doctrine. In any case, he treads a very narrow line in this hymn and enters into a cataphatic description of reality, contrary to his apophatic practice in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā. Perhaps this is the testimony to the importance he gives to the real audience. So great was that importance that he almost went too far in endangering his Madhyamaka doctrinal position. Or, perhaps it is testimony to Nāgārjuna's self-confidence in his skills that he could allow himself to walk the narrow path and end up not only maintaining his own doctrine but also forging alliances along the way with his host audience.

Similarities between the Niraupamyastava and the Śrī-Mālā in terms of the content and description of dharmadhātu may help us answer a difficult but important question: what is the significance of the positive description of reality for Nāgārjuna
(found in verse 22 of the Niraupamyastava)? In the Śrī-Mālā that language is connected to a very significant complement to the doctrine of emptiness involving the aśūnya and śūnya aspect of the garbha: the tathāgatagarbha is śūnya because it is empty of kleśas but it is aśūnya because it is endowed with buddhadharmas which are inseparable from the dharma-kāya.  

From the Śrī-Mālā alone we cannot deduce the reasons for the complement but we can do so with the help of another tathāgatagarbha work, the Ratnagotravibhāga. It is no accident that this śāstra calls itself the Uttaratantra (the later exposition), as opposed to the early exposition in the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras. The Ratnagotravibhāga does not declare that the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras are incorrect in their assertion that everything is empty (śūnāya sarvam) but offers correction that the word sarvam means sarvakleśa, which excludes the Buddha Qualities. Therefore, the word śūnya implies aśūnya – not empty of the qualities of Buddhahood and of the garbha. 

In what sense is Nāgārjuna using the positive assertions? At present, we cannot find any other plausible answer but that Nāgārjuna is also suggesting the aśūnya aspect of the doctrine of emptiness. Whether that is only a rhetorical strategy in order to gain endorsement by the host audience and to align himself with the

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84 The Śrī-Mālā sūtra:  
[Empowered by eloquence awarded by the Buddha, the queen Śrīmālā speaks:] “The voidness knowledge of the Tathāgatagarbha is of two kinds. The two are as follows:  
“Lord, the Tathāgatagarbha is void of all the defilement-stores, which are discrete and knowing as not liberated.  
“Lord, the Tathāgatagarbha is not void of the Buddha dharmas which are nondiscrete, inconceivable, more numerous than the sands of the Ganges, and knowing as liberated (Wayman and Wayman, 99).  
85 For more detailed explanation the reader is referred to Takasaki (1966:55).
mainstream, a skilful means (upāya) for instructing a particular audience, or that it is indeed his own philosophical position, we cannot tell.

**Authenticity of the Niraupamyastava**

Our hymn was ascribed to Nāgārjuna and quoted by no lesser commentators than Āryadeva, Bhāvaviveka, Candrakīrti, Prajñākaramati, and others. Analysis of the style shows very close similarities with the *Ratnāvalī*. The presence of Pūrvaśaila themes establishes further similarities with the *Ratnāvalī* and suggests that it was likely composed at the same place – among the Andhakas. If it is acceptable that the use of Pūrvaśaila themes is a rhetorical strategy for aligning with the host audience, then another characteristic feature of Nāgārjuna is observable, thus further strengthening the case of authenticity. In conclusion, there is a very high possibility that the hymn is an authentic work composed at approximately the same time and place as the *Ratnāvalī*. The relationship of the hymn with the *Lokānuvatanasūtra*, attributed to the Pūrvaśaila also provides insight into the most important audience for the work. It is most likely that Nāgārjuna composed this hymn while living in the environment dominated by Pūrvaśailas.

One final note: it would have been difficult or impossible to establish the authenticity of this hymn on the basis of a comparison with the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, but

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86 For more details the reader is refered to Lindtner (1982:126).
comparison with the *Ratnāvalī* was more than helpful. Hence, it seems more productive to take the *Ratnāvalī* as a primary criterion for the works showing signs of composition among the Andhakas.
Chapter III: The four hymns

Paramārthastava

Hymn to the Ultimate

kathāṁ sūryāṁi te nātham anutpannam anālayam/
lōka-pamāṁ atikrāntaṁ vākpathātītagocaram//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/
lōkaprajñāaptim āgamya sūrye 'ham 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 'stu te//3

Of you there is no origination since your nature is un-arisen.

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Not going or coming, o protector, I salute you, the one without inherent existence (svabhāva).

na bhāvo nāpy abhāvo 'si nocchedo nāpi śāśvataḥ/
na nityo nāpy anityas tvam advayāya namo 'stu 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 raktu haritamāṃjiṣṭho88 varṇas te nopalabhyate/
na pītakṛṣṇaśuklo vā 'varṇāya namo 'stu 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 'si na dirghaparimāṇḍalaḥ/
apramāṇagatiṃ prāpto 'pramāṇāya namo 'stu 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.

88 Must be a corruption in the text since the pāda has nine syllables – unusual for otherwise perfect style. Lindtner has it: na raktu harin māṃjiṣṭho (Nagarjuniana, p. 121, note 147), in which case the metre is regular pathyā.
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na duře nāpi cāsanne nākāse nāpi vā kṣītau/
na saṃśāre na nirvāṇe 'sthitāya namo 'stu te//7

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

asthitaḥ sarvadharmeṣu dharmadhātugatim gataḥ/
parāṁ gaṃbhīratāṁ prāpto gaṃbhīraya namo 'stu te//8

Not located in any dharmas, you have gone to the state of dharmadhātu;
you have arrived at the highest profoundity (gaṃbhīra). I salute you, the profound one.

evaṁ stutaḥ stuto bhūyās athavā kim uta stutaḥ/
śūnyeṣu sarvadharmeṣu kāḥ 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 tvāṁ śaknoti saṃstotum utpādavyayavarjitaṁ/
yasya nānto na madhyam vā grāho grāhyam na vidyate//10
Chapter III: The four hymns

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

नागतम नागतम सुत्वा सुगतम गतिवर्जितम/  
तेन पुन्येन लोको याम व्रजतम सागतिम गतिम//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.
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Comments

Like the previously examined hymn, the Paramārthastava has received considerable philological attention. It has been edited by la Vallee Poussin (1913), Tucci (1932) and Tola and Dragonetti (1985). It has been translated into English by Tucci (1932) and Tola and Dragonetti (1985), into French by la Vallee Poussin (1913) and Silbourn (1977), into Italian by Gnoli (1961), into Spanish by Dragonetti (1982) and into Russian by Androsov (2000). Lindtner (1982:124-6) provides notes on the extant manuscripts and works by traditional commentators quoting individual verses of this hymn. The authenticity of the hymn, however, has not been discussed, apart from the authenticity of the Catuhstava.

Style

Regarding vipulā: the Paramārthastava is a perfect stotra kavya. The metre is regular pathyā in all lines; there are no other vipulā, unlike previously discussed works.

Regarding particles: out of 22 lines, api is present in 6 lines, which is 27%, vā is present in 5 lines, which is 22.5% and other particles are absent. All together, 49.5% of the lines contain some particles (significantly – not of great variety as in the other works, as if an effort has been made to eliminate as many as possible). What is present, at least in the case of api, appears to be part of a standard phrase (na bhāvo nāpi abhāvo; na nityo nāpi anityas; na mahān nāpi hrastvo, etc).

Regarding compounds: 10 lines contain them, which is 45%. In one occasion (3 c-d) there is a caesura formed by a juncture between two stems of a compound.
Stylistic comparison with other discussed works is possible but the brevity of the hymn prevents drawing definite conclusions.

Basic structure

Despite its brevity, the Paramārthastava is a complete work with a well-defined structure containing three sections. The first two verses comprise 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. The main points of the first two sections will be examined 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 at his disposal in that world, and describes the Buddha as being in the domain of true reality. From such a position he asks how someone resorting to the world of conventions can 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 prajñā (conventions) and that of tathatā (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 method proposed is 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 it 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 (avarna)
6. Salutation to the Buddha who is without measure (apramāṇa)
7. Salutation to the Buddha who is without place (asthita)
8. Salutation to the Buddha who is in the state of dharmadhātu and has reached
the highest profundity (gambhāra).

After the enumeration, in the following two verses Nāgārjuna issues the statement
about the 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 a highly elaborate method of devotional worship. Unfortunately, commentaries that can provide details are not available. Amṛṭākara’s commentary is concerned with explaining the organic unity of the collection called the “Catuḥstava” and argues that each is written from the position of one of the stages 7-10 of the bodhisattva path (the 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 modern scholars. One scholar who comments on it is Paul Williams. 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, nor 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.) (1989:174).

Williams emphasizes that the Buddha is described mostly with negative terms and understands verses 9-10 as literally saying that he cannot be praised. Of course, Williams notices that the final verses undoubtedly praise the Buddha but explains that as Nāgārjuna’s gentle joke. Responding to his interpretation, we 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 āśūnya aspects of the dharmakāya. Even if that is not the way in which Nāgārjuna uses them, they are sufficient proof that the issue here is not negatives but something else, more likely related to the enumeration of the 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 verse 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 comments, Williams' final remark that the hymn ends with the "gentle joke," can also not be sustained.

The structure of the hymn becomes clear if verses 3 to 10 are seen as example of the very formal expression of the 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) (1992:220-221).

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 a thorough critique from the point of view of perfected wisdom. The following description shows how that thorough critique is manifested:

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 jewelled 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. bhūtā), 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 (1992:221).

In the first part of the description 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
Chapter III: The four hymns

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, does he properly obtain the samādhi of emptiness.

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 a direct relationship between the two texts nor does it provide explicit evidence of the practice of buddhānusmṛti samādhi in the Paramārthastava. After all, the name is nowhere used nor is the practice described in any of Nāgārjuna’s works. The resemblance could, therefore, be coincidental. Yet, there are several reasons for thinking differently. First, without the proposed hypothesis it would be difficult to explain the content of the verses. Second, as discussed in the introduction, even if 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 Lokātātastava, Niraupamyastava, Acintyastava and Stutyaatastava will
show that the majority of the verses are direct references to the Buddha as if he were
personally present and Nāgārjuna spoke directly to him. Furthermore, the hymns are
particularly concerned with commemorating qualities of the Buddha. And, as noted
above, Niraupamyastava 23, and Stutyaatastava 1, refer to the devotional worship
(bhakti) of the Buddha, while Niraupamyastava 23 also refers to seeing the Buddha.
All these features, according to Harrison (1992:216), are typical for the practice of
buddhānusmṛti. Third, the Paramārthastava shows unique similarities with the
Niraupamyastava in its references to bhakti, the dharmadhātu, and employment of
the buddhānusmṛti. The similarities can be used in arguing that the two hymns are
authored by the same person, but also in arguing that they are produced in the same
area and for the same audience, which was sympathetic towards the type of doctrines
and practices that eventually found their articulation in the Śrī-Mālā.

Both the Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra and the Śrī-
Mālā sūtra testify to the employment of the practice of buddhānusmṛti, with the
purpose of coming face-to-face with the Buddha. It seems that the practice is the
method for achieving such a meeting, the benefits of which have been celebrated by
many sūtras. As discussed above, the Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra claims that seeing the
Buddha leads to liberation. The Laṅkāvatāra sūtra seems to say that the power of the
Buddha is one that actually brings the bodhisattva to liberation. Another consequence
of seeing the Buddha is hearing his word. Many sūtras describe hearing his word

89 Verse 21 of the Niraupamyastava and verse 8 of the Paramārthastava.
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(buddha-śabda) as immersion into his knowledge (buddha-jñāṇa). Hence, 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. Seen in the context of the first two verses of the Paramārthastava, 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 reasonable 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 to 10 - complementing the analytical meditation presented in the analytical works.

Summary

This analysis shows that Nāgārjuna was very much involved in devotional practices. Arguably, in the Paramārthastava he used his elaborate method of buddhānusmṛti as a means for coming face to face with the Buddha. From Eckel we learn that Bhāvaviveka considered seeing the Buddha as equal to realising emptiness.90 Whether Nāgārjuna had the same view is impossible to tell with certainty but it seems highly probable that he introduces the practice of devotion in the context of his quest for bridging the gap between the conventional and the ultimate. Hence, arguably, this hymn presents another method for realising emptiness, complementing the analytical meditation employed in his analytical works.

The practice presented in the Paramārthastava is strikingly different to anything presented in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā. The question arises, to what can

90 Quoted in note 12 of the Introduction.
one attribute such differences? One answer, or part of it, could be that Nāgārjuna changed his place of residence and with it changed the main audience for his works. Hence, in the new environment he needed to address the concerns of a different mainstream audience. Joseph Walser's recent work proves that such a scenario is feasible, since there seems to be solid evidence that Nāgārjuna had changed his place of residence and that his works reflect the concerns of the mainstream Buddhist group in the area where they were composed.

The Paramārthastava shows very close similarities with the Niraupamyastava in terms of reference to bhakti, dharmadhātu and buddhānusmṛti. The three elements are very much within the Andhaka Buddhological framework and it is likely that the Paramārthastava is, as also the Ratnāvali and the Niraupamyastava, composed in the same environment.

**Authenticity**

The hymn is attributed to Nāgārjuna by the traditional commentators. Verses are quoted by Amṛtākara, Jñānaśrīmitra, Munidatta and Atiśa, but not by earlier commentators like Bhāvaviveka or Candrakīrti. This fact may cause some reservations, but it must also be recognized that, even though the hymn has not been attributed to Nāgārjuna by all commentators, there is no evidence that it has ever been attributed to anyone else.

The style of the hymn is very refined and the metre is perfect. The other works examined so far are stylistically not as refined, but that is not necessarily an argument
against authenticity, since the hymn contains only eleven verses without particularly
difficult technical vocabulary, so it is not at all unusual to be so elegant.

There is not much in common between this hymn and the
Mūlamadhyamakakārikā. If the latter was taken as the primary criterion, it would have
been very difficult to argue for its authenticity. Yet, the hymn has very much in
common with the Nīraupamānyastava, specifically in references to bhakti, the
dharmadhātu and the employment of buddhānusmṛti. Both hymns seem to show
similarities with works coming from the Andhaka milieu.

In the final analysis, we must recognize the fact that there is no solid proof
for accepting the authenticity of this hymn. Yet, considering that several traditional
commentators have attributed it to Nāgārjuna, no one has attributed it to any other
author, and there are close similarities with the Nīraupamānyastava, which is most
likely authentic, the burden of proof would be on the sceptics to provide evidence to
the contrary. We accept the hymn as very likely authentic.
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_Lokātastava_91

**Hymn to the One Beyond the World**

lokātīta namas tubhyāṁ viviktajñānavedine/
yas tvaṁ jagaddhitāyaiva khinnāḥ karunāya ciram//1

O you who are beyond the world, salutations to you, versed in discriminative knowledge!
You, solely for the benefit of the world, have suffered distress with compassion for a long time.

skandhamātravinirmukto na sattvo ‘stīti te matam/
sattvārthaṁ ca paraṁ khedam agamas tvaṁ mahāmunc//2

You are convinced that apart from mere _skandhas_92 no being exists, but for the sake of beings you went to great pain, o great sage.

te ‘pi skandhās tvaẏā dhīman dhīmadbhyaḥ samprakāśitah/
māyāmarīcigandharvanagarasvapnasamāṃbhāḥ//3

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92 Five constituents of personality: matter (rupa), sensations (vedāna), perception (saṃjñā), mental formations (saṃskāra) and consciousness (vijñāna).
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And, o wise one, you have explained to the wise ones that these skandhas are like illusions, mirages, cities in clouds, dreams.

hetutaḥ saṁbhavo yeśāṁ tadabhāvān na santi ye/
katham nāma na te spaṭam pratibimbasamā matāḥ//4

Those whose arising is from causes and which do not occur in absence of that, how, pray tell, can they not be clearly considered the same as a reflection by you?

bhūtāṇyacakṣurgrāhyāṇī tanmayāṇaḥ cākṣusāṇi katham/
rūpaṁ tvayāvaṁ bruvatā rūpagrāho nivāritāḥ//5

“[Since] elements are not graspable by the eye, how can what is visible be made of them?” – By you, who speaks thus about the form, the apprehension of form (rūpagrāha) was rejected.

vedaniyaṁ vinā nāsti vedanāto nirātmikā/
tac ca vedayaṁ svabhāvena nāsti ṭy abhimataṁ tava//6

Feeling does not exist without what is to be felt. Hence (ataḥ), it is without self. And, you consider that that which is to be felt does not exist by own being, that is your declaration.
“If perception and the object were non-different, then the mouth would be burnt by the [word/concept] ‘fire.’ If they were different, there would be no comprehension,” is stated by you, speaker of truth.

That, “The agent is self-dependent and so is the action,” is stated by you conventionally. But, dependent on each other they are established, you maintained.

No doer is there, no experiencer is there, merit and demerit are dependently born. What is dependent that is not [really] born, you have declared, o lord of words.
There is no object of knowledge without its being known and there is no consciousness [i.e. knower] without that [object of knowledge]. Therefore, the knowledge and the object of knowledge do not exist by own being, you have said.

lakṣyāl lakṣaṇam anyac cet syāt tal lakṣyam alakṣaṇam/
tayor abhāvo 'nanyatve vispaṭaṁ kathitaṁ tvayā//11

If the characteristics were different from the characterized then that characterized would be without characteristics. If they were not different, there would be non-existence of both – this has been clearly declared by you.

lakṣyalakṣaṇanirṣkapī vāgudāhāravajarjanam/
śāntaṁ jagat idaṁ drṣṭaṁ bhavatā jñānacaksuṣā//12

Devoid of characterized and characteristics, free from utterances of words, (and) peaceful this world has been seen by you with your eye of wisdom.

na sann utpadyate bhāvo nāpy asan saddasam na ca/
na svato nāpy parato na dvābhyaṁ jāyate katham//13

An existent being does not arise, nor does nonexistent, nor does [both] existent and nonexistent, not from itself, nor from another, nor from both. How would it be born?
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na sataḥ sthitiyuktasya vināśa upapadyate/
nāsato 'svaviśāṇena samasya śamatā katham//14

The destruction of an existent endowed with endurance is not fitting. How can a non-existent [thing] like the horns of a horse be extinguished?

bhāvān nārthāntaraṃ nāśo nāpy anarthāntaraṃ matam/
arthāntare bhaven nityo nāpy anarthāntare bhavet//15

Destruction is not different from the being nor can be thought to be non-different. If it was something different it would have been permanent; nor can it exist as non-different.

ekatve na hi bhāvasya vināśa upapadyate/
prthaktve na hi bhāvasya vināśa upapadyate//16

For, if there were unity, destruction of being would not be fitting.
If there were separateness, destruction of being would not be fitting.

vinaśṭat kāraṇāt tāvat kāryotpattir na yujyate/
na cāvinaśṭat svapnena tulyotpattir matā tava//17
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In the first place, through a cause which is destroyed the arising of an effect is not logical. Nor from one that is not destroyed. Origination is the same as a dream, you maintain.

na niruddhān nāniruddhād bijād aṅkurasāmbhavam/
mayotpādavād utpādāḥ sarva eva tvayocyate//18

Not from a destroyed nor from un-destroyed seed a sprout arises. Every origination is like the origination of an illusion, you say.

atas tvayā jagad idāṃ parikalpasamudbhavam/
parijñātām asadbhūtam anupannam na nasyati//19

Therefore, you have understood that this world has arisen due to imagination: - unreal, un-arisen, it is not destroyed.

nityasya saṁśṛtir nāsti naivāntyasya saṁśṛtih/
svapnavat saṁśṛtih proktā tvayā tattvavidām vara//20

There is no being in saṁsāra [i.e. no migration] of a permanent [self], there is no being in saṁsāra [i.e. no migration] of an impermanent self. Being in saṁsāra [i.e. migrating beings] is like a dream, you, o best of knowers of truth, have declared.
Caused by itself, by other, by both, without cause – this is what dialecticians have maintained about the suffering. But, you have stated that it is dependently originated.

What is dependent origination, that itself is emptiness, you maintain.

There is no independently existent being, that is your incomparable lion’s roar.

The teaching of the nectar of emptiness is for destruction of all conceptions. Whoever holds even to that (emptiness) is censured by you.

Inactive, controlled (by others), empty, like illusion, dependently existent,
all dharmas are without existence by own being, [thus] o protector, you have explained.

na tvayotpāditaṁ kim cin na ca kim cin nirodhitam/
yathā pūrvaṁ tathā paścāt tathatāṁ buddhavān asi//25

Nothing has been put forward by you and nothing denied. Just as before, just so afterwards, you are aware of suchness (tathatā).

āryair nisevitāṁ enām anāgamyarth ṣrī bhāvanāṁ/
nānimittāṁ hi vijñānaṁ bhavatiḥa katham cana//26

For, unless one resorts to cultivation (bhāvanā) practiced by the noble ones, the consciousness would in no way (na katham cana) become signless (animitta).

animittaṁ anāgamyarth mokṣo nāsti tvam uktavān/
atas tvayā mahāyāne tat sākalyena desitāṁ//27

Without arriving at the signless there is no liberation, you said.
Hence, that has been taught by you in full in the Mahāyāna.

yad avāptaṁ mayā puṇyaṁ stutvā tvāṁ stutibhājanam/
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nimittabandhanāpetam bhūyāt tenākhilam jagat//28

By the merit that I have obtained praising you, worthy of praise, may the whole world be free from the bondage of signs (nimitta).
Comments

The Lokātitastava is probably the most studied and most frequently quoted of all Nāgārjuna’s hymns among Western scholars. It has been edited by la Vallee Poussin (1913), Lindtner (1982) and Tola and Dragonetti (1985). It has been translated into English by Lindtner (1982) and Tola and Dragonetti (1985), into French by la Vallee Poussin, into Italian by Gnoli and into Russian by Androsov. Lindtner and Tola and Dragonetti provided valuable comments with their translation. Particularly significant are Lindtner’s (1982:124-126) notes on the extant manuscripts and works by traditional commentators that quote verses of this hymn. Lindtner (1982:121-123) also discussed the authenticity.

Style

As with the Mūlamadhyamakārikā and the Ratnāvalī, we shall analyse metrics, presence of particles and presence of compounds.

Regarding metrics: In the Mūlamadhyamakārikā 18% of the lines contained some kind of vipulā, while in the Ratnāvalī the percentage was 14.4%. In the Lokātitastava: 10 out of 56 lines contain some kind of vipulā (3 ra-vipulā: 8c, 10a, 18a; 3 na-vipulā: 13c, 19a, 22c; 1 bha-vipulā: 5c; and 3 ma-vipulā: 8a, 11c, 17c) which is 17.8%. The percentage is close to that in the Mūlamadhyamakārikā and the Ratnāvalī.

Regarding particles: in the Mūlamadhyamakārikā, according to Vetter: ca is present in 41% of the lines, eva in 16.4%, api in 9.4%, iti in 7.5%, hi in 7.5%, vā in 5.2%, punah in 4.1%, tu in 2.6%. All together, 94% of the lines contain some particle.
In the *Ratnāvali*, again, according to Vetter, in 605 lines existing in Sanskrit: *ca* is present in 126 lines, *eva* in 41, *api* in 74, *iti* in 43, *hi* in 7, *vā* in 15, *punah* in 8, *tu* in 22. All together, 336 lines contain some of the particles which is 55%. That is a much smaller percentage than in the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*.

In the *Lokātitastava* (56 lines): *ca* is present in 5, which is 9%, *eva* in 2, which is 3.6%, *api* in 6, which is 11%, *iti* in 2, which is 3.6%, *hi* in 4, which is 7.2%, *vā* is absent, *punar* is absent, and *tu* in 1, which is 1.8%. All together, particles are present in 36% of the lines. The percentage is lower than in the *Ratnāvali* and significantly lower than in the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*.

Regarding compounds: According to Vetter, in the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*, 79% of all *pādas* do not contain a compound; in the *Ratnāvali* that number is 51.5%. In the *Lokātitastava* 21 out of 56 lines do not contain compounds, which is around 36%. Furthermore, on one occasion (3 c-d) the hymn contains caesura formed by a juncture between two stems of a compound.

After the analysis of the style we can conclude similarities between the *Lokātitastava* and the other two works by Nāgārjuna. The percentage of *vipulā* matches closely to that of the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* and is not far away from the *Ratnāvali*, while regarding particles and compounds the hymn shows slightly more refined style than the *Ratnāvali*, and one that is significantly more refined than that of the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*. 
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Basic structure of the hymn

Excluding the first verse of salutation and the last verse, the dedication of merit, the rest fall into three distinct categories: verses 2-10 dealing with refutation of the independent existence of the constituents of personality, verses 11-20 dealing with refutation of the world as ultimately existent, and verses 21-27 giving gradual progression towards understanding of the teaching of Mahāyāna which ends in liberation.

93 First major section: verse 2 to 10. Verses 2-4 refute *skandhas* in general, verse 5-10 refute each individual *skandha*. The logic of the refutation follows similar pattern: referring to the relationship between the object and the organ that perceives it and then arguing that neither can exist independently of the other.

1. *skandhas* mentioned for the first time.
2. refutation of *skandhas* in general – they are like illusions, dreams, etc.
3. refutation of *skandhas* in general - all arise from causes
4. refutation of *skandhas* in general - they do not exist independently.
5. refutation of the *rūpa skandha*: relationship between the visual form and the organ that perceives it
6. refutation of *vedanā skandha*: sensory object and the feeling of it do not exist independently.
7. refutation of *samjñā skandha*: perception and concept about the perceived do not exist independently.
8. refutation of *sāṃskāra skandha*: agent and action do not exist independently;
9. same
10. refutation of *vijñāna skandha*: object of knowledge and consciousness that knows it do not exist independently.

94 Second major section: from verse 11 to 20 Nāgārjuna discusses the world as illusion. The dominant logic here is one that has been often characterised as paradoxical: arguing that neither A nor ~A is possible. Of course, there is nothing paradoxical if one knows that the argument is qualified: neither A nor ~A is possible if svabhāva is accepted. We’ll take a closer look at the arguments:

11. *lakṣaṇa* (the characteristic) is neither the same nor different with *lakṣya* (the characterised).
12. amplification of the same.
13. existent/nonexistent/both does not arise from self/other/both. (The logic of this verse is atypical for the group but frequently used by Nāgārjuna in his analytical works.)
14. existent cannot be destroyed; nonexistent cannot be destroyed.
15. destruction is neither same nor different from the being.
16. neither oneness nor separateness can be established
17. arising of an effect from destroyed is not logical; arising of an effect from un-destroyed is not logical.
18. sprout does not arise either from a destroyed or from an un-destroyed seed.
19. Conclusion: the world is like imagination; it cannot be really established.
20. Neither permanent nor impermanent being can be established. Beings are like dreams.

95 Third major section: from verse 21 to 27, Nāgārjuna’s argument leads to culmination into the statement of liberation in signless, fully taught in Mahāyāna:

21. Statement of the catuṣkoṭi; suffering is dependently originated.
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Doctrinal content

Practically all verses from the three major sections can find their parallels in the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* in terms of the doctrinal content and the logic employed.96 Even though verse 27 mentions Mahāyāna (the word is never mentioned in the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* but is central for the *Ratnāvali*), it is obvious that there is no attempt to undermine any śrāvakā school. The general attitude is one of harmonising Mahāyāna teaching with that of śrāvakayāna. There is no reference to the doctrine of three svabhāvas or knowledge of the doctrine of three bodies of the Buddha, no traces of the doctrine of vijñaptimātra or tathāgatagarbha. The hymn shows no evidence of relationship with Pūrvaśaila or any other school from Andhra. Overall, the hymn seems very much in accord with the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*, with a few notable differences. The most obvious difference is that while the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* offers the doctrinal statement as derived through personal analyses, the hymn delivers them through the mouth of the Buddha. At least eighteen verses out of twenty eight—

22. What is dependently originated, that itself is emptiness—that is the lion's roar.
23. The teaching of emptiness is for abolishing all conceptions. One must abolish even the conception about emptiness itself.
24. All dharmas are empty, like illusion, inter-dependent.
25. The Buddha never really spoke; he was aware of suchness.
26. Without cultivation practice, consciousness does not become signless.
27. Without arriving to signless there is no liberation. That has been taught by the Buddha in full in the Mahāyāna.

We see a gradual progression at the argument and guidance toward understanding of the teaching of Mahāyāna: Dependent origination is emptiness, emptiness is for abolishing all conceptions and arriving to the state of consciousness called “signless” which is liberation and which is fully explained by the Buddha in the Mahāyāna. This part contains the condensed doctrine of the hymn. Lindner's (1982:129-139) notes with his translation provide good source of information for doctrinal comparison between the *Lokātātstava* and Nagārjuna’s analytical works.
two thirds—refer to the statements made by the Buddha. Excluding the opening verse of salutation and the closing verse of merit transference (as well as verses 15 and 16, not present in the Tibetan translation), the percentage is even higher. As illustrated in the Introduction, verses 21 and 22 of the Lobfitastava find close parallels with verses XII,1 and XXIV, 18 of the Mulamadhyamakakarakä respectively. The least one could say is that Nāgarjuna makes a conscious effort to ground the doctrines presented in quotations from the Buddha (that is, to establish them as buddhavacana). The Lobfitastava alone does not offer sufficient material for major conclusions on the reasons for such shift in attitude but the role of evocation of the Buddha (buddhanusmrti) in the hymns is consistent and leads to the conclusion that it is deliberately employed.

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1. salutation; devotional statement
2. devotional statement
3. “you illuminated”
4. paraphrase of the above (with direct address: “pray tell”)
5. “you spoke”
6. “your declaration”
7. “is stated by you”
8. “you maintained”
9. “your utterance”
10. “you have said”
11. “has been exclaimed by you”
12. “seen by you”
13. own logic/paraphrase
14. - // -
15. - // -
16. - // -
17. “you maintain”
18. “you say”
19. “you have understood”
20. “you have declared”
21. “you have stated”
22. “your lion’s roar”
23. “censured by you”
24. “you have explained”
25. “you are aware of”
26. statement (doctrinally significant: introducing bhūvana and animitta)
27. “you said”
28. dedication/transfer of merit
Chapter III: The four hymns

Another difference relates to the content of the word \textit{bhāvanā}. Verse 26, one of the handful of exceptions that give doctrinal statements not through evoking the \textit{buddhavacana} but as author’s own, says:

For, unless one resorts to cultivation (\textit{bhāvanā}), practised by the noble ones, consciousness would in no way (\textit{na kathā cāna}) become signless (\textit{animitta}).

Here for the first time in the hymn Nāgārjuna mentions the word \textit{bhāvanā} (cultivation). The particle \textit{hi} (for) seems to be employed here as a connector between this verse and the previous one, possibly with all preceding verses as \textit{bhāvanā} seems to refer to all that precedes. But, what exactly is this practice of cultivation? The word is rarely used in the \textit{Mūlamadhyamakakārikā}. Based on the analysis of the verses where it is employed, XVII, 15; XXIV, 2, 24, 27; XXVI, 11, it would be fair to say that in the \textit{Mūlamadhyamakakārikā}, by \textit{bhāvanā} Nāgārjuna understands cultivation through analytical meditation such as he demonstrated throughout the work by his critique of \textit{svabhāva}. In the \textit{Ratnāvalī} the practice of the bodhisattva is cultivation of merit and wisdom. In this hymn (as well as in the \textit{Niraupamyastava}), however, Nāgārjuna is rarely (verses 13-17 only) employing personal analysis but predominantly commemorating the word of the Buddha. The distinct feature in the hymns, arguably connected to the practice of spiritual cultivation (\textit{bhāvanā}) is worship. The \textit{Lokātāstava} alone does not offer sufficient ground for major conclusions but, if analysed in comparison with other authentic hymns, the content of the word \textit{bhāvanā} would certainly be much closer to the practice of worshiping the qualities of the Buddha and commemoration of his words and deeds than to analytical meditation as evident in the \textit{Mūlamadhyamakakārikā}. 

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It is worth noting that the Lokātātastava, as well as the Niraupamyastava and the Paramārthastava (and, as we shall see, a few other authentic hymns) end with a verse of dedication of the merit accumulated by worshiping the Buddha for the welfare of all sentient beings. The Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, Śūnyatāsaptati, Vigrahavyāvartanī and Ratnāvalī, however, do not end with such a verse. The only work traditionally classified as analytical that ends with such a verse is the Yuktiṣaṣṭikā. The issue will be considered in detail after the analysis of all the hymns.

Is there a relationship with the Pudgalavāda?

The vocabulary used in the verses 8 and 9 of the hymn seems peculiar:

"The agent is self-dependent and so is the action," this was uttered by you conventionally. But, dependent on each other they are established, you maintained.

No doer is there, no experiencer is there, merit and demerit are dependently born. What is dependent that is not [really] born, that is your utterance, O Lord of words.

Verse five refuted rūpa, verse six refuted vedanā, verse seven refuted saṃjñā, verse ten refuted vijñāna so, naturally, the purpose of verses eight and nine is to refute the fourth skandha – saṃskāra. The word saṃskāra is not used at all. Instead, Nāgārjuna discusses karma and karyā (action and agent). The way of arguing is intriguing: Nāgārjuna opens the verse with a statement by the Buddha that the agent and the action are self-dependent. In the second line he offers another of Buddha’s statements, that they are both established inter-dependently. The first statement contradicts the
second but clearly suggests that the first was given from a conventional point of view while the second from the ultimate. Also, the first line — giving a quotation of the Buddha saying that the agent and the action are self-dependent — suggests that the intended recipient of the criticism is member of a school that carried such view.

Nāgārjuna could have applied the same logic as in the Mūlamadhyamakārikā IV 1-7,\(^9\) as he did in the verses 6 and 10 of the hymn, or could have done it as in the Śūnyatāsaptati 36 (“Karma is not born by conditions and by no means by non-conditions, for saṃskāras are like an illusion, a city in the clouds, a mirage”), but he does none of that.

The next verse, again not using the method applied in the Mūlamadhyamakārikā, stresses that no doer (or agent, kartr) and no experiencer (bhoktr), no merit and no demerit exist independently. They are established dependently, hence they are empty (not [really] born). The emphasis is clearly on the person — doer/experiencer of merit and demerit.

It is clear that, instead of refuting saṃskāra, Nāgārjuna is here dealing with the cause that forms saṃskāra — karma — and the person that experiences its results — kartr, addressing (at least, appearing to address) members of the school that held such views.

We may now ask: Is there a school that holds views that Nāgārjuna is refuting in the two verses? It seems that the Sāṃskāryas come close. This school held that

\(^9\) In chapter IV of the Mūlamadhyamakārikā (skandha parikṣā – Examination of Aggregates) Nāgārjuna refutes inherent existence of each skandha by stating that the aggregate is not independent from its cause. Verses 1 to 6 apply the logic on the first aggregate — material form (rupa) but in verse 7 states that “The method of treatment of all existents such as feeling, thought, perception and mental existents is in every way similar to that of the material form” (vedanācittasamjñānāpasaṃskārāṇāṃ ca sarvasaḥ sarveṣāṃ eva bhāvāni rūpeṣāva samāh kramaḥ).
karma was a composite entity consisting of several temporal components but also one atemporal, thus insisting on its persistence. In support they quote a canonical text: “Karma does not perish, even after hundreds of millions of kalpas. When suitable [conditions] and times come together, they ripen for their owners.”\footnote{In Etienne Lamotte (1998:16):} As discussed above, Sāṃmitiyas posited the existence of an entity called “indestructible” (avipranaśa), separate from karma itself. And, as Vasubandhu articulates the the Sāṃmitiya’s position in his Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa, by reason of this “indestructible” entity, one realizes the fruit of his karma (Lamotte, 1998:55).

But, even though Nāgārjuna does not endorse the Sāṃmitiya position, he is not straightforwardly dismissing it but only explaining that it may be acceptable on a conventional level but on the ultimate level all dharmas are empty. With that, he is not different from the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā. Hence, based on these two verses, it is difficult to say whether the Pudgalavādins (Sāṃmitiyas) are still his real audience, that is, whether he issued these statements while being in the Pudgalavāda milieu (for example, Magadhā, as in the case of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā) or in some Mahāsāṅghika dominated environment (for example Andhra, as in the case of the Ratnāvalī and the Niraupamyastava).

**Authenticity**

The tradition ascribes the hymn to Nāgārjuna. Verses are quoted by Candrakīrti (in several of his works), Prajñākaramati, Haribhadra and several lesser known authors

\[Na prāṇaśyanti karmāṇi kalpakōśaśāt air api\]
\[sāmagraṁ prāpya kālaṁ ce phalaṁ khalu dehinām/\]
(Lindtner, 1982:125-126). Our analysis of the style (in terms of vipulā, particles and compounds) shows close similarity with other examined works. In its doctrinal content and applied logic, it is very similar to the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā. Mentioning the word Mahāyāna and openly subscribing to the great vehicle makes it similar to the Ratnavali. Unlike the Niraupamyastava, the hymn does not offer material for establishing relationship with the Pūrvaśaila or any other Mahāsāṅghika school from the Andhra region. It does not make any references to the dharmadhātu, and it does not present the reality in cataphatic manner. There may be evidence of rhetorical strategies relating the hymn to the Pudgalavādins but at the moment it would be too speculative to draw conclusions. Still, based on the examination, there are great similarities between the Lokāuttastava and the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā. All evidence points to the conclusion that this hymn is authentic.
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Acintyastava\textsuperscript{100}

Hymn to the Unthinkable One

pratityajānāṁ bhāvānāṁ naiḥsvābhāvyāṁ jagāda yaḥ/
taṁ namāmy asamajñānam acintyam anidarśanam\textsuperscript{/1}

I salute him, the one with unequal cognition, the unthinkable, the indescribable, who taught that all dependently born beings are without inherent existence.

yathā tvayā mahāyāne dharmanairatmyam ātmanā/
viditaṁ desitaṁ tadvad dhīmadbhyaḥ karuṇāvasāt\textsuperscript{/2}

Just as you in Mahāyāna personally understood the selflessness of phenomena, just so you taught that to the wise ones out of compassion.

pratyayabhyaḥ samutpannam anutpannam tvayoditam/
svabhāvena na taj jātam iti śūnyam prakāśitam\textsuperscript{/3}

What has arisen from conditions is un-arisen, was said by you. That is not born with inherent existence, thus it was declared empty.

yadvac chabdam pratityeha pratiśādhasamudbhavaḥ/

\textsuperscript{100} Sanskrit text based on the Tola and Dragonetti (1985) critical edition.
māyāmāricivac cāpi tathā bhavasairudbhavanah//4

In the same way as echo is [produced] dependent on the sound, and, as an illusion and a mirage [are produced], thus is the origination of existence [produced].

māyāmāricigandharvanagarapratibimbakāh/
yady ajātāḥ saha svapnair na syāt taddarśanādikam//5

If illusion, mirage, cities in the clouds, reflections, as well as dreams are unborn, there can be no vision etc. of them.

hetupratyayasambhūtā yathaite kṛtakāḥ śmrtaḥ/
tadvat pratyayamaṁ viśvaṁ tvayoktaṁ nātha sāṁvyrtam//6

Just as those arising from causes and conditions are considered to be created, in that way all conditioned [things] you declared, o protector, are conventionally existent.101

asty etat kṛtakaṁ sarvaṁ yat kincid bālalāpanam/
ṛktamuśtipratikāsāṁ ayathārthaparakāṣītam//7

101 To, hopefully, add a bit of clarity to the meaning of the verse: since the things arising from causes and conditions are created [that is, do not have independent existence], the existence of all of them [created/conditioned things] can be established only conventionally.
[To say that] this created thing exists as a whole – that is immature talk similar to an empty fist, declared to be false.

kṛtakam vastu no jātāṁ tadā kim vārtamāṇikam/
kasya nāśād atītaṁ syād utpitsuḥ kim apekṣate//8

If a created thing is not born, how, then, [can it be] present?
From destruction of what can it be past? How can it be related to the future?

svasmān na jāyate bhāvah parasmān nobhayād api/
na san nāsan na sadasan kutaḥ kasyodayas tadā//9

An existent thing is not born from itself, from other, or both, not existent, non-existent, both existent-and-non-existent. Then, what arises from what?

ajāte na svabhāvo 'sti kutaḥ svasmāt samudbhavah/
svabhāvābhāvasiddhyaiva parasmād apy asambhavah//10

The unborn has no inherent existence. How can it arise from itself?
Since it is established that there is no inherent existence, how can it arise from something else?
svatve sati paratvam syāt paratve svatvam ṣiyate/
āpeksīkī tayoḥ siddhiḥ pārāvāram ivodī//11

If there is selfhood, otherness may be. If there is otherness based on another, selfhood is maintained.
The establishment of these two is said to be correlative like far and close.

yadā nāpeksate kīṁ cit kutaḥ kīṁ cit tadā bhavet/
yadā nāpeksate dirgham kuto hrasvādikam tadā//12

When it is not related to anything, how could something exist?
When it is not related to anything [considered to be] long, how could something be short?

astitve sati nāstitvam dirghe hrasvam tatha sati/
nāstitve sti cāstitvam yat tasmād ubhayaṁ na sat//13

If there is existence, [then] there is non-existence; if there is long, [then] there is short.
And, if there is non-existence, [then there is] existence. Therefore, the two do not exist [independently].

ekatvaṁ ca tathānekam aṭṭāṅgatādi ca/
saṁkleśo vyavadānaṁ ca samyaṁmithā svataḥ kutaḥ//14
Chapter III: The four hymns

Unity as well as multiplicity, and that which has gone by and that which has not come yet, etc., affliction and purification, correct and incorrect, how [can they exist] by themselves?

svata eva hi yo nästi bhāvah sarvo 'sti kas tadā/
para ity ucyate yo 'yam na vina svasvabhāvatāh//15

Since there is no thing that exists by itself, then, [how] can it exist as a whole? 102
That which is called “other” does not exist without own inherent existence.

na svabhāvo 'sti bhāvānāṁ parabhāvo 'sti no yadā/
bhāvagrāhāgraḥāvēśaḥ paratantro 'sti kas tadā//16

When there is neither self-existent or other-existent,
then how can one hold to the understanding that there [really] is existence dependent on other.

ādāv eva samaṁ jātāḥ svabhāvena ca nirvṛtāḥ/
anutpannāś ca tattvena tasmād dharmās tvayoditāḥ//17

Originally born the same and extinguished of inherent existence,

102 Sarva (whole), as opposed to kṣaṇa (composite, created).
and [therefore] in truth non-arisen— that is how the phenomena are—you said.

nihśvabhāvās tvaẏā dhūman rūpādyāḥ sanprakāsitaḥ/
phenabudbudamābhramaricikadilīsamāḥ//18

It was shown by you, o wise one, that form etc. [the remaining aggregates], are without inherent existence; they are the same as foam, bubbles, illusions, clouds, mirages, plantain tree.103

indriyair upalabdhaṃ yat tat tattvena bhaved yadi/
jātās tattvavido bālās tattvajñānena kim tadā//19

If that which is grasped by the senses were truth, fools would have been born with the knowledge of truth. Then, what [good would be the] knowledge of truth?

jaḍatvam apraṃāṇatvam athāvyākṛtatām api/
viparītaparijñānam indriyāṇāṃ tvam uciyān//20

Senselessness, trivialisation, even indistinctness;

Inverted knowledge [all of the above] belongs to senses—you said.

103 Kadali (also, kadala, kadali) — the plantain of banana tree whose soft and perishable stem is symbol for fragility and perishability.
Because of being obstructed by ignorance, the world does not properly understand [the truth] as it is – this has been thought and declared by you.

"Exists" is the view of eternalism, "does not exist" is the view of annihilationism. Therefore, the doctrine free from the two extremes is shown by you.

Phenomena are liberated from [any of] the four alternatives – [thus] has been said by you. Not knowable even by consciousness, how much less are they [within] the sphere of words.

"exists" is the view of eternalism, "does not exist" is the view of annihilationism. Therefore, the doctrine free from the two extremes is shown by you.

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Like what is arisen as illusion in a dream, like seeing a double moon, thus, this world has been seen by you as existing and non-existing thing.

utpannas ca sthito naṣṭaḥ svapne yadvat sutas tathā/
na cotpannah sthito naṣṭa ukto loko ‘rthatas tvayā//25

As a son born, present and destroyed in a dream, thus this world is not truly born, present and destroyed, you have declared.

kāraṇāt saṁbhavo drṣṭo yathā svapne tathetaraḥ/
saṁbhavaḥ sarvabhāvānāṃ vibhavo ‘pi matas tathā//26

Just as arising is seen as in a dream because of a cause, so is the opposite [i.e., destruction in a dream].
The arising and destruction is thus of all beings everywhere – this is what you thought.

rāgādijām yathā duḥkhāṃ saṁkleśasāṃṣṭī tathā/
saṁbhārāpūraṇān muktiḥ svapnavad bhāṣitā tvayā//27

As suffering born from passion, etc., as affliction [and] transmigration, so liberation through completing the accumulation [of wisdom and merit] is like a dream, you have said.
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jātaṁ tathaiva no jātaṁ āgataṁ gataṁ ity api/
baddho muktas tathā jñāṇi dvayam icchen na tattvavit//28

One who thus cognizes [i.e., sees things as] born, unborn, come, gone, bound or liberated, maintains duality; a knower of truth does not [maintain duality].

utpattir yasya na ivā sti tasya kā nirvṛtir bhavet/
māyāgajapraṇakṣatvād ādiśāntatvam arthataḥ//29

That which does not arise, how can it be extinguished?
Because it appears like an illusory elephant [it is], in reality, originally calm.

utpanno 'pi na cotpanno yadvan māyāgajo mataḥ/
uttapanam ca tathā viśvam anuttapanam ca tattvataḥ//30

As we think of the illusory elephant as born but it is not born,
In the same way [we think of] all [as] born [but] in reality it is unborn.

ameyair aprameyānāṁ pratyekam nirvṛtih kṛtā/
lokanāthair hi sattvānāṁ na kaś cin mocitaś ca taṁ//31
By the immeasurable world protectors (Buddhas) the liberation of immeasurable beings has been accomplished one by one. But [in reality], not a single one has been set free by them.

Those beings are not born and not extinguished — [this is] your clear statement. No one is set free by anyone — thus you announced, o great sage.

Just as the things made by illusion-making are empty, the whole world is empty, and likewise the creator, you have said.

The maker [is] also made by another [=he has no inherent existence but an interdependent one], [he] cannot pass the state of being created [= he cannot have an independent existence]. Or, otherwise that action as the maker of the maker is a consequence (prasajyate).
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namamātram jagat sarvam ity uccair bhāṣitaṁ tvaẏā/
abhidhānāt prthagbhūtam abhidheyam na vidyate//35

That the whole world in merely name – has been loudly declared by you.
What is named is not found separate from the name.

kalpanāmātram ity asmāt sarvadharmāḥ prakāṣitāḥ/
kalpanāpy asati proktā yayā śūnyam vikalpyate//36

Because of this (asmā) all phenomena have been explained as “mere conceptualisations.”
Also the imagination through which the emptiness is conceived is declared [to be] unreal.

bhāvābhāvadvayātītam anatitaṁ ca kutra cīt/
na ca jīnām na ca jīneyaṁ na cāsti na ca nāsti yat//37

That [which has] gone beyond the duality of being and non-being and has not passed over to some place,
[that which is] not knowledge nor knowable, not exists nor not exists,

yan na caikam na cānekam nobhayam na ca nobhayam/
anālayam athāvyaiktam acintyam anidārśanam//38
that which is not one nor not-one, not both nor not-both, without foundation, un-manifest, unthinkable, indescribable,

yan nodeti na ca vyeti nocchedi na ca śāsvatam/
tad ākāśapratikāśaṁ nākṣarajñānagocaram//39

That which does not arise, does not disappear, cannot be annihilated and is not permanent; that, which is like space, [that is] not within the range of words or knowledge.

yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatā saiva te matā/
tathāvidhaś ca saddharmas tatsamaś ca tathāgataḥ//40

What is dependent origination, that itself is emptiness, you maintain. Of that kind is the true doctrine and same as that is the Tathāgata.

tat tattvam paramārtho ‘pi tathātā dravyam iṣyate/
 bhūtaṁ tad avisaṁvadi tadbodhād buddha ucyate//41

That is also regarded as truth, ultimate, suchness, and real.
That is indisputable fact. [Through] understanding that one is called “buddha.”
Chapter III: The four hymns

buddhānāṃ sattvadhātos ca tenābhinnatvam arthataḥ/
ätmanās ca paresām ca samatā tena te matā//42

Really, [the fundament] of buddhas and the fundament of living beings are identical. Hence, you maintain the sameness between yourself and others.

bhāvebhyaḥ śūnyatā nānyā na ca bhāvo 'sti tāṃ vinā/
tasmāt pratītyajā bhāvās tvayā śūnyāḥ prakāśitāḥ//43

Emptiness is no different from things, nor there is a thing without it. Therefore, dependently born things were declared by you to be empty.

hetupratyayasaṁbhūtā paratantrā ca saṁvyātih/
paratantra iti proktaḥ paramārthas tv akṛtrimaḥ//44

Convention arises from causes and conditions and is dependent (on another). Thus, the dependent on another has been spoken by you. The ultimate, however, is not artificial (akṛtrimaḥ).

svabhāvaḥ prakṛtis tattvaṁ dravyaṁ vastu sad ity api/
nāsti vai kalpito bhāvo paratantras tu vidyate//45
[The ultimate is] also [named]: “own-existence,” “nature (prakrti),” “truth,” “real,” “actual existent,” “true.” Imagined existent does not exist but the relative is found.

astiti kalpita bhāve samāropas tvayoditah/
nāstīti kṛtakocchedād ucchedaś ca prakāśitah//46

[To say:] “it exists” [about the] imagined existent thing is called by you superimposition. [To say:] “It does not exist” because of the annihilation of what is created is explained as annihilation.

tattvajñānena nocchedo na ca śāsvatāt maṭā/
vastuśūnyaṁ jagat sarvaṁ mariciprītimaṁ matam//47

Through the knowledge of truth you maintain that there is no annihilation and no permanence. The whole world is empty of actual existence, like a mirage, you maintain.

mṛgatṛṣṇājalanṛ yadvan nocchedi na ca śāsvatam/
tadvat sarvaṁ jagat praktaṁ nocchedi na ca śāsvatam//48

As the water of a mirage is not annihilated nor permanent,
So is the whole world not annihilated nor permanent, you declared.
dravyam utpadyate yasya tasyocchedadikam bhavet/
antavan nantaivas ca pi lokas tasya prasajyate//49

For him for whom the “real substance” is born, for him there is annihilation etc.;
For him it follows that the world has ending as well as that it has no ending.

jane sati yathajneyam jneye jnanam tathachati/
yatrobhayam anutpannam iti buddham taddati kim//50

Just as there is the knowable when there is knowledge, so there is knowledge when there is the knowable. When it is understood that both are unborn [i.e. without independent existence], then what does [independently] exist?

iti mayaidristantaih sputam uktvabhisagvarah/
desayam asa saddharam sarvadristicikitsakam //51

Thus, having spoken clearly, through analogies of the magical illusion and so on, the best of physicians has shown the true doctrine that heals of all dogmatic views.

etat tat parama tatvarvishvaharthadevana/
bhavagrahaghitanam cikitseyam anuttara//52
This is the supreme truth, the teaching for the sake of instructing the absence of inherent existence. For those obsessed by the obsession of being (i.e. view of positivism), this is unsurpassed medicine.

dharmayājñika tenaiva dharmayajño niruttaraha/
abhikṣṇam iṣṭas trailokyenaṁṣkapāto nirargalah//53

For this reason, o sacrificial priest of the doctrine, the supreme sacrifice of the doctrine, has been constantly offered by you in all three worlds, without obstacles, without impediments.

vastugrahahayocchedi kufīrthamṛgabhikaraha/
niratmyasimhanāda ‘yam adbhuto naditas tvayā//54

You have roared the marvellous lion’s roar of non-self which annihilates the fear [arisen from] grasping existent things and frightens the deer, the heretical teachers.

śūnyatādharmagambhirā dharmabherī parāhatā/
naiḥsvābhāvyamahānādo dharmasāṅkhaḥ prapūritaḥ//55

With the deep law of emptiness, you have beaten the dharma-drum;
With the loud sound of non-inherent existence you have blown the dharma-conch.
The gift of dharma, the nectar of the teaching of Buddhas, has been declared.
The emptiness of dharmas has been indicated as the definite meaning.

But, the teaching about birth, cessation, etc., beings, living things, etc., has been declared as of provisional meaning (neyārtha), o Lord, and as conventional.

He who has gone finally to the other shore of the ocean of the perfection of wisdom
He, endowed with jewels of merit and good qualities, has crossed [into] the ocean of your qualities.

By the merit which I have obtained having praised you, the protector of the world,
The unthinkable, the indescribable, may the world become the same as you.
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Comments

Together with the Lokātātastava, the Acintyastava is the most frequently quoted of Nāgārjuna’s hymns among Western scholars. It is perhaps the best studied, since it contains doctrinal features that cast suspicion on its authenticity. It has been edited by Lindtner (1982) and Tola and Dragonetti (1985), who also translated it into English. It has been translated into Italian by Gnoli (1961), into Spanish by Tola and Dragonetti (1989) and into Russian by Androsov (2000). Once again, Lindtner’s (1982:124-126) notes on the existing manuscripts and the works by traditional commentators quoting verses from the hymn are exceptionally valuable.

As with the previous hymns, we shall examine its style, structure, doctrinal and religious content and its authenticity.

Style

Regarding vipulā: 3 out of 118 (1 na-vipulā: 9c; 1 ma-vipulā: 1a; and 1 ca-vipulā: 41c) which is less than 3%.

Regarding particles: out of 118 lines: ca is present in 38, which is 32.3%, eva in 7, which is 6%, api in 12, which is 10.2%, iti in 17, which is 14.5%, hi in 3, which is 2.5%, vā in 1, which is almost 1%, punar is absent, and tu in 2, which is 1.7%. All together, particles are present in 67% of the lines.

Regarding compounds: 52 lines out of 118 do not contain particles, which is 44%. Furthermore, on three occasions (5 a-b, 18 c-d, 57 a-b) caesura is formed by a juncture between two stems of a compound.

The percentage of particles and compounds in the Acintyastava is not too dissimilar from those in the other works examined, but regarding vipulā the
differences are great. Not only there are fewer than 3% of verses containing some vipulā (compared with 14-18% in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, the Ratnāvalī, the Niraupamyastava and the Lokāntastava104) but we find the presence of the odd ca-vipulā, undetected in any other work examined.

Basic structure of the hymn:

The Acintyastava is a complete work, starting with the salutation (verses 1-2) and ending with transference of merit (verse 59), containing in between several sections in a well defined structure. The first major section, verses 3 to 18, provides a detailed explanation of why dependently originated things are empty.105 The second major section, verses 19 to 36, provides details about the liberating knowledge (jñāna) of the truth.106 The third section, verses 37 to 50, deals with the characteristics of the true

104 The Paramārthastava contains no vipulā but it is not taken into comparison due to its breavity.
105

3. dependently arisen things are empty, from the ultimate point of view — non-arisen.
4. dependently arisen things are as echoes, as illusion, as mirages
5. from the ultimate point of view, since they are unborn, there can be no vision etc. of them
6. all conditioned things are conventionally existent
7. to say otherwise is a foolish talk
8. from the ultimate point of view, created things have no past, present or future.
9. from the ultimate point of view, created thing is not born from itself, other, both, from existent, non-existent or both.
10. from the ultimate point of view, a thing without inherent existence cannot arise from itself nor not from itself.
11. A and ~ A are only established as correlatives, that is, from the ultimate point of view, where there are no dualities, such distinction could not be maintained.
12. same as above
13. same as above
14. no dharma can be found to exist by itself
15. by the same logic, since a thing cannot exist by itself, “other” cannot be found.
16. since there is no svabhāva (inherent existence), there is no parabhāva (existence dependent on another)
17. conclusion: phenomena are non-arisen
18. conclusion: phenomena are as foam, bubbles, illusions...

106 This section has two parts. First part, 19-30:

19. Senses/faculties (mind included) are always deceiving. If they could grasp the truth, fools would have been born with the knowledge of truth.
20. same: senses are deceiving
21. the world is obstructed by ignorance
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dharma (saddharma). Finally, the fourth major section, verses 51 to 58, offers extravagant praise to the Buddha, the greatest of teachers. These eight verses are

22. the liberating doctrine is away from the two extremes of eternalism and annihilation
23. Liberation comes through non-attachment to any of the four alternatives (catuṣkoṭi), and that is the knowledge beyond consciousness, beyond the sphere of words.
24. the Buddha, perfect in his knowledge, sees the world as both existing and non-existing. That is, he sees simultaneously conventional and ultimate truth
25. the Buddha sees the world as a dream, that is the way of seeing from the point of view of true knowledge
26. arising of all beings is like in a dream
27. suffering, affliction, transmigration, liberation - are all like a dream
28. cognizing dualities is not a knowledge of the truth
29. reality appears like illusion, originally is calm (nondual)
30. conclusion: all things appear as born but in reality they are unborn.
The true knowledge is beyond words, beyond consciousness, the one that sees non-duality. From that point of view, all things appear only conventionally true, as mirages, as illusions.

Second part, verses 31 to 36, further explanation of the true knowledge:
31. the immeasurable Buddhas have liberated immeasurable beings one by one but in reality no one has been liberated
32. no one is set free by anyone
33. the whole world is empty, the Buddha as well
34. the Buddha is also un-born
35. the whole world is empty, separation is only done conventionally
36. even the emptiness itself is empty

Here we see the key Mahāyāna tenet: in reality, all designations are only conventionally declared, in reality all is empty, even the Buddha, even emptiness itself.

Like the previous one, this section has two subsections. First section - verses 37 to 45:
37. the true dharma is beyond duality, beyond knowledge, beyond existence and non-existence,
38. without foundation, un-manifest, unthinkable, incomparable,
39. does not arise, does not disappear, cannot be annihilated, not permanent, beyond measure, beyond words and knowledge.
40. What is dependent origination that is emptiness, such is the true doctrine, it is equal to Tathāgata,
41. That is real, ultimate, suchness, truth. Understanding it, one becomes a Buddha
42. The reality of the Buddha is the same as the reality of all living beings
43. Emptiness is not different from things, all dependently born things are empty
44. Conventionally, however, things are arisen. The ultimate is non-artificial.
45. The ultimate is also named: own existence, nature, truth, real, essence, true.

Here we see several key equations: dependent origination is equal to emptiness, the Buddha, truth, ultimate meaning, suchness, reality. The ultimate is non-artificial. The reality of the Buddha is the same as the reality of all living beings.

Second section - verses 46 to 50 - the truth is away from extremes:
46. to say "exist" is to fall in the extreme of permanence, to say "does not exist" is to fall in the extreme of annihilation
47. however, from the point of view of knowledge of truth, the whole world is empty
48. the whole world is neither subject to annihilation nor to permanence
49. those who see real substances (svabhāva), ascribe to extreme views
50. understanding that dualities are only relative (within the sphere of dependent origination), one understands that ultimately all is unborn.

107 Through analogies of the magical illusion and so on, the best of teachers showed the true doctrine
52. that is the supreme truth, the unsurpassable medicine

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expressions of worship but are also structured as the summary of the presentation of the whole teaching of Mahāyāna.

**Doctrinal content**

a. General observations

Many verses of the *Acintyastava* have close logical parallels with the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and the *Ratnāvalī*. In many ways the hymn is also similar to the *Lokāyaśtava*.

The opening verse establishes the key doctrinal tenet: all dependent things are without inherent existence (*niḥsvabhāva*). As early as the second verse, the hymn mentions Mahāyāna and establishes that the message was taught to the bodhisattvas out of compassion. Hence, the first two verses establish the key themes: wisdom, consisting of realisation that all dependently originated things are empty, and compassion taught by the Buddha to bodhisattvas, the real heirs of the teaching. The pair, wisdom and compassion, is the central theme of the *Ratnāvali*. From then on, the hymn uses the same logic as applied in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* regarding establishing wisdom: Verse 8 refutes inherent existence through the impossibility of such existence in any of the three times, verse 9 refutes it through a refutation of *catuskoti*, verses 10 and 11 uses the logic of neither *a* nor *¬a*, verses 14-16 explain that, since a thing cannot exist by itself, the “other” cannot be found (since there is no

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53. the Buddha is the sacrificial priest who continuously sacrifices the true doctrine in all three worlds
54. The annihilation of the grasping of “real substance” is the marvelous lion’s roar
55. Buddha’s deep voice is like dharma-drum, his high voice is like dharma-conch
56. the gift of dharma has been given in its final meaning – all phenomena are empty
57. but the teaching has been given through conventional means
58. whoever understands the meaning, generates perfect wisdom and merit.
svabhāva, there cannot be parabhāva). Verse 22 argues that the liberating doctrine is away from the two extremes of eternalism and annihilation and verse 23 that liberation comes through non-attachment to any of the four alternatives and that the liberating knowledge is beyond consciousness, beyond the sphere of words. All these features are typical for the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā.

b. Doctrinal specifics

In the same way as the Lokātātastava, many verses are direct addresses to the Buddha, as if commemorating his word or as if speaking directly in his presence.\(^\text{109}\)

\(^{109}\) Thirty one out of fifty nine verses (more than 50%) contain direct references to the Buddha:

1. salutation
2. you taught
3. said by you, proclaimed by you
4. continues
5. continues
6. you said
7. declared
8. continues in a form of a question
9. same
10. same
11. is said
12. continues with a question
13. same
14. same
15. same
16. same
17. you said
18. it was shown by you
19. continues with a question
20. you said
21. taught by you
22. shown by you
23. said by you
24. seen by you
25. your utterance
26. your thought
27. your saying
28. continues
29. continues with a question
30. same
31. same
32. you announced
33. continues
34. same
35. your loud declaration
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evidence begs the question about the reason for such a form. The simplest way of answering would be that the author lived in a non-Mahāyāna monastery and had to prove to the host audience that his Mahāyāna themes are fully in accord with the buddhavaccana. However, Nagarjuna did not feel compelled to do so to this extent in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā or in the Ratnāvalī. In those works he offered his own reasoning and only in few places referred to buddhavaccana. Here more than 50% of the verses refer to the Buddha directly. In addition, verse 51 suggests that every preceding statement is the word of the Buddha. The reason must be connected to the genre but also, very likely, to the purpose of generating merit through commemoration of the word of the best of teachers and rejoicing in the profundity of the message. ¹¹⁰

36. illuminated by you, declared
37. continues
38. same
39. same.
40. you maintain
41. continues
42. you maintain
43. declared by you
44. spoken by you
45. continues
46. your statement, you illuminated
47. you maintain
48. you spoke
49. continues
50. same
51. thus having spoken – the words suggest that all preceding verses were only words spoken by the Buddha
52.
53. offered by you
54. lion’s roar is your utterance
55. you have beaten the dharma drum, you have blown the dharma conch
56. proclaimed
57. your word
58.
59. transference of merit

¹¹⁰ Lindner (1982:123), suggests that we not attach too much importance to the motive of obtaining merit but he would have to explain the high percentage of direct addresses to the Buddha in the hymn, as well as the structure of the hymn, particularly the last section which is purely devotional.
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Relationship between the *Acintyastava* and *Vijñānavāda*

One of the reasons the *Acintyastava* has received considerable attention from scholars is the doctrinal statement present in verses 44 to 46:

> Convention arises from causes and conditions and is dependent (on another).
> Thus, the dependent on another has been spoken by you. The ultimate, however, is not artificial (*akṛtrimalḥ*). (44)

> [The ultimate is] also [named]: "own-existence," "nature (*prakṛti*)," "truth," "real," "actual existent," "true." Imagined existent does not exist but the relative is found. (45)

> [To say:] "it exists" [about the] imagined existent thing is called by you superimposition. [To say:] "It does not exist" because of the annihilation of what is created is explained as annihilation. (46)

A significant number of scholars questioned or denied the authenticity of the hymn because they found *Vijñānavāda* elements in these verses, pointing at resemblances with the *Lankaśatāra Sūtra*, which contains doctrines such as the three *svabhāvas*, *tathāgatagarbha*, *ālayavijñāna*, *vijñaptimātra*, and, in the form in which we possess it, postdates Nāgārjuna by roughly a century.

The starting point of a long controversy is the last *pāda* of verse 45, *paratantras tu vidyate* (the relative, however, is found). Mādhyamikas held that *paratanirasvabhāva* only exists *saṃvyṛtītaḥ*, not *paramārthaḥ*, but Yogācārins, as *Lankaśatāra* itself states, held that *paratantra* exists. Before we go any further in the discussion, it should be stated that at least one manuscript offers a different reading of the controversial statement. Lindtner informs us that alternative reading – *paratantras*
na vidyate – can be adopted based on “a varia lectio in the Sanskrit Ms(s) now presumably lost, but inferable from a recension of the Tibetan trans” (Lindtner, 1982:154, note on 45b, and p. 124). This reading, changing tu vidyate (affirmative) into na vidyate (negative), would harmonize the pāda with the core idea of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā and would avoid the whole controversy. Tola and Dragonetti opt for this reading and translate the line: “An imagined thing does not exist, a dependent (thing) does not exist” (1985:33). However, Tokyo’s and Gokhale’s manuscripts, which Lindtner uses, read tu vidyate. Hence, we have to explain the striking resemblance between the pāda with the Laṅkāvatārā Sūtra.

Lindtner makes a good case in arguing that Nāgārjuna must have known an early (oral or written) version, since he quotes verses from the Laṅkāvatārā Sūtra on several occasions through his works.111 He explains that some of the obscure verses of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā – those that appear to be without direct connection with the preceding arguments but, nonetheless, contain a clear allusion or reference to some authority, i.e. to some sūtra – could be understood properly by looking at the Laṅkāvatārā Sūtra for help and context. He gives as an example verse XVIII.12, which he thinks was misunderstood by all commentators, ancient as well as modern, because they were searching for a context in the early āgamas, instead of in the Laṅkāvatārā Sūtra (Lindtner, 1992:246-7). In the same passage he suggests that the case would be similar with several other verses.

Lindtner’s evidence is quite convincing. Yet, in Nancy McCagney’s view, the direction of influence from the Laṅkāvatārā Sūtra to Nāgārjuna is not firmly

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111 Lindtner dedicated one paper specifically to comparing the Laṅkāvatārāsūtra and the Early Madhyamaka doctrines (Lindtner, 1992).
established because of the possibility that both could be referring to an earlier common source. Also, it cannot be ruled out that both works were written at about the same time and exerted mutual influence (McCagney, 1997:44). In any case it is clear even for McCagney that Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools have much more in common than previously thought and she agrees with Lindtner that in the early period Yogācāra was not a school and the trikāya doctrine associated with it was part of a common Mahāyāna heritage (McCagney, 1997:44).

The issue has received considerable attention from Paul Williams. In his “Review Article” (1984) he first offers general remarks on the relationship between Nāgārjuna and the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra and then specifically discusses the famous verses of the Acintyastava. First of all, Williams reminds us that, even if we maintain that Nāgārjuna knew a Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra it does not follow that he knew the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra version that we know today. We must not forget that the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra is a large text, perhaps a family of texts, not necessarily mutually consistent, probably compiled over a long period. Hence, establishing that Nāgārjuna knew the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra does not necessarily shows that he knew all of it, particularly not that he knew of the cittamātra doctrines.112 To argue for a relationship between the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra and Nāgārjuna’s works is not the same as establishing that Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra as we know it at present was extant at his time and known by him (Williams, 1984:90). Furthermore, even if we accept that Nāgārjuna’s verses pointed out by Lindtner are direct references to the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra and not a result of a common heritage, nevertheless none of these verses refers to the Vijñānavāda

112 For more detailed discussion, Williams (1984:90).
doctrines. As Williams puts it, “Even if Nāgārjuna did know of a LS no reason has been supplied for thinking that Nāgārjuna was familiar with the Vijñānavāda teachings of cittamātratā’ (1984:93).

But, apart from the above general observations regarding the relationship between Nāgārjuna and the Lankāvatāra Sūtra, Williams examines the relationship with the Acintyastava specifically. On Lindtner’s suggestion of the presence of citamātra doctrines, he comments:

The Acintyastava doesn’t in fact refer to the cittamātra teachings as such, but it does state that samvṛti is paratantra, and that a kalpitabhāva doesn’t exist.

Verse 45bc is almost identical to LS 2:189:

AS 45bd – nāsti vai kalpito bhāvo paratantras tu vidyate/

LS 2:189ab – nāsti vai kalpito bhāvah paratantraś ca vidyate/

It seems that there is a case here for suggesting that the discussion in LS and that in the Acintyastava are connected, and the praising in the stava of the Buddha for giving these teachings indicates that chronological priority should be given to LS. However, supposing that the Acintyastava has been authentically attributed to Nāgārjuna, for which there remains doubts, nevertheless all one can conclude from the ‘trisvabhāva’ section in the Acintyastava is that Nāgārjuna made a distinction between the conventional world of dependent origination and flux, and the entities which were erroneously superimposed through construction upon it, and that he called the former ‘paratantra’. The words ‘parikalpita’ and ‘parinispatta’ aren’t used even though in the latter case Nāgārjuna gives a series of synonyms for
paramārtha in verse 45. The distinction which the Acintyastava seeks to make between the conventional flux and erroneous construction was essential to Nāgārjuna's teachings, albeit perhaps implicitly, in all the works which can reasonably be described as authentic... Without this distinction either the conventional world would have to be completely false, even as seen by Buddhas, or completely true. So the only new fact derived from the discussion in the Acintyastava is that Nāgārjuna used the word 'paratantra' in connection with samvṛti. It doesn't follow, therefore, that these verses entail a reference to Vijñānavāda, or that Nāgārjuna knew of the Vijñānavāda. What they may indicate is that the ur-text of LS, which Nāgārjuna was presumably familiar with, did speak of paratantra and contrast it with the false construction habitually indulged in by the pṛthagjana, and this may therefore be Nāgārjuna's source for the term and its use (Williams, 1984:93-94).

Williams makes several important points in the above passage. First, even though the word paratantra is used, a suggestion that Nāgārjuna knew trisvabhāva theory, the other two svabhāvas (parikalpita and parinispanna) are not mentioned. Second, the only new doctrinal element is the use of paratantra in connection to samvṛti. That does not entail reference to Vijñānavāda. In fact, apart from the use of the word paratantra, Nāgārjuna does not employ any other technical term specific to the Vijñānavāda. It remains interesting that the word paratantra is used in relation to samvṛti. That was never the case in any of the previously examined works. It is possible that the case here is similar to the employment of avipranaśa concept in
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Mūlāmadhyamakakārikā and with the description of dharmadhātu in Tathāgatagarbha terms in the Niraupamyastava, which would suggest the employment of a specific rhetorical strategy in order to align Madhyamaka with the doctrines of the host monastery. Unfortunately, given the content of the hymn, we cannot say anything more specific about the audience or place of composition.

To summarise the whole discussion: it is quite likely that Nāgārjuna knew some form of the Lāṅkāvatāra Sūtra and also possible that he used a sūtra that was a common source of references for some of his verses as well as for the Lāṅkāvatāra. But, that does not prove the presence of cittamātra doctrines in Nāgārjuna’s writings. Of course, it cannot be excluded that he knew of such a doctrine (just as it cannot be excluded that he knew the Tathāgatagarbha doctrine, even though he never mentioned the word, as discussed above) but such knowledge cannot be inferred from the analysis of the verses. Hence, Williams’ argument stays.

Authenticity

The authenticity of Acintyastava has been contested mostly because of the content of verses 44 to 46. As we saw through the translation provided by Tola and Dragonetti, the problematic pāda 45d may be harmonized with Mādhyamaka in a quite simple fashion and at least one manuscript did so. But, the presence of the word paratantra is still a concern. If we accept Williams’ arguments this is not a big problem. Still, we have to acknowledge that the word is there and it was not used in any of the previously examined works. Now, even if the presence of the word paratantra

113 In two subsequent occasions to Williams’ “Review Article,” Lindtner advanced further his arguments in support of the thesis that Nāgārjuna was familiar with some version of Lāṅkāvatāra Sūtra (1992 and 1999).
suggests doctrinal inconsistency, that is not so strange for Nāgārjuna, at least no more strange than the employment of the concept of avipranaśa in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā or cataphatic description of dharmadhātu in Tathāgatagarbha terms in the Niraupamyastava. Furthermore, it is likely that Nāgārjuna knew some version of the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra and that this sūtra was known and highly regarded in the area of composition of the hymn and among the intended audience. If that is so, it is also possible that in the references to paratantra we are observing the distinct signature of Nāgārjuna – his rhetorical strategy of aligning with the doctrines of the host audience. As Williams observed, Acintyastava uses the word paratantra in connection with saṃvṛti. It is possible that in that subtle shift of vocabulary he shows compatibility of his Mādhyamaka doctrine with that of the host school. Be that as it may, if Acintyastava is a genuine work by Nāgārjuna, it is most likely that he used references to paratantra for rhetorical purposes, since he never used the word in any previously examined work and he was not shy of incorporating doctrines by the host school to forge alliances. In short, the hymn should not be dismissed because of the content of verses 44 to 46. But, there is another piece of evidence that raises suspicion. The low percentage of vipulā is very different from that in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, the Ratnāvalī, the Niraupamyastava and the Lokāśūnastava. In summary, doubts remain about the authenticity of this hymn but at this point it is accepted as probable.
Conclusion

After the examination it becomes even more obvious that the four hymns composing the collection called the “Catuhstava” are not an organic unit and that they have great doctrinal and stylistic differences between them. Doctrinally, the Niraupamyastava shows obvious similarities with the Pūrvaśaila themes, while it shows no presence of any Pudgalavāda themes. In that respect, the hymn is very similar to the Ratnāvalī but not to the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā. The Lokātātastava, however, is doctrinally very similar to the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā and it is possible that verses 8-9 take into consideration the Pudgalavāda doctrinal position. Different as they are, these two are most similar in style with the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā and the Ratnāvalī. Coincidentaly, the two are quoted by the earliest of the “trustworthy witnesses” proposed by Lindtner. Despite the differences, the examination concluded that there is no sufficient reason to deny authenticity to any of the four.

Having accepted all four as authentic (even though not parts of one organic unit), we can summarise their main similarities. All four are complete works, starting with salutation, ending with transference of merit and having a well defined structure in between. All four are clearly affiliated with Mahāyāna, two of them referring to the vehicle explicitly (Lokātātastava 27 and Acintyastava 2), while the other two show unmistakable references to the practice of the bodhisattva. Despite that, the general attitude towards śrāvakayāna is not antagonistic in any of the hymns. At least in one of them, the Niraupamyastava, we see clear evidence of an attempt to harmonize
Mahāyāna with the teaching of the śrāvaka school, in this case the Pūrvaśaila. There is evidence in all four of the practice of the commemoration of the Buddha, either of his word or his incomparable physical or mental qualities. Affiliation with Pudgalavāda themes was not detected in any of the four hymns. Closely related and clearly evident in all four is the practice of merit accumulation. Each of the hymns ends with the verse of transference of the merit for the welfare of all sentient beings, accumulated by worshiping the Buddha. Two of the hymns, the Niraupamyastava and the Paramārthastava, explicitly mention the practice of devotion. The practices of commemoration, enumeration, worship and merit accumulation are typically related to a ritual setting, which suggests that the hymns have been part of the liturgy. These features will be further discussed in the concluding chapter and for now it must suffice to offer a brief summary of the scope of Nāgārjuna’s works.

After examining the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, the Ratnāvalī and the four hymns, we are in a position to discuss the range of doctrines, rhetorical strategies and religious practices present in these texts.

Regarding doctrines: obviously, all Nāgārjuna’s works are clearly Madhyamaka, advocating the emptiness of all dharmas, the non-existence of svabhāva and the unity of emptiness and dependent origination. Regarding the types of logical analyses, the usual logical patterns established in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā are evident: the impossibility of inherent existence of an entity in any of the three times, impossibility of any of the four positions, and so on. But, apart from these basic features, common to all Madhyamaka works, there are a few notable specifics. Evident in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā is the incorporation of the concept of
avipraṇaśa and some other Pudgalavāda doctrinal tenets into Madhyamaka. In fact, an attempt to harmonize the Pudgalavāda and Madhyamaka tenets on conventional level is evident. The same procedure is repeated in the Ratnāvali but with the concept of momentariness, associated with several schools including the Pūrvaśaila. In the Niraupamyastava reality is treated in the cataphatic manner. The description given for the dharmadhātu is very close to that of the tathāgatagarbha doctrine. In Paramārthastava the meditative technique of commemorating the Buddha through worship is used in the context of discussing emptiness, arguably as a means of realizing the ultimate truth. In the Acintyastava the peculiar technical term paratantra is used in relation to sanvyāti. Altogether, the range of doctrines incorporated in Madhyamaka is much greater than previously considered by Western scholars.

The same examples used to illustrate doctrinal scope can be used for an examination of the rhetorical strategies. Obviously, Nāgārjuna is eager to show his audience (whether Pudgalavādins, Prajñāptivādins, Pūrvaśailas or other) that their doctrines harmonize very well with the Madhyamaka. This is not a simple and enthusiastic demonstration of the superiority of Madhyamaka teaching of emptiness, but a careful strategy of forging alliances with the host audience. This rhetorical strategy of forging alliances through harmonising his doctrines with those of the host school is one very specific feature for Nāgārjuna, well worth keeping in mind in the analysis of the authenticity of any other work.

114 It should not be missed that in Ratnāvali and Niraupamyastava, composed in a Pūrvaśaila environment, Nāgārjuna is careful enough not to endorse Pudgalavāda themes, even though he did exactly that in Mūlamadhyamakakārikā.
Regarding religious practices: *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* is devoid of any references to worship of the Buddha or treatment of his physical body as perfect. Also, it does not show great concern for merit accumulation through bodhisattva deeds but concentrates on logical analysis. In the *Ratnāvali* and in the hymns we see a lot more emphasis on merit accumulation. In the hymns, in the *Paramārthastava* in particular, the emphasis is heavily on devotional practice (*bhakti*). The *Ratnāvali* prescribes the sevenfold practice of the bodhisattva but that is not repeated in any of the hymns. It seems as if the sevenfold practice is prescribed as a ritual to be performed several times a day, separate from engagement in perfecting the ten bodhisattva grounds and separate from the merit accumulated through the composition of works. Despite the wide range of practices, Nāgarjuna does not give much notice to *samathā* (calming) meditation. He does speak of *bhāvanā* (cultivation) but the content is to be understood through the practices mentioned above. We find no evidence that *bhāvanā* necessarily includes *samathā*.

Despite the great range of included doctrines and practices, it is obvious that he is not a "radical innovator," as sometimes described by contemporary scholars. He is very much concerned with orthodoxy, making extensive efforts to show that his doctrines are in line with *buddhavacana*.

Often he has been described as reformer of the Abhidharma. Yet, all we can conclude is that he is very careful not to openly criticize the school whose members most likely are his hosts at the time of composition – in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* he never openly criticizes the Pudgalavāda but, on the contrary, makes an effort to align with their doctrines, while in the *Ratnāvali* and the *Niraupamyastasva* that place
is taken by the Pūrvaśailas. Of course, he reinterprets the position of the host school through his Mādhyamaka lens but is always very careful not to disagree with the orthodoxy.
Chapter IV

Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

Introduction

Apart from the four hymns examined in the previous section, the following five are very likely to have been authored by Nāgārjuna: Dharmadhatustava, Cittavajrastava, Sutyaśītastava, Aṣṭamahāsthānacaityaśotra and Dvādaśakāraṇayastotra.

Until recently, the Dharmadhatustava has received very little scholarly attention, despite the fact that it was attributed to Nāgārjuna by Bhāvaviveka, one of the earliest commentators, and has been considered by many Tibetans as the master’s final philosophical position. Doctrinally, this is a fascinating work since it argues for the existence of the potential for enlightenment in every individual, bringing to light the āśūnya aspects of the doctrine of emptiness. In this it appears very similar to the doctrine of tathāgatagarbha even though it never mentions the word. For many scholars such a doctrinal twist has been considered incompatible with Nāgārjuna. But, as will be argued, doctrinally this hymn does not go any further than the undeniably authentic Niraupamyastava (verses 21 – 23). As will be further argued in the concluding chapter, this hymn is most likely the doctrinal background after which the Niraupamyastava could confidently deliver the peculiar verses.
The *Cittavajrastava* has been edited and translated on more than one occasion by Western scholars since it was considered by some as part of the *Catuhštava*. Unfortunately, the doctrinal content has not been studied in detail. As our examination will show, the hymn contains doctrinal features closely resembling the *Dharmadhātuastava*. Some of its verses are so hermetic that they are practically impenetrable without prior knowledge of the doctrines expounded by the latter. This study will claim that both texts are obviously authored by the same person, the short and obviously not independent *Cittavajrastava* most likely being an appendix to the *Dharmadhātuastava*.

The *Stutyañitastava* is a hymn with a rather strange destiny in Western scholarly circles. Despite close similarities with the *Lokāñitastava* and the *Acintyastava*, it has received very little attention and has been so marginalised that has never been translated nor commented upon.

The *Aṣṭamaḥasthānacaityastotra* and *Dvādaśakaraṇayastotra* present another interesting story. For centuries, up to the present day, both have been used in the daily liturgy by many Tibetans, yet they have received very little scholarly attention. This study will hopefully bring to the surface some specifics of their religious content that may explain the reasons for their great popularity in the tradition.

The hymns will be approached in the same way as the previous four. The Tibetan texts will first be edited and translated and then commented on with attention to their structure, content, doctrinal specifics and authenticity.
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

*Dharmadātustotra*

*Chos kyi dbyins su bstod pa*\(^\text{115}\)

**Hymn in Praise of the Dharmadhātu**

'Ijam dpal gzhon nur gyur pa la phyag 'tshal lo

I pay homage to the youthful Mañjuśrī

Verse 1:

gang zhig kun tu ma shes na'

srid pa gsum du rnam 'khor ba

sems can kun la nges gnas pa'i

chos kyi dbyings la phyag 'tshal lo

I pay homage to the dharmadhātu

which is definitely located in all sentient beings

transmigrating in all three worlds

while being completely unknown.

Verse 2:

gang zhig 'khor ba'i rgyur gyur pa

de nyid sbyang ba byas pa las

\(^{115}\) bsTan-'gjur (Narthang), 2010, folio 70a – 74b.
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

dag pa de nyid mya ngan 'das
chos kyi sku yang de nyid do

That which itself is the cause of *samsāra*
when cleansed through purification
that itself is *nirvāṇa*
and the same is also *dharmadhātu*

Verse 3:

ji ltar 'o ma dang 'dres pas
mar gyi snying po mi snang ba
de bzhin nyon mong dang 'dres pas
chos kyi dbyings kyang mi mthong ngo

Just as the essence of butter
is not evident because it is mixed with milk,
just so, the *dharmadhātu* is not seen
because it is mixed with afflictions (*kleśa*).

Verse 4:

ji ltar 'o ma rnams sbyangs pas
mar gyi snying po dri med 'gyur
de bzhin nyon mong nams sbyangs pas
chos dbyings shin tu dri med 'gyur
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nagarjuna

Just as the essence of butter becomes immaculate because of purification of milk, so dharmadhātu becomes completely immaculate because of the purification of afflictions.

Verse 5:
ji ltar mar me bum nang gnas
cung zhig snang bar mi 'gyur ba
de bzhin nyon mongs bum nang gnas
chos kyi dbyings kyang mi mthong ngo

Just as a lamp inside a pot will not be evident, just so, standing in the pot of afflictions dharmadhātu is also not seen.

Verse 6:
phyogs ni gang dang gang dag nas
bum pa bu ga gtod gyur pa
de dang de yi phyogs nyid nas
'od kyi rang bzhin 'byung bar 'gyur

From whatever direction
the pot has a hole,
only from that direction
the nature of light arises.

(70b)\(^{116}\)  Verse 7:
gang tshe ting zin rdo rje yis
bum pa de ni bcag gyur pa
de tshe de ni nam mkha’ yi
mthar thug bar du snang bar byed

When the pot is broken
by the diamond (vajra) meditation (samādhi)
then it [the light] shines
as far as the sky.

Verse 8:
chos kyi dbyings ni skye ma yin
nam yang 'gag par 'gyur ba med
dus rnams kun tu nyon mongs med
thog ma bar mtha’ dri ma bral

Dharmadhātu never arises,
it never ceases;

\(^{116}\) The page number in the Tibetan Canon.
at all times without afflictions (*kleśa*),

[it is] immaculate at the beginning, middle and end.

Verse 9:

\[\text{ji ltar rin chen vaiḍūrya} \]
\[\text{dus rnams kun tu 'od gsal yang} \]
\[\text{rdo yi nang na gnas gyur na} \]
\[\text{de yi 'od ni gsal ma yin} \]

Just as the light of a cat’s eye gem
although radiant at all times,
does not shine
when it is located in a rock;

Verse 10:

\[\text{de bzhin nyon mongs kyis bsgribs pa'i} \]
\[\text{chos dbyings shin tu dri med pa'ang} \]
\[\text{'khor bar 'od ni gsal ma yin} \]
\[\text{mya ngan 'das na 'od gsal 'gyur} \]

So *dharmadhātu*, although it is completely stainless,

[when] covered by afflictions (*kleśa*) in *samsāra*
its light does not shine

[but] in *nirvāṇa* its light shines.
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nagarjuna

Verse 11:
khams yod na ni las byas pas
sa le sbram dag mthong bar 'gyur
khams med par ni las byas na 'ang
nyon mongs 'ba' zhig skyed par zad

If an element [of gold] exists, through being worked,
pure gold will be seen.
even if it is worked, in the absence of element
only affliction arises.

Verse 12:
ji ltar shun pas g.yogs gyur pas
so ba 'bras bu mi 'dod ltar
de bzhin nyon mongs kyis g.yogs pas
de ni sangs rgyas zhes mi brtag

Just as barley, because is covered with husk
is not accepted as fruit,
just so, that [dharmadhātu] because it is covered by afflictions
is not thought of as “Buddha.”
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

Verse 13:

ji ltar sbun pa las grol na
'bras nyid snang bar 'gyur ba ltar
de bzhin nyon mongs las grol na
chos kyi sku nyid rab tu gsal

Just as when freed from the husk
the fruit itself appears,
just so, when released from afflictions
the dharmakāya is completely apparent.

Verse 14:

chu shing snying po med do zhes
'jig rten na ni dper byed kyang
de yi 'bras bu snying po nyid
mngar po za bar byed pa ltar

Worldly beings use this example:
“the banana tree has no essence.”
But, its fruit has essence:
It is like a sweet to eat.

Verse 15:

snying po med pa'i 'khor ba las
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

If beings become free from the trap of affliction arisen from *samsāra* which has no essence,

the result of that has an essence –

it becomes the nectar of immortality of embodied beings [*nirvāṇa*].

Verse 16:

Likewise, from all seeds a fruit arises similar to its cause.

Which wise person is able to establish that fruit exists when [its] seed is absent?

Verse 17:
sangs rgyas go 'phang 'thob par 'gyur

That very element which is as seed
is accepted as the basis of all dharmas (Buddha Qualities).
Gradually, through being purified,
the state of Buddhahood is obtained.

Verse 18:
dri med nyid ma zla ba yang
sprin dang du ba khug rna dang
sgra gcan gdong dang rdul la sogs
sgrib pa lnga yis bsgrigs par 'gyur

Although the sun and the moon are immaculate,
by five hindrances [they can] become obstructed:
Cloud, smoke, fog,
eclipse, dust and so on.

(71a) Verse 19:
de bzhin 'od gsal ba yi sems
'dod dang gnod sems le lo dang
rgod pa dang ni the tshom ste

117 Verses 18 to 23 are quoted in Sanskrit by Nāropā in his Sekoddeśaṭikā (p. 66) and reproduced by Seyfort Ruegg, "Le Dharmadhātustava de Nāgarjuna," p. 466:
nirmalau candrasūryau hy āṣṭau pañcabhir malaiḥ
abhranīḥāradhūmena rūhuvaktrarajomalaś/18
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

Just like that, the luminous mind
becomes defiled by five hindrances:
desire, ill will, sloth,
sluggishness and doubt.

Verse 20:

ji ltar me yis dag pa'i gos
sna tshogs dri mas dri ma can
ji ltar me yi nang bcug na
dri ma tshig 'gyur gos min ltar

Just as various stains of a stained garment
can be cleaned by fire,
such as that by being placed inside the fire
the stains will burn but the garment will not;

Verse 21:

de bzhin 'od gsal pa yi sems
'tod chags la sogs dri ma can

---

118 evam prabhāśvaraṃ cittam āvrtām pañcabhīr malaṁ/
kīmavyāpādāmīddhena auddhatyavicikitsayī/19
119 agnih saucāṃ yathā vastraṃ malināṃ rāgajair malaṁ/
agnimadhye yathākṣiptaṃ malaṃ dagdhāṃ na vastrapāḥ/20
120 The clothes of the gods are said to be of such a nature – they are washed by fire, which burns only the stains but not the clothes themselves.
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nagarjuna

ye shes me yis dri ma sreg
de nyid ’od gsal ma yin no

Just so the mind of clear light
[stained by] the stains of desire and so forth:
by the fire of wisdom stains will be burnt
but not the clear light [mind].

Verse 22:
stong pa nyid ni ston pa’i mdo
rgyal bas ji snyed gsungs pa gang
de dag kun gyis nyon mongs Idog
khams de nyams par byed ma yin

By all those teachings the Victorious One offered about emptiness
in the scriptures,
afflictions are eliminated
but the element [dharmadhātu] is not damaged.

Verse 23:
sa yi nang na gnas pa’i chu
dri ma med par gnas pa ltar

121 evaṁ prabhāsvaram citraṁ malināṁ rāgajair malaiḥ
jñāṇāṇīnaṁ malaiṁ dagdhāṁ na dagdhāṁ tat prabhāsvarami/21
122 Verse 19 lists all five.
123 śāntatāhāraṁ sūtraṁ ye kecid bhāṣitā āśīrāṁ
sarvais tathā klesāvāṃśītā naiva dhātuvināśanam/22
nyon mongs nang na ye shes kyang
de bzhin dri ma med par gnas\(^{124}\)

As water inside the earth
stays pure,
so also \(jñāna\), inside the afflictions
stays pure.

Verse 24:

\[
\text{chos dbyings gang phyir bdag ma yin}
\text{bud med ma yin skyes pa min}
\text{gzung ba kun las rnam grol ba}
\text{ji ltar bdag ces brtag par bya}
\]

Because \(dharma dhātu\) is not "I,"
is not "a woman," is not "a man,"
being free from all objectification,
how can it be taken as "I"?

Verse 25:

\[
\text{chags pa med pa'i chos kun la}
\text{bud med skyes pa dmigs ma yin}
\]

\(^{124}\) pṛthivyantarhitaṁ toyaṁ yathā tiṣṭhāti nirmalam/ klesair antarhitaṁ jñānaṁ tathā tiṣṭhāti nirmalam/23
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

'dod chags kyis gdungs gdul bya'i phyir
bud med skyes par shes rab bstan

For one who is not attached to any phenomena,
Woman or man is not perceived.
For the sake of trainees afflicted by passion,
[the Buddha] taught wisdom in regard to woman and man.

Verse 26:
mi rtag sdsug bsngal stong pa zhes
bya ba gsum pos sems sbyong byed
mchog tu sems ni sbyong byed pa'i
chos ni rang bzhin med pa yin

Practising these three [doctrines] purifies the mind:
"impermanence," "suffering," "emptiness."
As to the supreme mind, the dharma which purifies it
is without svabhāva.

Verse 27:
ji ltar sbrum ma'i lto na bu
yod kyang mthong ba ma yin pa
de bzhin nyon mongs kyis g.yogs pa'i
chos kyi dbyings kyang mthong ma yin
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nagarjuna

Just as a child in the belly of a pregnant woman
exists but is not seen,
just so, covered by afflictions,
\textit{dharmadhātu} also is not seen.

Verse 28:

\begin{verbatim}
bdag dang bdag gi rnam rtog dang
ming gi 'du shes rgyu mtshan gyis
rnam rtog bzhi po 'byung ba yang
'byung dang 'byung las gyur pas so
\end{verbatim}

Due to perception of name
and the thought of “I” and “mine,”
four conceptual possibilities also arise
[and also] elements and what consists of elements.

Verse 29:

\begin{verbatim}
sangs rgyas mams kyi smon lam yang
snang ba med cing mtshan nyid med
so sor rang rig sbyor ldan nyid
sangs rgyas rtag pa'i chos nyid can
\end{verbatim}

Even if the prayers to the Buddha
have no appearance and no characteristics,
one endowed with direct experience
is endowed with the eternal reality of the Buddha.

Verse 30:

ji ltar ri bong mgo bo'i rwa
btags pa nyid de med pa ltar
de bzhin chos rnams thams cad kyang
btags pa nyid de yod ma yin

Just as a horn on a rabit’s head
is imputed but does not exist,
similarly, all dharmas
are simply imputed [but] are actually not existent.

(71b) Verse 31:

phra rba rdul gyi ngo bo yis
glang gi rwa yang yod ma yin
ji ltar sngon bzhin gyis de bzhin
de la ci zhig brtag par bya

Just as horns of a bull are also non-existent,
being of the nature of particles, waves and dust,
so, as before,\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{125} As in the example of the horns of a rabbit.
what is to be investigated?\textsuperscript{126}

Verse 32:

brten nas 'byung bar 'gyur ba dang
brten nas 'gag par 'gyur bas na
geig kyang yod pa ma yin no
byis pas ji ltar rtogs par byed

Arising is dependently originated and
cessation is dependent[ly originated]. Because of that,
not a single thing exists [independently].
How can the ignorant realise it?\textsuperscript{127}

Verse 33:

ri bong ba lang rwa yi dpes
ji ltar bde gshegs chos rnams nyid
dbu ma nyid du sgrub par byed\textsuperscript{128}

Just as [with the] example of the horns of a rabbit and a bull,
the Sugata established that all dharmas are the same
as the Middle Way.\textsuperscript{129}

Verse 34:

\textsuperscript{126} The object of investigation cannot be found.
\textsuperscript{127} That is, how can the ignorant come to a conclusion that things exist inherently?
\textsuperscript{128} This verse is missing one line.
\textsuperscript{129} That is, empty of inherent existence.
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

ji ltar nyi zla skar ma'i gzugs
dang ba'i snod kyi chu nang du
gzugs brnyan mthong bar 'gyur ba ltar
mtshan nyid rdzogs pa'ang de dang 'dra

Just as the reflection of the form of the sky, the moon and the stars can be seen on the surface of clear water in a vessel, similarly, all defining characteristics just like that [can be seen as reflections].

Verse 35:
thog ma bar dang mthar dge ba
bslu ba med cing brtan pa yi
gang zhig de ltar bdag med la
ji ltar bdag dang bdag gir brtag

[One who is] virtuous in the beginning, middle and end, non-deceptive and steadfast, selfless, how can such a one think “me” and “mine”? 

Verse 36:
ji ltar sos ka'i dus su chu
dro bo zhes ni brjod par byed
de nyid grang ba'i dus su ni
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nagarjuna

grang ngo zhes ni brjod pa yin

Just as in the hot summer day
water is [accurately] described as hot,
in winter, the same [water] is [accurately] described
as cold.

Verse 37:
nyon mongs dra bas g.yogs pa na
sems can zhes ni brjod par bya
de nyid nyon mongs bral gyur na
sangs rgyas zhes ni brjod par bya

When covered by the net of afflictions
they are called sentient beings;
when free of afflictions
the same ones are called buddhas.

Verse 38:
mig dang gzugs la brten nas ni
dri ma med pa'i snang ba 'byung
skye med 'gag pa med nyid las
chos kyi dbyings ni rab tu shes
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

In dependence upon eye and form
the appearance of the Stainless [One] arises.
[But] through [understanding of] non-arising and non-ceasing
the dharmadhatu is thoroughly known.

Verse 39:
sgra dang rna ba la brten nas
rnam par dag pa'i shes pa gsum
mtshan nyid med pa chos kyi dbyings
rtog dang bcas pas thos par 'gyur

In dependence upon sound and ear
threefold pure knowledge [occurs].
[But] one endowed with realisation
Hears the dharmadhatu, free of characteristics.

Verse 40:
sna dang dri la brten nas snom
de ni gzugs su med pa'i dpe
de bzhin sna yi rnam shes kyis
chos kyi dbyings la rtog par byed

In dependence upon odour and nose [one] smells.
Analogously to the non-existence of form,
by the nose consciousness
one realises it [i.e. smell] as the dharmadātu.

Verse 41:
le yi rang bzhin stong pa nyid
ro yi khams kyang dben pa ste
chos kyi dbyings kyi ngo bo yis
rnam par shes pa gnas med pa

The intrinsic nature of the tongue is emptiness,
the realm of taste is empty.

Because [both are] of the nature of the dharmadātu,
consciousness is non-abiding.

Verse 42:
dag pa'i lus kyi ngo bo dang
reg by'i rgyen gyi mtshan nyid dag
rkyen dag las ni (72a) grol gyur pa
chos kyi dbyings zhes brjod par bya

The essence of the pure body with
the characteristics of the tangible object,
from purification of conditions freedom takes place.
That is said to be dharmadātu.
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nagarjuna

Verse 43:

yid gtsor gyur pa'i chos rnams la
rtog dang brtag pa rnam spangs nas
chos rnams rang bzhin med pa nyid
chos kyi dbyings su bsgom par bya

Through abandoning speculation and imputation
about all phenomena, the chief of which is mind,
[one realises] that the nature of phenomena is absence of real existence.
[Knowing this] meditate on dharmadhātu!

Verse 44:

mthong dang thos dang bsnams pa dang
myangs dang reg par gyur pa dang
chos rnams de ltar mál 'byor pas
shes nas mtsan nyid rdzogs pa yin

And by the yogi,
who has cognised seeing, hearing, grasping,
tasting, touching, being and all dharmas in that way,
characteristics are perfected.
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nagarjuna

Verse 45:

mig dang rna ba sna dag dang
lee dang lus dang de bzhin yid
skye mched drug po rnam dag pa
"di nyid de nyid mtshan nyid do

The six sense spheres completely purified:

eye, ear, together with nose,
tongue, body and mind as well.

Just this is the characteristic of reality.

Verse 46:

sems nyid rnam pa gnyis su mthong
ji ltar 'jig rten 'jig rten 'das
bdag tu 'dzin na las 'khor ba ste
so sor rig na de nyid do

The nature of the mind can be seen as of two kinds:

mundane and supramundane.

Through attachment to "I" there is saṃsāra,

if there is awareness, there is reality.

Verse 47:

'dod chags zad pas mya ngan 'das
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

zhe sding gti mug zad pa dang
de dag 'gags pas sangs rgyas nyid
lus kun gyi skyabs nyid do

Through destruction of hatred, delusion
and greed, there is nirvāṇa.

Through cessation of these there is Buddhahood,
the sole refuge of all embodied beings.

Verse 48:
shes dang mi shes pa dag las
lus 'di nyid las thams cad de
rang gi rnam par rtog pas bcings
bdag nyid shes nas gro la 'gyur

All, whether they know or don’t know,
are bound by their own-conceptualisations.
On account of [not knowing the nature of] this very body.
Having known the nature of “self,” they become free.

Verse 49:
byang chub ring min nye ba 'ang min
'gro min 'ong ba 'ang ma yin zhing
nyon mongs gzeb gyur 'di nyid la
mthong ba dang ni ma mthong yin

Enlightenment is neither far nor near,
neither going nor coming.
From within this very [body, which is the] cage of afflictions,
one will either see it or not see it.

Verse 50:
shes rab mar me la gnas nas
mchog tu zhi bar gyur pa yis
bdag la brtags pas gnas bya zhes
mdo sde’i tshogs las gsungs pa lags

As stated in the collections of sūtras:
by abiding in the lamp of wisdom
supreme peace comes to be.
One should abide [therein] by investigating the “self.”

Verse 51:
stobs bcu’i stobs kyis byis pa mams
byin brlabs zla ba tshes pa bzhin
nyon mongs can gyi sems can gyis
de bzhin gshegs pa mi mthong ngo
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

By the power of the ten powers immature ones receive blessings like the full moon.

Beings who are defiled do not see the Tathāgata.

Verse 52:

ji ltar yi drags rnams kyis ni
rgya mtsho bskams par mthong ba ltar
de bzhin mi shes pas bsgribs pas
sangs rgyas rnams ni med par btags

Just as by the hungry ghosts the ocean is perceived as dry,
similarly, by those obscured by ignorance the Buddha is perceived as non-existent.

Verse 53:

dman pa b sod nams dman pa la
bcom ldan 'das kyis ci bgyir mchis
ji ltar dmus long lag pa ru
(72b) rin chen mchog ni bzhag pa 'dra

For the inferior one of little merit to be attended by the Blessed One
is like a jewel being placed
in the hand of a blind person.

Verse 54:

sems can bsod rnams byas rnams la
'od kyis gsal zhin dpal ldan pa'i
sum cu rtsa gnyis mtshan 'bar ba
sangs rgyas de yi mdun na gnas

Sentient beings, when they have produced merit,
stand in front of the illustrious Buddha
[whose] 32 marks [of a great being] glow
shining with splendor.

Verse 55:

mgon po de yi gzugs kyi sku
bskal pa mang por bzhugs nas ni
gdul bya rnams ni 'dul ba'i phyir
dbyings nyid tha dad gyur ba lags

The protector lived in his Form Body
for many eons
but in order to train those to be trained,
the same elements appear differently.
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nagarjuna

Verse 56:

sems kyi yul ni des rto gs nas
der ni shes pa 'jug par 'gyur
so so rang rig rnam dag na
sa rnam de yi btag nyid gnas

Having perceived a sense object,
the awareness engages there.
If self-awareness is pure,
it abides in the essence of the grounds.

Verse 57:

dbang phyug chen po'i gnas mchog dang
'tog min nyid de rnam mdzas pa
shes pa gsum po gcig nyid du
'dres par gyur la btag smra'o

The three, the superior abode of the mighty lord,
the Pure Land of highest beauty itself
and consciousness, united
[become] as one, I declare.

Verse 58:

byis pa'i nang na kun mkhyen dang
'phags pa'i nang na sna tshogs nyid
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

dbang phyug chen po tshe dpag med
bskal pa tshe yi rgyu gang yin

What is the reason of a lifespan of an eon,
omniscience within the ignorant,
variety within the noble,
and infinite life of the Great Lord?

Verse 59:
phyi rol sems can khams kyi yang
dpag tu med pa'i bskal par ni
tshe yang gang gis bsrungs gyur cing
srog chags kun gyi srog gnas pa'i

[It is that which remains] beyond the realm of sentient beings
[even after] countless eons,
moreover, [it is that] by which life is protected,
[and that which is] the essence of all living beings.

Verse 60:
rgyu yang mi zad pa de nyid
gang gis 'bras bu mi zad gang
snang ba med pa'i bye brag gis
shes rab don du rab tu 'jug
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

That very thing is an inexhaustible cause
on account of which the result is inexhaustible.
Because of being distinguished by invisibility,
on account of wisdom \( (\text{prajñā}) \) one enters it.

Verse 61:

\[
\text{byang chub ring bar mi bsam zhing} \\
\text{nye bar yang ni basam mi bya} \\
\text{yul drug snang ba med par ni} \\
\text{yang dag ji bzhin rig gyur pa′o}
\]

Awakening should not be thought of as distant
and also not thought of as that which is near;
[when] the six objects are non-appearing,
[it] becomes known exactly as it is.

Verse 62:

\[
\text{ji ltar ′o ma dang ′dres chu} \\
\text{snod gcig la ni gnas pa las} \\
\text{ngang pas ′o ma ′thung byed cing} \\
\text{chu ni ma yin de bzhin gnas}
\]

Just as [if] there were
water mixed with milk in a container,
a swan would drink the milk and
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nagarjuna

not the water; ...

Verse 63:
de bzhin nyon mongs kyis g.yogs nas
ye shes lus 'dir gcig gnas kyang
ral 'byor pa yis ye shes len
mi shes pa ni 'dor par byed

So, although wisdom in this body
abides covered with afflictions,
a yogi takes the wisdom
and discard the ignorance.

Verse 64:
bdag dang bdag gi zhes 'dzin na pas
ji srid phyi rol rnam btags pa
bdag med rnam pa gnyis mthong nas
srid pa'i sa bon 'gag par 'gyur

As long as “I” and “mine” are maintained,
the external world will be imputed.
Having seen the two kinds of selflessness,
the seed of becoming will be stopped.

Verse 65
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

gang phyir sangs rgyas mya ngan 'das
gtsang ba (73a) rtag pa dge ba'i gzhi
gang phyir gnyis ni byis pas brtags
de yi gnyis med rnal 'byor gnas

Because the Buddha [is] nirvāṇa,
the pure [and] permanent [are] the basis of virtue.
Because of that the immature one imputes duality
[but] the yogi abides in non-duality.

Verse 66:
dka' spyod sna tshogs sbyin pa dang
tshul khrims sems can don sdud dang
sems can phan byed bzod pa ste
gsum po 'di yis khams rgyas 'gyur

Generosity [through] various hardships,
morality collected for the sake of sentient beings and
patience for the benefit of sentient beings,
thanks to these three the potential will unfold.

Verse 67:
chos rnams kun la brtson 'grus dang
bsam gtan la sems 'jug pa dang
rtag tu shes rab brtan pa ste
Enthusiasm for all dharmas,
a mind engaged in meditation
and always stable wisdom
also makes realization increase.

Verse 68:

thabs dang bcas pa'i shes rab dang
smon lam rnam par sbyangs pa dang
stobs la nges gnas ye shes te
khams rgyas byed pa'i chos bzhi po

Wisdom endowed with skillful means and
aspirational prayer fully purified,
definitively abiding in power, exalted wisdom:
these four disciplines will make the potential unfold.

Verse 69:

byang chub sems phyag mi bya zhes
smra ba ngan pa smra ba ste
byang chub sems dpa' ma gyur bar
chos kyi sku ni 'byung ma yin

It is bad speech to say
"Bodhicitta is not to be honoured."

Without becoming a bodhisattva
the dharmakāya would not arise.

Verse 70:
bur shing sa bon la sdong gang
kha ra spyad par 'dod pa des
bur shing sa bon med par ni
kha ra 'byung bar 'gyur ma yin

[One] wishes to enjoy sweetness
which abides in the sugarcane seed,
but, without a sugarcane seed,
the sweetness will not arise.

Verse 71:
bur shing sa bon gang bsrungs nas
nje bar gnas shing bsgrubs pa las
bu ram kha ra dgas rnams ni
de las 'byung bar 'gyur ba ltar

From nourishing the sugarcane seed,
attending to it and making it grow,
sweet sugar
will arise from that [labor]. Similarly,
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nagarjuna

Verse 72:
byang chub sems ni rab bsrungs nas
nye bar gnas shing bsgrubs pa las
dgra bcom rkyen togs sangs rgyas rnams
de las skye zhing 'byung bar 'gyur

From fully protecting the Bodhicitta,
attending to it and making it grow through that [labour],
Arhats, Pratyekabuddhas and Buddhas
arise.

Verse 73:
ji ltar sa hu'i sa bon sogs
zhing pas bsrung bar byed pa ltar
de bzhin theg mchog mos rnams la
'dren pa rnams kyis bsrung ba mdzad

Just as the seed of rice, etc.,
is protected by the farmer,
so, those with faith in the supreme vehicle
are protected by the leaders.

Verse 74:
ji ltar mar ngo'i bcu bzhi la
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

zlā ba cung zhig mthong ba ltar
de bzhin theg mchos rnams la'ang
sangs rgyas sku ni cung zad snang

Just as on the fourteenth day of waning
the moon is hardly seen,
so, even to those with faith in the supreme vehicle,
only the smallest portion of the body of the Buddha appears.

Verse 75:
ji ltar tshes pa'i zla ba la
skad cig skad cig rgyas par mthong
de bzhin sa la zhugs rnams kyang
rim gyis rim gyis rgyas par mthong

Just as one sees the waxing moon
increasing from moment to moment,
so those engaged in the bodhisattva bhūmis
see [the Buddha’s dharmakāya increasing] from moment to moment.

Verse 76:
ji ltar yar ngo'i bco lnga la
(73b) zla ba rdzogs par 'gyur ba ltar
de bzhin sa yi mthar thug na
chos kyi sku yang rdzogs shing gsal
Just as on the fifteenth day of waxing
the moon is complete,
so, on completion of [the bodhisattva] grounds
the dharmakāya is perfect and radiant.

Verse 77:
sangs rgyas chos dang dge 'dun la
rtag tu mos pa brtan po yis
sems de yang dag bskyed byas nas
phyir mi ldog pa yang yang 'byung

Having been generated properly,
with continuous firm faith
in Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha,
that mind [of bodhi] will not revert again but will arise again and again.

Verse 78:
nag po'i gzhi ni yongs spangs nas
dkar ba'i gzhi ni rab bzung bas
de tshe de ni nges rtogs pa
dga' ba zhes ni mngon par brjod

When the foundation of evil is dispelled
and the foundation of virtue is firmly taken hold of,
the realization of certainty [which arises]
Is called “The Joyous.”

Verse 79:
'dod chags la sogs sna tshogs pa'i
dri mas rtag tu dri ma can
dri ma med pas gang dag pa
dri ma med ces brjod pa yin

It possesses stain always because of the stains of
various kinds of desires etc.
[But] what is purified because of being without stain
is called “The Stainless.”

Verse 80:
nyon mongs dra ba rab 'gags nas
dri med shes rab rab gsal bas
tshad med pa yi mun pa dag
sel bar byed pas 'od byed pa'o

Because it removes immeasurable darkness
purifying it with the light of stainless wisdom
after having blocked the network of afflicted emotions,
it is [called] “The Illuminating.”
Verse 81:

rtag tu dag pa'i 'od kyis gsal
'du 'dzin rnam par spangs pa yi
ye shes 'od kyis rab bskor bas
sa de 'od 'phro can du 'dod

Because it shines continuously with the pure light and is accompanied by the wisdom which eliminates all attachment, that bhūmi is considered “The Radiant.”

Verse 82:

rig dang sgyu rtsal bzo gnas kun
bsam gtan rnam pa sna tshogs nyid
nyon mongs shin tu sbyangs dka' las
ram par rgyal bas sbyang dkar 'dod

Because of mastering all sciences, arts and crafts, various forms of meditation, and afflictions, difficult to purify, [this bhūmi] is called “The Difficult to Overcome.”

Verse 83:

byang chub rnam pa gsum po dang
phun sum tshogs kun bsdu ba dang
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

skye dang 'jig pa zab pa la
sa de mngon du gyur bar 'dod

When there are three kinds of bodhi,
all the collections of excellence are collected
and there is profundity in [knowledge of] birth and death,
that bhūmi is considered “The Directly Manifested.”

Verse 84:
'khor lo'i bkod pas rnam kun tu
ʻod kyi dra bas rtse ba dang
'khor ba'i mtsho yi 'dam brgal bas
de la ring du song zhes bya

Because all aspects are established by the wheel [of the Doctrine]
and joyous with the web of radiance,
and the mud of the ocean of sanśāra has been crossed,
it is called “The Far Reaching.”

Verse 85:
sangs rgyas kyis nges 'di bzung zHING
ye shes rgya mtshor zhugs pa dang
'bad med lhun gyis grub gyur pas
bdud kyi 'khor gyis mi g.yo ba'o
Definitely supported by the Buddha,
entering the ocean of wisdom,
being effortless and spontaneous,

[this \textit{bhūmi} is] “Unshaken” by Māra’s retinue.

Verse 86:
so so yang dag rig kun la
chos ston pa yi 'bel ba'i gtam
ral 'byor pa de mthar son pas
sa de legs pa'i blo gros 'dod

Because the yogi has finally
[reached the perfection] of teaching the doctrine elaborately
to everyone [according to their] individual [level of] knowledge,
the \textit{bhūmi} is considered “The Eminent Intelligence.”

Verse 87:
ye shes rang bzhin 'di yi sku
dri med nam mkha' dang mnyam pa
sangs rgyas mams kyis 'dzin pa las
chos kyi sprin ni kun tu 'byung

The body is of the nature of wisdom,
immaculate and limitless as space.
The vigilance supported by the Buddhas
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

“The Cloud of Doctrine” arises.

Verse 88:
sangs (74a) rgyas rnams kyi chos kyi gnas
spyod pa'i 'bras bu yongs su 'dzin pas
gnas ni yongs su gyur pa de
chos kyi sku zhes brjod pa yin

The dharma abode of the Buddhas (dharmadhātu) [is understood]
by taking hold of the fruit of the practice.
That abode transformed
is called “The Dharmakāya.”

Verse 89:
bag chags las grol bsam mi khyab
'khor ba'i bag chags bsam du yod
khyod ni kun tu bsam mi khyab
gang gis khyod ni shes par nus

Samsāra’s tendencies are conceivable,
freedom from karmic tendencies is inconceivable.
You [who have acquired that freedom] are in every way inconceivable -
by what could you be known?

Verse 90:
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ngag gi spyod yul kun las 'das
dbang po kun gyi spyod yul min
yid kyi shes pas rtogs bya ba
gang yang rung la phyag 'tshal bstod

[You are] beyond the domain of speech,
and not in the sphere of any sense faculty.
[Nevertheless,] I prostrate and praise
whatever is knowable by mental consciousness.

Verse 91:
rim gyi 'jug pa'i lugs nyid kyis
sangs rgyas sras po grags chen rnams
chos kyi sprin gyi ye shes kyis
chos nyid stong pa mthong gyur nas

By the method of gradual engagement
the illustrious sons of the Buddha,
have seen empty reality
by the wisdom of "The Cloud of Doctrine."

Verse 92:
pad+ma chen po'i rang bzhin gyis
gang tshe sms ni rab dkrus pas
'khor ba'i gzeb las 'das gyur nas
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nagarjuna

pad+ma chen po rang bzhin gyi
stan la de ni rab gnas 'gyur\textsuperscript{130}

With the mind purified,
with the nature of a great lotus,
having gone beyond the \textit{samsāric} traps,
he abides on the throne.

Verse 93:
‘dab ma rin chen du ma’i ’od
‘dod par bya ba’i ze’u ’bru can
pad+ma bye ba du ma yis
rnam pa kun tu yongs su bskor

Encompassed by
a multitude of lotuses
with radiant precious petals,
endowed with desirable alluring stamen;

Verse 94:
stobs bcu po yis yongs su gang
mi ’jig s pa yis yang dag ngoms
bsam mi khyab pa’i sangs rgyas chos

\textsuperscript{130} The first and the fourth lines are identical. The fourth line is most likely a scribal error. The text makes no sense if only the first four lines are read but makes sense (as well as the following stanzas) if the fourth line is omitted and the fifth takes its place.
spros med rnams las nyams mi mnga'

The inconceivable Buddha qualities complete with the ten powers, with fearlessness, perfectly satisfied, not subject to deterioration because they are beyond conceptuality.

Verse 95:

legs par spyod pa'i las kun gyis
bsod nams ye shes rab bsags pa'i
zla ba nya la skar ma yis
'khor du rnam pa kun gyis bskor

Having fully accumulated merit and wisdom by means of practising good deeds, they are [like] a full moon surrounded by stars.

Verse 96:

sangs rgyas phyag gi nyi ma der
dri med rin chen 'bar gyur des
sras kyi thu bo dbang bskur bas
dbang bskur ba ni kun tu stsol

By means of the stainless jewel
in the sun-like hand of the Buddha,
empowerment is fully bestowed
on the senior heirs.

Verse 97.131

ral 'byor chen po der gnas nas
rmongs pas dman pa'i 'jig rten mams
sdug bsngal gyis g-yengs 'jigs pa la
lha yi spyan gyis gzigs gyur nas

The Mahayogis residing there,
look with the divine eye on worldly beings,
inferior because of mental blindness,
whom suffering can frighten and distract.

Verse 98:
de yi sku la 'od zer rnam
‘bad pa med par 'byung 'gyur te
rmongs pa'i (74b) mun par zhugs de yi
sgo rnam 'byed par mdzad pa yin

Light rays from their bodies
shine spontaneously
and open up gates for those

131 Without the exclusion of a line in verse 92, this verse would have had five lines. By moving one line up, the number of lines is now four.
who wander in the dark of confusion.

Verse 99:

lhag bcas mya ngan 'das pa rnams
lhag med mya ngan 'das par 'dod
'dir ni mya ngan 'das pa nyid
dri ma med par sms gyur pa'o

Those who have reached nirvāṇa with remainder consider it to be nirvāṇa without remainder.

[But] here [on this superior level] nirvāṇa is simply the purification of the mind.

Verse 100:

sems can kun gyi dngos med pa'i
ngo bo de yang de'i spyod yul
de mthong byang chub sms dpa'o
shin tu dri med chos kyi sku

The essence of non-substantiality of sentient beings is the domain of that [dharmadhatu].

Seeing that is the glorious bodhicitta.

It is the stainless dharmakāya.
Verse 101:

dri ma med pa'i chos sku la.
ye shes rgya mtsho gnas gyur nas
sna tshogs nor bu ji bzhin du
de bas sems can don rnams mdzad

The ocean of wisdom,
abiding in the stainless dharmakāya,
like a wish-fulfilling jewel
accomplishes the welfare of sentient beings.
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

Comments

Apart from the Tibetan, where it has 101 verses, the Dharmadhiitustotra is extant in Chinese in 87 verses (Taisho, No. 1675) which, according to Lindtner (1982:17, n.16), is merely a free translation. It is attributed to Nāgārjuna by Bhāvaviveka, who quotes verses 91-96 and 101 (Lindtner, 1982:17). The Sanskrit version, supposedly existent, is not available at this time. Currently we have only six Sanskrit verses (18-23) quoted by Nāropā in his Sekoddeśaṭīka and listed in my footnotes with the edition and translation.

The hymn enjoys great popularity among Tibetans, many considering it Nāgārjuna’s final philosophical position. The Tibetan catalogues contain at least seven titles of canonical commentaries.

To the present day there is no edition of any manuscript of the hymn, whether Sanskrit, Tibetan or Chinese in any Western language. There is one English translation, by Ari Goldfield, published in Shenpen Osel (1999:6-16), followed by the commentary by the Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche on the first 43 verses. Rinpoche largely follows the canonical commentary by Shakya Chogden, *Ascertaining the Dharmadhātu: An Explanation of Praise of the Dharmadhātu.* Nineteen verses are also translated by Jeffrey Hopkins (2007:63-67), using Dol-bob-a’s commentary. The hymn is discussed and paraphrased by D. S. Ruegg (1971) in

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132 Through personal communication I received information that there are two Sanskrit manuscripts, one from zhol par khang, Lhasa, and one at the Potala Palace but these are currently not accessible to me. Furthermore, Christian Lindtner, in his summary of Nāgārjuna’s Catuḥstava for the Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies (2003:181) writes: “The Dharmadhiitustava is also available in a Sanskrit manuscript from Tibet/China but has not yet been edited.” In personal communication, Professor Lindtner informed me that he received the information from a Chinese source that he considered reliable but has lost the contact with over the years. For further information he directed me to Professor Steinkelner who confirmed the existence of the Sanskrit manuscript and directed me to the Tibetan scholar currently working on the edition. So far I have been unable to contact him.

133 As this dissertation was ready for submission, I learned of the forthcoming publication of another translation by Karl Brunnholzl with the commentary of the Third Karmapa (*In Praise of Dharmadhātu*, Snow Lion Publication), expected in February or March of 2008. I have not seen this book.
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French. Apart from that, there is only one brief note offered by Lindtner in his "Nagarjuniana", expressing his doubts about the authenticity of the text based on the fact that the hymn employs "positive ontology." Nevertheless, Lindtner is reluctant to dismiss the hymn without further consideration.\(^{134}\)

**Style**

Until the Sanskrit manuscript is obtained, analysis of the style is not possible. At this point we can only offer a short note about two problem places in the text. First, verse 33 has only three lines. The fourth line cannot be retrieved but the message of the verse is clear. Second, verse 92 has five lines but line 1 and 4 are identical. It is my opinion that due to a scribal mistake line 1 of verse 92 was copied in the place of line 4. Therefore, in my translation I have omitted line 4 of verse 92 and line 5 has become the fourth. With that alteration, all subsequent verses have four lines and make much better sense.\(^{135}\)

\(^{134}\) Lindtner (1982:17, n. 46) writes:

> It must also be noted that several śūtras asserting the existence of dharmadhātu or tathāgatagarbha as nitya, dhruva, śiva and śāśvata (cf. CS, II, 22) are also known from quotations in Nāgārjuna's SS. In this stava (or stotra) we also find a prima facie 'positive ontology': dharmadhātu is niyatāsthāna (1), saṃsūrahetu (2), anupāna, aniruddha (8), prabhāsvāra, viśuddha (9), sāra (15), bija (17), anāman (24, here 'without gender'), dhruva (35) etc. It is not merely śūnya (22). – It would be a glaring inconsistency for the author of MK, ŠS, VV etc. to express himself thus paramārthatah. On the other hand I do not think we can exclude that Nāgārjuna wrote this hymn samvṛtītaḥ, or neyāroha (cf. CS, III, 57) with the motive sattvāvātārataḥ (cf. CS, II, 21-22).

\(^{135}\) Ruegg’s (1971:471) text lists verse 99 as having five pādas.
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Structure

Apart from the two opening verses (giving salutation to the dharmadhātu and a brief doctrinal explanation of its place and significance), the remaining verses can be divided into three major sections.

The first major section, verses 3 to 42, describes the dharmadhātu. This section has three subsections:

1. Verses 3 to 11: describing the nature of the dharmadhātu,
2. Verses 12 to 25: on the possibility of cleansing the dharmadhātu,
3. Verses 26 to 42: on the potential for enlightenment of all sentient beings due to the nature of the dharmadhātu.

The second major section, verses 43 to 90, describes the practice of purification of the dharmadhātu and reaching the state of Buddhahood. It has two subsections:

1. Verses 43 to 65: preliminary discussion on the practice,
2. Verses 66 to 90: specific description of the actual practice. This subsection has four parts:
   a. Verses 66 to 68: brief account of the ten bodhisattva grounds
   b. Verses 69 to 77: discussion of bodhicitta
   c. Verses 78 to 87: description of each of the ten bodhisattva grounds
   d. Verses 88 to 90: discussion of the tenth stage

The third major section, verses 91 to 101, describe the state of Buddhahood acquired after completion of the practice.
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Basic Content

Rather than a lengthy examination of the hymn line by line, it should suffice to discuss the three major questions corresponding to the three major sections: “What is the dharmadhātu?”, “What is the practice leading to complete purification of the dharmadhātu?” and “What kind of state is achieved at the end of the purification?”

What is the dharmadhātu?

The opening verse, immediately after paying homage to the Dharmadhātu, explains that it is definitely located (or, certainly exists, nges gnas) in all sentient beings even though it is completely unknown. The second verse adds that it is the cause of saṃsāra but, when cleansed through purification, is itself nirvāṇa. These two verses give the condensed description of what the dharmadhātu exactly is. The following verses explain this in detail. First, verses 3 to 11 offer a basic description of its nature. The dharmadhātu, even though present in all sentient beings, is not seen by them because of their afflictions (kleśa) (3). When those afflictions are purified it becomes completely immaculate (4). It is like a clear light inside a closed pot: standing in the pot of afflictions, the dharmadhātu is not seen (5). But, if a hole is made in the pot, the light will be seen (6). Similarly, when the pot of afflictions is broken by the diamond (vajra) meditation, then the dharmadhātu will shine forth (7). Of course, the diamond meditation is one that realizes emptiness. It is the practice of bodhisattvas who have reached a sufficient level of skill (which will be discussed later).

The dharmadhātu never arises nor does it cease; it is at all times free of afflictions (8). It is pure like a precious gem that, although radiant at all times, does
not shine when it is covered with rock (9). Hence, although completely stainless, when covered by afflictions its light does not manifest. When the light is unmanifest, the state is called *samsāra*; when manifest, it is *nirvāṇa* (10). Therefore, the same person is in *samsāra* when s/he does not realize the *dharmaḥdatu* due to being dominated by afflictions; but when those afflictions are purified, s/he is in *nirvāṇa*. This means that each and every individual has the potential to become a Buddha. The *dharmaḥdatu* is that potential. If that was not present, Buddhahood would not be possible, just as without the presence of gold, no matter how much one works on an ore, gold will not be produced (11).

Verses 12 to 25 offer further clarification of the statement that the *dharmaḥdatu* is present in all sentient beings and explain why is it possible to purify afflictions and reach Buddhahood. The sub-section starts with a simile: just as barley covered with husk is not thought of as fruit, so the *dharmaḥdatu*, when covered by afflictions, is not thought of as Buddha (12). When freed from the husk the fruit appears, and when released from afflictions, the *dharmaḥkāya* is completely apparent (13). Furthermore, the banana tree has no essence but it produces a fruit that is sweet to eat (14). Similarly, *samsāra* has no essence but becoming free from the trap of affliction results in the fruit of Buddhahood (15). The remaining verses of this sub-section give further details of what exactly this potential for Buddhahood is which is present in all sentient beings. It is the luminous mind (19), the mind of clear light (21) that can be purified by the fire of wisdom, which will burn the afflictions but will not burn the clear-light-mind itself (21). The next verse amplifies the statement: all the teachings that the Victorious One offered about emptiness in the scriptures are taught to eliminate afflictions but they do not damage the mind of clear light (22).
verse explains further the nature of that clear mind as \textit{ji\-\=n\=a} (23). It seems that \textit{ji\-\=n\=a} is the same as the \textit{dharmadhatu}, present in each individual but obscured by afflictions. Those afflictions can be dispersed and that allows the luminous mind to shine unobscured. \textit{Dharmadhatu} (or \textit{ji\-\=n\=a}, or luminous mind) is not an object of any sort, it is not “I,” “woman,” “man;” it is free from all objectifications (24) and, naturally, beyond dualities. Even the dharma that purifies the supreme mind is without \textit{svabh\=ava} (26). \textit{Ji\-\=n\=a} is beyond the \textit{catuskoti} (28), and it is the eternal reality of the Buddha (29). In order to acquire it, one needs first to understand the emptiness of all dharmas (30-31) and the dependent origination of all that originates and ceases (32). Through understanding the emptiness of all dharmas, through abandoning speculations and imputations, one realizes that they have no inherent existence (\textit{svabh\=ava}) (43). Through realizing that, consciousness becomes non-abiding (41) and freedom is gained. That is said to be the \textit{dharmadh\=atu} (42).

In summary, \textit{dharmadh\=atu} is \textit{ji\-\=n\=a} and that equals the \textit{dharmak\=\=ya} of a Buddha, the clear and luminous mind that is purified from all afflictions and which realizes emptiness at all times. That mind is present in all beings in the sense that all beings have the potential to develop it but one is not called a Buddha until one fully realizes this potential.

What is the practice leading to complete purification of the \textit{dharmadh\=atu}?

Even from the descriptive part it is obvious that, in principle, the \textit{dharmadh\=atu} is achieved when one purifies all afflictions. The necessary precondition is the realization of the emptiness of all dharmas. But the path is gradual (17). It starts with accumulation of merit, which allows the sentient being to stand in front of the
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illustrious Buddha (54). That accumulation goes on for countless eons (59). It is through merit that a sentient being generates the potential to become a yogi and acquire wisdom (prajñā) and then, through that wisdom realizes the dharmadhātu (60). It is through wisdom that a yogi realizes the two kinds of emptiness (of self and of all dharmas) and, as a result, stops the seed of saṃsāra (64). It is through wisdom that a yogi no longer imputes dualities (65) and, practising the ten perfections, unfolds his/her potential and increases realization (66-69). It is necessary for developing the potential to practise as a bodhisattva, meaning to develop the bodhicitta, otherwise, the dharmakāya would not arise (69). Furthermore, a necessary prerequisite for developing bodhicitta is faith in the supreme vehicle and in the protection of the leaders (73). Once the necessary preconditions are acquired, the bodhisattva engages in perfecting the ten grounds. As the bodhisattva progresses moment by moment, he sees the Buddha’s dharmakāya in greater detail just as the waxing moon becomes more visible night after night (75). Upon completing the bodhisattva practice and perfecting all ten grounds, the dharmakāya is visible completely, perfect and brilliant, just like the full moon (76).

Before turning to the description of the result, the hymn’s list of causes for liberation should be summarised. First, liberation is achieved through understanding the doctrines of impermanence, suffering and emptiness (26); understanding that due to thoughts of “I” and “mine” four conceptual possibilities arise (28); understanding that arising and cessation are dependently originated, and hence not a single thing exists independently (32); understanding that all dharmas are the same as the Middle Way (33); understanding the non-arising and non-ceasing of the dharmas (38 – obviously, closely related to 32 and the doctrine of emptiness); understanding that the nature of
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phenomena is absence of real existence (43); understanding that through attachment to “I” there is samsāra (46) and as long as “I” and “mine” are maintained, the external world will be imputed. Having seen the two kinds of selflessness, the seed of samsāra will be stopped (65). Second, liberation is achieved through freeing oneself from afflictions (4); freeing oneself from the five hindrances: desire, ill will, sloth, sluggishness and doubt (19); freeing oneself from all objectifications, the chief of which is “I” (24); freeing oneself from all four conceptual possibilities (28); freeing oneself from all imputations (30); freeing oneself from greed, hatred and delusion (47); freeing oneself from six objects (61); imputation of “I” and “mine” (64); and imputation of duality (65).

The above sets of actions suggest the personal effort of the practitioner. However, the hymn also speaks of support by the Buddha. The support is first mentioned in verse 73: “those with faith in the supreme vehicle are protected by the leaders.” Of course, the “leaders” should be understood here as the Buddhas. Furthermore, describing the eighth bodhisattva ground, verse 85 starts with, “Definitively supported by the Buddha.” Also, describing the tenth ground, verse 87 mentions “the vigilance afforded by Buddhas.” Finally, verse 96, says, “By means of the blazing jewel in the sun-like hand of the Buddha, empowerment is fully bestowed on the senior heirs.” This is not surprising since the Ratnāvalī, in its own description of the ten bodhisattva grounds, also mentions support by the Buddha on the tenth ground. But, there is another point to make here. The fact that Buddhas intervene at critical moments not only sheds light on the importance of faith and worship but raises questions about the role of Buddhas in the practice of bodhisattvas. The last

question would probably have to be examined by comparing it with texts describing the practice of buddhānusmṛti and visions of the Buddha. It is without a doubt closely related to worship of the Buddha.

What kind of a state is achieved at the end of the purification?

Upon completion of the ten bodhisattva grounds the bodhisattva completely develops his potential and takes hold of the fruit of the practice and acquires the dharmakāya (88). Naturally, that means that he is completely free from karmic tendencies and acquires freedom, which is in every way inconceivable (89). He has seen reality as empty through the method of gradual engagement, culminating in the realization of the tenth ground by means of wisdom (91). And then, with the mind purified, having gone beyond the saṃsāric traps, he abides on the throne (92) encompassed by multitudes of lotuses, radiant with precious petals and endowed with desirable alluring stamen (93). Having acquired the inconceivable Buddha qualities (94), having fully accumulated merit and wisdom (95), full empowerment is bestowed on him (96). Then, with his acquired divine eye, he looks upon the whole world of wretched sufferers (97) and spontaneously radiates rays of light that penetrate the darkness of ignorance and open the gates of the abode of enlightenment (98) in which domain there is insight into the non-existence of essence in any sentient being. That is the insight of the bodhisattva who has acquired the absolutely spotless dharmakāya (100). His Dharma Body, transforming into an ocean of wisdom, shines like myriads of precious stones and acts for the welfare of all sentient beings (101).
Some doctrinal specifics

a. The dharmadhātu is described in positive terms

The opening verse, immediately after paying homage to the dharmadhātu, explains that it is definitely located (or, certainly exists, nges gnas) in all sentient beings even though it is completely unknown. Even though present in all sentient beings, the dharmadhātu is not seen by them because of their afflictions (kleśa) (3). When those afflictions are purified it becomes completely immaculate (4). It is like a clear light inside a closed pot: standing in the pot of afflictions, the dharmadhātu is not seen (5). But, if a hole is made in the pot, the light will be seen (6). Similarly, when the pot of afflictions is broken by the diamond (vajra) meditation, then the dharmadhātu will shine (7).

The dharmadhātu never arises nor ceases; it is at all times free of afflictions (8). It is pure like a precious gem that, although radiant at all times, does not shine when it is covered with rock (9). Hence, although completely stainless, when covered by afflictions its light does not manifest. When the light is un-manifest, the state is called saṃsāra; when manifest, it is nirvāṇa (10).

This basic description suggests that the dharmadhātu is permanent and imperishable. As Lindtner suggested, we see here a prima facie “positive ontology.” Apart from his list of positive descriptions given in note 133 above, we add: the nectar of immortality of embodied beings (15), the seed from which the fruit is developed and the basis of all dharmas (17), the luminous mind (19), the mind of clear light (21),
eternal reality (29), pure and permanent (65). Obviously, this hymn does not hesitate to offer a cataphatic description of reality.

b. The relationship between dharmadhātu, jñāna and dharmakāya

The use of the term jñāna is interesting. In verse 21 it appears as the cause for developing the potential for Buddhahood. However, it also appears as the result: verse 91 says that the illustrious sons of the Buddha have seen reality by means of the wisdom (prajñā) acquired upon accomplishment of the tenth bodhisattva ground. It is upon completion of this ground that the practitioner acquires dharmakāya, the pure and luminous mind of the Buddha. Hence, jñāna is here equated with the dharmakāya. It seems that jñāna has a dual character: it acts as a cause for developing the potential for Buddhahood (prajñā aspect) and also as the result – pure and luminous mind of the Buddha (jñāna aspect).

It should also be noted that our hymn uses the term dharmadhātu when giving similes of pure essence covered by afflictions but when speaking of the pure essence being apparent, it uses the term dharmakāya (verse 13, etc.). Hence, it seems that the existential term dharmakāya is used interchangeably with the term dharmadhātu when the later is thoroughly known but not when it is obscured which suggests that the dharmakāya is always pure and that it cannot be even theoretically perceived as covered by afflictions, as dharmadhātu can. Furthermore, it could be said that the term dharmakāya is used only when speaking of the result, that is, when used to designate the state of completely realized fruit of the practice, as verse 88 defines it,
while the term *dharmadhātu* has a dual function and is used both for the potential and for the result.

c. The relationship between *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*

It seems that due to the dual character of the *dharmadhātu* (and *jñāna*), our hymn is able to establish the relationship between *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. Verse 2 tells us that *dharmadhātu*, which itself is the cause of *saṃsāra*, when cleansed through purification, is itself *nirvāṇa*. The *dharmadhātu* is completely stainless but in *saṃsāra* it is covered by afflictions while in *nirvāṇa* it is free of them (10). Hence, the *dharmadhātu* is the link between *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. Due to the dual character of the *dharmadhātu*, the hymn is able to state that enlightenment is neither far nor near, neither going nor coming, but it is achieved from within this very body when afflictions are purified (49 and 61).

d. The importance of the faith

The hymn places great emphasis on faith. It considers it fundamental for properly generating the pure mind (*jñāna*). First, faith in the supreme vehicle and protection by the leaders are necessary prerequisites for developing *bodhicitta*, which is necessary for developing the potential to practise as a bodhisattva. Furthermore, it is by means of continuous stable faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha that the pure mind arises again and again without regress (77).
e. Knowledge of two-body theory of the Buddha

Throughout the text the hymn speaks of the Body of Truth (dharmakāya) of the Buddha. In verse 55 it mentions the Form Body (nirmāṇakāya). Significantly, the Dharmadhātustava does not mention nor suggest any knowledge of the Body of Enjoyment (saṃbhogakāya). Hence, it could be concluded that the author only knows of the two-body theory of the Buddha.

f. The description of the ultimate state in relation to the tathāgatagarbha

When the practice is completed, all afflictions purified and the clear mind shines without obstructions, the resulting transformed state is named dharmakāya. Hence, the bodhisattva attains the nirvāṇa of the Buddha, that is, he himself becomes the Buddha. This resulting state, where the Buddha-qualities are acquired, is described as inconceivable (89, 94), beyond the domain of speech and not in the sphere of any sense faculty (90). It is also beyond the realm of sentient beings (59). However, as discussed above, on account of wisdom (prajñā) one enters it (60).

On several occasions our hymn describes the ultimate state in negative terms: inconceivable in every way (89), beyond the domain of speech and any sense faculty (90), not “I”, not “a woman,” or “a man,” (24), a state beyond objectifications, beyond dualities, beyond imputations. But it also describes it in positive terms, as described in the point a) above. In that, the Dharmadhātustava, like the Niraupamyastava, comes very close to the doctrine of tathāgatagarbha, but like the latter text, it never mentions the word. In fact, doctrinally, the Dharmadhātustava does not go beyond the Niraupamyastava (insofar as it mentions only two bodies of the Buddha and offers a
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cataphatic description of reality without mentioning the tathāgatagarbha) but, rather, complements it in the sense of explaining fully the delicate points briefly introduced in the latter: the content of the term dharmadhātu, the relationship between sentient beings and the dharmadhātu, the details of the practice and the state of enlightenment.

Some observations regarding the form

By its form, the Dharmadhātustava is unlike any of the hymns of the Catuvāstava. First, it does not end with the verse of transference of merit, as in each of the previously examined hymns. Again, unlike the hymns of the Catuvāstava, there is no evocation of the word of the Buddha. Furthermore, there is no mention of the accumulation of merit attained by praising the dharmadhātu. Finally, unlike the hymns of the Catuvāstava, there is no direct praise of the Buddha, even though it could be argued that praising the dharmadhātu (which equals the dharmakāya) is praise of the enlightened qualities of the Buddha.

Authenticity

Examination of the style, in terms of the metrics, use of particles and compounds, cannot be conducted until the Sanskrit manuscript becomes available. Hence, at present, authenticity will have to be determined on the basis of other criteria such as attribution by the tradition and relationship with other relevant texts.

The earliest Indian commentator who attributed this hymn to Nāgārjuna is Bhāvaviveka, which means we do have attribution by an early "trustworthy witness."
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If *Dharmadhātustava* was authored by Nāgārjuna, it seems safe to conclude that, like the *Ratnāvali* and the *Niraupamyastava*, it must have been composed among the Andhakas, probably in a Pūrvaśaila-dominated environment. The reasons for such an assumption are two. First, it is very different from the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, which was most likely composed in Mathurā, as argued above. The *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* mentions the term “bodhisattva” only once and ignores the practice of perfecting the ten bodhisattva grounds. Furthermore, it favors an apophatic description of reality, never uses the word *dharmadhātu*, makes no references to faith and is completely devoid of devotional practices. Second, the *Dharmadhātustava* shows similarities with the *Ratnāvali*, a work written among the Andhakas, in terms of advocating the bodhisattva practice and reliance on faith and worship. Furthermore, the *Niraupamyastava*, which is similar to the *Dharmadhātustava* in its references to the *dharmadhātu* and in its cataphatic description of reality, was also composed among Andhakas and, we can tell more precisely, among Pūrvaśailas.

Regarding the time of composition of the hymn, all that could be confirmed with certainty, relying on external evidence, is that it was composed before the time Bhāvaviveka lived. But, it should be pointed out that the hymn shows no doctrinal elements that were not already present in the authentic works of Nāgārjuna and the hymn knows only of the two body theory of the Buddha. Doctrinally, it seems to be less developed than the *Śrī-Mūlā* in the sense that it does not mention the theory of the *tathāgatagarbha*, it does not mention explicitly the two meanings of emptiness, and it does not mention explicitly the practice of evocation of the Buddha and acquiring eloquence through it (even though the author may have known of these practices). If
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It is accepted that the *Dharmadhātu* was composed prior to the Śrī-Mālā, we are coming close to the time of Nāgārjuna.

Unfortunately, at this point it is impossible to say much more about authenticity of the text. One thing is certain: the *Dharmadhātu* is a very different work than the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and it goes far beyond it in terms of doctrine, practice and style. But, to insist that it is not Nāgārjuna’s is to insist that Nāgārjuna is incapable (for personal, doctrinal or strategic reasons) of going beyond the position expressed in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. Such a claim would be naïve because it would assume knowledge of Nāgārjuna before examining all the works attributed to him. Furthermore, it would deny that he was capable of going beyond the confines of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. However, the *Ratnāvalī* and the *Niraupamyastava* – two undeniably authentic works – testify that he is certainly capable of going beyond his initial position. And, it has to be stressed again, doctrinally the *Dharmadhātu* does not go beyond the *Niraupamyastava*, although it provides more detail. Based on the above examination, I find the hymn probably authentic.

**A few minor points**

Verse 2 defines *dharmaḥ* as “that which itself is the cause of *samsāra.*” At this point the critical question arises – if *dharmaḥ* is intrinsically pure and is the cause of *samsāra* then where are obscurations coming from? This, of course, is one of the most obscure problems in Buddhism. Unfortunately, our hymn does not answer this question.
Verse 57 mentions the Highest Pure Land (‘og min, akaniṣṭha), the Unsurpassable Buddhafield, the Pure Land of Buddha Vairocana. The following verse uses the word tshe dpag med, which can be translated as “infinite life” but is also the name of Buddha Amitāyus (the Buddha of Infinite Life). It is difficult to ascertain in which of the two senses is the word used in verses 58 but it should be noted that one of the first epigraphic sources referring to Mahāyāna in Southern India – dating from the second century, hence, predating Nāgārjuna – is an inscription recording a donation in honor of Amitāyus. It could well be that the two verses make reference to other Buddhas by name.

The hymn makes frequent use of similes. In fact, the use of similes is the most characteristic stylistic feature of the text. If it is genuine work by Nāgārjuna, we see a wider range in his stylistic scope in addition to a widened range of doctrines and religious practices.
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*Cittavajrastava*

*sems kyi rdo rje'i bstod pa*137

Hymn in praise of the Indestructible Mind

‘jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pa la phyag ’tshal lo

Homage to the Youthful Mañuśrī

Verse 1:

gang gis sms byung dra ba ni
sems nyid kyi ni bsal mdzad
sems kyi rmongs pa sel ba yi
rang sms de la phyag ’tshal lo

Homage to one’s own mind,
the eliminator of mind’s delusions.
By it the web of mental factors belonging to the mind itself 
is eliminated.

Verse 2:

sems can mos pa sna tshogs mams
tha dad lha yi dmigs pa la
rin chen sms ni mam grol las
lha gzh an bsgrub tu yod ma yin

137 *bsTan-’giur* (Narthang) 2013, folio 77a – 77b
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Beings of different inclinations
have the idea of different gods.
But, apart from the jewel mind,
there is no establishing another deity.

Verse 3:

sems thob pa ni byang chub ste
sems ni 'gro ba lnga po yin
bde dang sdug bsngal mtshan nyid dag
sems las ma gtogs cung zad med

Attainment of the [indestructible] mind is enlightenment;
the five destinies are [nothing but] the mind,
the characteristics of pleasure and pain
do not exist at all apart from the mind.

Verse 4:

'gro ba kun gyis mthong ba rnams
cung zad bsgom pa'i nam pa yang
de kun sems kyi dra ba ru
de nyid gsung pas bstan pa yin

Lindtner (1982: n. 24) found this verse in Ādikarma pradīpa, p. 200:
cittena labhyate bodhiś cittena gatpānacakam/
na hi cittād rīte kiṃ cil laksanam sukhaduhdhayoh!!
Things seen by all transmigrating beings, 
and whatever types of meditation there are, 
are all in the web of the mind, 
the speaker of truth said.

Verse 5:

rnam par rtog pa spangs pa'i sems 
rnam par rtog pas sgo byas pa'i 
'khor ba rnam rtog tsam nyid de 
rnam rtog med pa thar pa yin

[For] the mind that abandoned conceptualisations, 
*samsāra*, produced by means of conceptualisation, 
is only a conceptualisation. 
Without conceptualisation – there is liberation.

Verse 6:

de (77b) bas kun gyis 'bad pa yis 
byang chub sems la phyag bya'o 
sems kyi rdo rje'i bsgom pa'i phyir 
de ni byang chub mchog ces bya

Therefore, all [must] zealously
pay homage to *bodhicitta*.

On account of cultivating the indestructible mind,
that [*bodhicitta*] is called "The Supreme Enlightenment" (*paramabodhi*).

Verse 7:

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khams bskyed sems ni lus kyis bcings
sems med khams ni bde bar 'jug
de phyir sems ni kun tu bsrung
bde legs sems las sangs rgyas 'byung
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The mind generating constituents [*dhātus*] is bound by the body,
without the mind the *dhātus* go to bliss.
Therefore, guard the mind in all ways,
Buddhas arise from a happy and virtuous mind.
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Comments

The Sanskrit version of the hymn does not exist, except for verse 3, quoted by Lindtner. The Tibetan text is edited and translated into French by La Vallée Poussin (1913:14-16). An edition and English translation is provided by Tola and Dragonetti (1985:37-38). The hymn has been considered by Lindtner (1982:12-14) as perhaps authentic but its content has not received critical discussion in any Western language.

Style

Without the whole text in Sanskrit, it is a thankless task to discuss the style. However, due to the brevity of the hymn, the conclusions would have to be tentative even if the Sanskrit original existed.

Form and Structure

In its form, the Cittavajrastava is unlike any of the hymns of the Catuhstava. The practice of enumeration or commemoration of the qualities of the Buddha, so dominant in the four hymns, is here absent (except in verse 4: "the speaker of truth said"). Furthermore, there is no mention of the accumulation of merit by praising the cittavajra. Finally, unlike the hymns of the Catuhstava, there is no praise of the Buddha directly, even though it may be inferred that praising the indestructible mind is praise of a quality of the Buddha. In all the features listed above, the Cittavajrastava is similar to the Dharmadhātustava.

Structurally, the hymn does not give even the slightest impression that it may have been used in a ritual context. It is not at all devotional, but explanatory of a doctrinal point or position. Once again, its similarity with the Dharmadhātustava but not with the other four hymns is obvious.
Content and doctrinal specifics

The whole hymn is organized around one topic, the jewel mind. The way in which this mind is explained is very interesting. To begin with, in the first verse the mind is introduced as the cause of enlightenment. The third verse, however, presents the same mind as the result of enlightenment. It seems that the mind has a dual function, corresponding to the two aspects (prajñā and jñāna) discussed above in the context of the Dharmadhātustava.

Verse 5 gives another very interesting statement: The mind that abandons conceptualisations realises that saṃsāra was produced by means of conceptualisation and was nothing but conceptualisation. But now that the mind is no longer conceptualising, it is liberated.

First of all, it should not be missed that the mind is never said to be empty. Second, the content of the verse resembles Dharmadhātustava 2: “That which is the cause of saṃsāra, when cleansed through purification, is itself nirvāṇa and the same is also the dharmadhātu.” The word dharmadhātu is not mentioned in the Cittavajrastava but the characteristics of the cittavajra (the indestructible mind) seem at this point similar to those of the dharmadhātu. The background assumption seems to be that the cittavajra is always present in the individual but is covered by conceptualisations, in the same way as the dharmadhātu is covered by afflictions. If this analogy is correct, what the verse seems to imply is that when cittavajra is covered by conceptualisations there is saṃsāra, but when it is free of conceptualisations there is nirvāṇa. Hence, the cittavajra seems to be the link between
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samsāra and nirvāṇa. But, while in samsāra, one does not realise this. Only for the mind that has abandoned conceptualisations does this becomes apparent.

Verse 6 is also very interesting doctrinally. It starts with the declaration that all must zealously pay homage to bodhicitta. The introduction of the term bodhicitta at this point is peculiar. It could be that the verse is explaining the dual function of the mind (being the cause for the enlightenment as well as the result, enlightenment itself). If so, bodhicitta (the mind of enlightenment, byang chub sems) is that through which the indestructible mind is cultivated but can also be seen as the result, the indestructible mind itself, hence called the “Supreme Enlightenment” (paramabodhi, byang chub mchog). In any case, the message of this verse hinges on the interplay between three terms: bodhicitta (byang chub sems), paramabodhi (byang chub mchog), and the one between them, justifying their relationship, the cittavajra (sem kyi rdo rje). It seems that, for the logic of the verse to work, the bodhicitta and the cittavajra have to be understood as the two aspects of the same mind, one representing the cause, the other the result. That is as in the Dharmadhātustava, where the same luminous mind (equated with the dharmadhātu) has a prajñā and jñāna aspects, appearing as the cause and result of enlightenment respectively.

The last verse is also difficult to understand due to the play of words: “The mind generating dhātus (kham) is bound by the body. Without the mind the dhātus (kham) go to bliss.” It could be that the first line refers to the conceptualising mind (relating to verse 5) and, in that case, it produces samsāra. The term dhātu would, therefore, refer to 18 differentiated dhātus. In the second line, “no mind” would refer to the mind without conceptualisation and the term dhātu would refer to the un-
differentiated *dharma*dhātu*, which equals the bliss of enlightenment. If so, then, once again, we see a similarity with verse 2 of the *Dharmadhātu*stava.

In order to understand the doctrine of the hymn it seems best to start with verse 6. If *bodhicitta* and *cittavajra* are two names for the same enlightened mind expressing its two different aspects - the cause and the result – then all the other verses individually and the text as a whole make very good sense:

Verse 1 pays homage to the mind that is the eliminator of mind’s delusion, and hence, is the mind that is the cause of enlightenment. One could substitute the term *bodhicitta* for this mind, since, by eliminating mind’s delusions, the indestructible mind is cultivated, as verse 6 would say. Verse 3 says that the attainment of the (indestructible) mind is enlightenment, hence, the result aspect is apparent. One could here use the word *cittavajra*. Verse 1 emphasises the cause aspect, verse 3 emphasises the result aspect, but verse 6 explains that they are actually the same mind.

Verses 2, 3 and 4 explain that all things experienced are in the web of the mind. The statement culminates in verse 5, which explains that the whole of *saṃsāra* is produced by means of conceptualisation and is only a conceptualisation.

Verse 7 further explains that *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are results of the same mind.

The underlying assumption of the whole hymn, it seems, is that the indestructible mind is always present in all beings (as is the *dharma*dhātu* in the *Dharmadhātu*stava*). When it is covered by conceptualisations, there is *saṃsāra*, when it is free of conceptualisations, there is *nirvāṇa*.

In conclusion, it seems that in its two fundamental doctrinal features, 1) the same indestructible mind has two aspects as cause and as result, and 2) the same mind
when obstructed is in samsāra but when free of obstruction is in nirvāṇa, the hymn is strikingly similar to the Dharmadhātustava.

**Authenticity**

Considering that some verses of the hymn are too hermetic to be understood on their own, it is very likely that this hymn was not an independent work but an appendix to a larger work. Considering similarities, it is very likely that the Dharmadhātustava was that larger work. It is possible that the topic of the mind was considered not to have been sufficiently elaborated in the Dharmadhātustava and the Cittavajrastava provides that appendix. Or, maybe the Cittavajrastava provides an explanation of the same topic from a different angle, i.e., on the indestructible element of enlightenment present in all sentient beings. Indeed, without the Dharmadhātustava it is difficult to understand the Cittavajrastava. Certainly, the Mālamadhyamakakārikā, the Ratnāvalī and the first four hymns do not help here.

The relationship between the Dharmadhātustava and the Cittavajrastava does not prove that both hymns are Nāgārjuna’s but if one is accepted as authentic, there is greater likelihood that the other is also authentic. Hence I accept the hymn as probably authentic.
Stutyalita stava

bstod pa las 'das par bstod pa

Hymn to the One Beyond Praise

'jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pa la phyag 'tshal lo

Homage to the Youthful Mañjuśrī!

Verse 1:
bla med lam las gshegs pa yi
de bzhin gshegs pa bstod 'das kyang
gus shing spro ba'i sems kyis ni
bdag gis bstod 'das bstod par bgyi

Although the Tathāgata, who has gone by the unsurpassed path,
is beyond praise,
I, with the mind inspired by devotion,
praise the one beyond praise.

Verse 2:
bdag dang gzhan dang gnyis ka las
rmam par dben pa'i dngos gzigs kyang

139 bstTan-’gjur (Narthang), 2020, folio 87a – 88a.
khyod kyi thugs rje sems can las
ma log pa ni ngo mtshar lags

Even though you see reality
devoid of self, other and both,
it is marvellous that your compassion does not turn away
from sentient beings.

Verse 3:
ngo bo nyid kyis ma skyes shing
tshig las 'das pa'i spyod yul gyi
chos mams khyod kyis gang bstan pa
de ni khyod kyi ngo mtshar lags

You have taught
that dharmas are un-arisen by way of svabhāva
and are beyond the domain of words.
That is your marvellous [teaching].

Verse 4:
phung po khams dang skye mched mams
khyod kyis bsgrags (87b) par mdzad lags kyang
de dag yongs su 'dzin pa ni
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nagarjuna

slad kyis kyang ni bzlog par mdzad

Although you declared aggregates, constituents, and sense spheres, later you turned aside grasping of these.

Verse 5:

gang zhig rkyen las de ma mchis
dngos mams rkyen las ji ltar skye
de skad mkhas pa khyod gsungs pas
spros pa mams ni bcad pa lags

If one thing exists without a cause, how can things arise through a cause? By speaking these wise words, o Protector, you broke up conceptual proliferations.

Verse 6:

gang dag tshogs las rab grub na
tshogs pa rgyu las 'byung mthong ba
de dag mtha' gnyis brten par ni
khyod kyis shin tu gzigs pa lags
Those who see that if something is established through the establishment of conditions then the totality of conditions arises from a cause rely on two extremes.
This has been thoroughly realized by you.

Verse 7:

dngos po rkyen la brten grub par
khyod ni shin tu bzhed pa lags
de ltar byas pa'i skyon lags par
'di ltar ston pa khyod kyis gzigs

That things are established in dependence on conditions,
is your worthy proclamation.
You who teach in this way
have seen the faults of what is produced thus.

Verse 8:
gang nas kyang ni mchi ma lags
gang du yang ni mchis ma lags
dngos po thams cad gzugs brnyan dang
mtshungs par khyod ni bzhed pa lags

You asserted that
it does not exist through anything,
it does not exist anywhere and
that all things are similar to a reflection.

Verse 9:

Ita ba thams cad spang ba'i phyir
mgon po khyod kyis stong pa gsungs
de yang yongs su btags pa ste
dngos su mgon po khyod mi bzhed

For the sake of abandoning all views, o Protector,
the empty has been declared by you.
Furthermore, that [emptiness] being imputed,
you did not declare it to be substantial, o Protector.

Verse 10:

stong dang mi stong bzhed ma lags
gnyis kar khyod dgyes ma lags te
de la brtsod pa ma mchis par
khyod kyi gsung chen spyod pa lags

You do not assert empty or not empty,
you are not pleased with both [together].
There can be no argument about that,
this is the manner of your great speech.
Verse 11:

gzhan min dgos po yod min zhing
 gzhan min gnyis min zhes kyang gsungs
gcig dang gzhan nyid spangs pas na
 ji Ita bur yang dgos ma mchis

Without other, a thing does not exist;
without other, you say, “not two.”
Abandoning singularity and difference,
a thing cannot exist in any way.

Verse 12:

gal te skye sogs gsum mchis na
 'dus byas mtshan nyid mchis par 'gyur
 de dag gi yang skye la sogs
gsum pa tha dad 'gyur pa lags\(^{140}\)

If we have the three: arising, etc.,
then there would be the characteristics of conditioned phenomena.

\(^{140}\) Compare *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*, VII, 1:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{yadi saṃskṛta utpādas tatra yuktā tri-\text{lakṣāṇī}} / \\
\text{atḥaṃsaṃskṛta utpādāj kathaṃ saṃskṛta-\text{lakṣāṇaḥ}} / \\
\end{align*}\]

If arising is conditioned, therein three characteristics are proper. If arising is unconditioned,
how can there be characteristics of the conditioned?

The same verse with commentary also appears in the *Mādhyamikavārtti* (*Madhyamakārikās*) (la Vallée Poussin, 1902-1913:145-6) and *Prasannapadā* by *Candrakīrti* (Vaidya, 1960:59).
Moreover, the three[characteristics] of “being born,” etc., of those would be different.\textsuperscript{141}

Verse 13:

skye sogs gsum pos so so ni
'dus byas las la nus ma lags
gcig la gcig tu 'dus pa rnams
phrad par yang ni mchis ma lags\textsuperscript{142}

If the three: arising, etc., are separate,
they have no capacity to function as a conditioned phenomenon.
If they all include each other,
there will be no meeting.

Verse 14:

de ltar mtshan gzhi mtshan ma mchis
de ltar grub pa ma lags pas
'dus byas grub pa ma lags na
'dus ma byas lta ga la grub

\textsuperscript{141} Alternative reading of the last two lines: “And the arising etc. of these [three] would become a different three (i.e., arising of arising, duration of arising, disappearance of arising).”

\textsuperscript{142} Compare \textit{Mālamadhyamakārikā}, VII, 2:

\begin{verbatim}
 utpādāyasya traya vyastā naśātya laksāṇa-karmanāh/
sarṣṣṛṣṭasya samastāḥ syur ekatra kathām ekadā/
\end{verbatim}

When the triad consisting of arising, etc. are discrete, they are not adequate to function as characteristics of the conditioned. If they were to be combined, how can they be in the same place at the same time?
The same verse with commentary also appears in the \textit{Mādhyamikavṛtti} (\textit{Madhyamakārikās}) (la Vallée Poussin, 1902-1913:145-6) and \textit{Prasannapadā} by Candrakirti (Vaidya, 1960:59).
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nagarjuna

It is not established that
the characterisation and the characteristic exist.
If the conditioned is not established,
how can the unconditioned be established?

Verse 15:

smra ba'i seng ges de skad du
khyod nyid gsungs na seng ge yis
'bigs byed glang chen smra rnams kyi
rgyas pa bsal bar gyur pa bzhin

When you, the lion among speakers, speak thus,
it is like the lion
removing the arrogance
of the words of the Vindhya-mountain elephant.

Verse 16:

(88a) lam zhugs gnod pa sna tshogs dang
lta ba'i lam ngan mi bsten ltar
khyod la brten nas yod pa dang
med pa nyid la'ang brten ma lags

One who has entered the path does not resort to
various ways of causing harm and to the bad path of views.
Likewise, having relied on you, 
there is no reliance on existence and non-existence.

Verse 17:

khyod kyis dgongs nas gsungs pa dang 
gang dag gis ni de ltar rtogs 
de dag khyod kyis dgongs gsungs pa 
phyir zhing rtogs par bgyi mi 'tshal

Those who have understood in this way 
what was said by you with [hidden] intention, 
they have no need of further understanding 
of your intended words.

Verse 18:

dngos kun mya ngan 'das mtshungs par 
de ltar gang gis rnam shes pa 
de tshe de la ji ltar bur 
ngar 'dzin kun tu 'byung bar 'gyur

For him who realises that 
all things are like nirvāṇa 
how can the conception of “I” 
arise at that time there?
Verse 19:

de ltar yang dag rig pa'i mchog
de nyid rig pa khyod bstod pa'i
bdag gi bsod nams gang yin des
'jig rten yang dag rig mchog shog

By means of whatever merit I, who praise you,
the knower of reality, supreme among
those who know correctly, [have accumulated] in this way,
may the world have superior correct knowledge.
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

Comments

The Sanskrit version of the hymn does not exist except in Patel’s (1932:701-3) reconstruction from Tibetan. The Tibetan text has been edited by Patel (1932:703-5). Despite that, no translation has been provided in any Western language. The hymn is classified by Lindtner (1982:12-13) as perhaps authentic and then, in note 22 on the same page, upgraded to being quite possibly authentic. Lindtner further notes that this is the most philosophical of all hymns attributed to Nāgārjuna, apart from Lokārūtastava and Acintyastava.

Style

Patel’s reconstruction makes it obvious that the hymn has been written in anuśṭubh metre but without the original there is no point in attempting an analysis of the style.

Structure and content

The structure of the hymn is relatively simple. The first two verses are salutatory, praising the unsurpassed accomplishment and compassion of the Buddha, while the last verse dedicates the merit. Verses 3 to 18 form one section, in which verses 3 to 16 commemorate key points of the teaching of the Buddha, and verses 17 and 18 provide a summary.

143 Key themes of the verses 3-16:

3: no svabhāva
4: skandhas, constituents, sense spheres
5: no prapañca
6: avoiding the two extremes
7: dependent origination
8: all things are like reflections and the same: empty
9: all views are empty and imputed
10: neither empty nor non-empty can be asserted
11: abandon all (as insubstantial)
12: impossible to establish svabhāva of the characteristics of compounded phenomena
Practically all of the basic points of the Madhyamaka doctrine are present in this hymn. Doctrinally speaking, the hymn does not go any further than the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. But, just as in the case of the *Lokātātastava*, there is one fundamental difference: here the doctrines are delivered while the author is addressing the Buddha in the second person, as if standing in front of him. It is as if the author commemorates his teaching as a form of worship because of devotion.

**Authenticity**
We do not know of any case where verses of this hymn have been quoted by the commentators. Due to the non-existence of a Sanskrit manuscript, the analysis of the style and a comparison with other works reliably attributed to Nāgārjuna cannot be conducted. However, there are obvious and significant similarities in the doctrinal and other content between the *Stutyaatītastava* and the other authentic works of the master.

In terms of the doctrinal content, the hymn is concerned with the teaching of emptiness and explains it through various arguments, practically all of which are typical for Nāgārjuna’s style of Madhyamaka and can be found implicitly or explicitly in his analytical works. Some of the statements closely resemble the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*: dharmas have no *svabhāva* and are, ultimately, beyond the domain of words (verse 3); conventionally the Buddha spoke of 5 aggregates, 18 constituents and 12 sense spheres but, in order to reach the ultimate, grasping of those must be abandoned (4); in order to be liberated one must break with all conceptual proliferations (5); ultimately, things are like reflections (8); the Buddha declared

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13: impossible to establish *svabhāva* of the characteristics of compounded phenomena
14: neither the conditioned or unconditioned can be established
15: the lion’s roar removes arrogance
16: “exist” and “non-exist” are dependent; the path to follow is one of no harm and no bad views.
things as “empty” for pragmatic reasons in order to facilitate the abandoning of all views (9); both “empty” and “non-empty” must be abandoned (10); all views entail inner contradictions (11-15).

There are great similarities between this hymn and the four hymns of the Catuḥṣṭava. To begin with, like all four hymns of the Catuḥṣṭava, the Stutyatitastava starts with a verse of salutation and ends with the verse of dedication of merit accumulated by praising the Buddha.

Like the Niraupamyaṭaṭa 23 and the Paramārthastava 2, the Stutyatitastava describes the act of reverence towards the Buddha as devotion (bhakti, gus pa) and does not shy away from spelling out the appropriateness of devotion (despite the sober tone of the Mūlamadhyamakārikā, which is devoid of any forms of worship).

The logic of verse 2 of the Stutyatitastava is similar to verse 2 of the Lokāḥstava: all dharmas being empty, persons do not exist ultimately. Yet, even though the Buddha understands this, his compassion does not turn away from them.

Almost all verses can find their doctrinal and logical parallels in the Mūlamadhyamakārikā. The only significant difference is in the form: in the Mūlamadhyamakārikā the logic and the arguments are delivered as products of Nāgārjuna’s philosophical analysis, but in the Stutyatitastava all are given as spoken by the Buddha, with Nāgārjuna only repeating them faithfully and thus praising the master through evocation of his teaching.144 Each one of the four hymns of the Catuḥṣṭava follows the same practice; an overwhelming majority of the verses are

144 Most of the verses are 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.
recollections of the word of the Buddha, many of them directly addressing the Buddha as if he were personally present.

The presented evidence seems to warrant the conclusion that the Stutyāṅitastava was written by an author with a very similar understanding of the purpose of the stotra genre as the author of the hymns of Catuḥstava. Furthermore, we find full doctrinal compatibility with the key elements of Nāgārjuna’s doctrine, but no close similarities in form or doctrine to the hymns by Aśvaghoṣa, Mātṛceta, Rāhulabhadra or any other known stotra-kavi, and nothing in the content to suggest a different time of composition than that of Nāgārjuna. In summary, there is no reason to dispute the authenticity of the hymn.
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

*Aṣṭamahāsthānacaityaastotra*

*gnas chen po brgyad kyi mchod rten la bstod pa*¹⁴⁵

_Hymn in Praise of the Eight Great Places of Caityas_

'jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pa la phyag 'tshal lo

Homage to the Youthful Mañjuśrī

Verse 1:

'gro ba'i bla ma gcig pu lum bir bltams
ser skyā'i grong khyer gzhi ru gnas par mdzad
yon tan rin chen bye bas brgyan pa yi
bde gshegs mchod rten rnams la phyag 'tshal lo

Homage to the caitya adorned with ten million jewels of good qualities
of the Sugata, the sole teacher of beings,

who was born in Lumbini,

and lived in the city of Kapilavastu.

Verse 2:

ma ga d+ha yi byang chub shing drung du
chu bo ne rany+dza na zhes bya ba'i
'gram bzhugs mchod rten yon tan rgya che ba

¹⁴⁵ *bsTan-'dgrur* (Narthang), 2024, folio 90a–90b.
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

byang chub rten du gyur la phyag 'tshal lo

In [the state of] Magadha, beneath the bodhi tree,
on the banks of the river Nīrāñjana, [the Buddha] sat.
I worship the vast caitya
which is the basis for enlightenment.

Verse 3:
ka shika yi ba ra na se ru
chos kyi 'khor lo rnam grol rmad byung na
nyon mongs sgrib pa rnam par gcod mdzad pa
ye shes mchod rten bzhi la phyag 'tshal lo

In Kāśi’s Vārānasī,
where the marvellous liberating wheel of dharma [was turned],
he destroyed the obscurations due to conflicting emotions.
I worship the four wisdom caityas [located there].

Verse 4:
mnyan du yod par gzhan stobs tshar bead nas
dze ta'i tshal du cho 'phrul chen po bstan
sa gsum dgongs pa mchod tu bsgrub mdzad pa
mu stegs pham mdzad mchod rten phyag 'tshal lo

In Śrāvastī, having tamed the power of others,
he demonstrated the great miracle in the Jeta grove,
having accomplished the highest intention for all three worlds.
I worship the *caitya* [located in the place] of defeat of heretics.

Verse 5:

grong khyer dam pa mchog ni gsal ldan du
lha rnams gnas gshegs bla na med par babs
zhabs la tshangs dbang cod pan gyis mchod (90b) pa
sum cu'i lhas mchod mchod rten phyag 'tsal lo

In the most excellent town of Sāṇkāśya,
gods descended to go to the unsurpassable abode
and Lord Brahmā made offering with [his] crown to the feet [of the Buddha].
I worship the *caitya* worshiped by thirty gods.

Verse 6:

dge 'dun dbyen du snagar gyur las
ston pa'i nyan thos rab mthun pa
rgyal po'i khab kyi 'od ma'i tshal
byams ngos mchod rten phyag 'tshal lo

Having previously caused the division of Saṅgha,
great number of hearers were brought together
in the bamboo grove of Rājagrha.
I worship the *caitya* revealing loving kindness.
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

Verse 7:

sku tshe 'du byed btang pa las
slar yang sku tshe byin brlabs pa
rnam grol yangs pa can gyi ni
byin brlabs mchod rten phyag 'tshal lo

Having abandoned the formative forces of body and life,
once again the liberated one
displayed miraculous powers with body and life.
I worship the Vaiśālī's caitya.

Verses 8:

ku sha'i grong du 'gro ba rnams
dge ba la ni sbyor mdzad cing
'gran med gyang gnas zung gi tshal
mchod rten mya ngan 'das phyag 'tshal

In Kuśinagara [he gave instructions] to all living beings
to apply themselves in doing virtue.
I worship the nirvāṇa caitya [located in]
the unparalleled garden of the two [śāla trees] situated in the [country of] Malas.

Verse 9:

shaka thub mchod rten brgyad po dang
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nagarjuna

phyogs bcu gzhan dang gzhan rnams na
bzhugs pa'i chos sku kun la 'dud
zhi la rtag tu spyis phyag 'tshal

I pay homage to the dharmakāya

located in the eight caityas of the Śākya Buddha

and in each and every of the ten directions,

which is venerated in all places and eternally in peace.

Verse 10:
'di ltar spros pa kun bral dpe med dag cing dag pa'i ngo bo nyid
sangs rgyas chos sku mkha' ltar 'gro ba la khyab yang dag phyag 'tshal bas
bsod nams gangs ri'i kha dog ltar dkar ba dag gi rgyud la gang bsags pa
des na sems can ma lus rigs 'dzin bde rtogs byang chub thob par shog

In this way I have properly paid worship to the dharmakāya of the Buddha which, like
space, pervades all beings,
is beyond all conceptual proliferations, unparalleled in purity and which has the
essential nature of purity.
By means of that merit, white like the colour of the snowy mountains [has been]
accumulated in my mental continuum,
may all beings, whatever family they belong to, attain happiness, realisation and
enlightenment.
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

Comments

The Sanskrit manuscript of the hymn does not exist. The Chinese and Tibetan versions were edited and translated in English by Hajime Nakamura (1980:259-265). The hymn was also translated by P.C. Bagchi (1941:228-9) but he did not provide an edition. Lindtner does not comment on the *Aṣṭamahāsthānacaitya* directly but, he considers the *Dvādaśakāraṇayastotra* as perhaps authentic\(^{146}\) and agrees with Hajime Nakamura that the two are likely to be authored by the same person (Lindtner, 1982:13).

Structure

The *Aṣṭamahāsthānacaitya* is a well structured hymn containing ten elegant verses. The first eight verses pay homage to eight *caityas*, each located in a place associated with a great event of Buddha’s life:

1. Homage to the *caitya* associated with the birth of the Buddha located in Lumbini,
2. Homage to the *caitya* of enlightenment located in the state of Magadha, on the banks of the river Niraṇjana,
3. Homage to the *caitya* of the First Turning located in Vāraṇasī, in the land of Kāśi,
4. Homage to the *caitya* of the defeat of heretics located in the Jeta grove in Śrāvasti,

\(^{146}\) Lindtner explains: “Clearly a Madhyamaka text (speaks of *puniyajñanasamābhūra*, *upāyakausalya* etc.) relating the Buddha’s *dvādaśakāra*, cf. BV, 91-92; CS, II, 23” (1982:13).
5. Homage to the caitya of 33 gods worshiping the Buddha located in Sāṃkaśya, also known as the place where the Buddha descended from the heaven of the 33 gods,\textsuperscript{147}

6. Homage to the caitya of harmonizing the saṅgha and revealing lovingkindness located in Rājagṛha,

7. Homage to the caitya of demonstration of miraculous powers located in Vaiśālī, also known as the place where the Buddha spoke on the limits of life,

8. Homage to the caitya of entering into parinirvāṇa located in Kuśinagara, in the country of Malas, between the two sāla trees.

The following verse (9) pays homage to the dharmakāya located in the eight caityas and the final verse (10) dedicates the merit accumulated by thus praising to the benefit of all sentient beings.

Content

The title and the structure explain the content – this is a praise of the eight places of the caitya. It is not the praise of eight caityas, since the hymn recognizes the existence of many more, but the praise of the eight places connected to great miracles on which caityas have been erected. By enumerating these places, the hymn worships the Buddha’s qualities of enlightenment. Related to this observation are two further points. The first point relates to Nāgārjuna’s Buddhology. He understands the Buddha as perfect both physically and mentally. The appearance in a human body subject to illness, old age and death was only a show in order to give most appropriate instructions for the advancement of beings along the spiritual path according to their

\textsuperscript{147} According to all traditional accounts, the caitya is related to the place where the Buddha descended from the heaven of the 33 gods (trīyāstrīṃśāḥ), even though the verse in this hymn mentions 30 gods.
capacities. This type of understanding has been discussed in the context of the
Niraupamayastava and other authentic hymns. The second point relates to Nāgarjuna’s
hymnology. By enumerating the qualities of enlightenment this hymn resembles the
structure of most of Nāgarjuna’s hymns. Ultimately, all these hymns are in praise of
Buddha’s dharmakāya.

The hymn does not start with a separate verse of salutation of the Buddha but,
since verse 9 identifies all caityas with the dharmakāya of the Tathāgata, it can be
argued that the first eight verses are one elaborate salutation.

The final verse is a beautiful dedication of merit, more elaborate than any we
have seen before. Hence, the hymn is a complete work, containing formal salutation
and formal transference of merit, similar to all the hymns of the Catuhstava and
several others.

The content of the hymn shows no disagreement with any of the tenets held by
Madhyamaka or Nāgarjuna but, it should be noted, it does not disagree with most of
the tradition.

Other Buddhas are not mentioned in this hymn. Each verse refers only to the
Śākya Buddha. Also, Mahāyāna is nowhere mentioned or alluded to. There is nothing
in the first eight verses with which any Buddhist school would not agree. The above
observations are not proofs of authenticity but arguments that the hymn could have
been composed in the second or third century in practically any Mahāsaṅghika
environment in India. The style, of course, suggests that it was composed by an
accomplished poet.
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

Doctrinal specifics

The last two verses provide the most striking doctrinal feature of the hymn. The author identifies paying homage to caityas by paying homage to the dharmakāya of the Buddha. The language is unambiguous: it is not the case that caityas symbolically represent the Buddha by holding his relics but they are the Buddha in his Dharma Body or, in other words, the Buddha in his Dharma Body is located there. This point deserves further attention for several reasons related to authenticity.

There is not enough specific evidence in this hymn to establish a direct link with Nāgārjuna but it may be helpful to compare some of its features with similar ones found around the time of Nāgārjuna. The evidence will not have the power to locate the time or place of composition of the hymn but it will show that as early as the time of Nāgārjuna, and in the region of Nāgārjunakośa, similar ideas were in circulation.

First, the same close relationship between the worship of the caitya and Buddha's dharmakāya existed around the third century Nāgārjunakośa. In several donative inscriptions connected with the Mahācetiya in Nāgārjunakośa we find an atypical phrase: saṃma-saṃbudhasa dhātuvaraparigahitasa mahācetiya, continuously misunderstood by commentators until Gregory Schopen, after impressive detective work, concluded that it must be translated as: “At the Great shrine of the Perfectly Enlightened One who is enclosed in the relic chamber” (1997:151). After examining other sources, Schopen concludes that in the period both preceding and following the Nāgārjunikośa inscriptions which date from the 148

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148 Asvaghosha’s Budhacarita, Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa (Schopen, 1997:152-9).
end of the third to the beginning of the fourth century the conception in that region was that the relic contained in the *caitya* is a living presence animated and characterised by the same qualities as the living Buddha. Significantly for us, the inscriptions belong to the Aparamahāvīnaseliya group of which we know nothing specific, but the general assumption is that it is the same as the Aparaśaila – one of the schools in Andhra also present at the time of Nāgārjuna. Hence, it seems significant that we find an atypical doctrinal position very prominent in Nāgārjunikoṇḍa and we also find a hymn attributed to Nāgārjuna – associated with the same region – in which the same claim is so comfortably made. Of course, this is not a proof of direct relationship between our hymn and the Aparamahāvīnaseliyas/Aparaśailas but it certainly does not damage the possibility of this being an authentic work by Nāgārjuna. If Nāgārjuna lived among the Andhakas and composed this hymn, it is only to be expected that he would align himself with the doctrinal positions of the hosts, as he did so many times in the past.

Before continuing to the next point, one suspicion must be addressed. Vasumitra, listing the common tenets of the Caityaśaila, Aparaśaila and Uttarāśaila schools, under number 2 writes: “Even if one makes offering to a *stūpa*, one cannot acquire great fruits” (Masuda, 1925:38). This tenet suggests that Aparaśailas and other Andhakas did not consider the worship of a *stūpa* highly. Commenting on the same question, Schopen has two points to make. First, he makes a distinction between the terms *stūpa* and *caitya*, noting that, “one of the most notable characteristics of the Aparamahāvīnaseliya inscriptions at Nāgārjunikoṇḍa is the complete avoidance of the term *stūpa*” (Schopen, 1997:159-160). This position allows one to argue that, even if Vasumitra is correct about the Aparamahāvīnaseliya (Aparaśaila) tenet, the conclusion
only applies to the stūpa but not to the caitya. Still, this would be the weaker argument. The second point is much more interesting. Schopen confronts the evidence found on the ground – an epigraph written by the members of the school describing their own practice – with the evidence found in a text written by an unknown author, of unknown geographical provenance, expressing the views of a group to which he did not belong. Naturally, Schopen suggests that, in ascertaining what tenets Aparamahāvinaseliya’s held, we should consider what Aparamahāvinaseliya monks in the third century actually did rather than what a Sarvāstivāda author of the fourth century said that they did (Schopen, 1997:160). Agreeing with Schopen it could be added that the Ratanāvalī, composed in the same region at the end of the second century or the beginning of the third, prescribes worship of a stūpa as not only a legitimate practice but a preferable one for a bodhisattva. Summarising the discussion, one could say that even though it cannot be proven that the Aṣṭamahāsthāna-caityastotra was composed by Nāgārjuna, the evidence suggests that such a possibility is acceptable. There is nothing in the hymn to disagree with the views held in the area where Nāgārjuna lived.

Second, since ultimately this hymn is about worship of the Buddha’s dharmakāya, which generates immense merit, thematically it fits well with all four hymns of the Catuḥstava as well as with the Stutyafitastava. All those hymns are salutations to Buddha’s enlightened qualities, his teaching, his deeds and his two bodies. By extension, we can conclude that even the Dharmadhūrṣṭavā and the Cittavajrastrastra fit in the same group since they also pay tribute to the dharmakāya from a different angles. The point made here does not prove or deny authenticity but it does highlight the common thread in all the hymns.
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nagarjuna

Authenticity

In the paper entitled “The Eight Great Caityas and their Cult,” P.C. Bagchi (1941) translated three hymns of praise to the Eight Caityas – two from Tibetan and one from Chinese. Regarding the first two he writes:

The first two texts (I and II) are said to be the works to Acarya Nagarjuna.

This Nagarjuna was certainly a person different from the great Nagarjuna, the founder of the Madhyamaka school of philosophy. The great Nagarjuna does not seem to have taken delight in the composition of light poems except the Suhrillekha which has however a different character. There was a later Nagarjuna who was a teacher at Nalanda and lived in the 10th century A.D. (See my Kaulajñānanirñaya, p. 28). The nature of the two texts fits in well with the authorship of this latter Nagarjuna (Bagchi, 1941:224).

The two texts mentioned are the two hymns with the same name, the Aṣṭamahāsthānacaityastotra (Narthang, gnas chen po brgyad kyi mchod rten la bstd pa, 2024, folio 90a – 90b) and the Aṣṭamahāsthānacaityastotra (Narthang, gnas chen po brgyad kyi mchod rten la bstd pa, 2025, folio 90b – 91a), from the list of eighteen attributed to Nagarjuna by the Tibetan canon. They are very different in style, structure and content, as will soon be illustrated, since the second will be treated in the following chapter. It is interesting at this point to consider Bagchi’s arguments since he is the only scholar that we know of who comments on the authenticity of the hymn.

First, he considers this hymn “light.” As the above examination has shown, the hymn is elegant, carefully constructed and well crafted and obviously written by a master poet. Bagchi considers it “light” not because he compares it with Nagarjuna’s
analytical works but because he considers philosophical analysis as “heavier” than worship. There is no evidence to suggest that philosophical analysis was traditionally considered more important than practices such as worship or merit accumulation. Nāgārjuna certainly does not do so. Wisdom and merit always go together for him.

The second point is also interesting. Bagchi suggests the 10th century Nālandā teacher of the same name as author of the hymn. The nature of the hymn may fit well with the authorship of this later Nāgārjuna but it also fits well with the second to third century Nāgārjuna who lived around Nāgārjunakośa. As discussed above, there is nothing in the hymn that could be considered atypical for the time and place of the author of the Ratnāvali and the Niraupamyastava. Once again, this line of reasoning does not prove authenticity but it proves that it cannot and should not be excluded out of hand.

Summary

The hymn does not exist in Sanskrit so it is not possible to compare the style. In terms of the practice of worship, it is similar to the Ratnāvali where Nāgārjuna recommends to the king to worship in the presence of stūpas and thus generate merit. In terms of generating merit through worshiping the Buddha (here present in his Dharma body), it is similar to the hymns of the Catuḥstava and the Stūyatitastava. Given that Andhakas considered a caitya to be the house where the Buddha resides, it is not unreasonable to assume that this hymn may have originated in the same circles, thus fitting well with the place of Nāgārjuna’s residence. All these conclusions are fallible and are not proofs of authenticity but at least they show that there is nothing in this
hymn that would contradict any of the tenets held by Andhakas of his time. I accept the hymn as probably authentic.
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

*Dvādaśakāranayastotra*

*mdsad pa bcu gnis kyi tshul la bstod pa zhes bya ba*¹⁴⁹

The hymn of the method of the twelve deeds [of the Buddha]

sangs rgyas shakya thub pa la phyag 'tshal lo

Homage to the Buddha Śākyamuni

Verse 1:

gang gis dang por byang chub thugs bskyed nas
bsod nams ye shes tshogs gnyis rdzogs mdzad cing
dus 'dir mdzad pa brgya chen 'gro ba yi
mgon gyur khyod la bdag gyi bstod par bgyi

To you who at the beginning generated the enlightened mind,
completed the accumulation of wisdom and merit,
and who has at this time become the protector of beings through your 100 great deeds,
I offer praise.

Verse 2:

lha (91b) mams 'dul mdzad 'dul ba'i dus mkhyen nas
lha las babs nas glang chen ltar gshegs te
rigs la gzigs nas lha mo sgyu 'phrul gyi

¹⁴⁹ *bsTan-'giur* (Narthang), 2026, folio 91a -- 92a.
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nagarjuna

Ihums su zhugs par mdzad la phyag ’tshal lo

I praise you who, having tamed the gods, recognizing the time to train [humans],
descending from the gods departed in the likeness of an elephant [and]
having recognized the family,
entered the womb of Māyādevī.

Verse 3:

zla ba bcu rdzogs shakya’i sras po ni
bkra šis lum bi’i tshal du bltams pa’i tshe
tshangs dang brgya byin gyis btud mtshan mchog ni
byang chub rigs su nges mdzad phyag ’tshal lo

At the time when, at the end of ten months, a son was born in the Śākya clan
In Lumbini, in the garden of good fortune,
Brahmā and Indra paid homage.
I pay homage to you whose superior marks prove that you belong to the awakened lineage.

Verse 4:

gzhon nu stobs ldan mi yi\textsuperscript{150} seng ge des
ang+ga mag d+hara ni sgyu rtsal bstan

\textsuperscript{150} The manuscript reads yi but the verse makes much more sense with yi.
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

skye bo dregs pa can rams tshar bcad nas
'gran zla med par mdzad la phyag 'tshal lo

As a powerful prince, like a lion of humans,
you demonstrated [supernatural] ability in worldly arts [anga-maga-dhara],
[and] subjugated all haughty people.
I pay homage to you who performed without rival.

Verse 5:

'jig rten chos dang mthun pa bya ba dang
kha na ma tho spang phyir btsun mo yi
'khor dang ldn mdzad thabs la mkhas pa yis
rgyal srid skyong bar mdzad la phyag 'tshal lo

I pay homage to you who,
in order to act in conformity with worldly ways and to eliminate censure,
skilfully took a retinue of queens
and acted as protector of the kingdom.

Verse 6:

'khor ba'i bya ba snying po med gzigs nas
khyim nas byung ste mkha' la gshogs nas kyang
mchod rten rnam dag drung du nyid la nyid
rab tu byung bar mdzad la phyag 'tshal lo
I pay homage to you who,

having seen *samsāric* activities as essenceless,

leaving home went in the air and

in front of the stūpa of Great Purity ordained yourself.

Verse 7:

brtsam pas byang chub 'grub par dgongs nas ni
ne ra ny+dzana'i 'gram du lo drug tu
dka' ba spyad mdzad brtson 'grus mthar pyin nas
bsam gtan mchog brnyes mdzad la phyag 'tshal lo

I pay homage to you who,

intending to achieve enlightenment through spiritual practice,

undertook austerities for six years near the [river] Nirañjana and

reached perfection of effort discovering the highest *dhyāna*.

Verse 8:

thog ma med nas 'bad pa don yod phyir
magad+ha yi byang chub shing drung du
skyil krung mi g yo mngon par sangs rgyas nas
byang chub rdzogs par mdzad la phyag 'tshal lo
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

I pay homage to you who, in order to [make] the beginningless effort meaningful, cross-legged, immovable, you awakened completely, beneath the Bodhi Tree in Magadha, and realized perfect enlightenment.

Verse 9:

thugs rjes 'gro la myur du gzigs nas ni
ba ra na se la sogs gnas mchog tu
chos kyi 'khor lo bskor nas gdul bya mams
theg pa gsum la 'god mdzad phyang 'tshal lo

I pay homage to you who, having immediately seen all beings with compassion, turned the wheel of Dharma in Vārānasi and other supreme places and established disciples in the Three Vehicles.\(^{151}\)

Verse 10:

gzhan gyi'rgol ba ngan pa tshar bcad nas
mu stegs ston pa drug dang lhas byin sogs
khor mo 'jig gi yul du bdud rnams btul
thub pa g.yul las rgyal mdzad phyag 'tshal lo

I pay homage to you, silent sage victorious in battles who,

\(^{151}\) The reference is to the vehicles of the śrāvakas, pretyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas.
having destroyed the false arguments of others, such as Devadatta and the six fīrtiḥka teachers, in the land of Khor-mo Jik\textsuperscript{152} tamed the demons.

Verse 11:

srid pa gsum (92a) na dpe med yon tan gyis
mnyan du yod par cho 'phrul chen po bstan
lha mi 'gro ba kun gyis rab mchod pa
bstan pa rgyas par mdzad la phyag 'tshal lo

I pay homage to you who spread the teaching
with [your] enlightened qualities unequalled in the triple world,
who manifested the great miracle in Śrāvasti,
and was greatly honoured by gods, men and all other beings.

Verse 12:

le lo can rnams myur du bskul ba'i phyir
rtsa mchog grong gi sa gzhi gtsang ma ru
'chi med rdo rje lta bu'i sku gshegs nas
mya ngan 'da' bar mdzad la phyag 'tshal lo

I pay homage to you who, in order to quickly inspire the lazy ones,

\textsuperscript{152} Tibetan rendering for the Sanskrit name of the location.
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nagarjuna

in the immaculate place of Kuśinagara

enacted the passing into peace

having gone to [your] diamond-like body.

Verse 13:

yang dag nyid du 'jigs pa med phyir dang
ma 'ongs sems can bsod nams thob bya'i phyir
de nyid du ni ring bsrel mang sprul nas
cha brgyad sku gdung mdzad la phyag 'tshal lo

Since in reality you are beyond destruction

and in order that future beings may obtain merit,

at that very place you miraculously transformed yourself into many relics

and divided your remains into eight parts.

Verse 14:

de ltar bstan pa'i bdag po bcom ldan gyi
mdzad pa'i tshul la mdo tsam bstod pa yi
dge bas 'gro ba kun gyi spyod pa yang
bde gshegs nyid kyi spyod dang mtshungs par shog

In this way, by the merit of this short hymn on the manner of [the 12] deeds

Of the Bhagavan, the master of the teaching,

May the deeds of all transmigrating beings become equal
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

To the deeds of the Tathāgata.
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

Comments

The hymn has a very prominent place among the Tibetans and is chanted daily as liturgy by followers of all four lineages. Nevertheless, it has not attracted much scholarly attention. The Sanskrit manuscript of the Dvādaśakāranayastotra has not yet been found and the Tibetan (mdzad pa gnyis kyi tshul la bstod pa zhes bya ba, Narthang, 2026, folio 91a – 92a) has not been edited. There is one translation in English, by Mathew Akester (2006) in Buddhist Himalaya, the online journal of Nagarjuna Institute of Exact Methods, but the edition used is not specified. Lindtner considers the hymn perhaps authentic by virtue of being “Clearly a Madhyamaka text (it speaks of punyajñānasamabhāra, upāyakauśalya etc.) relating the Buddha’s dvādaśakāra, cf. BV, 91-92; CS, II, 23” (Lindtner, 1982:12-13) and agrees with Nakamura (1980) that the author is likely the same as the author of the Aṣṭamahāsthānacāityaastotra.

Structure

The hymn is a complete work containing fourteen verses, the first being salutation and the last a dedication of merit. Each of the twelve middle verses (2-13) describes one of the Buddha’s most celebrated deeds:

1. (verse 2) entering the womb
2. (verse 3) taking birth
3. (verse 4) demonstrating supernatural abilities in the worldly arts
4. (verse 5) taking the company of a queen
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna

5. (verse 6) renouncing the world and becoming a monk
6. (verse 7) practicing austerities
7. (verse 8) achieving perfect enlightenment
8. (verse 9) turning the wheel of dharma
9. (verse 10) destroying all false arguments and subduing all opponents
10. (verse 11) manifesting the great miracles in Śrāvastī
11. (verse 12) passing into parinirvāṇa
12. (verse 13) transforming into eight relics

Content

We do not know when the tradition of enumerating the twelve deeds started or whether it existed before this hymn.\(^{153}\) There are four great events in the Buddha’s life that are present in all enumerations. Those are: 1) his birth, 2) enlightenment, 3) turning the wheel of dharma, and 4) entering into parinirvāṇa. Our hymn lists entering the womb prior to the first great event. That verse, together with the opening verse of the hymn, refers to the completion of the bodhisattva path after accumulating wisdom and merit. To the period between birth and enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree, the

\(^{153}\) The enumeration that this hymn offers is somewhat different to the most commonly used traditional list which includes:

1. Remaining in Tuṣita
2. Entering mother’s womb
3. Taking birth
4. Becoming skilled in worldly arts
5. Enjoying a retinue of queens
6. Renouncing the world
7. Practicing austerities and renouncing them
8. Going to the essence of awakening (towards the Bodhi Tree)
9. Defeating Māra
10. Attaining total enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree
11. Turning the wheel
12. Departing for the ultimate peace of parinirvāṇa

Our hymn contracts # 1 and 2 of the traditional account into one, omits numbers 8 and 9, and adds three new ones (# 9, 10 and 12).
hymn devotes four verses (4-7), explaining not only the events of the prince’s life but, just as importantly, the “proper” Buddhological understanding of the acts: they were all skilful means for giving best possible instructions to living beings for advancement on their spiritual paths. Verses 8 and 9 refer to the great enlightenment and the turning of the wheel of dharma. However, the turning of the wheel is not here understood as a single event in time and place. The reference is, rather, to a continuous teaching in many places and instructions given to śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas. Verses 10 and 11, describing the period after the enlightenment and the first turning of the wheel, refer to destroying the false arguments of ārthikas and subduing all enemies as well as to the great miracles causing highest reverence for the Dharma. Again, these verses do not seem to refer to single events but to a continuous and consistent way of acting. Verse 12 refers to the parinirvāṇa but the enumeration does not end there. It goes one step further to the period shortly after death, explaining the significance of the relics, a topic that will be examined in more detail below. Overall, the hymn provides a balanced picture of the life of the Buddha. As the title suggests and the content shows, the intention is not to describe particular events but to provide an explanation for the acts. The explanation is that the Buddha is already perfect so the events displayed were only a show for the most effective instruction of beings, according to their capacities of understanding.

Doctrinal specifics

There are at least three doctrinally significant features in this hymn. The first two have already been noted by Lindtner, leading him to consider this hymn as perhaps authentic. The first verse mentions the accumulation of merit and wisdom (bsod nams ye shes tshogs gnyis, Sskr. puñyajñānasamābhāra), which is the dominant feature of
the *Ratnāvali*. Verses 5, 8, 11, 12 and 13 refer to Buddha’s skilful means (*upāyakauśalya*) as well as to his great compassion. It is out of compassion for the world that he undertook the acts described and it is out of his mastery in skilful instruction that he chose lessons. Otherwise, the Buddha was already perfect. What he did was just a show for instructing and motivating sentient beings.

Verse 5 states that the Buddha, having taken the company of a queen, governed a kingdom in order for the world to live in harmony with the Dharma. Verse 8 states that beneath the Bodhi Tree he manifested enlightenment (*mngon par sangs rgyas*) as a skilful means of showing sentient beings that their spiritual efforts are meaningful. Otherwise, of course, the Buddha was already perfectly enlightened. Verse 11 refers to the miracle in Śrāvastī when the Buddha divided himself into multiple bodies, thereby appearing in person in front of each member of the audience for instructions and conversation, consequently causing great reverence and spreading the Dharma. Verse 12 refers to Buddha’s *parinirvāṇa* but glosses the event with the interpretation that all was just a manifestation in order to inspire lazy ones who would, otherwise, rely entirely on his grace. In reality, the Buddha was immortal. To strengthen the case, the following verse refers to another bodily transformation in order for future sentient beings to obtain merit.

Statements like these are typical for Mahāyāna but they are also quite acceptable for Mahāsāṅghikas (and unacceptable for conservative schools such as Sarvāstivāda). As discussed above in the context of our comments on the *Nirāupamyastava*, the author considers the Buddha’s body to be physically perfect. The same claim is present in this hymn – the body of the Buddha is not subject to deterioration and death and there are no imperfections of any sort. Verses 12 and 13
state that his body is diamond-like and immortal. The show of entering into final pacification was only for purposes of instruction.

In the above discussion we established the relationship between the Niraupamyastava and the Mahāsaṅghika school, Pūrvaśaila, through its similarities to the Lokānuvartanasūtra. There is no direct evidence that this hymn has similar ties but it obviously views the body of the Buddha in the same way.

Verse 13 contains probably the most significant doctrinal statement:

Since in reality you are beyond destruction
and in order that future beings may obtain merit,
at that very place you miraculously transformed yourself into many relics
and divided your remains into eight parts.

The verse comes after the description of the final stages of the Buddha’s life. It appears to be saying that, at the moment of passing into parinirvāṇa, the Buddha transformed into eight relics, the worship of which will be the source of immense merit for future beings. Once again, as in the Aṣṭamahāsthānacaityaśastotra, we see the conception that relics do not symbolically represent the Buddha but they are the Buddha in person.

The similarities between the two hymns are worth noting again. They both worship the deeds of the Buddha, understanding this as the worship of the Buddha’s dharmakāyā. Both refer to generating merit by worshiping the relics and seem to be doctrinally complementing each other, in the sense that the details about the Buddhology of each becomes clear only after considering both. In agreement with Nakamura and Lindtner, I consider them both to be written by the same author.

154 Transformed into — sprul nas, which could also be translated as “emanated/incarnated/manifested” - from sprul (nirmita) — formation, creation, making; nirmāṇa — transformation.
Chapter IV: Other hymns likely to be authored by Nagarjuna

Authenticity

There is nothing in this hymn that would contradict any tenet held by Nagarjuna. That is, there is nothing here that could not be a view held in Andhra in the second or third century. There are similarities with the *Niraupamyaastava* in the way of seeing the body of the Buddha but that is only to be expected from any Mahāyāna or Mahāsāṅghika. Verses 12 and 13, with their references to the immortality of the diamond-like body which is also described as a true nature, show similarities to the Buddhology of the *Dharmadhātustava*, the *Cittavajraastava* and the *Niraupamyaastava* (verse 22). Verse 13 closely resembles inscriptions from Nagarjunakoṣa in terms of treating the relics as the body of the Buddha, i.e. as another *nirmanakāya*. We must recognize that the evidence is not specific enough to prove authenticity since the doctrinal tenets presented in the hymn would not be controversial to many Buddhist schools. Yet, it seems significant that the hymn shows similarities to other hymns composed by Nagarjuna and also to doctrinal tenets held by schools active at the time and the place of Nagarjuna, making the assumption that it was authored by him reasonable.
Chapter V

Dubious and spurious hymns

Introduction

The following nine hymns have not been considered authentic: the Kāyatrayāstotranāma, the Sattvārādhanastava, the Prajñāpāramitāstotra, the Niruttarastava, the Āryabhaṭṭarakaṁaṇī{jusriparamārthastutināma, the Āryamaṇī{jusriḥṭarakaṁakarunāstotra, the Aṣṭamahāsthānacaityaastotra (2025), the Vandanāstotranāma, and the Narakoddharastava. Only in two of them do we find decisive evidence that they have not been authored by Nāgārjuna: the Prajñāpāramitāstotra, because it has been attributed to another author in at least three separate occasions, and the Kāyatrayāstotranāma, because it contains doctrines that emerged much later than the time of Nāgārjuna. The other seven are considered dubious for various reasons and with different degrees of confidence.

Despite the fact that they are not considered authentic, all nine deserve serious attention in the context of the study of the stotra genre of Buddhist literature. Some are quite profound and nuanced in their religious and doctrinal content, as well as in their poetic expression.

Of the nine, four (the Āryabhaṭṭarakaṁaṇī{jusriparamārthastutināma, the Āryamaṇī{jusriḥṭarakaṁakarunāstotra, the Niruttarastava, and the Vandanāstotranāma) have never been edited or translated in any Western language.
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Fragments of the *Sattvārādhanastava* exist in Sanskrit and have been edited and translated into French (Levi, 1929) but the Tibetan version of the whole text, somewhat different from the Sanskrit, has not been edited or translated. Similarly, fragments of the *Prajñāpāramitāstotra* exist in Sanskrit and have been edited and translated into French (Lamotte, 1970), but the Tibetan version of the whole hymn has not been edited or translated. The *Aṣṭamahāsthānacaitya stotra* (2025), the *Kāyatra yastotranāma* and the *Narakoddharastava* have all been edited and translated into English (details will be supplied later in this chapter).
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Asṭamahāstānacaityaśāstra

gnas chen po brjuaṛ kyi meḥid rten la bstod pa\textsuperscript{155}

Hymn in Praise of the Eight Great Places of Caityas

'jam dpal gzhon nur gyur ba la phyag 'tshal lo

Homage to the Youthful Mañjuśrī

Verse 1:

dang po byang chub tu thugs bskyed nas
bskal pa grangs med gsum du tshogs bsags te
byang chub snying por sāṅga rgyas bdud ni btul
byang chub chen po'i mchod rten phyag 'tshal lo

First, having generated the thought of enlightenment,
and having gathered the accumulations (of merit and wisdom) for three incalculable
aeons,
the Buddha conquered Māra on the bodhi throne.
I pay homage to the caitya of great enlightenment.

Verse 2:

chos kyi gzhir gyur ser skya'i grong khyer du

\textsuperscript{155} bsTan- 'gyur (Narthang), 2025, folio 90b – 91a.
In the city of Kapilavastu which became the basis of righteousness, he was born from his mother Māyā into the Śākya lineage of Śuddodana. [He] stood up supported at the hip by Brahmā. I pay homage to the source of the Auspiciousness caitya.

Verse 3:

Having gone for alms in Vārānasī and elsewhere and having subdued king Bimbisara’s mad elephants through the power of his fingers, by a gesture he converted the city. I pay homage to the caitya [there].

Verse 4:

ne sing dag tu bsnyel so mdzad pa'i tshe

156 “bshegs” is probably a scribal error for “gshegs.”
ha lu many+dzusa sbrang rtsi phul nas kyang
khron par dus byas sum cu rtsa gsum skyes
thugs rje 'byung ba'i mchod rten phyag 'tshal lo

In the pure grove at the time of doing meditation,
A monkey [Hanumāṇa], having offered him honey,
[died and] was born in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three [gods].
I pay homage to the caitya from which arises compassion.

Verse 5:
tshangs pas 'khor lo phul nas 'khor lo bskor
mu stegs ston pa drug ni stobs kyis btul
sprul pa'i grangs kyis lha mi tshim mdzad pa'i
cho 'phrul bstan pa'i mchod rten phyag 'tshal lo

Having [been] offered the wheel by Brahmā, he set in motion the wheel [of Dharma]
the six Tīrthika teachers [were] subdued by the power [of that teaching].
By a number of magical creations, gods and humans were satisfied.\textsuperscript{157}
I pay homage to the caitya of the show of wonderful magic.

Verse 6:
dga' bo la sogs klu yi tshogs rnams kyis

\textsuperscript{157} Probably the reference is to the miracle in Śrāvasti where the Buddha divided himself into multiple bodies thereby creating an illusion in which every person had his own Buddha to converse with.
bsnyen bkur phul zhing bu mos 'o ma drangs
dkar dang 'jig rten ma lus tshar gcod pa
nyer zhi rgyal ba'i mchod rten phyag 'tshal lo

By the hosts of Nāgas, Nanda\(^{158}\) and others,
reverence was offered, and by a young girl milk [was served].
[Life both] holy and worldly, without remainder, [was] put an end to.
I pay homage to the caitya of the conqueror's complete pacification.

Verse 7:
byang chub sems dang rang sangs rgyas rnam dang
nyan thos dgra bcom tshogs kyis yongs bskor te
sdom dang tshul khrims la ni rab dkor pa'i
rnam par dag pa'i mchod rten phyag 'tshal lo

I worship the caitya of highest purity
of the supreme treasurer in virtue and vow
surrounded by the gathering of bodhisattvas,
pratyekabuddhas and śrāvaka arhats.

Verse 8:
sems can mi rtag 'dul pa'i dgongs pa dang

\(^{158}\) Nanda (dga' bo) is the King of Nāgas, according to S. C. Dass, *Tibetan-English Buddhist Historical Glossary* (1990).
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Iha las babs nas mdzad pa kun gyi mthar

Tsun das gsol btab zla gsum nas mthar phyin

Mya ngan 'das mdzad mchod rten phyag 'tshal lo

With the thought of training sentient beings,

Having descended from the gods, he completed everything to be done.

After three months of supplication (gsol btab) by Canda (tsun da),\textsuperscript{159} he reached the end (parinîṣṭhitā).

I worship the caitya of making (mdzad) [a show of] nirvāṇa.

\textsuperscript{159} Canda – pupil of the Buddha.
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Comments

The Aṣṭamahāsthānacaitya-stotra is not extant in Sanskrit. An English translation has been published by P.C. Bagchi (1941:229-230) but he did not provide an edition. Apart from that, the hymn has not attracted scholarly interest.

Structure and content

The Aṣṭamahāsthānacaitya-stotra (Narthang, 2025, folio 90b-91a), like the previous hymn carrying the same title (listed in Narthang under number 2024), enumerates the great qualities of the Buddha illustrated through his great deeds, commemorated by caityas. Yet, apart from these similarities, there is obviously a great difference in style and elegance of expression. The #2025 is not very concerned with following the traditional account of the eight great deeds or the locations of caityas associated with them. Verse 5 seems to mention two separate events (turning the wheel and the miracle in Śrāvasti) but does not commemorate two different caityas. Also, verse 8 seems unclear about which caitya is worshipped and where it is located, or whether it is different to the one worshipped in verse 6. It seems that the concern of the hymn is to worship the qualities of the Buddha without relating them closely to one particular event and caitya.

160 Structure: Homage to
1. the caitya associated with the great enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree.
2. the caitya associated with the birth and early years of the Tathāgata.
3. the caitya of taming mad elephants in the city of king Bimbisara.
4. the caitya of compassion associated with the event when the person who offered food to the Buddha was, by the power of the Buddha, reborn in the heaven of the Thirty-Three Gods.
5. the caitya of setting the wheel in motion, converting the six Tirthika teachers and showing magical bodily appearances (in Śrāvasti).
6. the caitya of complete pacification.
7. the caitya of highest purity — associated with the vow and conduct.
8. the caitya of reaching nirvāṇa.
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

It is debatable whether this hymn starts with the proper salutatory verse. Even if it does, it does not end with the dedication of merit which gives an impression of incompleteness.

Authenticity
Not much can be said with any certainty about the authenticity of this hymn. Content like this could have emerged from any Mahāsaṅghika or Mahāyāna environment and there is nothing specific to ground it in one particular setting or to relate to one particular author. Theoretically, it could be Nāgārjuna's. Yet, if that is the assumption, then one would have to answer the question: Why would Nāgārjuna compose another hymn of the same title which is less elegant in style and poetic expression and which offers nothing new or different? It seems that the only way one could argue for its authenticity is to consider it as a rough draft. That would explain the simplicity and the lack of the transference of merit. But, if it is considered as a complete work (as it should be given its place in the canon), then it does not have much similarity with Nāgārjuna's authentic works. In the final analysis, it is difficult to imagine why an accomplished poet like Nāgārjuna would compose two works with the same title, on the same topic, and leave one so inferior to the other. Therefore, I consider it very likely not authentic.
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Vandanaśutraṇāma

phyag htsal bahi bstod pa she bya ba

The Hymn Named “Homage”

de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad la phyag ’tshal lo
I pay Homage to all Tathāgatas

Verse 1:

gnod byed ’dod chags zhe sdang dang
srid ’khor rmongs byed drwa ba spangs
mchog sbyin mdzad pa rgyal ba mchog
mchog byung sangs rgyas bdag phyag ’tshal

I pay homage to the arising of the Supreme Buddha,
One who abandons the web that creates harmful attachment, hatred and sanśāric delusions,
the Supreme Victor doing [acts of] perfect generosity.

Verse 2:

yang dag thugs chud rdzogs sangs rgyas
lha dang lha min mchod byas pa

\[161 \text{bsTan-’gyur (Narthang), 2027, folio 92a -- 92b.}\]
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

'jig rten gsum gyi bla ma la
mi pham mnyam pa med gyur cing
bdud stobs pham mdzad bdag phyag 'tshal

I pay homage to the defeater of the forces of Māra,
the perfect Buddha, possessing Pure Mind,
worshipped by gods and asuras,
teacher of the triple world,
the unconquerable, the incomparable.

Verse 3:
shakya'i rgyal po'i sras su 'khrungs
gdung ni nyi ma'i rigs su grags
dpa' bo rmad byung sangs rgyas ni
yon tan tshogs ni bsdus pa la
lha mi rlung lhas mchod phyag 'tshal

I pay homage to the [one] worshiped by Vāyu,162 gods and humans,
to [the one who] collected good qualities,
the heroic, marvellous Buddha,
born as a prince of Śākya
in a clan renowned as [belonging to] the lineage of the Sun.

162 God of wind, protector of the North-West direction, one of the ten guardians of directions.
Verse 4:

gser gyi ri bo'i rtse 'dra'i sku
pad+ma'i 'dab ma'i spyan mnga' ba
gser gyi mdog dang ldan gyur cing
sum cu rtsa gnyis mtshan dang ldan
shes ldan mtshan bzang phyag 'tshal lo

He has a body like the peak of the golden mountain,
with eyes [like] lotus leaves.
It is endowed with beautiful complexion,
and endowed with thirty-two auspicious marks.
I pay homage to the thirty-two auspicious marks of the wise one.

Verse 5:

me dang klog dang me stag dang
(92b) nyi zer stong ldan dkyil 'khor can
gang gis stobs ni brgyan gyur pa
mnyam med stobs ldan phyag 'tshal lo

He is endowed with a nimbus of fire, lightning, sparks and
one thousand sun's rays,
on account of which he is ornamented with power.
I pay homage to the incomparably powerful one.
Verse 6:

dpal ldan mchog ni 'bar ba yi
bsod dang dul bar yang dag ldan
thub pa'i dbang po mchog gyur pa
yang dag byang chub brnyes pa la
ches dregs phyag byes phyag 'tshal lo

To the supremely glorious one [who is]
fully endowed with radiant merit and discipline,
the supreme sage
[who has] attained complete enlightenment,
and who uprooted the great arrogance, I pay homage.

Verse 7:

gang zhig sems can phan mdzad cing
bde ba'i don phyir snying rjes 'jug
yang dag don la zhugs gyur pas
mya ngan 'das grongs gshegs phyag 'tshal

I pay homage to the one departed into parinirvāṇa,
[to the] one who benefited sentient beings
and, in order to give happiness, acted compassionately
by entering the ultimate truth.

163 The word "byes" must be scribal error. "Uprooted" is my best guess for the intended meaning.
Verse 8:

'dis ni lto 'phye mi'am ci
lha dang lha min phyag byas pa
bdag gis rgyal ba bstod pa las.
bsod nams bdag gis gang bsags pa
des ni sems can thams cad kyang
byang chub khong du chud par shog

Because of this [praise], serpents, *kimnara*,
gods and asuras have prostrated [themselves].

By the merit I have accumulated
by thus praising the Conqueror,
by that, may all sentient beings
realise enlightenment.

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164 Mythical beings with a human torso and the head of a horse or with a horse's body and the head of a man, in later times reckoned among the Gandharvas or celestial choristers, and celebrated as musicians.
165 It is very likely that the first two lines are part of a different verse of which the remainder was lost or omitted due to scribal error. The final four lines make sense on their own, as does the whole verse, but show no organic connection with the previous two.
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Comments

The Sanskrit manuscript of this hymn has not been located. The Tibetan version used here has not been previously edited or translated into any Western language.

Structure and Content

Structurally, this is another hymn enumerating the great qualities of the Buddha. It is a complete work in eight verses, ending with the transfer of merit. The verses are uneven in the number of lines but the content is clear: each verse deals with one aspect of the Buddha, building toward the last line which summarizes the homage.

The Vandanāstotranāma is not a hymn about the eight places of caityas nor is it about the twelve deeds of the Buddha. Hence, it cannot be said that this hymn is a poor copy of the Asṭamahāsthānacaityatostotra or the Dwādaśakāranayastotra, but rather that it is a differently structured enumeration of qualities.

Authenticity

The hymn is classified by Lindtner as most probably not genuine and he finds the eight verses poor (1982:15-16). Indeed, the verses are not only poor and not elegant in comparison to the authentic works of Nāgārjuna but are also uneven in the number

\[166\] Structure:
1. Homage to the arising of the Supreme Buddha,
2. Homage to the defeater of the forces of Māra,
3. Homage to the guardian of gods and humans,
4. Homage to the thirty-two auspicious marks,
5. Homage to the unequalled in power,
6. Homage to the great pride salutation abroad,
7. Homage to the departed into parinirvāṇa,
8. Transference of merit.
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

of lines and metre. Unless one assumes that it is a lost quickly written first draft that somehow found its way into the canon, it is difficult to imagine it being Nāgārjuna's.
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Āryabhātārakamaṇjuśrīparamārthastutinama\textsuperscript{167}

\`{p}hags pa rje btsun 'jam dpal gyi don dam pa'i bstod pa zhes bya ba\textsuperscript{168}

Hymn in Praise of the Ultimate, Noble Worshipful Maṇjuśrī

'jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pa la phyag 'tshal lo

Homage to the Youthful Maṇjuśrī

Verse 1:

byon pa ma lags bzhud mi mnga'
bzhengs pa ma lags bzhugs mi mnga'
'jig rten pa las shin tu 'das
tshig las 'das pa'i spyod yul lags

Neither coming nor going,
neither arising nor remaining,
completely beyond the mundane,
its domain is beyond speech.

\textsuperscript{167} Lindtner (1982:15-16) has bhāṭaraka but that must be a misspelling for bhāṭāraka: great lord, venerable or worshipful person (which fits well with the Tibetan translation (rje btsun: chief, supreme, venerable, worshipful).

\textsuperscript{168} bsTan-‘gyur (Narthang), 2022, folio 88b – 89a.
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Verse 2:

mgon po khyod la ji ltar bstod
‘on kyang ’jig rten btags brten gyis
khyod ni ci ’dra de bzhin du
bdag gis gus pas bla ma bstod

How can I praise you, o protector?
Nevertheless, somehow or other,
relying on worldly expressions,
I will praise you, the guru, with devotion.

Verse 3:

ngo bo nyid kyis ma skyes te
khyod la skye ba yod mi mnga’
mgon po gshegs dang byon mi mnga’
dngos med khyod la phyag ’tshal bstod

Essentially unborn,
you have no origination,
o protector, you do not come or depart.
I prostrate and praise you, who are not an existent.

Verse 4:

khyod la dngos dang dngos med min
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

chad pa ma lags ther zug min
khyod rtag ma lags mi rtag min
gnyis med khyod la phyag 'tshal bstod

You are neither existent nor non-existent,
Neither subject to destruction nor everlasting,
You are neither permanent nor impermanent.
I prostrate to you and praise you who are devoid of duality.

Verse 5:
dmar dang ljang dang le brgan dang
ser dang dkar dang nag ma lags
khyod la kha dog yod mi mnga'
mdog bral khyod la phyag 'tshal bstod

You have no colour –
neither red nor green nor violet nor
yellow nor white nor black.
I prostrate to you and praise you who are devoid of colour.

Verse 6:
khyod ni che dang chung ba dang
sbom dang phya ba khyod min te
ring dang thung ba'i kham ma lags
tshad med khyod la phyag 'tshal bstod

You are not big or small or
gross or fine.
You are not constituted as long or short.
I prostrate to you and praise you who are immeasurable.

Verse 7:

shes pas srid la mi gnas shing
snying rjes zhi la mi gnas te
mya ngan 'das dang 'khor mi gnas
mi gnas khyod la phyag 'tshal bstod

Because of wisdom you do not abide in the world of becoming and,
because of compassion, you do not abide in the peace (of cessation).
Not abiding in nirvāṇa or saṃsāra,
I prostrate to you and praise you who are non-abiding.

Verse 8:

chos mams kun la mi (89a) gnas shing
chos kun rtogs par thugs su chud
mchog tu zab pa nyid bsten pa
zab pa khyod la phyag 'tshal bstod
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Not abiding in any dharma,
you have attained the realisation of all dharmas,
resorting to the ultimate profundity.
I prostrate to you and praise you who are profound one.

Verse 9:

de ltar bstd bgrang gi
gzhan du khyod la ji ltar bstod
chos rams thams cad stong pa la
. su la bstod cing su yis bstod

In praising you thus I enumerate your praises,
otherwise, how can I praise you?
All things being empty,
who has been praised and by whom has he been praised?

Verse 10:

mtha' ma mchis shing dbus ma mchis
gzung dang 'dzin pa rnam spangs pa'i
rtog bral khyod la phyag 'tshal bstod\(^\text{169}\)

You are without end, without middle,
without apprehended and apprehension.

\(^{169}\) This verse has three lines.
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

I prostrate to you and praise you who are beyond conception.

Verse 11:

bla ma mgon po 'jam dbyangs kyi
don dam yang dag mtshan brjod pa'i
bsod nams 'di yis 'jig rten 'di
bde bar gshegs pa 'dra bar shog

By the merit of reciting the sublime names
of the ultimate Mañjuśrī,
the master and protector,
may this world become like the Sugata.
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Comments

The hymn only exists in the Tibetan but is yet to be edited or translated into any Western language. The only scholarly reference to it is offered by Lindtner who classifies it as most probably not genuine and as “simply another recension of Parmārthastava” (1982:16, n. 34).

In terms of the structure and the content the hymn is indeed very similar to the Parmārthastava. The two hymns are not exactly the same but apart for verses eight, ten and eleven being different, they are virtually the same.

Authenticity

There is no external reason to deny the authenticity of this hymn. The hymn worships Mañjuśrī instead of the Buddha but that is not controversial since we have plenty of evidence that the great bodhisattva was known and worshiped by the time of Nāgarjuna and there is no reason to assume Nāgarjuna would not devote a hymn to him.

Doctrinally, there is nothing in this hymn that would disagree with Nāgarjuna’s authentic works. The majority of the verses match the Parmārthastava in their message and in their approach. Verses eight, ten and eleven are somewhat different but, on closer examination, they make very similar points. For example, the final verse in this hymn reads: “May this world become like the Sugata by the merit of reciting the sublime names...” For comparison, the final verse of the Parmārthastava reads: “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.” The Aryabhaṭṭarakaṁaṇjuśrīparamārthastutināma carries a specific explanation of the action generating merit: “reciting the sublime names” (mtshan brjod pa’i). Even though not spelled out, that is exactly the practice that Paramārthastava takes by enumerating and commemorating the epithets of the Sugata. In regard to that practice, both hymns are fully in accord with the earliest form of the stotra genre. 170

Having said that, it is very unlikely that the hymn could be authentic because we can find no evidence that Nāgārjuna mentions Maṇjuśrī in any of the reliably attributed works (such as the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, the Śūnyatāsaptati, the Vigraya vyāvartani, the Yuktiśāstikā, the Ratnapali and the nine hymns). We see no evidence in Andhra of the significant popularity of Maṇjuśrī to the extent that would warrant a thesis that Nāgārjuna responded to it. Furthermore, an accomplished master poet as he was, Nāgārjuna was not in the habit of repeating himself. His practice is if writing on the same subject to approach it from a different angles or to clarify points not already clarified. Rarely does he repeat himself. Therefore, it is very difficult to accept that he would offer practically the same hymn with only one change, dedicating it to Maṇjuśrī rather than to the Buddha. For those reasons, the hymn is classified as very likely not authentic.

170 According to Sander, “The simplest form of a Buddhastotra is the enumeration of names of the Buddha” (1971:71). This practice has obvious parallels in non-Buddhist texts like the Śivasahasranāma and, as Waldschmidt (1979) argues, in some cases, as in the Varnāṣata, a stotra goes back to a list of names. As observed in the comments to the Paramārthastava, the practice of enumeration is closely related to the practice of buddhānusmyti or evocation of the Buddha, except that in this case the person is Maṇjuśrī.
Niruttarastava

bla na med pa'i bstod pa.171

Hymn in Praise of the Unsurpassable One

'jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pa la phyag 'tshal lo
Homage to the Youthful Mañjuśrī

Verse 1:

gang gi tshu rol pha rol spangs
shes bya'i rang gi ngo bo mchog
ye shes rdzu 'phrul stobs kyis gsal
bla med de la phyag 'tshal bstod

I prostrate to and praise the Unsurpassable,
who is luminous through the power of magical display of wisdom,
[who has] the nature of the highest object of knowledge,
who has abandoned the extremes.

Verse 2:

gang la mkhyen dang mi mkhyen med
rnal 'byor ba dang tha mal dang
gang la bsgom dang mi bsgom med

171 bsTan-'gyur (Narthang), 2021, folio 88a – 88b
I prostrate to the Unsurpassable
in whom there is no wisdom or non-wisdom,
who is neither ordinary nor a practitioner
and in whom there is no cultivation or non-cultivation.

Verse 3:

gang zhig gcig bu ye shes gsal
ma lus shes bya yongs su gcod
del tar mnyam zching gzhal med pa
bla med de la phyag 'tshal lo

I prostrate to the Unsurpassable
who has unique clear wisdom,
who cuts off all objects of knowledge without exception,
who has no other equal in that way.

Verse 4:

gang zhig rags dang phra ba dang
lci ba dang ni yang ba'i rdul
sbrul gyi rkang pa'i rang bzhin med
bla med de la phyag 'tshal lo
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

I prostrate to the Unsurpassable
who has no nature of gross and subtle,
heavy and light,
and does not have the nature of the legs of a snake.

Verse 5:

gang gis srin bu'i stobs kyis ni
gang zhig thang la 'chi ba ltar
gang gi snang bas mun bsal ba
bla med de la phyag 'tshal lo

I prostrate to the Unsurpassable
by whose appearance darkness is dispelled,
just as by the power of Kṛmi, the king of Nāgas,
Danvantarī, was slain.

Verse 6:

gang zhig sbrul ldan rdzu 'phrul gyis
gar mkhan rkang pa bskyod pa la
(88b) gang gi lam gzigs lam mkhyen pa
bla med de la phyag 'tshal lo

The nirmāṇika magically
causes the puppet to move its feet;
the one who sees his path knows the path.

I prostrate to the Unsurpassable.

Verse 7:

gang zhig gis ni cha shas dang
don stong min te gnyis ka spangs
thams cad mkhyen pa dbang phyug gtso
bla med de la phyag 'tshal lo

Abandoning both part and whole and
objects empty and not [empty],
I prostrate to the Unsurpassable,
the omniscient, the highest Lord.

Verse 8:

shin tu nyes pa rnam spangs shing
dri ma'i bdag nyid las ring ba
dngos dang dngos po med spangs pa
bla med de la phyag 'tshal lo

I prostrate to the Unsurpassable
which abandons all faults,
is distant from what is impure,
and abandons existent and non-existent.
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Comments

This is another hymn that has not attracted scholarly attention. It is not extant in Sanskrit and the Tibetan version has not been edited or translated into any Western language. It has been classified by Lindtner as most probably not Nāgārjuna’s on the grounds that the eight verses are “too poor to be genuine” (1982:16).

Content and authenticity

There is nothing specific to point out in this hymn. The content of the verses offers nothing that has not been said before nor does it add any new perspective and does not examine things from a different angle. After offering the *Niraupamyastava*, the *Acintyastava*, the *Lokāṇātastava* or the *Stutyaṅītastava*, it is difficult to imagine any reason Nāgārjuna might have had to write this hymn.

Verses 2, 3, 7 and 8 are poor and one-dimensional when compared with the deep and elegant verses of the hymns mentioned above. By the same comparison, verses 4, 5 and 6 appear uncharacteristic for Nāgārjuna in their use of metaphors and similes. In short, even though we do not have any specific evidence, in agreement with Lindtner I find the verses of this hymn too poor to be considered genuine. They have no resemblance with any hymn or analytical work reliably attributed to Nāgārjuna.
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Sattvārādhanastava

sem chen mgu bar bya’i bstod pa

Hymn of propitiating the sentient beings

‘jam dpal dbyangs la phyag ’tshal lo
Homage to Mañjuśrī!

Verse 1:

nga la gus pa sems can don te gus pa gzhan ngag min
gang gis snying rje ma btang de yis nga la gus pa ste
snying rje btang nas gnas par gyur pa lhung pa gang yin pa
de ni de las snying rjes bslang bar nus kyi gzhan gyis min

The one who has faith for the sake of beings is the faithful one, another [should not] have that word.
The one who does not abandon compassion, he is the one with faith in me.
The one who has fallen remains [fallen] having abandoned compassion.
He is able to be raised from that [state] by compassion, not by another thing.

Verse 2:

gang gi snying rje sems can la ni rjes su zhugs gyur pa
des ni nga yang mnyes byas des ni bstan pa’i khur yang bzung
tshul khrims thos pa snying rje dag dang blo dang gsal ba dag

172 bsTan-’gyur (Narthang), 2017, folio 82b – 83b.
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gang la yod pa des ni rtag tu bde bar gshegs pa mchod

He whose compassion is applied to sentient beings,
he pleases me; he is also the one who bears the responsibility for the [Buddha’s] teachings.

He who possesses moral integrity, learning, compassion along with intelligence and lucidity
is always making offerings to the Sugata.

Verse 3:

nga nyid sems can phan 'dogs gyur pas grub 'di brnyes pa ste
sems can kho na'i don du nga yis sku 'di yang dag bzung
sems can rnams la yid kyis (83a) gnod par sems de gang gi phyir
nga la mi bltos pas na de yi don ston par mi 'gyur\(^{173}\)

I accomplished this feat by benefiting sentient beings.

Only for the welfare of sentient beings I perfectly maintain my body.

The one who intends to harm sentient beings [even] mentally [because of that] has no regard for me.

Therefore, the meaning [of the teaching] cannot be taught to him.

\(^{173}\) Silvain Lévi (1929) has published an edition of the Sanskrit manuscript of the hymn with the first two verses missing. From that point on his text mostly corresponds with the Tibetan. All differences will be noted below.

In Lévi's version we can find a text corresponding to verse 3 of the Tibetan, with the difference that only fragments of the first two lines survive and belong to different verses than the last two lines:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{........ kāram adhikṛtya gato 'smi siddhim} \\
\text{sattvārtham eva tanum esa samudvāhāmi/ (x + 1)} \\
\text{sattvān hinasti manasāpi hi yaḥ sa kasmān} \\
\text{mām eva saṁśrayati yo mayi nirvāpekaśaly/ (first two lines of } x + 2) \\
\end{align*}\]
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Verse 4:

sems can phan pa chung yang des ni mchod pa 'byung 'gyur te
gang gis yid ni mgu bar byed pa mchod pa yin pas so
gnod pa'i bdag nyid can nam gzhann la rmam par 'tshe 'ang rung
legs par sbyar nas mchod par gyur kyang des ni mchod mi 'gyur

Service to sentient beings may be minor [but] it still is an offering [pūjā].
After all, offering is what pleases the mind.
Offering which has a harmful nature or has the potential to harm others,
even if done properly, is not [real] offering.

Verse 5:

chung ma dag dang bu dang 'byor dang rgyal srid chen po dang
sha rnam dang ni khrag dang tshil dang mig dang lus rnam kyang
gang la brtse ba'i dbang du byas na nga yi yongs btang ba
des na de la gnod pa byas na nga la gnod byas 'gyur

174 Silvain Lévi has corresponding lines in Sanskrit, except that in his version the first two lines belong to a different verse than the second two:

pūjā tu sā bhavati svātihetkaṇāpi
pūjyasya yā maṇasi tuṣṭaṁ upādātī∥ (x + 2)
hīṅsātmikā paravihēthaṁ asambhavā vā
pūjī na pūjyam anugacchati sarīrātāpi∥ (first two lines of x + 3)

175 In Lévi's Sanskrit version, once again, the first two lines belong to different verse than the second:

dāriṅga sutaś ca vibhavā śa mahatvarājyaṁ
mārhasāṁ soṇitavase nayane sarīrā∥ (x + 3)
yeṣāṁ priyavām adhiḥkṛtya mayojhitāni
yas tāṁ viheṭhitə 'ham∥ (first two lines of x + 4)
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

If you harm that out of love for which I have completely abandoned
wife, son, treasures, the great kingdom,
flesh, blood, fat, eyes and body,
you harm me.

Verse 6

des na sems can phan pa byas na nga la mchod pa'i mchog
sems can gnod pa byas pa nga la shin tu gnod pa'i mchog
bde dang sdug bsngal ba dang sems can mtshungs par myong bas na
sems can mams la 'tshe bar byed de nga yi slob ma ji ltar yin176

Therefore, if you benefit sentient beings it is the best offering to me.
The ultimate harm you can inflict on me is harming sentient beings.
Sentient beings’ happiness and pain are equally experienced [by me].
Therefore, if you harm sentient beings, how can you be my disciple?

Verse 7:

sems can mams la brten nas sangs rgyas mnyes dang dge ba byas
sems can mang po'i don la rab gnas pha rol phyin pa thob
sems can don la brtson pa'i yid kyi bdud kyi stobs kyang bcom
sems can mams la de Ita de ltar spyad pa des na nga sangs rgyas

176 In the final two lines of the verse x + 4, Lévi’s version corresponds to the first two lines of the
Tibetan verse. The final two lines of the Tibetan verse have no correspondence in Lévi’s Sanskrit text:
Sattvopakāraparamā hi mamāgrupūjā
Sattvāpakāraparamāś ca parābhavaḥ syāt// (x + 4)
Buddha’s joy and wholesome actions depend on sentient beings.

[1] remained and attained the highest perfection for the good of the multitudes sentient beings.

[1] destroyed the monstrous (Māra’s) power through concerted effort for the welfare of sentient beings.

I became Buddha due to performing actions such as these for the sentient beings. 177

Verse 8:

skye ba skye bar gces par gyur pa'i gnyen 'dra srog chags med gyur na

dngos po gang la 'dir ni snying rje byams las dmigs pa nges par 'grub
btang snyoms dga' ba la sogs dngos po'i yul dang rnam par thar la sogs gang la
gang gi don du snying rje de la 'bad pa'i yid kyis bzod pa yun rings bsgoms 178

If there is no being who has been like a beloved relative from life to life,
What thing could be ascertained as an object towards which you have compassion?
What would be the object of equanimity and joy?

177 Lévi’s Sanskrit version:
sattvān prāpya mayā kṛtāṇi kuśālāṇy ārādhitaḥ tāyanaḥ
prāptāḥ pāramitāḥ ca sattvasamīter cvārtham ātiṣṭhatā
sattvārthena samudyatena manasā mārasya bhagnam bālam
sattvair eva tathā tathā viracitarḥ yenāsmi buddhaḥ kṛtah// (x + 5)

178 Lévi’s Sanskrit version:
kasmin vastuni sidhīyatām iha kṛṣṇa maitri ca kvālambayatām
kcopeṣā[ṃ] uditadivastuviṣayāḥ kasmin vimokṣādayāḥ
kasyārthe karunāpāreṇa manasā kṣaṃtiś citraṃ bhāviṣā
na syur janmani janmani prijavibhau mitran yadi prādinaḥ// (x + 6)
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

What would be liberation etc? For the sake of whom would the practice be cultivated with the mind intent on compassion?

Verse 9:

glang po la sogs 'gro ba sems can mams nyid du ma nga yis sbyin pa byas
sems can mams nyid snod nyid du yang nye bar gyur pas nga yis sbyin pas bsdus
sems can mams nyid sna tshogs dngos por gyur pas nga yis snying rje 'phel bar gyur
gal te sems can mams (83b) nyid bsrung ma byas na gang gi don du don 'di bscrubs

I have practiced generosity to all migrating sentient beings such as elephants etc.
Because they have become a worthy vessel, sentient beings have been drawn closer by my charity.
Because sentient beings of various kinds have become objects of compassion, my compassion has increased.
If I do not protect sentient beings, for whom would this aim be accomplished?

Verse 10:

gal te sems can med na 'khor bar nyan mongs mi bzd rab tu mang po las
skye ba bgyud par gnod pa mtshungs pa med las gang la brten nas phan 'di bscrubs
bde bar gshegs kyi bdag nyid chen po ngo mtsar che ba 'khor ba'i rgyan gyur 'di

---

179 Lévi's:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{sattvā} & \text{ eva gajādibhāvagatayo datā m ānekaśāḥ} \\
\text{sattvā} & \text{ eva ca pātraitām upagātā deyam mayā grāhitaḥ} \\
\text{sattvār} & \text{ eva vicitrabhāvagamanād asmatkṛtoḥ vardhitā} \\
\text{sattvān} & \text{ eva pālayāmi yadi cet kasyārtham arthāḥ kṛśāḥ}/ (x + 7)
\end{align*}
\]
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

gal te nga la sms can rams la brtse med gyur na gang gi don du nye bar bsgrubs

Because of the multitude of terrible defilements in samsāra,
there would be incomparable suffering in a succession of virtues. Relying on what
would benefit be accomplished?
For whose sake would the greatness of the Sugata, the marvellous ornament
of samsāra be accomplished, if I had no affection for sentient beings?

Verse 11:

ji srid nga yi bstan pa 'gro ba sms can la phan pa 'dir ni 'bar gyur pa
de srid gzhan la mchog tu phan par 'dod pa khyed kyis gnas par gyis
thos pas nga yi legs par spyad pa sms can don la mi skyo thos bgyid la
skyo ba med par lus 'di las ni snying po dag ni blang bar gyis

As long as the benefit of my teachings to other beings prevails
you must remain with the wish to supremely benefit others.
Hear about my good deeds and continue to hear. Without being depressed work for
the welfare of sentient being.

Being not depressed (joyfully) take the essence [of the teaching] from this body.

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180 Lévi's:
sarṣāre vyasanābhhipātabhule na syur yadi prānino
janmāvartaviḍambanena yamalokam prāpya sātmikṛtāḥ
sarṣārīt taraṇāṃ ca saugatam idam māhātmyam atyadbhutam
kasyārthena samihitaṃ yadi na me sattvā bhavyeyuḥ priyāḥ// (x + 8)

181 Lévi's:
yāvac cedaṇā jvalatī jagataḥ śāsanaḥ śāsanaḥ me
tāvat steyam paraḥitaṃ a śātmavdbhūḥ bhavadbhīḥ
śrutvā śrutvā ca mama vicaritaṃ sattvahetor akhinnaiḥ
khedaḥ kāryo na ca tanum inām uktasārīṃ bhavadbhīḥ// (x + 9)
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Comments

The Sanskrit text which closely matches the Tibetan version was edited by Sylvain Lévi (1929) with the first two verses missing and attributed to Asvaghoṣa. Lévi’s first verse (corresponding to verse 3 in the Tibetan) exists only in fragments. Also, Lévi’s verse x+4 (corresponding to verse 7 in the Tibetan) does not contain the second half of the Tibetan. Apart from these differences, the two texts are very similar.

I recently discovered another Sanskrit edition with the full text of 11 verses corresponding closely to the Tibetan text (Pandey, 1994). The author does not cite the source of his edition but it seems to be a reconstruction based on the Tibetan and Lévi’s Sanskrit.

Content

Lévi edits the hymn under the title Samyaksambuddhabhāṣitaṃ sattvarādhanam nāma mahāyānasūtrantam (1929:256). Judging by the content, this short and beautiful poem, even though listed as a hymn (bstod pa) in the Tibetan canon, is actually much better defined as bhāṣita or sūtranta. In it we see something highly peculiar for the genre: the speaker is the Buddha himself. That has not happened in any of the authentic hymns examined above. There is no evidence of evocation, commemoration, concern for merit accumulation or merit transference. By its form, this work does not correspond to any hymn examined so far.
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Authenticity

Lévi did not attribute this work to Nāgārjuna because in the manuscript he found there was no mention of the author and the previous three texts in the same groups were all attributed to Aśvaghoṣa. One could argue that since there was no direct attribution the authorship is still open for discussion. That is true but we must also acknowledge that, in its style, this work does not resemble anything we have seen from Nāgārjuna. Poetically it more resembles Aśvaghoṣa and, perhaps, Māṭceta, as Lindtner (1982:17, n.43) points out. In the absence of hard proof we classify this hymn as dubious and definitely different in content to anything exhibited by Nāgārjuna.
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Prajñāpāramitāstotra

shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin ma'i bstod pa\textsuperscript{182}

Hymn in Praise of the Perfected Wisdom

bcom ldan 'das ma shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin ma la phyag 'tshal lo

Homage to the Blessed Perfected Wisdom

Verse 1:

gang khyod sku kun nyes med la
nyes med rnams kyis gzigs mdzad pa
dpag med shes rab pha rol phyin
rnam par mi rtog phyag 'tshal 'dud

To you, who are completely faultless and
seen by the faultless ones,
to you, the immeasurable perfect wisdom
beyond conceptualisation, I prostrate.\textsuperscript{183}

\textsuperscript{182} bsTan-'gyur (Narthang), 2018, folio 83b – 84b.

\textsuperscript{183} Corresponding Sanskrit verse given by Lamotte, \textit{Le Traite}, p. 1061, n.1:
nirvikalpe namas tubhyam
prajñāpāramitā 'mite,
yī tvam sarvānadvayānī
niravadyair nirikṣyase//

Recently I discovered a Sanskrit manuscript with 21 verses corresponding closely to the Tibetan text but still containing several notable differences (to be discussed below). The manuscript is to be found at
Verse 2:

nam mkha' bzhin du gos med cing
spros pa med cing yi ge med
bsam yas khyod mthong gang yin pa
des ni de bzhin gshegs pa mthong

Similar to space, unsullied,
free from conceptual proliferations, beyond words,
unthinkable – those who see you thus,
see the Tathāgata. \(^{184}\)

Verse 3:

'phags ma yon tan phyugs khyod dang
sangs rgyas 'gro ba'i bla ma mams
(84a) khyad par yod par ma 'khums te

http://www.sub.uni-goettingen.de/ebene_1/fiindolo/gretil/1_sanskr/4_reliuit/buddh/bst-108u.htm,
Pandey, however, does not specify the source. His version will also be quoted here, noting the
differences between the two manuscripts with bold script.

Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon:

\[
nirvikalpe namastubhyam prajñāpāramitā 'mite/
yā tvaṁ sarvānāvadyāṁi nirvāṇāyairnirīkṣyate//1
\]

\(^{184}\) Lamotte (1970:1061, n. 2):
\[
ākāśam iva nirlepāṁ
niśprapañcāṁ nirakṣatāṁ
yas tvaṁ paśyati bhāvena
sa paśyati tathāgatam//
\]

Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon:

\[
ākāśamiva nirlepāṁ niśprapañcāṁ nirakṣatāṁ/
yastvāṁ paśyati bhāvena sa paśyati tathāgatam//2
\]
zla ba dang ni zla 'od bzhin

[Between] you who is rich in good qualities
and the Buddha, the teacher of beings,
no difference can be realized, as in the case
of moon and moonlight.\(^{185}\)

Verse 4:

gus la byams ma sangs rgyas kyi
chos kyi sngon 'gro khyod brtan nas
thugs rje'i bdag nyid mnyam med pa'i
bdag nyid chen por bde blag 'gro

O compassionate mother, relying with faith on you,
who comes before the Dharma of the Buddhas,
[beings] easily go to the incomparable greatness
which has the nature of compassion.\(^{186}\)

\(^{185}\) Lamotte, 1970:1061, n. 2:

tava cārya
guṇādhīyā
dharmasya ca jagadguroḥ
na paśyanty antaraṁ santaś
candracandrākāryoriva//

Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon:

tava cārya
guṇādhīyā
dharmasya ca jagadguroḥ
na paśyantyantaraṁ santaścandracandrākāryoriva//3

\(^{186}\) Lamotte does not have this verse in Sanskrit. Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon:

kpātmakāṁ prapadya tvāṁ buddhadharmaṁ purusassarāṁ/
sukhenāyāṁti māhātmyamatulam bhaktavatsale//4
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Verse 5:

lan cig tsam yang bsam dag pas
khyod la tshul bzhin blta ba gang
des kyang mthong ba don yod kyi
dngos grub nges par thob par 'gyur

By even one pure wish
those who see you correctly,
will definitely obtain
the accomplishment of meaningful seeing. 187

Verse 6:

gzhan don mngon dga'i 'dag nyid can
dpa' bo dag ni thams cad kyi
gso mdzad bskyed par mdzad pa ste
khyod ni byams ma'i yum lags so

Possessing pure joy for the benefit of others,
you are the nourishment, the generator,
you are the gentle mother
of all heroes. 188

187 Lamotte does not have this verse in Sanskrit. Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon:
sakrṇapyāśaye śuddhe yastvāṁ vidhivakṣyate/
tenāpi niyatāṁ siddhiḥ prāpyate 'moghadarśane//5

188 Lamotte, 1970:1062, n. 1:
sarveśāṁ api virāṇāṁ
parārthe niyatātmanāṁ,
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Verse 7:

gang slad sangs rgyas 'jig rten gtso
thugs rje can mams khyod kyi sras
de yi slad du dge ma khyod
sems can kun gyi phyi mo lags

Because Buddhas,
compassionate masters of the world, are your sons
o virtuous one, you
are the grandmother of all sentient beings. 189

Verse 8:

pha rol phyin pa dri med pa
kun gyis ma smad pa khyod kyi
dus kun rjes su 'brang lags pa
rgyu skar rnams kyiis zla ris bzhin

---

poṣikā janayitri ca
mātā tvam asi vatsalā//

Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon:
sarveṣāmapi virāṇaparārtthe niyatātmanām/
vyāpikā jagatimenaṃ mātā tvamasi vatsalā//6

Lamotte, 1970:1062, n.2:
yad buddhā lokaguravāḥ
putrās tava kṛpalavah
tenā tvam asi kalyāṇī
sarvasattvapitāmaḥ//

Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon:
ye buddhā lokaguravāḥ putrāstavā kṛpalavah/
tenā tvamasi kalyāṇī sarvasattvapitāmaḥ//7
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Perfect and stainless,
o blameless one,
all ever follow you
like the stars do the moon.\textsuperscript{190}

Verse 9:

gdul bya'i 'gro bā la brten nas
de dang de bzhiṅ gshegs rnams kyis
khyod nyid gcig pu tshul mang du
sna tshogs mtshan gyis bsngags pa mdzad

Those relying on beings to be trained [i.e. bodhisattvas]
and the Tathāgatas,
praise you and only you
in many ways and by many names.\textsuperscript{191}

\textsuperscript{190} Lamotte does not have this verse in Sanskrit. Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon:
\begin{verbatim}
Sarvapāramitābhis tvarp nirmalābhīraṇindītā/
candrālekheva tārābhīrahunāprotā 'si sarvatah/
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{191} Lamotte, 1970:1062, n. 3:
\begin{verbatim}
vineyājanam āśādyā
tatra tatra tathāgaṇataṁ
bahurūpā tvam evaikā
nānāṅāmabhīr īśyase//
\end{verbatim}
Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon:
\begin{verbatim}
vineyajanaṁāśādyā tatra tatra tathāgataṁ/
bahurūpā tvam evaikā nānāṅāmabhīr īśyase//
\end{verbatim}
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Verse 10:

zil ba'i chu yis thigs pa rams
nyi ma'i 'od dang 'jal ba bzhin
rgol ba rams kyi rtsod dang skyon
khyod dang 'jal na 'jig par 'gyur

Just as dewdrops
vanish on encountering the light of the sun,
so do the disputations and fallacies of the debaters
when they encounter you.192

Verse 11:

khyod nyid byis pa rams la ni
skrag byed mthong na 'jigs pa dang
mkhas pa rams la dbugs 'byin pa
skyed bas mthong na zhi ba lags

To the immature you appear fearsome,
And are a generator of fear.

To the wise you appear peaceful

192 Lamotte, 1970:1062, n. 4:

prabhāṃ prāpyeva dhītāṃśor
avasyāyodabindavaḥ
tvāṃ prāpya pralayarṣyanti
dōṣa vāddāś ca vādinām//

Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon:

prabhāṃ prāpyeva dhītāṃśoravaśyāyodavindavah/
tvāṃ prāpya pralayarṣyanti dōṣāvāddāśca vādinām//10
And are a generator of comfort.\textsuperscript{193}

Verse 12:

khyod mgon gang la khyod la yang
mngon par chags pa mnga' min na
de la yum cig ji ltar na
gzhan la 'dod chags zhe sdang 'byung

Since you, o protector,
have no attachment even to yourself,
then, o mother,
how could desire and hatred towards others arise?\textsuperscript{194}

Verse 13:

khyod ni gang nas ma byon zhing

gang du yang ni mi gshegs pas

\textsuperscript{193} Lamotte, 1970:1063, n. 1:
ivam eva träsajananī
bhillanāṁ bhīmadarśanā
āśväsajananī cāsi
viduṣāṁ saumyadarśanā//

\textsuperscript{194} Lamotte, 1970:1063, n. 2:
yasya tvayy apy abhiśvaṅgas
tvannāthasya na vidyate,
tasyāṁba katham anyatra
rāgadveṣau bhāviṣyataḥ//

Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon:
yasya tvayyapayabhīṣvaṅgaṁtvannāthasya na vidyate/
tasyāṁba kathamanyatra rāgadveṣau bhāviṣyataḥ//11
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

gnas ni thams cad dag du yang
mkhas pa rnam kyis dmigs ma lags

As you are not coming from anywhere,
and you are not going anywhere,
the wise ones do not perceive you
as abiding in any place.\textsuperscript{195}

Verse 14:
gang khyod de ltar ma 'khums nas
bsam pa yis ni bsgrubs pa dang
bsgrubs pa las ni rnam grol ba
de 'dir rmad byung chen po lags

That those who do not comprehended you
practise with thought in this way
and are liberated through practice
is a great wonder here.\textsuperscript{196}

\textsuperscript{195} Lamotte, 1970:1063, n. 3:
nāgacchasi kutaścit tvam
\textit{na ca kvacana} gacchasi
sthāneśv api ca sarveśu
vidvadbhir nopalabhyase//

\textsuperscript{196} Lamotte does not have this verse in Sanskrit. Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon:
\textit{ye tvām eva na paśyanti prapadyante ca bhāvataḥ/}
prapadya ca vimucyante tad idam mahadābhutam//14
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Verse 15:

khyod nyid mthong na 'ching 'gyur (84b) zhin
ma mthong na yang 'ching bar 'gyur
khyod nyid mthong na grol 'gyur zhin
ma mthong na yang grol bar 'gyur

Seeing you, one is bound;
not seeing [you], one is also bound.

Seeing you, one is liberated;
not seeing [you], one is also liberated.197

Verse 16:

e ma ya mtshan cher 'ong ma
grags ldan ma khyod bzang mo lags
shin tu rto gska' sgyu ma bzhin
snang zhin mi snang ba yang lags

Wonderful, most astonishing, pleasing mother,

197 Lamotte, 1970:1064, n. 1:
    tvām eva badhyate paśyann
    api badhyate
    tvām eva mucyate paśyann
    api mucyate/

The verse is also quoted by Buddhapālita in Mūlamadhyamakavārtti but attributed to Rāhulabhadra (see Lindtner, 1981:207). Lindtner adds in a footnote that the verse is also quoted in Madhyamakaratantrapradīpa, loc. Cit., 335a; Mahāyānasaṃgrahopanibandhana, TP, No. 5552, Li 329a (1982:216, n. 94).

Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon:
    tvāmeva badhyate paśyannapāśyanna vibbadhyate/
    tvāmeva mucyate paśyannapāśyanna vimucyate//15

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renowned mother, you, kind lady, are indeed
most difficult to realise. Like magical illusion,
you appear and not appear. 198

Verse 17:
sangs rgyas rang sangs rgyas rNams dang
nyan thos rNams kyi's nges bsten ma
khyod nYid gcig pu thar pa'i lam
de ltar gzhAn dag med par nges

The one definitely resorted to by Buddhas, Pratyekabuddhas
and śrāvakas, [o] mother,
you alone are the one path to liberation.
It is certain that another one like that does not exist. 199

Verse 18:

198 Lamotte, 1970:1064, n. 2:
aho vismayanīyasi
gambhirāsa yaśasvinī
sudurbodhāsa māyeva
dṛṣyaś ca dṛṣyaśe//

Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon:
aho vismayanīyasi gambhirāsa yaśasvinī/
sudurbodhāsa māyeva dṛṣyaś ca dṛṣyaśe//16

199 Lamotte, 1970:1064, n. 3:
buddhaiḥ pratyekabuddhaiḥ ca
śrāvakaś ca niṣevitā
mārgas tvam eko mokṣasya
nasty anya iti niṣcayāḥ//

Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon:
buddhaiḥ pratyekabuddhaiśca śrāvakaś ca niṣevite/
mārgastvameko mokṣasya nāstyany a iti niṣcayāḥ//17
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

lus can mams la phan don du
tha snyad mdun du mdzad nas ni
brtse bas 'jig rten mgon mams kyis
khyod bstan ma bstan par yang gda'

For the benefit of embodied beings,
you are presented in conventional language.
Out of compassion, by the protectors of the world
you can be described yet not described.\textsuperscript{200}

Verse 19:
‘dir khyod bstod par sus rnGO thogs
mtshan ma med cing gos pa med
ngag gi yul kun las ‘das ma
gang khyod ‘gar yang rten mi mnga’

Signless and stainless,
beyond the range of all words, o mother,
you who are without any support.
Who is capable of praising you here?\textsuperscript{201}

\textsuperscript{200} Lamotte, 1970:1064, n. 4:
vyavahāraṃ puraskṛtya
prajñāpyarthanā śārīrīnām
kṛpayā lokanāthais tvam
ucyase ca na cocyase/

Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon:
vyavahāraṃ puraskṛtya prajñāpyarthā śārīrīnām/
kṛpayā lokanāthais tvamucyase ca na cocyase//18
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Verse 20:

de ltar gda' yang kun rdzob tu
bdag cag ngag lam 'di 'dra bas
khyod ni bstod byar mi gda' na'ang
bstod pas shin tu mya ngan 'das

Although you exist in this way conventionally,
you cannot be praised by words such as these of ours.
Nonetheless, by praising you,
there is prefect liberation.202

Verse 21:

shes rab pha rol phyin bstod las
bdag gi dge ba gang bsags pa
de yis 'jig rten ma lus pa

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201 Lamotte, 1970:1065, n. 1:

śaktas kas tvām iha stotam
nirmiśām nāraṇjanām
sarva-vāgyāyātītā
ya tvam kvacid anihīritā//

Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon:
śaktas kastvāmaḥ stotam nirmiśām nāraṇjanām/
sarveśaṁ viṣayātītā yā tvam kvacidaniḥīritā//19

202 Lamotte, 1970:1065, n. 2:

saty eva m api saṃvṛtyā
vākpathan vayaṁ idṛṣaiḥ
tvām astutām api stutvā
tuṣṭṭaṇaṁ suṁiṁjītaḥ//

Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon:
satyevaṁ api saṃvṛtyā vākopathair vayaṁ idṛṣaiḥ/ tvām astutāṁ api stutvā tuṣṭṭaṇaṁ suṁiṁjītaḥ//20

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shes rab pha rol phyin gzhol shog

May whatever merit I have accumulated
by the praise of perfect wisdom
lead the whole world
to perfect wisdom.\textsuperscript{203}

\textsuperscript{203} Lamotte does not have this verse in Sanskrit. Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon:
prajñāpāramitāśruti yanmayopacitam śubham/
tenāstvāśu jagat kṛtsnāṁ prajñāpārāparāyaṇam/21
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Comments

The *Prajñāpāramitāstava* is extant in Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan. Lamotte (1970:1061 – 1065) offers a translation of the *Tsan pan jo po lo mi* (*Prajñāpāramitāstotra*) together with the Sanskrit text (and French translation) corresponding to the stanzas found in *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra*. Several of these Sanskrit verses match closely the Tibetan version used here. Another Sanskrit edition, in 21 verses (matching the number of verses in the Tibetan version) has been offered by Pandey Janardan Shastri (1994) but with no information about the source and no translation. It is possible that his is a reconstruction from the Tibetan. The Tibetan canonical version used here has not been previously edited or translated.

Authenticity

The content of this beautiful hymn certainly deserves more detailed examination, but here we must limit our observations only to providing reasons for denying its authenticity. On three separate occasions the hymn has been attributed to Rāhulabhadra. Lamotte points out that the Nepalese manuscript of the hymn, discovered in 1907 by Haraprasād Shāstri, mentions: “kṛṣṇ iya’f!l Rāhulabhadrasya” (1970:1060). Furthermore, Lamotte found the Chinese manuscript quoting verses of our hymn and saying: “The verses of *Prajñāpāramitāstotra* which are found in the 18th roll of the Ta tche tou louen of Nāgārjuna are works by the dharmācārya Lo ho (Rāhula)” (1970:1060). Finally, Lindtner provides evidence that Buddhapālita, in

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204 His text is published online by the Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon (www.uwest.edu/sanskritcanon), Stotra section, nos. 1 – 108, text no. 64: *Prajñāpāramitāstotram*. The manuscript can be accessed at: http://www.sub.uni-goettingen.de/eboe/eboe1/ebone1/ebone1/gretil/1_sanskr/4_relit/buddh/bst-108u.htm.
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_Mūlamadhyamakavya, XVIII_, quotes verses that correspond to verses 12 and 13 of the Chinese version of _Prajñāpāramitāśāstra_ (Lamotte, 1979:1061), and verse 15 of the Tibetan version used here, saying: “The teacher Rāhulabhadra has also stated, in his ‘Hymn to Perfect Wisdom’ (Lindtner, 1981:207). Hence, the evidence seems overwhelming that the author of the hymn is not Nāgārjuna but Rāhulabhadra.²⁰⁵"

There should be no need of further discussion on authenticity. Yet, since we do possess 16 verses from the _Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra_ in Sanskrit that closely match our Tibetan version, it may be beneficial to compare their style in order to see whether our decision is supported.

Regarding metrics, _pādas_ 7a and 11a contain _na-vipulā_ (v v v), while _pāda_ 17c contains _ma-vipulā_ (- - -). The other verses are in regular _pathyā_ metre (v - -). All together, in 16 preserved verses – 32 lines – 3 have some sort of _vipulā_ which is 4.8% (3.2% _na-vipulā_ and 1.6% _ma-vipulā_). The percentages varies significantly from that found in the _Mūlamadhyamakakārikā_, the _Ratnavali_, the _Niraupamyastava_ and the _Lokātitastava_, where it was between 14% and 18%. Also, here we have only two types of _vipulā_. In short, judging by the metrics, the Sanskrit verses matching our Tibetan text do not show great similarity with the style of the works reliably attributed to Nāgārjuna.

Regarding the presence of particles: _ca_ is present 10 times, _eva_ 6 times, _api_ 7 times and _iti_ once. All together, particles are present in 19 lines while 13 lines are free of them, which means, particles are present in roughly 60% of the lines. The percentage matches the _Ratnavali_ but there are fewer types of particles used.

²⁰⁵ Rāhulabhadra, also known as Saraha, is known to the Tibetan tradition as Nāgārjuna’s teacher, but to the Chinese tradition as his disciple (see Giuseppe Tucci, 1930:140).
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Regarding compounds: around 40% of the lines contain them. The percentage, again, is not too far from the Ratnāvali. However, due to the limited number of verses we possess and the fact that we do not have the full text, these numbers would not allow us to make definite conclusions. In any case, they do suggest that the style is more refined than that found in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā and even that in the Ratnāvali.

The percentage of vipulā, particles and compounds in the 16 verses shows significant stylistic differences from the authentic works of Nāgārjuna. It seems that the analysis of the style supports the conclusion that the hymn is not Nāgārjuna’s.

There seems to be another internal proof. Verse 17 says of Prajñāpāramitā: “you alone are the one path to liberation; it is certain that another one like that does not exist.” This is clearly a Mahāyāna claim. Such a strong and exclusivist claim has not been made in any of the authentic works examined above. In comparison, the Ratnāvali is rather apologetic and asks for tolerance for Mahāyāna, never entering into direct polemics with any śrāvaka school.
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

*Kāyatrayastotranāma*

sku gsum la bstod pa zhes bya ba²⁰⁶

The Hymn in Praise of the Three Bodies

'phags pa 'jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pa la phyag 'tshal lo

Homage to the Noble Youthful Mañjuśrī

Verse 1:

gcig min du ma ma yin bdag dang gzhan la phan pa phun sum tshogs chen gzhir gyur pa
dngos min dngos po med pa ma yin mkha' ltar ro gcig rtogs par dka' ba'i rang bzhin
can
gos pa med cing mi 'gyur zhi la mi mnyam mnyam pa khyab pa can te spros med pa
so so rang rig rgyal ba rnams kyi chos sku dpe med gang yin de la bdag phyag 'tshal

Neither one nor many, the foundation of great good fortune, which is a benefit for self
and other,
neither an existent nor a non-existent, similar to space, of one taste, having an
inconceivable nature,
stainless, immutable, peaceful, matchless, all pervading, free of conceptual
elaborations,

²⁰⁶ *bsTan-'gyur* (Narthang), 2015, folio 78a – 78b.
I salute the unparalleled Dharmakāya of Jinas, which is to be personally realised.

Verse 2:

rang gi 'byor ba 'jig rten las 'das bsam gyis mi khyab legs mdzad brgya yi 'bras bu ni blo can rnams kyi dga' ba skye'd phyir 'khor gyi nang du sna tshogs rgyas par ston mdzad cing rtag tu dam pa chos kyi sgra skad rgya chen 'jig rten kun tu 'phro bar mdzad pa po sangs rgyas longs spyod dzogs sku chos kyi rgyal srid gnas (78b) pa gang yin de la phyag 'atshal lo

Whose own power is transcendent, inconceivable, the result of 100 well-achieved Buddha-acts,

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207 The Sanskrit text of the Trikāyastava together with the Tibetan translation that matches ours, after the Amdo edition of the Deb-ther sngon-po, was first published by Baron A. von Stael-Holstein (1911). Reconstruction of the Sanskrit text from Chinese (San Chen Tsan, Bunyiu Nanjio, Catalogue, no. 1072) was offered by Sylvain Lévi (1896). Yet another version of Sanskrit is to be found in the Sekkodesaṭīka of Naṭapāda (Nāro-pa), edited by Mario E. Carelli (1941:57-58). We shall reproduce all three Sanskrit texts below in the order: 1) Baron A. von Sael-Holstein; 2) Sylvain Lévi’s reconstruction from Chinese and, 3) Nāro-pa’s (Roerich’s).

1) yo naiko nāpy anekaḥ svaparahitamahāsarpadādhārabhūto
   naivābhāvo na bhāvah[ḥ] kham iva samaraso durvābhāvavabhāvah/ nirlepān nirvikāraṇā śīvam asamāsaman viśpīnaṃ niśprāpaṇitam vande pratyātmavedyaṃ tam aham anupamaṇā dharmkāyaṃ jīnānām//

2) yo naiko nāpy anekaḥ svaparahitamahāsarpadādhārabhūto
   naivābhāvo na bhāvah kham iva samara -- viśvābhāvavabhāvah/ nirlepān nirvikāraṇā śīvam asamāsaman viśpīnaṃ-prapācaṇa(m) vande pratyātmavedyaṃ tam aham anupamaṇā dharmkāya(m) jīnānām//

3) yo naiko nāpy anekaḥ svaparahitamahāsarpadādhārabhūto
   naivābhāvo na bhāvah kham iva samaraso durvābhāvavabhāvah/ nirlepān nirvikāraṇā śīvam asamāsaman viśpīnaṃ niśprāpaṇitam vande pratyātmavedyaṃ tam aham anupamaṇā dharmkāyaṃ jīnānām//
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

who teaches variously and extensively in the assembly for the sake of generating joy for the wise ones,
it makes the vast sound of the holy dharma permeate all times and all worlds,
I pay homage to that which is located in the kingdom of Dharma, the Buddha's *Saṃboghaṅkāya*.

Verse 3:

sems can mams ni smin par mdzad phyir la la dag tu me 'bar bzhin du gang snang zhing
la la ru zhi rdzogs par byang chub chos kyi 'khor lo rab tu zhi bar snang la
sna tshogs thabs tshul mams kyi rnam pa du mar 'jug cing srid pa gsum gyi 'jigs sel ba
phyogs bcur chub mdzad thub pa mams kyi sprul sku don chen gang yin de la phyag 'tshal lo

To some it appears like a fire in order to mature sentient beings,

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1) lokāṭṭham acintyāṁ sukṛtasamapalāṁ ātmano yo vibhūtiṁ
parśṇamadhye vicitrāṁ prathayati mahatāṁ dhimatāṁ pritiḥetoh/
buddhāṇāṁ sarvalokapraśṭāṁ aviratodārasisaddharmaghoṣāṁ
vande saṃbhogakāyaṁ tam aham iha mahādharmanājyapratīṣṭhānāṁ//

2) lokāṭṭhāṁ acintyāṁ sukṛtasamapalāṁ ātmano yo vibhūtiṁ
parśṇamattā (?) vicitrāṁ stabhayati mahatma-matāṁ pritiḥetum/
buddhāṇāṁ sarvaloka praśṭāṁ aviratodārasisaddhamsaṁ
vande saṃbhogakāyaṁ tam aghanighamahādharmanājāṁ pratiṣṭhāṁ//

3) lokāṭṭhamacintyāṁ sukṛtaśatapalāṁātmāṁyānaṁ you vubhūtiṁ
parśṇamadhye vicitrāṁ prathayati mahatāṁ dhimatāṁ pritiḥetoḥ/
buddhāṇāṁ sarvalokapraśṭāṁ aviratodārasisaddharmaghoṣāṁ
vande saṃbhogakāyaṁ tam aham iha mahādharmanājyapratīṣṭhitām//
to some it appears as peaceful, to some it appears as the wheel of the doctrine of supreme liberation,
it removes fear of all three worlds engaging in many forms of a variety of methods.
I salute the \textit{Nirmāṇakāya} of the Sages, of great value, which permeated the ten directions.\textsuperscript{209}

Verse 4:
sems can don gcig rgyun tu mdzad cing bsod nams ye shes chen po dpag med las byung ba'i
bde bar gshegs pa rnams kyi sku gsum yid dang tshigi lam las rab tu 'das pa la
bdag gi dad pas phyag byas dge ba byang chub sa bon bsags par gyur pa gang yin des
sku gsum thob nas 'gro ba 'di dag ma lus byang chub lam la nges par 'jug par shog

May I obtain the \textit{trikāya} by the merit, the seed of \textit{bodhi},

\textsuperscript{209} 1) satvānām pākahetoḥ kvacid anala ivābhāti yo dipyamānah
sambodhau dharmacakre kvacid api ca punar dṛṣṭaye yaḥ praśantarāḥ/
naikākārapraṇātāṁ tribhavabhayaharanāṁ viśvarūpaṁ upāyair
vande nirmāṇakāyam daśādiganugataṁ taṁ mahārthaṁ muninām/

2) sattvānām bhūgaheutoḥ kvacid anabha ivābhāti yo dipyamānah
sambodhau dharmacakre kvacid api ca punar dṛṣṭaye yaḥ praśantarāḥ/
naikākārapraṇātāṁ tribhavabhayaharanāṁ viśvarūpaṁ upāyair
vande nirmāṇakāyam daśādiganugataṁ taṁ mahārthaṁ muninām/

3) sattvānām pākahetoḥ kvacid anala ivābhāti yo dipyamānah
sambodhau dharmacakre kvacid api ca punar dṛṣṭaye yaḥ praśantarāḥ/
naikākārapraṇātāṁ tribhavabhayaharanāṁ viśvarūpaṁ upāyair
vande nirmāṇakāyam daśādiganugataṁ taṁ mahārthaṁ muninām/
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

I have accumulated by having paid homage with faith to the three bodies of the Sugata which are beyond the path of mind and speech

and firmly establish all transmigrants without exception on the path of bodhi.²¹⁰

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²¹⁰

1) sattvarthaikakrapaṇāṃ aparimitamahāyānapuṇyānayānāṃ
yāyānāṃ saugatānāṃ pratīvigatamanovākpathānāṃ trayānāṃ/
kṛtvā baktīḥ praṇāmaḥ kusālaṁ upacītaḥ yan mayā bodhibijāṃ
trikāyas tena labhā jagad idam aklīrāṃ bodhimārga niyuṭaḥ//

2) sattvarthaikakrapaṇāṃ aparimitamahāyānapuṇyānayānāṃ
yāyānāṃ saugatānāṃ pratīvigatamanovākpathānāṃ trayānāṃ/
kṛtvā baktīḥ praṇāmaḥ kusālaṁ upacītaḥ yan mayā bodhibijāṃ
trikāyas tena labhā jagad idam aklīrāṃ bodhimārga niyuṭaḥ//

3) trailokyāçararūktaḥ gaganasamagataḥ sarvabhāvasvabhāvāḥ
śudhāḥ sāntaḥ viviktaḥ paramāśivamayaḥ yoginīneva gamyaḥ/
durbodhaḥ durvividāraḥ svaparabhitataṃ vyāpinnāṁ nirnimittaḥ
vande kāyaṁ jīnānāṁ sukhamasamasamaṁ nirvikalpaikāntāṁ//

As we can see, the Amdo Sanskrit version corresponds to ours. Levi’s reconstruction from Chinese is very close, too. However, the final verse of Nāropa’s text is very different.
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Comments

The Sanskrit text of the *Trikāyastava* together with the Tibetan translation that matches ours after the Amdo edition of the Deb-ther sngon-po was first published by Baron A. von Stael-Holstein (1911). Another Sanskrit version is to be found in the *Sekkodesaṭīka* of Naḍapāda (Nāro-pa), edited by Mario E. Carelli (1941:57-58). An English translation of that version (as well as Sanskrit transliteration) is offered by George N. Roerich (1996:1-2). Before the appearance of these two, a Sanskrit reconstruction from Chinese (*San Chen Tsan, Bunyiu Nanjio, Catalogue, no. 1072*) was made by Sylvain Lévi (1896).

Basic observations on the style, structure and content

The *Kāyatrayastotra* contains four verses in the *sragdhāra* metre. The structure of the hymn is simple. Each of the first three verses pays tribute to one of the bodies of the Buddha: the *Dharmakāya*, the *Saṃboghakāya* and the *Nirmāṇakāya*. The last verse dedicates the merit obtained by such praise to the welfare of all sentient beings.

The hymn does not start with a separate verse of salutation to the Buddha. However, the first three verses, each dedicated to one of the bodies of the Buddha, collectively composes an elaborate salutation.

There is nothing unusual in the doctrinal content of the hymn except for one specific feature: tribute is paid to the three bodies of the Buddha, including the *saṃboghakāya*.
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Authenticity

According to Lindtner, the hymn has been "ascribed to Nāgārjuna in Jñānaśrīmitra's Sākārasiddhi-śāstra, p. 503 but the trikāya-doctrine is hardly compatible with the kāyadvaya of YŚ, 60; RĀ, III, 10, 12. Moreover the style is very loose, rather unlike Nāgārjuna" (Lindtner, 1982:15-16). Regarding the style, we must say that the evidence is inconclusive due to the brevity of the hymn. However, the presence of the trikāya doctrine and the explicit mention of the samboghakāya seems sufficient reason to deny authenticity. None of the authentic works mentioned above suggest any knowledge of the third body. Without exception, when the bodies of the Buddha are discussed (Yuktisāṣṭikā, 60; Ratnāvali, 210, 212, Niraupamyastava, Dharmadhātustava), only two are mentioned, the nirmānakāya and the dharmaṣṭā. The term samboghakāya does not appear in Nāgārjuna’s writings in any context. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that the trikāya doctrine was articulated for the first time much later than the time of Nāgārjuna. Guang Xing, tracing the evolution of the trikāya theory, concludes that the term samboghakāya first appeared in the Mahāyānasūtra upālākāra (2005:129). He agrees with Habito and Makransky that it was in this text that the earliest systematic explanation of the trikāya doctrine was formulated (Xing, 2005:129).

The authorship of the Mahāyānasūtra upālākāra causes some controversy among scholars and there are three names mentioned as possible authors: Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu (Xing, 2005:130). According to Xing, Maitreya is a controversial figure and most scholars express a sceptical attitude to his historical
identity. Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, however, are historical persons and great Mahāyāna teachers whose dates are relatively settled. For Xing, they are the more likely candidates for authorship of the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*.

Relying on J. Takakusa (1905) and E. Frauwallner (1951), Xing locates Asaṅga at roughly 310-390 CE and, based on H. Nakamura, locates Vasubandhu approximately 320-400 CE (Xing, 2005:221, n.137). Furthermore, examining the two early sources in Chinese concerning the lives of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu: the *Life of Vasubandhu* translated by Paramārtha (499-569 CE) and Xuanzang’s *Datangxiyujì* (‘The Record of the Western Regions’), Xing finds that both agree that Asaṅga and Vasubandhu were brothers born into a Brahmin family in Puruṣa-pura in North India (2005:130).

In short, the evidence suggests that the first time the doctrine of *trikāya* and the term *sāmboghakāya* appeared was most likely in the fourth century in North India. There seems to be no chance that our Nāgārjuna could have known of it.
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

_Narakoddharastava_

**dmyal ba nas ’don pa zhes bya ba**

The Hymn Named “Rescue From Hell”

‘jig rten mgon po la phyag ’tshal lo

Homage to the Protector of the World

**Verse 1:**

’khor ba’i rgya mtsho chen por ni
dbul ba’i ’dam du bying ba la
yongs su mkhyen pa bskyed nas ni
dc bzhin gshegs kye bdag la skyobs

I am drowned in the swamp of poverty,
the great ocean of _samsāra_.

Having generated full knowledge,

protect me, o Tathāgata!

**Verse 2:**

bdag ni rab rib khang par zhugs

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211 _bsTan-’gyur_ (Narthang), 2028, folio 92b - 93a.
212 Sanskrit edition by Christian Lindner (1979):
_dāridrāpanikasānām mānasāsāyā mahodadhau/
parijñānām samutpādyā trāhi mūm he tathāgata/_
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

I have entered the house of clouded vision,
and experiencing suffering, unprotected,
I have been abandoned by the community of kinsmen.
Protect me, o, Tathāgata! 213

Verse 3:

Father, mother, sister,
children, friends, wife,
I regard as an illusion.
Protect me, o, Tathāgata! 214

Verse 4:

213 timirgārāpraviṣṭam anāthadubhkhavedanam/
bandhavargaiḥ pariṣṭaṁ trāhī māṁ hi tathātata/
214 mātā pitā bhagīṇy api putradāśasuhṛjjanāḥ/
indrajalā mayā drśṭās trāhī māṁ hi tathātata/
I will go forth alone
with whatever good or bad deed I have done
for the sake of my retinue.
Protect me, o, Tathāgata! 215

Verse 5:
O, protector, if I become blind
in the very terrible old well
and in the bottomless ocean,
protect me, o, Tathāgata! 216

\[\text{215 yan mayā pariṣāṁ karmane dukṣṭam/}
\text{ekākī tena yasyāmi trāhi māṁ he tathāgata/}
\text{216 jīrṇākūpe mahāghora navagānasaṅgara/}
\text{andhābhūto śmy aharp nātha trāhi māṁ he tathāgata/}\]
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Verse 6:

rgya mtsho chen po rgal ba yi
gru ni gog por zhugs pa ltar
bdag gis (93a) kyang ni rgal dkar 'khums
de bzhin gshegs kye bdag la skyobs

I have entered onto this
decrepit boat to cross the great ocean
and I realized that it is difficult to cross.
Protect me, o, Tathāgata! 217

Verse 7:

chos dang chos min ma 'tshal shing
bgrod dka' bgrod min mi rigs pas
'di ni sems med shing dang 'dra
de bzhin gshegs kye bdag la skyongs

Since I do not understand right and wrong
and do not understand what is the way to go or not go,
I am unconscious like a log,
protect me, o, Tathāgata! 218

217 jirnā nāukā samārupā mahāsāgaralaṅghane/
durlanghyan ca mayā drṣṭāṁ trāhi māṁ he tathāgata//
218 dharmāḥdharmāṁ na viṣṭāṁ gamyāgamyaṁ na veditam/
acchanaṁ idaṁ kāṭhaṁ trāhi māṁ he tathāgata//
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Verse 8:

pha bsad pa dang ma bsad pa
kho bos mtshams med lnga bgyis pa
mi bzad rab rib mun par 'khums
de bzhin gshegs kye bdag la skyobs

I have committed patricide, matricide, [and the other three of the] five inexpiable offences,\(^{219}\)

[and now] I realize the horrible unclear darkness.

Protect me, o, Tathāgata!\(^{220}\)

Verse 9:

bdag gis mchod rten 'jig par bgyis
dge 'dun dkong\(^{221}\) ni rnam par blangs
bdag gis sems can 'tshe bar bgyis
de bzhin gshegs kye bdag la skyobs

I have destroyed stūpas,

I have stolen possessions of the Saṅgha,

I have harmed sentient beings,

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\(^{219}\) Five inexpiable offences: patricide, matricide, killing an arhat, causing blood to flow from the body of a Buddha, causing separation of the saṅgha.

\(^{220}\) mātrghātaṃ pītrghātaṃ pañcānantaṃ me kṛtām
paśyāmi tīmīraṃ ghorāṃ trāhi māṃ he tathāgata/

\(^{221}\) Should be dkor.
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

protect me, o, Tathāgata! 222

Verse 10:

\[ \text{In this world there is no happiness,} \]
\[ \text{it is not expected in the next.} \]
\[ \text{I am bound by the string of my karma.} \]

Protect me, o, Tathāgata! 223

Verse 11:

A life such as this

wanders like a \textit{Kāśi} flower in the air

\[ 222 \text{ktō mayā stūpabhetāḥ sāṃghikārtho vināśītaḥ/} \]
\[ \text{ktā mayā sattvahīṃsā trāhī mān he tathāgata/} \]
\[ 223 \text{iha loke sukhaṃ nāsti paraloke na veditam/} \]
\[ \text{veṣṭitaṃ karmastṛtṛena trāhī mān he tathāgata/} \]
\[ 224 \text{Lindtner has } mkha' \text{ la = through the air (} mkha' = \text{space, sky). The Tibetan canon has } mkhar \text{ but that could also mean "in the sky." It could be a scribal error and Lindtner could be correct. His choice matches the Sanskrit version.} \]
blown by the wind.

Protect me, o, Tathāgata!\textsuperscript{225}

Verse 12:

'brog dgon dang ni tsher ma yi
ljon shing mang po brten med pa
de na bdag gis lam ma mthong
de bzhin gshegs kye bdag la skyobs

Barren and thorny, [\textit{saṃsāra}]
is not a support for many trees.
I see no path there.

Protect me, o, Tathāgata!\textsuperscript{226}

Verse 13:

nyes pa med par phyugs nams dang
ri dwags mang po mdas bsad pas
de tshe bdag ni rgyal por rlom
de bzhin gshegs kye bdag la skyobs

Many innocent cows and deer
my arrows have killed.

\textsuperscript{225} \textit{kāśāpuśapāṃ yathākāśe bhramate vāyuṇāhatam/}
\textit{Idṛṣyapāṃ jīvitaṃ hy idam trāhi māṃ he tathāgata/}
\textsuperscript{226} \textit{atavi kaṇṭakācchannā bahuvṛkṣanirāśrayam/}
\textit{panthānaṃ nātra paśyāmi trāhi māṃ he tathāgata/}
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

At the time I pretended to be king.
Protect me, o, Tathāgata!²²⁷

Verse 14:

sems can dmyal bar 'tshed pa na
skyob pa 'ga' yang yod ma mchis
gang la skyabs su mchi bar bgyi
bdag la skyab²²⁸ par su zhig 'gyur

There will be no refuge
when I boil in hell.
Where will I go for refuge?
Who will be my refuge?²²⁹

Verse 15:

sman pa rnams kyi sman pa'i rgyal
nad rnams thams cad gso mdzad pa
kham gsun rgyu dang mi rgyu ba
skyob byed 'jig rten mgon po la

Of physicians you are the king,

²²⁷ anaparāchaṁ paśuś ca hatāḥ kāṇḍar mrgā mayā/
 rājanaṁ mā tadāmanye trāhi māṁ he tathāgata/²²⁸ Should be skyob.
²²⁹ naraṁ pacyaṁnasya kaścit trātā bhaviṣyati/
gacchāmi kasya sārṣaṁ ko me trātā bhaviṣyati/
you are curer of all diseases,

you, o protector of the world, protect

all three worlds of animate and inanimate beings.\textsuperscript{230}

\textsuperscript{230} vaidyāṇātā vaidyārājāṁs tvam sarvavyādhicikṣaṁsāṁ
lokāṇāṁ bhava tritā trālokya saṃcarācare//
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Comments

A Sanskrit and a Tibetan editions, as well as an English translation have been published by Lindtner (1979). Lindtner located several manuscripts, which he argues proves that the hymn must have enjoyed considerable popularity in the tradition.

Structure and content

The hymn contains 15 verses, the first 13 of which enumerate various misdeeds of the most serious character committed by the author and end with the same refrain: “Protect me, o Tathāgata!” Verse 14 acknowledges that for such negative karma, the only destination is hell and asks two rhetorical questions: “Where will I go for refuge? Who will be my refuge?” The final verse places all hope in the compassion of the ultimate protector, the Buddha. Hence, in the final analysis, there is hope even for sinners such as the author.

There is no verse of salutation and no verse of transference of merit. In fact, there is no explicit acknowledgement that the author accumulated merit by the composition or by his prayers.

The hymn is beautiful in its simple and effective structure: the sinner has no hope of salvation by his own effort as he is not fit to travel the difficult path alone. He is destined to burn in hell. Still, there is a protector of ultimate compassion even for sinners of that sort and faith in him is well placed.

Considering the content – a being in hell invoking the protection of the Buddha – the title could be: “Hymn in praise (of the Buddha) from a being in hell (wishing) to be rescued.” Here we see something very different from the other hymns: there is no enumeration of the Buddha’s epithets, no commemoration of his teachings.
or qualities, but rather a prayer from a sinner asking for rescue from the flames of hell where he will fall because of his accumulated negative karma. That is indeed unusual in comparison with all the other hymns we have examined so far.

Authenticity

In style and in content this hymn is unlike anything we have seen in Nāgārjuna. Of course, that alone is not a decisive proof that he could not have written it, but any claim of authenticity would have to be accompanied with acknowledgement of a radical change in approach and vocabulary.

Lindtner points to the absence of any external criteria for attribution. Except for one possible allusion to verse 11 in Bodhicaryāvatārapañjikā, “... sattvā mudhā ... bhramanti ambare kāśīpūspam iva... saṃsāre” (Lindtner, 1979:146-7) there seems to be no other allusions or quotations among the commentators and no attributions to Nāgārjuna.

The brief examination of style, specifically the presence of vipulā, also seems to corroborate the idea of different authorship. The Niruttarastava has 15 verses in anuśṭubh metre, seven out of which contain some kind of vipulā (2 ra-vipulā: 2a, 9c; 2 ca-vipulā: 3a, 11c; 1 sa-vipulā: 4a; 1 bha-vipulā: 13a; and 1 na-vipulā: 14c), which is 23.3%. That is considerably different from the works examined above, which range from 14% to 18%.

Overall, the difference in style, structure and content and the lack of attribution lead to the conclusion that this hymn is most likely not authentic.
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Āryamañjuśrībhāṭṭārakarakṟṇāstotra

*rje btsun hphags pa hjam dpal gyi s̱ nin rje la bstod pa*\(^{231}\)

In praise of the Compassion of the Noble Mañjuśrī

'jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pa la phyag 'tshal lo

Homage to the Youthful Mañjuśrī

Verse 1:

nyes pa ma lus pa rnam s̱ ras bsal zhing  
thub pa'i grags pa 'gro ba ma lus khyab  
dpal ldan rab tu bstan pa'i sku mnga' ba  
dpal ldan khyed la rtag tu phyag 'tshal lo

I always pay homage to you, the glorious one,  
endowed with the glorious teaching body,  
who has completely annihilated all faults,  
whose reputation as a muni spread to all beings.

Verse 2:

bos shing bos 'gro ba ma lus pa  
phongs pa 'di dag kun las khyed skyob mdzad  
bdag ni s̱ dug bsngal gyur kyang dman khyed ces  
ci yi phyir na nges par sel mi mdzad

\(^{231}\) *bsTan-'gyur* (Narthang), 2023, folio 89a -- 90a.
Summoning again and again all migratory beings
you rescue them from all frailties.
I am subjected to suffering and weak,
so why would you not alleviate it?

Verse 3:

* bcom ldan khyod ni rtag par thams cad la
* rnam pa kun tu thams cad gsol grag na
* bdag la mthong ba tsam yang ma stsal pas
* de phyir bdag ni shin tu skal dman lags

O, Bhagavân, when I called upon you
all the time and in every way
even the mere sight of you was not bestowed on me.
Because of that I am exceedingly unfortunate.

Verse 4:

* yon tan ldan zhing nyes pa sel mdzad pa
* blo bzang 'gro kun skyob par brtson gyur na
* bdag blo khyed la mngon du zhen na yang
* yongs pas gdungs pa nyid du ci phyir 'gyur
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

You are endowed with virtues and [you] eliminate the errors, you are noble-minded, work hard to rescue all beings. Although my mind has always cherished you, why I am left completely in despair?

Verse 5:

thugs rje'i bdag nyid ldan pa khyed kyi ni
(89b) pad+ma lta bu dag pa'i spyan gnyis kyi
'gro ba phan par mdzad kyang bdag sdug par
ma gzigs pa ni kye ma sdug bsngal lo

You are the compassionate one.
With your two pure lotus-like eyes, you bring benefits to transmigratory beings.
Nevertheless you did not see me suffer. Oh, how sorrowful!

Verse 6:

khyed kyi s yid 'jigs dbugs 'byin mdzad pa yi
phyag gi pad+ma ring du rtag tu skyong
skal nyes pa yi tsha bas de yang ni
thag ring du ni mi snang nyid du 'gyur

Your lotus hand which relieves mental fear
protects us extensively at all times
and the heat of the evil era
has disappeared far away.

Verse 7:

khyed kyi snyan ni ma nyams gtsang ba dag
gnyis kyis kyang ni lus la s dug bsngal gyis
gzir te spyan sngar 'o dod 'bod gyur kyang
bdag gi dman pa ci phyir gsan ma gyur

Your ears are not diminished and are sound,
whereas both my two [ears] afflict my body with suffering.

When, oppressed, I call out in your presence.
Why do you not listen to my plight?

Verse 8:

rnam pa kun tu thugs rjes drangs khyed kyis
dmyal bar song ba'i 'gro rigs bde mdzad na
sdig can bdag la bcom Idan 'das kyis ni
thugs rje de yang brtse ba mi mnga' 'gyur

You, are motivated by the compassion in all ways
And even grant happiness to the migratory beings gone to hell.
[But] to me, an evil person, the Blessed one,
although compassionate, does not show love.

Verse 9:

'jig rten dman la phan par mdzad pa yi
khyod la gzhon nu rol pa 'di mnga' na
gang 'dir bdag ni sdug bsngal gyis gzir kyang
skyab par mi mdzad sdig can bsam pas nyes

While you, who benefits the lowly worldly beings,
enjoy a youthful splendour,
I, who is afflicted by suffering here [in this world],
offer no protection and, thinking I am evil, do wrong.

Verse 10:

di ni sdug bsngal can ni gang yin zhes
glen gang gang gis phun tshogs zad gyur ces
de ltar nam par rgyu zhing skyob mdzad kyang
bdag phongs ma gzigs kye ma ngo mtshar che

To the question “Who possesses suffering?”
[you say] “The fool who squanders his good fortune.”
Explaining in this way, you offer protection.
Yet, amazingly, you do not seem to see my misfortune.
Verse 11:

gang zhig la ni tshig sbyin gang zhig la
'phral du phun tshogs rgya chen sbyin bya zhes
de ltar brtson pa khyed kyi mkhyen rab kyis
ci yi phyir na bdag la skyob mi mdzad

It is said that to some you give words [of advice],
to some you instantly give extensive wealth.
Making an effort in this way, with your wisdom,
why do you not provide me protection?

Verse 12:

khyed la dad par gyur ba su mi bde
khyed dang bsod nams dman pa zhig ma mchis
bdag ni khyed la dad kyang sdu g bsngal bar
ci phyir gyur ces ngo mtshar rnam par 'khrungs

Who is not happy who has faith in you?
With you there is no one with little merit.
I have faith in you yet I suffer.
It makes me wonder why.

Verse 13:

sdu g bsngal gcod mdzad sman pa chen po ni
You, the doctor who eliminates suffering,
abandon me. Yet, you tell me
whose merit is destroyed
to not take refuge in another.

Verse 14:
'gro la rtag tu bu gcig 'dra ba yi
brtse ba'i thugs ni mnga' zhing sgrol spyod pa
khyed kyang gal te bdag gnod mi sel na
de tshe bdag ni mgon med bcom pa lags

You always view all beings as your only son,
possessing a compassionate heart you are engaged in releasing them.
If you do not remove my pain,
then I am destroyed without any protector.

Verse 15:
bcom ldan khyod ni dran pa tsam gyis ni
(90a) 'gro la 'bras bu mnyam med kun stsol na
bdag ni bsnyen bkur bgyid kyang bdag gi phyogs
Bhagavān, mere remembrance of you 
bestows unequalled fruits on migratory beings. 
I have made my reverent offerings [to you], 
so why is it that consideration of me is postponed in every way?

Verse 16:

de ltar smre gsol ba yis khyod yon tan 
cha tsam brjod las bdag gis dge bsags pa 
gang yin des ni 'gro la bsod nams dag 
grya cher rang bzhin grub pa'i bum pa bzang

While communicating [my] misery in this way 
may whatever virtue I have accumulated 
through enumerating a little of your good qualities 
[provide] merit to beings extensively [like] a naturally existing wish fulfilling pot.

Verse 17

yid bzhin nor bu lta bu gzugs sku yi 
zhab gnyis rgyu ba'i dpag bsam 'dra ba yi 
khyod kyi gzhon nu'i lus su bdag gyur cing 
skye ba kun tu bdag po nyid gyur cig
Chapter V: Dubious and spurious hymns

Your form-body is like a wish fulfilling jewel,
Your two feet are like a wish-granting tree that moves.
May I acquire your youthful body
and may I be its owner in all lifetimes.\textsuperscript{232}

\textsuperscript{232} It would have been expected that the hymn would with the verse of merit transference (verse 16). Verse 17 is not only unusually located but it makes very little sense. The grammatically correct translation of the third line would be, “you who is similar to the thought/wish of moving two feet.” Yet, it is difficult to see how that fits with the rest of the text.
Comments

This hymn has attracted practically no attention among Western scholars. Not only has it not been edited or translated into any Western language but it has been virtually ignored by scholars. Even Lindtner, who mentions all the other hymns attributed to Nāgārjuna by the Tibetans at least with a footnote, does not mention this one.

Structure and content

The hymn contains seventeen relatively simple verses. The structure is also simple but it seems effective: the author enumerates the qualities of the great bodhisattva and, in practically each verse, parallels those qualities with lamentation about his own inferiority and pitiful state. In effect, it seems that the qualities of Mañjuśrī are even more enhanced and the message is even more transparent: liberation from miseries is not possible without the grace of the Noble One.

As the result of the enumeration of Mañjuśrī's qualities, the author assumes he has generated merit (verse 16) and requests to acquire his youthful body which is like a wish fulfilling jewel in order to work for the benefit of others (verse 17). Hence, we seem to be seeing another variation in the stotra genre: accumulation of merit through the enumeration of the qualities of the great bodhisattva accompanied by lamentation of one's own inferiority. In that, the hymn is unique among the eighteen and is definitely worth detailed study.

Authenticity

Profound as it is, the method displayed in this hymn has no resemblance to anything we have seen in the hymns considered authentic. The imagery and the style are also
unlike anything we have seen from Nāgārjuna. Finally, we must make a similar observation as we did in the case of Aryabhaṭṭaraka Maṇjuśrīparamārthastutināma: in the authentic works we find no mention of Maṇjuśrī and we find no evidence that such a cult was popular in the Andhra region at his time. For these reasons this hymn must be classified as dubious and probably not authentic.
Chapter VI

Conclusion.

This dissertation started with an observation that most often the attention of Western studies of Nāgārjuna has been directed towards understanding his philosophy, focusing on the logical consistency and doctrinal value of his analytical works. Such an approach does not pay enough attention to the social setting and the religious function of his arguments and neglects important aspects of Nāgārjuna’s life along with the voices within the texts that could offer valuable clues about the social, psychological or religious functions of the doctrine. Such an approach also ignores the function of the arguments in Nāgārjuna’s religious praxis within the wider context of his religious community.

This dissertation has attempted to answer some of the questions regarding the relationship between Nāgārjuna’s doctrine and his religious praxis. In particular, the focus has been on uncovering how the doctrine was transmitted and how it was used in the religious context in which Nāgārjuna lived. Uncovering these relationships helps shed light on Nāgārjuna’s religious life in general and allows us to gain more information about his ritual and symbolic universe, the locus of power and authority in that universe and how he perceived the Buddha and his relationship with him.

The preliminary study showed that the best source of information to answer these questions were Nāgārjuna’s hymns and also showed that the hymns were the least studied of all works attributed to the master. In fact, the most prominent features
in them - worship, devotion, commemoration, merit accumulation - have not even entered the mainstream of critical scholarly discussion on Nāgārjuna but have been marginalised and often ignored. In order to answer the questions stated above, a lot of ground had to be prepared. To begin with, it was necessary to ascertain the authenticity of each hymn. In order to do that, the criteria of authenticity had to be established. Furthermore, the content of each authentic hymn had to be discussed in order to bring the religious practices to the surface. Much of the preceding work has been devoted to this task. Now, after briefly summarising the discussion of the criteria and authenticity, we can approach the main questions posed in this study.
Chapter VI: Conclusion

1. Brief summary of the hymns attributed to Nāgārjuna

Criteria for authenticity of the hymns

Eighteen hymns are attributed to Nāgārjuna by the Tibetan canon. The fact alone does not provide decisive evidence of authenticity given that the Prajñāpāramitāstava has been ascribed to another author, the Kāyabhūtastotramāna contains doctrines developed later than the time of Nāgārjuna and several hymns are dubious for other reasons. Having that in mind, the authenticity of each hymn has been examined using several criteria.

We began with attribution by the tradition. We considered not only attribution by the Tibetan canon but, more importantly, attribution by the early commentaries. If a hymn has been attributed to Nāgārjuna by earlier commentators such as Buddhāpālita, Bhāvaviveka or Candrakīrti, the claim for authenticity has been considered stronger. However, in some cases, even if the hymn has not been attributed or quoted by early commentators, the authenticity has not been quickly dismissed. For example, the Paramārthastava has not been quoted or attributed to Nāgārjuna by early commentators.233 Yet, it has been considered authentic because of its close similarities with the undeniably authentic Niraupamyastava in some key doctrinal terms and practices. It has been attributed to Nāgājuna by many commentators, albeit not the earliest; it has not been attributed to any other author; and it has no evident similarity with the works of any other author.

Apart from the traditional attribution, we examined the doctrinal content and compared it with the content found in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā and the Ratnāvali

but took a cautious attitude due to the complexity of the issue. First, a work could be written much later and still show perfect compatibility in doctrine. Second, doctrinally even the Ratnāvalī and the Mūlamadhyamakārikā are not fully compatible since the former has several doctrinal features not found in the latter (Walser, 2005:271-278). Once it was recognized that two works can be authentic even if doctrinally they do not match perfectly it became apparent that other works could also show doctrinal differences. Hence, full doctrinal compatibility was not expected. However, every effort was made to examine whether the doctrinal elements could have been known at the time and place of Nāgārjuna. For example, in the case of Niraupamyaastava, verses 21 - 23 contain references to dharmadhatu, a positive description of reality, and devotion (bhakti) to the Buddha. These features were found to be present in the Pūrvaśaila school from Andhra which was likely the region where Nāgārjuna composed many of his hymns. However, in one particular case, that of the Kāyatrayastotrānāma, a doctrinal feature was found that had most probably not developed at the time of Nāgārjuna. The undeniably authentic works show evidence that Nāgārjuna only knew of the two-body theory of the Buddha and never mention or allude to the sambhogakāya. As discussed above, the first time the doctrine of the three bodies was exposed was in the fourth of fifth century. Hence, we concluded that this cannot be accepted as an authentic work.

The works that exist in Sanskrit were examined in terms of their style, following Tilman Vetter’s (1992) method of comparison of the presence of vipulā, particles and compounds. We compared the Mūlamadhyamakārikā, the Ratnāvalī, the four hymns of the Catuḥstava and every other hymn attributed by the Tibetan
canon which are extant in Sanskrit. The Śūnyatāsaptati is not extant in Sanskrit and the Vigrahāvyavartani is not written in anuśūbha, so these two could not be compared. The Yukiṣaṣṭikā is only found in Tibetan, but Lindtner (1982:102-119) located 12 of 61 verses as individually quoted in works by various authors in Sanskrit. Because of the small percentage (20%) of verses in Sanskrit and also because they do not come from one manuscript but from many different sources we did not consider the results. Other works were not considered due to concerns about their authenticity.

We considered evidence that might connect a particular work with a particular geographical area. We were unable to detect such evidence in every work but those that showed such evidence pointed to composition among the Andhakas (Pūrvaśailas, Aparaśailas, Caitiyas) and in one case (Lokāśūtastava) among the Pudgalavādins (who were not present in the Andhra region in the second or third century). As noted above, the Niraupamyastava is clearly related to Pūrvaśaila texts and was most likely composed for that audience. Elements of the Āṣṭamaṁśṭhānacaitīyastotra and the Dvādaśakāranaṅgastra suggest the same, as will be discussed below.

Regarding the primary criterion, in addition to the commonly accepted Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, we added the Ratnāvali. That was necessary because the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā offers criteria which are too narrow and on which it would be impossible to attribute the Niraupamyastava to Nāgarjuna. To begin with, the doctrinal differences between it and the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā are too great. ⁴

As mentioned above, the Niraupamyastava contains references to dharmadhātu and offers a positive description of reality, two points leading Ruegg to remark that the hymn is “not too far removed from the theory of absolute expounded in the doctrine of the tathāgatagarbha” (Ruegg, 1981:16), as well as references to devotional practices (bhakti). All three elements are practically impossible to square with the sober, analytical, apophatic tone of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā.
Furthermore, while the hymn and the *Ratnavali* match almost perfectly in terms of style the same cannot be said with regards to the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. Finally, while the hymn and the *Ratnavali* show clear affiliation to the Andhaka schools, most obviously to the Pūrvaśaila, thus suggesting composition in Andhra, the same cannot be said for the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, which, judging by the internal evidence, is much more likely to have been composed in Mathurā.\(^{235}\)

It must be admitted, it is through the *Ratnavali* that we find the *Niraupamyastava* to be an authentic work. This move may be challenging for the conservative proponents of the view that only the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* must be the primary criterion. A much greater challenge for them would be to authenticate the *Niraupamyastava* on the basis of their criterion. As discussed in Chapter 2, that seems possible only if the *Catuḥstava* is viewed as an organic unit. As illustrated in Chapter 2, that is how Lindtner established the authenticity of *Niraupamyastava* and *Paramārthastava*. However, the historical evidence does not support the view that the *Catuḥstava* is an organic unit and, since the *Niraupamyastava* is so similar to the *Ratnavali* and the two are undeniably produced by the same author, the alternative is either to dismiss the authenticity of the *Ratnavali* or to accept the *Niraupamyastava* also as authentic. If, despite all the traditional attributions and proofs of idiosyncracies given by Walser, the former is decided on, then we end up with a picture of Nāgārjuna as author of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and devoid of any context. That is an

\(^{235}\) For the place of composition of *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and *Ratnavali*, see Walser (2005:269). A summary of his discussion as well as a comparison of the *Niraupamyastava* with both works in terms of doctrine, style and place of composition is offered in Chapter 2 and 3 above.
extremely conservative position, theoretically possible but in practical terms too speculative and not credible.

As final criteria for authenticity we took all the individual criteria collectively. The hymn that satisfies more criteria can more comfortably be classified as authentic. By such process we were able to classify some hymns as likely to be authentic, others as dubious and some as spurious. Only two of the nine hymns, the Lokāfītastava and the Niraupamyastava, satisfy all criteria for authenticity. The first is more closely related to the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā while the second is more closely related to the Ratnāvalī.

To summarise the discussion so far, three critical decisions had to be made in order to establish the authenticity of the hymns: a) to improve on the existing criteria for authenticity by re-examining each of the individual components (style, doctrine, scope) and adding new ones (metre and rhetorical strategies), b) to reject the Mūlamadhyamakārikā as the only primary criterion and include the Ratnāvalī, and, c) to reject the idea that the Catuhstava is an organic unit.

Deciding on authenticity

Nine hymns seem likely to be authentic: Niraupamyastava, Lokāfītastava, Acintyastava, Paramārthastava, Stūyatītastava, Dharmadhāustotra, Cittavajrastava, Aṣṭamahāsthānacaityastotra (Tangjūr, 2024, folio 90a – 90b), and Dvādaśakāranayastotra.

Confidence in the authenticity of the Niraupamyastava and the Lokāfītastava is strongest. Not only is the Niraupamyastava attributed to Nāgārjuna by early
commentators but it matches closely the *Ratnāvalī* in terms of style and area of composition. Furthermore, Nāgārjuna’s idiosyncratic rhetorical strategies of aligning his own doctrines with those of the host audience, in this case the Pūrvaśailas, are observable.

The *Lokātītastava* matches the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* more closely than the *Ratnāvalī*. It is also attributed to Nāgārjuna by early commentators\(^{236}\) and both doctrinally and stylistically fits well with the rest of the reliably attributed works. There is nothing in the hymn that would suggest authorship by another person.

Regarding the *Acintyastava* and the *Paramārthastava*, there are certain reservations but they are not strong enough to deny authenticity to the hymns. The *Acintyastava* contains a few peculiar doctrinal statements\(^{237}\) but that does not mean that Nāgārjuna could not have authored them.\(^{238}\) As discussed above, on closer analysis, the peculiar doctrines are not controversial. The metre of the hymn poses slight concerns in the sense that the composition is almost perfectly regular containing *vipulā* in only 3 lines out of 118 (which is around 2.5%) as opposed to 14%-18% in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, the *Ratnāvalī*, the *Niraupamyastava* and the *Lokātītastava*. For the same reason the *Paramārthastava* raises concerns: there is no single occurrence of *vipulā*, all lines being written in the regular metre. Apart from

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\(^{236}\) See Lindtner, 1982:125-126.

\(^{237}\) Verses 44-46 are problematic and particularly the last *pāda* of verses 45, containing the phrase *paratantras tu vidyate* (dependent on another, however, is evident). Mādhyanikas held that *paratantrasvabhāva* only exists *saṃvyātiḥ* and not *paramārthataḥ* but Yogācārins, as the *Laukīkāvatāra* *śūtra* states, held that *paratantra* exists. The quoted *pāda* of *Acintyastava* seems to make a claim in line with the latter.

\(^{238}\) As Williams (1984:93-4) explains, it is not necessary to interpret the verses in relation to the *trisvabhāva* doctrine of the *Laṅkāvatāra* *śūtra*. After all, the words *parikalpita* and *parinispanna* are not used, even though in the latter case Nāgārjuna gives a series of synonyms for *paramārtha* in verse 45. The only thing one can conclude, based on the verses alone, is that Nāgārjuna uses the word *paratantra* in connection with *saṃvyāti*.  

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that, there is nothing in either hymn that would be inconsistent with the rest of the attributed works or suggesting closer similarities with some other known stotra-kavi of the time, such as Aśvaghoṣa, Mātṛceṭa or Rāhulabhadra. The above four hymns are considered authentic by Lindtner and by the majority of scholars.

In terms of the doctrinal content, the *Stutyaṭīṭastava* is fully in accord with Nāgārjuna’s analytical works. It discusses the teaching of emptiness and explains it through various arguments practically all of which are typical for Nāgārjuna’s brand of Madhyamaka and can be found implicitly or explicitly in his analytical works. Furthermore, it has great similarities with the four hymns of the *Catuhṣṭava* in terms of the structure and the content. Considering that there is nothing in the content to suggest a different time or place of composition than that of Nāgārjuna, considering that there are no close similarities with the hymns by any other known stotra-kavi; and, finally, considering that so far no argument has been put forward offering any reason for doubting the authenticity, it has to be accepted as authentic.

The *Dharmadhatustava* is attributed to Nāgārjuna by Bhāvaviveka. It shows great similarities with the *Ratnāvalī* in its concerns with the practical side of the path of the bodhisattva, with the difference that, while the epistle seems to be giving instructions to lay followers, the hymn seems to be addressing monks more directly. Doctrinally it seems closely related to the *Niraupamyastava*, 21-22. The two verses of the latter are simply impenetrable without assuming that Nāgārjuna had adopted some doctrine of the dharmadhatu with a positive ontological description of reality. No such doctrine appears in any of the analytical works (*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, Ratnāvalī, Vigrahavyāvaranī, Śūnyatāsaptati, Yuktishaśṭikā*). Looking at the content of
the Dharmadhatustava, it seems obvious that this hymn provides such a background.

The central concern of the hymn is the dharmadhātu, the potential for enlightenment, present in each individual (referred to in the verse 21 of the Niraupamyastava but not elaborated upon in any of the previously examined works). The hymn explains its nature in full detail, the practice for its full development, and the state of the ultimate goal. One of the main doctrinal features of the hymn is the identification of the dharmadhātu, the dharmakāya, and the enlightened mind, discussing them in a cataphatic manner (as does verse 22 of the Niraupamyastava). Doctrinally, the Dharmadhātustava goes no further than the Niraupamyastava. Without access to the Sanskrit manuscript we cannot examine the style. But, even without more direct proof, the evidence suggests authenticity. And, for the skeptics we leave the question: on what ground can the authenticity of this hymn be denied?

The Cittavajrastava shows very close doctrinal similarities to the Dharmadhātustava. In its two fundamental doctrinal features, that a) the same indestructible mind has two aspects, as a cause and as a result and, that b) the same mind when obstructed is in saṃsāra, when free of obstructions is in nirvāṇa, the hymn is very close to the Dharmadhātustava. Given that some verses are too hermetic to be understood on their own without knowing the background, it is very probable that this short hymn was not conceived as an independent work but as an appendix to a larger work. Considering that the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, the Ratnāvali or any of the four hymns of the Catuhstava could not provide the context, it is very likely that the Dharmadhātustava was that larger work. It is also possible that it was thought that the topic of the enlightened mind had not been sufficiently elaborated in the
Dharmadhātustava and the Cittavajrastava was offered as an additional explanation. It could also be that the Cittavajrastava provides explanation from a different angle to the same topic, the indestructible element of enlightenment present in all sentient beings. In any case, it is practically impossible to understand this hymn without the help of the Dharmadhātustava which suggests that both are probably written by the same author.

The Dvādaśakāranayastotra is a hymn of fourteen elegant verses arranged with a neat structure. As Lindtner (1982:13, n. 28) notes, it is clearly a Madhyamaka text speaking of Buddha’s twelve deeds (dvādaśakāra) in relation to the punyajñānasamānābhāra and upāyakauśalya. The punyajñānasamānābhāra is referred to in the first verse and in that the hymn is similar to Ratnāvalī. The upāyakauśalya is referred to in verses 5, 8, 11, 12 and 13. In this, the hymn is similar to the Niraupamyastava (which, in turn, on that point shows great similarities to the Lokānuvartanasūtra ascribed to Pūrvaśaila).239 The most significant doctrinal statement, that the Buddha transformed himself into eight relics, we see in verse 13. The verse comes after a description of the final stages of the Buddha’s life. It appears to be saying that at the moment of passing into parinirvāṇa the Buddha transformed into eight relics, the worship of which will be the source of immense merit for future beings. This may not be strong enough evidence to help us locate the place of composition but it seems significant that we find an atypical doctrinal position very prominent in Nāgārjunakoṇḍa240 and we also find a hymn attributed to Nāgārjuna associated with the same region in which the same claim is so comfortably made. Of

239 See Harrison, (1983:224-6) and the above discussion on Niraupamyastava in Chapter 3.
240 See Schopen (1997) and the above discussion in Chapter 4.
course, this is not a proof of direct relationship between our hymn and the Aparamahāvinasešiças/Aparaśailas but it certainly does not undermine the possibility of its being an authentic work by Nāgārjuna. If Nāgārjuna lived among Andhakas and composed this hymn, it is only to be expected that he would align himself with the doctrinal positions of the hosts as he did so many times in the past.

There is nothing in this hymn that would contradict any tenet held by Nāgārjuna and there is nothing here that cannot be a view held in Andhra in the second or third century. The hymn is similar to the Niraupamyastava, particularly in the attitude towards the Buddha as expressed in verses 19-20. Furthermore, it is similar to the Andhakas in terms of worship practices. The verses are elegant as one would expect them to be if authored by Nāgārjuna. Verses 12 and 13, referring to the immortality of the diamond-like body, which is also described as a true nature, show similarities to the Dharmadhātustava, the Cittavajrastava and the Niraupamyastava (verse 22). Finally, the hymn has not been attributed to any other author but Nāgārjuna. Once again, there are no idiosyncrasies to establish undoubted proof of authenticity but, in light of the above observations, the burden of proof would be on the skeptics to provide evidence against authenticity.

The Aṣṭamahāsthānacaitīyatotra, like the previous hymn, is also written in an elegant style and with a neat structure. The most striking feature in the hymn we find in the last two verses where the author identifies paying homage to caitīyas with paying homage to the dharmakāya of the Buddha. The language is unambiguous: it is not the case that caitīyas symbolically represent the Buddha by holding his relics but they are the Buddha in his Dharma body or, in other words, the Buddha in his Dharma body is located there. This point is significant for at least two reasons. First, as
discussed in the context of the *Dvādasakārānayastotra*, it is possible to relate the hymn with Andhra schools. Furthermore, it establishes specific doctrinal similarity with the previous hymn, which makes the claim that both are authored by the same person even more plausible.\(^{241}\) In terms of generating merit through worshiping the Buddha (here present in his Dharma body), it is similar to the hymns of *Catuhstava*.

The second line of the *Niraupamyastava, 23* refers to the career of the Buddha. It is possible that the whole verse refers to the ritual of enumerating the great events in the Buddha’s life. If so, then the verse obviously shows Nāgārjuna’s recognition of the importance of evoking the qualities of the Buddha. Hence, it should not be surprising that he would author hymns like the *Aṣṭamahāsthānacaityastotra* and *Dvādasakārānayastotra*.

Based on the analysis of the relationship between the primary criterion and correspondence with other criteria, we seem to have two groups of hymns: one group more closely related to the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and the *Lokāṇītastava*, also containing the *Acintyastava* and the *Stutyaśītastava*; and the other more closely related to the *Ratnāvalī* and the *Niraupamyastava* (both with obvious Andhaka ties), also including the *Paramārthastava*, *Dharmadhātustava*, *Cittavajrastava*, *Aṣṭamahāsthānacaityastotra* and *Dvādasakārānayastotra*.

The remaining nine hymns were considered dubious or spurious. The *Aryabhāṭarakamaṇḍujāśrīparamārthastutiṃāma* is very similar to the *Paramārthastava*. There are differences in the language and in the precise message of individual verses but, overall, it is obvious that the only significant difference is that instead of the

\(^{241}\) Nakamura (1980:259-265) and Lindtner (1982:13, n. 28) held such opinion.
Buddha this hymn praises Mañjuśrī. Praising Mañjuśrī is not controversial. We have plenty of evidence that the great bodhisattva was known and worshiped at the time of Nāgārjuna and before. Yet, as an element in the context of determining the authenticity of this hymn, it is a concern because we find no evidence that Nāgārjuna mentions Mañjuśrī in any of the reliably attributed works (such as the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, Śūnyatāsaptati, Vigrayavyāvartanī, Yuktisāṣṭikā, Ratnāvalī and the nine hymns). We see no evidence in Andhra of any significant popularity of Mañjuśrī that Nāgārjuna might respond to.

The hymn is very similar to the Paramārthastava, and can be regarded as another rendering of it. The recognition of this fact led Lindtner to denounce its authenticity. However, to be fair to the Tibetans, we must assume that they were aware of this and yet they still attributed the hymn to Nāgārjuna. Strictly speaking, the fact that the hymn is another rendering of the Paramārthastava is not necessarily an argument for in-authenticity and if we do make a decision on that ground, it will be based on our own presuppositions and not on the evidence. Yet, we are still left to wonder why an accomplished poet and pious monk like Nāgārjuna would offer the same hymn to two protectors. Without further evidence, we must consider this hymn dubious. Fortunately, since we already have the same content through the Paramārthastava, nothing will change in terms of the conclusions drawn from analysis of Nāgārjuna’s hymns.

The Āryamañjuśrībhāṭṭarakarunāstotra falls in the same category with the previous hymn for very similar reasons: there is no evidence that Nāgārjuna ever mentioned Mañjuśrī nor that such a cult was popular in the Andhra region at his time.
Furthermore, in its content and method of praising it is different to anything we have seen in the authentic works. Theoretically it is not impossible for Nāgārjuna to compose such a work but it is highly unusual and seems out of context.

The Aṣṭamahāsthānacakītāyanāstotra (Tangjur, 2025, folio 90b-91a), like the other hymn carrying the same name (2024), enumerates the great qualities of the Buddha illustrated through his great deeds, commemorated by caityas. It is not just a copy of the other but it covers the same topic from a different angle. However, its verses are much less elegant than anything we have seen from Nāgārjuna. Considering also the fact that the hymn does not contain a significantly different message, it is difficult to imagine why an accomplished poet like Nāgārjuna would compose two works with the same title, on the same topic and leave one inferior in its expression.

The Vandānāstotranāma is another hymn worshipping the great deeds of the Buddha. The verses are not only poor in content but have an uneven number of lines. Unless one assumes that it is a lost, quickly written first draft that somehow found its way into the canon, it is difficult to imagine any way of connecting it with Nāgārjuna.

The Sattvārādhana is a hymn in eleven verses, nine of which (even though not completely matching) are found in Sanskrit and edited by Sylvain Lévi under Aśvaghoṣa’s name. Comparing the style, Lindtner (1982:17, n.43) found greater similarity to Mātṛceta’s works than any other. Based on the evidence we cannot decide on the authenticity but given the similarities with works by other authors and differences in style and topic to the work by Nāgārjuna previously examined, we consider it dubious. The form of this hymn is unlike that of any other hymn examined. The speaker is the Buddha (which makes one wonder why is it classified as a hymn of praise). The expression is beautiful but in terms of drawing conclusions about
religious practices it is of no help. Hence, regardless of whether this hymn is authentic or not, it will have no impact on answering the questions posed at the beginning of this dissertation.

The authenticity of the Prajñāpāramitāśūtra is denied because of three serious arguments against it. The first two are given by Lamotte. First, a Nepalese manuscript discovered in 1907 attributes the hymn to Rāhulabhadra and, second, the Chinese commentator Ki tsang does the same. Finally, according to Lindtner, Buddhapālita, in Mūlamadhyamakavākya, XVIII, quotes a verse of the Prajñāpāramitāśūtra saying, “The teacher Rāhulabhadra has also stated, in his ‘Hymn to Perfect Wisdom’” (Lindtner, 1981:207). That quotation corresponds to verses 12 and 13 of the Chinese version found in Lamotte (1970:1061) and verse 15 of the Tibetan version. The evidence thus seems overwhelming that the author of the hymn is not Nāgārjuna but Rāhlabhadra.

The Kāyatrayaśūtranāma is not accepted as authentic on the basis of doctrinal incompatibility with any of the reliably attributed works. The doctrine of the three bodies was never mentioned by Nāgārjuna. All the evidence suggests that he knew only of the two-body theory.

The Narakoddharastava is also very different in style to anything we have seen from Nāgārjuna. It is more of a confession and a cry for help from a fallen being than worship of the Buddha or his enlightened qualities. In its content it has nothing to do with any of the hymns attributed to Nāgārjuna.

The Niruttarastava is simply too poor to be considered as genuine. It has no resemblance to any hymn or analytical work reliably attributed to Nāgārjuna. Once
again, to be fair, we must say that we find no definite reason to dismiss its authenticity but we must consider the hymn dubious. In any case, its inclusion has no bearing on the concluding discussion.

Concluding this review we should note that only in the case of two hymns did we find strong evidence to consider them spurious. The other seven do not offer sufficient evidence for definite conclusions, albeit they seem very different from anything we find in the reliably attributed works. Of course, it would have been naïve to expect black-and-white answers. It is only natural that we find various degrees of confidence and shades of doubt. Unfortunately, the line had to be drawn somewhere. The decision made here is not infallible and future analyses may prove that greater or lesser number of hymns are authentic. Regarding those admitted as authentic, we can be confident that the decision is based on a satisfactory level of proof. Regarding the rest, nothing substantial would change in the answers to the questions posed in this dissertation even if a few more hymns were admitted. Hence, we can proceed with conclusions regarding the place of the doctrine of emptiness in Nāgārjuna’s religious praxis.
2. Religious content

We can now observe in more detail the main similarities between the hymns:

a. Enumeration. Seven of the nine authentic hymns enumerate the epithets, teachings, and the enlightened qualities or great deeds of the Buddha.

*Niraupamyastava*. There are three major sections in the hymn, first dealing with the qualities of Buddha's mind, second, with the qualities of his body, and third, the conclusion on the question of his real body and the highest practice. Practically each verse enumerates some of his enlightened qualities, either of his mind or of his body.

*Paramārthaastava*. Each of verses 3 – 8, which collectively compose the main content of the hymn, is devoted to praising one of the epithets of the Buddha, describing his enlightened qualities.

The *Lokātātastava*, *Acintyastava* and *Stutyatūtastava* are similar in their praise of the Buddha's teaching and the enumeration of the various teachings of the Buddha. In each of these three hymns several verses compose a subsection devoted to one particular aspect of the Buddha's teaching. For example, in the *Lokātātastava*, verses 2-10 are devoted to the refutation of the *skandhas*, verses 11-20 to the refutation of the world as illusion, and verses 21-27 to the teaching fully taught in the Mahāyāna that liberation is in realizing the signless. In *Acintyastava*, verse 3-18 deal with the teaching that dependently originated things are empty, verses 19-36 with the liberating knowledge (*jñāna*) of the truth, verses 37-50 with the teaching on the characteristics of the true *dharma* (*saddharma*), while in the final section, verses 51-58 are praises of the Buddha, the greatest of teachers. The *Stutyatūtastava* elaborates
dependent origination, progressively giving further details towards the perfection of this teaching.

Looking at the doctrine, these three hymns appear very philosophical, even analytical. But when seen in the context of the other hymns it is apparent that they are concerned with enumerations of particular aspects of the Buddha’s teaching. Indeed, there is a lot of doctrine, a lot of evidence of rhetorical strategies, perhaps even polemical stands but the main characteristic of their form is enumeration and recitation of particular qualities of the Buddha as a teacher.

The *Aṣṭamahāsthānacaityastotra* enumerates the eight great deeds of the Buddha commemorated by eight caityas erected on the places where the great event reportedly took place. In fact, the hymn is a praise of the Buddha’s dharmakāya and an enumeration of the magical shows that he performed in order to advance beings on the path.

The *Dvādaśakāranayastotra* enumerates the twelve great deeds of the Buddha. Furthermore, the hymn praises the Buddha’s skillful means for advancing beings on the path and, in that context, enumerates his enlightened qualities.

b. Commemoration/calling to mind (anusmṛti) the superiority and profundity of Buddha’s teaching or of his virtuous deeds. Even the most basic examination of the form will show that in 5 hymns most of the verses are direct references to the Buddha as if he were personally present and Nāgārjuna spoke directly to him. The picture one gets of the author is of him sitting in front of the image of the Buddha (material or visualized) and, inspired by eloquence, reciting the verses in front of him. In more detail:
In the Lokātitaśtava, out of 28 verses (the first being salutation and the last dedication), 18 verses are direct references to the Buddha.

In the Acintyastava, out of 59 verses (the first being salutation, verses 52-58 being pure worship and the last being dedication), 29 are direct references to the Buddha.

In the Niraupamyastava, out of 25 verses (the first being salutation and the last dedication), 22 are direct references to the Buddha.

In the Paramārthastava, 11 out of 11 verses are direct references to the Buddha, all expressing worship.

In the Stutyaśtitaśtava, out of 19 verses (the first being salutation and the last dedication), 12 are direct references to the Buddha.

These five hymns are full of references such as: “you have said,” “it is your word,” “it is your utterance,” “it is your lion’s roar.” All doctrines in these hymns are commemorated and not derived through personal analysis, as in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, the Śūnyatāsaptati or the Vigrayavyāvartanī. Even the verses that are not direct references to the Buddha (except for the introducing and concluding ones) must be understood as evoking his word. For example, in Stutyaśtitaśtava, verses 11-14 do not refer to the Buddha. But, verse 15 says: “When you, the lion among speakers, speak thus, it is like the lion removing the arrogance of the words of the Vindhyā-mountain elephant.” Obviously, the previous four verses are to be understood as a repetition of statements made by the Buddha.

Furthermore, in the Lokātitaśtava, verses 13-16 contain no references to the Buddha. Verse 17, however, is a continuation of the same theme but it ends with the words, “you maintain.” Naturally, it is to be understood that in the previous four
verses, even though they do not directly refer to the Buddha that such a reference is assumed.

The *Acintyastava* provides another characteristic example. In this hymn it is very common that one verse will refer to the Buddha with words, “said by you” or, “proclaimed by you,” then the next one or two verses will continue with the same idea followed by a verse of direct reference. Verses 3-6 are a good illustration.

To conclude, in 5 hymns we see direct references to the Buddha and commemoration of his words.

In the context of *buddhānusmṛti* it should be noted that the *Niraupamyastava*, verses 6, 7, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24 and the whole of the *Paramārthastava* are particularly good examples of commemorating the virtues of the Buddha while the *Acintyastava*, the *Lokāññastava* and the *Stutyagotastava* are good examples of commemorating the superiority and profundity of his teaching. These are two commonly used ways of practising *anusmṛti*.

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The *Āstamahāsthamacaityaastotra* and the *Dvādaśakāranayastotra* are concerned with enumerating the great virtuous deeds of the Buddha but, as we saw above, the commemoration of the virtuous deeds is one of the common ways of practising *buddhānusmṛti*. Hence, these two can also be considered in the same group.

c. Concerns for orthodoxy. In each of the hymns examined above the commemoration goes with a direct acknowledgement that the verses are just repeating the word of the Buddha. In other words, the author is particularly concerned with establishing that he is not offering his own theses but speaks fully in accord with orthodoxy.

242 Listing the types of *buddhānusmṛti* as found in the old sūtras, Harrison 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 teaching...” (Harrison, 1992:216).
Chapter VI: Conclusion

d. Worship. All seven hymns discussed so far show elements of worship of the Buddha and the comments made above can be used as evidence for that. Three hymns - the Niraupmyastava, the Paramārthastava and the Stutyāūtastava - even refer explicitly to the practice of religious devotion (bhakti, gus pa). The Niraupamyastava, 23, even refers to seeing the Buddha, a practice inseparably connected to devotion. The Acintyastava does not refer to devotion explicitly but verses 51-58 come very close to it. Even the titles of the hymns suggest worship of the ultimate, transcendent, incomparable (Niraupamyastava means "Hymn to the Incomparable," Lokāūtastava - "Hymn to the One Beyond the World," Acintyastava - "Hymn to the Unthinkable One." Paramārthastava - "Hymn to the Ultimate One," Stutyāūtastava - "Hymn to the One Beyond Praise"). Likewise the Aṣṭamahāsthānacaityaastotra and the Dvādaśakāranayastotra, which, as does the Niraupamyastava, tell us by their content that the Buddha is completely beyond comparison with anything worldly, but out of his great compassion, he manifested life in conformity with the world in order to advance beings on the path to liberation.

e. Recitation. The features examined above, enumeration, commemoration and worship, are typical of ritual practice, which suggests that each of the seven hymns had been composed to be recited as part of religious practice, maybe daily practice, perhaps even as part of a large ceremony.

f. Merit accumulated due to praise. All of the seven hymns discussed above end up with transference of merit. They all say, in one way or another, that merit is accumulated by praising the Buddha.²⁴³ The merit is accumulated not through

²⁴³ Niraupamyastava:
Thus, I have spread the flowers of his good qualities over the well-gone, the unthinkable, the immeasurable.
analyses, not through the composition of independent works, but through praise (worship) of the enlightened qualities of the Buddha manifested through his teaching or deeds for the advancement of beings on the path; praise performed by commemorating and enumerating.

Two of the nine hymns, the *Dharmadhāustava* and the *Cittavajrastava*, have none of the features examined above. What is evident is that they both offer, from the beginning to the end, their own doctrinal statements and explanations, not framing them as the word of the Buddha, not enumerating any of his qualities, and not worshipping him. They give no impression of being composed with ritual purposes in mind but with the purpose of establishing a particular point. Significantly, they do not end with the dedication of merit.

Through the merit I have obtained [by so doing] may all beings participate in the profound doctrine of the Indra of sages.

**Lokāhitastava:**
By the merit that I have obtained praising you, worthy of praise, may the whole world be free from the bondage of signs (*nimitta*).

**Paramārthastava:**
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.

**Acintyastava:**
May the world be the same as you through the virtue of the merit I have obtained by thus praising you, the protector of the world, the unthinkable, who cannot be pointed out.

**Stutyañjastava:**
By means of whatever merit I, who praise you, the knower of reality, supreme among those who know correctly [have accumulated] in this way may the world have superior correct knowledge.

**Aṣṭamahāsthānacaityaastotra:**
In this way having properly paid worship to the Dharmākāya of the Buddha which, like space, pervades all beings, is beyond all conceptual proliferations, unparalleled in purity and which has the essential nature of purity, merit, white like the colour of the snowy mountains [has been] accumulated in my mental continuum. By means of that may all beings, to whatever family they belong to, attain happiness, realisation, enlightenment.

**Dvādasakārānayastotra:**
Thus, by this short hymn on the method of [the 12] deeds Of the Bhagavan, the master of the teaching, May the deeds of all transmigrating beings become equal To the deeds of the Tathāgata.
Chapter VI: Conclusion

The patterns shown by the two sets of hymns open up the possibility of examining the important question of dedication of merit. The question has been noticed by scholars before, but not answered. Understanding the dedication of merit can open the door to better understanding Nāgārjuna’s religious practices and to answering many of the questions asked at the beginning of this dissertation.

On punyaparīṇāmaṇā in Nāgārjuna’s Works

Among the analytical works, the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, Śūnyatāśaptati, Vigrahavyāvartanā and Ratnāvalī do not dedicate merit. However, the Yuktiśāstikā, also classified as dialectical work, does end with the dedicatory verse. Obviously, the fact that some of Nāgārjuna’s works end up with the dedication of merit and some do not is not related to the genre of literature since we have analytical works and hymns belonging to either one of the two categories. The question arising from this peculiarity is: Is there a particular criterion by which Nāgārjuna considers some of his works to have generated merit so that he, as a practising bodhisattva, can transfer it?

To our knowledge, the only attempt to provide a theory comes from Paul Williams in his Review Article to Lindtner’s Nagarjuniana (1984: 82-3). Unlike

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244 Considered by the Tibetans as an analytical work.
245 Paul Williams (1984:82) thinks that verses 469-487 of the Raināvalī may be construed as dedication of merit but those verses are the end of the description of the bodhisattva practice that Nāgārjuna narrated for the king, recipient of the letter, not the end of the work itself.
246 From Lindtner’s edition and in his translation (1982: 118-119):

dge ba ’di yis skye bo kun
bsod nams ye shes tshogs bsags te
bsod nams ye shes las byung ba’i
dam pa gnyis ni thob par shog

May all people by this merit (kuśala) gather a collection of merit and insight (punyajñānasambhāra) and obtain the two goods (sal) which arise from merit and insight.
Lindtner, who downplays the relevance of the presence of dedication of merit in Nāgārjuna’s works,²⁴⁷ Williams devotes considerable space to answering it. He formulates his concerns in the following way:

It seems that the main problem, then, is why Nāgārjuna, a fervent Mahāyānist, didn’t dedicate the merit obtained from his composition at the end of MK, ŚŚ, VV and, perhaps, VP and VS? In particular, we might hope for a dedication at the end of MK, which is a major independent work, as is YŚ (1984:82).

Williams assumes that the Mūlamadhyamakārikā – a dialectical and independent work – should end with such a verse and he tries to fathom why it does not. Unfortunately, he could not get any help from Candrakīrti for whom the absence of dedicatory verses seems not to have been a problem (1984:82). In such a situation, Williams resorts to a speculation, recognizing that it is totally lacking hard facts, that maybe what we consider individual works are only parts of a larger unit where the verse of dedication of merit is placed only once, at the end of the whole set. So, he speculates, following Candrakīrti, that the Mūlamadhyamakārikā, Vigrahavyāvartanī and Śūnyatāsaptatī are one such set, where the Mūlamadhyamakārikā, starting with the salutatory verse, is the first part, the Vigrahavyāvartanī is the middle, and the Śūnyatāsaptatī is the last. Since the last work ends somewhat abruptly, Williams speculates that it probably originally had a verse of dedication of merit at the end (1984:83).

²⁴⁷ Christian Lindtner, commenting on the Acintyastava and Lokātitastava, recognizes the fact that they end with dedicatory verses but suggests not to attach too much importance to the motive of obtaining puṣyā as expressed in the pariṇāmanā at the end of each hymns since Mūlamadhyamakārikā, Śūnyatāsaptatī and Vigrahavyāvartanī, i.e. the purely dialectical works, do not contain any such puṣyapariṇāmanā (Lindtner, 1982: 122-123 and 123, n.153).
Like Williams, we agree that the question is important and should be explained but we find it necessary to approach the issue differently. Rather than assuming which works should have dedication of merit, as Williams does with the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* because of being a major independent work, and trying to find a way to connect those works to such verses, we shall start by looking at the similarities in all the works that dedicate merit and similarities in those that do not.

As discussed above, all hymns that dedicate merit show the following features: enumeration, commemoration, concerns for orthodoxy, worship and recitation. The two hymns that do not dedicate merit show none of these features. Instead, they are concerned with proving doctrinal points. Three dialectical works, the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*, the Śūnyatāsaptati, the Vigrayaḥāvartanī and also the *Ratnavanī*, do not dedicate merit and also show the same pattern observed in the two hymns that do not dedicate merit. The Yuktisāṅkikā, however, does dedicate merit and we should examine whether it shows the same general concerns as the seven hymns.

We agree with Lindtner (1982:100) that the *Yuktisāṅkikā*, a work of 61 verses, can be assessed as “a collection of aphorisms loosely tied together by a subject-matter in common: *pratītyasamutpāda*.” The literary qualities of this work are obvious and the exposition is beautiful and clear. But, in terms of the doctrine it does not go any further than the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*. Unlike the case with the Śūnyatāsaptati and the Vigrayaḥāvartanī, we do not see any new elements or more detailed elaboration on some obscure points. One may wonder: if this was an analytical work, what has it achieved that was not already achieved by the Fundamental Verses? Hence, what was its purpose? The answer seems to appear if one examines the second verse (#1 in Lindtner’s edition). After the salutation to the Buddha for his proclamation of the law
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of dependent arising, the principle by which origination and destruction are eliminated, the *Yuktisāṣṭikā* continues:

1. Those whose intelligence, having gone beyond being and non-being, and has no support [in anything], have discovered the profound and imperceptible meaning of “condition.”

Such a verse is atypical for the analytical works; we do not find anything similar in the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*, the *Śūnyatāsaptatī* and the *Vigrāvyāvartanī*. The *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* starts with the salutation but, after that, the first verse is directly polemical, containing a very strong statement. Similarly, the *Śūnyatāsaptatī* and *Vigrāvyāvartanī* start directly with strong analytical statements. Such is the case with the *Ratnāvalī* which, after the first verses of dedication opens up with the announcement that what follows will be Nāgārjuna’s own explanation about the virtuous practices. Here, however, it seems that the verse

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\[
\text{astinästivyatikrānta buddhir yeśāṁ nirāśrayā
gambhiras tair nirālambhāḥ prayāyārtho vibhāvyate/1}
gang dag gi blo yod med las
nam par ‘das shing mi gnas pa
de dag gi ri kyen gyi don
 zab mo dmigs med nam par rtogs (1)
\]

249 na svato näpi para to na dvābhyaṃ näpy ahetutah/
upānaṁ jātu vidyante bhāvāḥ kvacāna kecana/

No existents whatsoever are evident anywhere that are arisen from themselves, from another, from both, or from a non-cause (Kalupahana, 1986:105).

250 *Śūnyatāsaptatī*, 1
gnas pa’am skye ‘jig yod med dam’/ dman pa’am mnyam dang khyad par can/
sangs rgyas ‘jig rten snyad dbang gis’/ gsung gi yang dag dbang gis min/

Though the Buddhas have spoken of duration (sthitī), origination (utpāda), destruction (bhaṅga), being (sat) non-being (asat), low (hina), moderate (sama) and excellent (viśeṣa) by force of worldly convention (lokavyāvahāraśāt), [they] have not done [so] in an absolute sense (tattvaśāt) (Lindtner, 1982:34-35).

251 *Vigrāvyāvartanī*, 1

Surveśāṁ bhāvāṇāṁ sarvatra na vidyate svabhāvaś cct/
Tvadvacanam asvabhāvaṃ na nivartitum svabhāvam alam// (Lindtner, 1982:76)

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\[
\text{astinästivyatikrānta buddhir yeśāṁ nirāśrayā
gambhiras tair nirālambhāḥ prayāyārtho vibhāvyate/1}
gang dag gi blo yod med las
nam par ‘das shing mi gnas pa
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serves as an announcement of what the Buddhas (those whose intelligence has gone beyond) have discovered. With such an announcement, the main content of the work, verses 2-59, are framed as a commemoration for the wisdom expressing the discovered principles. Assuming such purpose of the first verse, the *Yuktisaṣṭikā* as a whole makes very good sense. Indeed, some verses are written in the form of objections expressed from the point of view of the opponent but, as quickly becomes obvious, that is a rhetorical devise creating a sort of catechism. Under this scenario it also becomes obvious that the work was composed with the purpose of being recited. In that sense, the *Yuktisaṣṭikā* shows all of the important features common to the hymns that dedicate merit.

The analytical works that do not dedicate the merit, the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, the *Śūnyatāsaptati*, the *Vigraya vyāvartani* and the *Ratnāvalī*, all have features in common with the hymns that do not dedicate merit and absence of features common for the hymns that dedicate merit.

We may now summarize the evidence in the context of answering the question why some hymns end with a dedication of merit. Obviously, the answer is not connected to the genre since some hymns do not dedicate merit. Furthermore, the answer is not connected to whether the work is complete, since the *Dharmadhātustava* is a complete and independent work that does not end abruptly and still does not dedicate merit. It now appears obvious that merit is not generated by independent analysis and arguments (or, that Nāgārjuna does not presume that it is) but by worshiping the Buddha through the enumeration and commemoration of his teaching.

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*O King, I will explain practices solely virtuous to generate in you the doctrine for the practices will be established in a vessel of the excellent doctrine.*
and deeds. Furthermore, that worship seems to be connected to recitation as part of the ritual practice.

In light of the above examination, it seems that accumulation of merit is assumed only in works worshipping the Buddha through the enumeration of his enlightened qualities and virtuous deeds, and the commemoration of his superior teachings, faithfully repeating his word and, probably, publicly reciting them. Such a conclusion seems to allow a further hypothesis about the steps in the process of assuming merit.

Approaching the hypothesis, we need to remember that Nāgārjuna lived at the time when Mahāyāna was a minority movement. As discussed in Chapter 2, the epigraphic evidence shows no donations to Mahāyāna as an independent group prior to the fifth century. The conclusion we can draw is that Nāgārjuna lived in the monastery dominated by some of the śrāvaka schools. His works that do not dedicate merit, specifically the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, show great care in aligning doctrinally with the host audience either through specific shifts in the vocabulary or by incorporating the doctrines of the host schools. The impression is unambiguous that in these works Nāgārjuna is trying to convince the audience that the doctrines he presents are fully in accord with the word of the Buddha, hence, they should be accepted as orthodox. But, when we look at the works that dedicate merit the attitude is different. The statements are expressed as coming from the Buddha, Nāgārjuna only repeating them. The comparison between similar verses from the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* on one side and two hymns that dedicate merit, the
Acintyastava and the Lokātātastava, offered in the Introduction, illustrates the point.

For example, the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, XXIV:18 offers the following statement:

We state (tāṁ pracaḵṣmahe) that whatever is dependent arising, that is emptiness. That dependent upon convention, is the middle way.252

Doctrinally the same statement is repeated in two of the hymns:

Lokātātastava,22: What is dependent arising, that itself is emptiness, you maintain (saiva te matā). There is no independently existent being, that is your incomparable lion’s roar (siṁhanādas tavātulaḥ).253

Similarly, Acintyastava, 40:

What is dependent arising that itself is emptiness, you maintain. Of that kind is the true doctrine and the same as that is Tathāgata.254

The doctrinal statements in the first lines of each are identical: equating dependent arising and emptiness. The difference is that the hymns attribute the statement to the Buddha while the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā offers it as its own.

Another good example comes from comparing the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā XII, 1 and Lokātātastava, 21:

Mūlamadhyamakakārikā XII, 1

Caused by itself, by other, by both, without a cause –

This is what some think of suffering. That conclusion is indeed not logical.255

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252 yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatāṁ tāṁ pracaḵṣmahe/
sū prajñāpāram upāditya pratipat saiva madhyamā/MMK, XXIV, 18
253 yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatā saiva te matā/
bhāvaḥ svutaniṁ nāṣṭīti siṁhanādas tavātulaṁ/LS, 22
254 yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatā saiva te matā/
tathākādhaṁ ca saddharmas tattavam ca tathāgataṁ//AS, 40
255 svaYaṁ kṛtaṁ paraṁ kṛtaṁ dvābhyaṁ kṛtaṁ ahetukaṁ/
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_Lokāṭitastava, 21_

Caused by itself, by other, by both, without a cause -

This is what dialecticians have thought about suffering. But, you have stated that it is dependently originated.\(^{256}\)

The first line is exactly the same in both works. However, in the second line, the _Lokāṭitastava_ attributes the statement to the Buddha ("you have stated"), while the _Mūlamadhyamakakārikā_ takes it as a conclusion from own analyses ("that is not logical"). While in the _Mūlamadhyamakakārikā_ Nāgārjuna is making his case that the doctrines he presents are in accord with the orthodoxy, in the hymns we see no such effort. Instead, he comfortably attributes the same doctrinal statements to the Buddha; he knows they are orthodox. Moreover, he seems to recite the same doctrinal statements in a ritual context, as a commemoration of the _buddhavacana_, and he generates merit by such practice. Obviously, there is a major transition in attitude that has taken place. What follows is a hypothesis that might explain some details of that transition.

The hypothesis begins with the recognition that reciting the _buddhavacana_, even if performed privately, is always a publicly established act in the sense that it is the community which approves what is _buddhavacana_ and what can be recited, that is, what constitutes orthodoxy and orthodox practice. Nāgārjuna, being an advocate of the minority Mahāyāna movement, had to conform to the mainstream understanding of what constitutes orthodoxy. Without that approval he could not have hoped for the

\(^{256}\) _duḥkham ity eka icchanti tac ca kāryaṁ na yujyate_// MMK. XII, 1

\(^{256}\) _svayam kṛtaṁ paramkṛtaṁ dvābhyaṁ kṛtaṁ abetukaṁ/
tārākair iṣyaṁ duḥkhaṁ tvayā tūktam pratītyajam_// LS, 21
acceptance and proliferation of his works. Keeping that in mind, we propose the following three-part scenario:

First, the \textit{Mūlamadhyamakakārikā} was written as an independent exposition of the principles of the Middle Way under the assumption of the author that it faithfully preserves the word of the Buddha. As such it was offered for evaluation by the Buddhist community, presumably to the administrative body with expertise in orthodoxy.

Second, at some point after the deliberation, the \textit{Mūlamadhyamakakārikā} was accepted by the experts as fully in accord with the \textit{buddhavacana}.

Third, only when the community officially accepted it, could Nāgārjuna repeat the same statements as spoken by the Buddha. Under this scenario one can conclude that the \textit{Acintyastava} and \textit{Lokātītastava} are written not only after the \textit{Mūlamadhyamakakārikā} but after the latter was accepted as orthodox.

There is no hard proof for this hypothesis as it aims to reconstruct the background of the events leading to the composition of some works, events not mentioned in any of the texts examined. We find no precedent to look at in the vast Buddhist literature since Nāgārjuna is one of the earliest datable Mahāyāna authors. Other Mahāyāna works, such as the \textit{Aṣṭasāhasrika}, the \textit{Gaṇḍavyūha}, the \textit{Saddharmapuṇḍarīka}, the \textit{Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthi-ta-saṃādhi-sūtra} and others do claim to commemorate the word of the Buddha but it is impossible to retrieve the background and examine the circumstances under which they were endorsed as orthodox since we do not know the authors of them, the places of composition, and the works that preceded them, which would allow us to study the steps on the way to orthodoxy. Fortunately, we do have many works authored by
Nāgārjuna so that, based on the analysis of the content, we can propose scenarios about the procedures regarding establishing orthodoxy.

The proposed hypothesis, rudimentary as it may be, can explain why some works end up with merit transference and some do not. Only in the works that repeat the *buddhavacana* (after the orthodoxy of the statements is ascertained) is merit assumed and properly transferred. The *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, containing individual theses not attested by public scrutiny, does not assume merit. Hence, one may conclude that, a) the accumulation of merit comes from worshiping the Buddha which, naturally, involves faithful repetition of his word and, b) whether one work faithfully preserves the word of the Buddha is for the community to decide, not for the author alone. It could also be concluded that the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* must have introduced interpretations of the *buddhavacana* previously unattested by the community. Hence the caution exercised by Nāgārjuna not to presume accumulation of merit by the act of composition. Under this scenario, the *Śūnyatāsaptati* and *Vigrahavyāvartanī* were probably further elaborations in support of the claim that the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* is orthodox, possibly upon request by the examiners. It may also be that the shorter analytical works were elaborations for the needs of different audiences. It is obvious that Nāgārjuna travelled. The *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and the *Ratnāvalī* address different audiences, arguably in different geographical locations, the former likely in Mathurā, the latter in Andhra. It is only natural to assume that in each new location, if his reputation has not preceded him and his *Fundamental Verses* were not already endorsed as orthodox, he had to convince the hosts again, being mindful of their specific doctrinal needs. This would explain why
in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, apart from concerns for Pudgalavādins, there are distinct concerns for the Prajñāptivādins.

A similar scenario can be imagined for the *Dharmadhātustava* (with its appendix, the *Cittavajrastava*) and the *Niraupamasyastava*. The *Dharmadhātustava* and *Cittavajrastava* introduce doctrinal novelty - the asūnya aspect of the doctrine of emptiness. That was most likely a doctrine unattested before, so it had to be first approved by the orthodoxy. It is only after the *Dharmadhātustava/Cittavajrastava*, was accepted as orthodox, that the *Niraupamasyastava* could offer verses 21-22 and claim accumulation of merit.\(^{257}\)

The case with the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and the *Yuktīsaṭṭikā* is similar: only after the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* was accepted as orthodox, could the *Yuktīsaṭṭikā* offer the same doctrine framed as a repetition of the wisdom discovered by the Buddhas.

This scenario explains why the same doctrinal content is expressed in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* as his own statement while in the *Lokātītastava* and the *Acintyastava* it is given through the mouth of the Buddha.

In summary, contrary to Lindtner’s opinion, the motive of obtaining puṇya seems to have been of the highest importance for Nāgārjuna, except that he could not have assumed it with his unattested works. Contrary to Williams’ assumption, merit is not connected to the independence of the work but to the worship of the Buddha.

\(^{257}\) Based on the analysis of the style and doctrine, Vetter and Walser considered the *Ratnāvali* as a more mature work than the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. The *Niraupamasyastava* shows great similarities with the *Ratnāvali* but introduces doctrines unknown to the latter, giving the impression that it is an even more mature work. If this impression is correct, it supports the traditional Tibetan view that the *Dharmadhātustava* represents Nāgārjuna’s final philosophical position (and awarded it with no less than twelve commentaries).
through the enumeration of his qualities and the commemoration of his teachings and, most importantly, only after the official certification of the orthodoxy of the statements.

**The purpose of the doctrine in Nāgārjuna’s religious praxis**

The purpose of the doctrine in the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* and other works from the same group (*Śūnyatāsaptati, Vigraya-vāyavartanī, Ratnāvali, Dharma-dhātu-stava* and *Cittavajra-stava*) is different to the purpose of the doctrine in the seven hymns dedicating merit and the *Yuktiśaśṭikā*. In the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* and other works from the same group the purpose is to convince the mainstream community that the doctrine is orthodox (involving all strategies for persuasion). We find no elements suggesting that any of the works from this group was conceived for practical religious use. In the seven hymns and the *Yuktiśaśṭikā*, however, we see all the elements of religious practice. It is in these works, most transparently in the hymns, that we see the place of doctrine in Nāgārjuna’s practice.

To begin with, the doctrine in the seven hymns is presented through worship and commemoration of the qualities of the Buddha. Furthermore, the purpose of the practice is to generate merit. Consequently, the core religious practices are worship and commemoration, two elements which generate merit.

In the context of religious practice, the doctrine is only one of the commemorated qualities of the Buddha. There is no indication that commemoration
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of the doctrine has higher status than the commemoration of caityas or great miracles. They seem to be equally potent. We see this most explicitly in the As̲tamahāsthānacaityastotra and the Dvādaśakāranayastotra, but it is also obvious in the Niraupamyastava, 23, and in the Paramārthastava. These hymns show that the goal of the practice is worship and commemoration of the two bodies of the Buddha, the doctrine being praised as part of the praise of his dharmakāya. At the end of the As̲tamahāsthānacaityastotra and the Dvādaśakāranayastotra Nāgārjuna says that he has paid proper worship to the dharmakāya and proceeds to the transference of the generated merit. There is no indication at all that the merit acquired is any lesser in quantity or quality than the merit acquired by commemorating the doctrine in the “philosophical hymns.” This observation may come as unexpected to those focussing on Nāgārjuna’s philosophy but it is obvious after the analysis of his hymns and is fully in accord with the practices of his contemporaries judging by the evidence mentioned in the Introduction.

In all seven hymns, whether the practice goes through commemoration of the teaching, the caityas or the miracles, the goal is seeing the Buddha. The Niraupamyastava 16 and 23 literally refers to that. The Paramārthastava shows most explicitly the method for practicing buddhanusmṛtisamādhi, which results in seeing the Buddha. The As̲tamahāsthānacaityastotra and the Dvādaśakāranayastotra are similar. Once again, this may come as a surprise to the “philosophically orientated” students of Nāgārjuna but, once again, Nāgārjuna shows practices very similar to those of his contemporaries, as exhibited in the As̲tasāhasrika, the Gaṇḍavyūha the Saddharmapundarīka, the Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra,
the Śrī-Mālā-sūtra and others. After examining the content of the hymns, particularly after establishing similarities between the Paramārthastava and the Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra in terms of providing a method for realising emptiness through commemoration and worship of the Buddha, and given the similarities between the Niraupamyastava with the Śrī-Mālā according to which meeting with the Buddha empowers one with eloquence, it seems very likely that Nāgārjuna understood the significance of seeing the Buddha in the same manner as the sūtras mentioned above.

A close look at some aspects of the ritual

Now that we have examined the place of the doctrine in Nāgārjuna’s religious praxis, we can ask a few additional questions, coming from the field of “higher literary criticism,” in order to unpack some important mechanisms by which religious life operates.

The truth is ineffable, completely beyond reach of the unenlightened being. Yet, the gap between the unenlightened and the enlightened (the conventional and the ultimate) is bridged and the truth is manifested. The ingenuity by which this problem is resolved is arguably the most fascinating aspect if not of the whole of Buddhism then certainly of the study of Madhyamaka. Here, through the analysis of the hymns, we can observe Nāgārjuna’s solution.

First, let us examine where the hymns locate the source of authority. As discussed above, the validity of the words comes not from exegesis (not from logical
analyses) but from commemorating the Buddha. Hence, the source of authority is the Buddha. The doctrine is true because it is the word of the Buddha.

In the context of the status of the Buddha in Nāgarjuna’s writings, it is significant that the Buddha regularly appears whenever there is a qualitative leap in the practice of the bodhisattva. To begin with, the Dharmadātustava, 77, informs us that it is by means of continuous stable faith in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Saṅgha that the pure mind arises again and again without regress. In the next ten verses (78-87) the hymn offers a description of each of the ten stages on the path. The qualitatively most significant changes seem to be taking place in the eighth and the tenth stages. In both cases the hymn describes the intervention of the Buddha.

Describing the eighth stage:

- Definitively supported by the Buddha,
- Entering the ocean of wisdom,
- Being effortless and spontaneous,
- “Unshaken” by Mara’s retinue (85).

And, describing the tenth stage:

- The body is of the nature of wisdom,
- Immaculate and limitless as space.
- The vigilance afforded by Buddhas
- Forms the “Cloud of Doctrine” (87).

In the tenth stage the bodhisattva sees reality as it is, that is, his wisdom fully realizes emptiness. As the above verse says, that vigilance is afforded by Buddhas. Beyond that point, the bodhisattva meets the Buddha in all his majesty and acquires the fruit of accomplishment. Verses 96 describes that state:

- By means of the blazing jewel
In the sun-like hand of the Buddha, 
Empowerment is fully bestowed 
On the senior heirs (96).

Once again we see the Buddha empowering the bodhisattva. The Ratnāvalī is similar to the Dharmadhātustava. Describing the tenth stage, the text offers the following verses (In Hopkins’ translation):

The tenth is the Cloud of Doctrine 
Because the rain of holy doctrine falls. 
The Bodhisattva is bestowed empowerment 
With light rays by the Buddhas (459).

On the tenth ground the bodhisattva acquires the dharmaćāya. Interestingly, the text refers here to the empowerment by the Buddha. It seems that Nāgārjuna’s understanding of the Buddha (Buddhas) is very similar to that of the authors of the Gaṇḍavyūha, the Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthitasamādhi-sūtra and the Śrī- Mālā- sūtra. It is the Buddha that bestows power on his heirs. Not surprisingly, the goal of the practice is to meet him in person.

Now, let us examine how the authority is established. As we see in the hymns, the religious practice consists of worship and evocation of the Buddha. Two significant points are to be kept in mind here. First, the Buddha is the truth, he is the sacred presence. Seeing him means seeing the ultimate, the suchness, reality as it is. Second, seeing him, the omnipotent, perfectly compassionate, the wish-fulfilling jewel, is empowering. Hence, by commemorating his ultimate qualities and then coming face to face with him one is simultaneously humbled and empowered. The Buddha, being utterly incomparable in his perfect qualities, overwhelms with awe and
induces submission, manifesting his ultimate authority by the process. But, at the same time, the meeting is empowering since in his presence one speaks the truth (buddhavacana) and one is moved to action or appointed (adhitīṣṭhati) to a religious task to further spread the truth as a compassionate bodhisattva inspired by eloquence. This acquired eloquence and authority is not the result of personal philosophical analysis but is bestowed. Hence, this authority does not come from the self. The self is completely abandoned in the act of worship. Yet, the worshiper emerges at the end as empowered and as a channel for the truth. This seems to be a very elegant way of avoiding the extremes. In addition, as we learn from the Paramārthastava, one worships the Buddha without objectifying him, so that the practice is fully in accord with the wisdom of the Middle Way.

Of course, there is one significant fact that must not be overlooked: Nāgārjuna’s internal conviction and his personal relationship with the Buddha were not sufficient to bestow authority. The acceptance of his analytical works, primarily the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, as orthodox by the community of religious specialists was the necessary precondition. Only after that could Nāgārjuna express his doctrine as the word of the Buddha (in other words, only after that could Nāgārjuna assume that he was bestowed with eloquence by the Buddha). There should be no doubt that Nāgārjuna was personally convinced that his doctrine of emptiness was fully in accord with the word of the Buddha before he wrote the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā. However, he never assumed merit from that work, that is, he never presumed empowerment. It was only after the doctrine was approved as orthodox that he could use it in ritual, generate merit and transfer it. Hence, the question of “who knows the meaning of the doctrine?” can now be answered: it is the community of religious
specialists that approves what is in accord with the *buddhavaeana* so, it is the community that knows. Nāgārjuna did not establish the authority himself – the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* is very careful not to assume authority; it does not speak in the name of the Buddha. With these observations we enter into the relationship between power and authority. First, we must recognize that authority is inseparable from the power of those who control what is to be accepted as orthodox. Second, one should not assume that Nāgārjuna is apolitical. After all, he did go to great efforts to convince the community of religious specialists that his doctrine was orthodox. As a result, he earned the right to commemorate the Buddha and to be empowered by him. This suggests that, at least in the role of historians, we should remain suspicious of the religious and moral claims that Nāgārjuna was apolitical. His writings are very much related to power and authority.

There are at least two more significant consequences to be drawn from the examination of the ritual. The first is doctrinal. One of the philosophically and religiously most important questions about Nāgārjuna is how he bridged the gap between the conventional and the ultimate. The ultimate truth is ineffable, beyond concepts, beyond consciousness itself. Yet, it is communicated. While the debate about how the gap is bridged in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* goes on (whether by logic or by a mystical leap), there is no doubt about how it is answered in the hymns. The ultimate is brought up through evoking the sacred presence of the Buddha. Whether we call that “mystical” or we explain it through the sociology of power and the rhetoric of authority, the fact remains the same.

Finally, the analysis offers insight into how emptiness is to be realized by the religious specialist. The hymns direct us to the practice of worship and the
commemoration of the Buddha, his words and his qualities, by evoking his sacred presence, after which one is empowered and inspired with eloquence. After all that has been said above, the conclusion seems clear: what is required is a particular type of behaviour, a particular lifestyle. First, the practice must be approved by the orthodox and then one must perform the ritual properly (following the proper structure and in the proper setting). It seems that one’s capacity for philosophical analysis is really not the decisive quality. By means of this ritual one can realize emptiness by commemorating the great miracles of the Buddha equally as well as by commemorating the great doctrine. It is the ritual that evokes the Buddha and it is the Buddha that brings one to spiritual transformation through empowering one and inspiring one with eloquence.
3. The most plausible hypothesis for the historical Nāgārjuna revisited: more evidence locating him among Andhakas of the Yajña Śrī period

As discussed in Chapter 2, Mabbett and Walser arrived at a plausible hypothesis concerning Nāgārjuna’s historical and geographical location, linking him to the king Yajña Śrī Śātakarni (variously dated, but most likely 175-204 CE) and the Nāgārjunakoṭa-Amarāvati region. Mabbett’s part of the hypothesis rests on the presence of a devotional strand in the works attributed to Nāgārjuna and the work Mabbett refers to as evidence is the Dharmadhātustava. As observed in Chapter 2, this is the weakest part in an otherwise carefully executed paper, given that the Dharmadhātustava is not the most illustrative text for the devotional strand in Nāgārjuna. However, other works reliably attributed to him not only explicitly show the devotional strand but directly testify to the close relationship with the Andhakas (the Buddhist schools from the Andhra region – Caitīyas, Pūrvaśailas, Aparaśailas) flourishing at the time of Yajña Śrī. It is through these works that we can further support the hypothesis.

To begin with, the Niraupamyastava seems closely related to the schools from Andhra and there are several arguments in support of this claim. First, there is an obvious similarity between the Niraupamyastava and the Lokānuvvartana sūtra, which most likely comes from the Pūrvaśaila circles in Andhra. It is likely that the sūtra served as a model for the hymn’s structure. Furthermore, doctrinally, the Niraupamyastava shows great similarities with the Śrī-Mālā-sūtra. Even if the latter

258 See the discussion on the Niraupamyastava in Chapter 4 above.
Chapter VI: Conclusion

postdates the *Niraupamyastava* by several decades, it seems obvious (especially after the analysis of the peculiar verses 21-22) that the hymn must have been written from the perspective of knowledge of similar doctrinal themes. This further strengthens the case linking Nāgārjuna with Andhra. Finally, verse 23, directly referring to *bhakti*, provides further evidence of similarities with the Śrī-Śāla and the Andhra milieu.

According to Mabbett and Walser, the *Ratnāvali* was composed in Andhra and, as the latter author pointed out, among the Andhakas who were his real audience. Our analysis in Chapter 3 showed how close the stylistic similarities with the *Ratnāvali* are in all of the three elements examined: *vipulā*, particles and compounds. We find that the two works have been composed not only by the same author but in the same or a very similar milieu.

The establishment of the *Niraupamyastava* among the Andhakas is significant for another reason. Mabbett refers to the *Dharmadhātustava* but can only refer to Ruegg in support of the authenticity of the hymn. That is a weak point in his study. Here the authenticity of the *Dharmadhātustava* is argued through the *Niraupamyastava*. But, for the present purposes, even if the *Dharmadhātustava* is not authentic, the *Niraupamyastava* is sufficient to make the case that Nāgārjuna lived among the Andhakas. The *Niraupamyastava* makes a much stronger case because it is without doubt authentic and is related to the Andhakas directly: even if the Śrī-Śāla is not a product of the Andhakas, the *Lokānuvaranā sutra* is attributed to Pūrvaśaila by a reliable witness such as Candrakīrti.

Two more hymns are likely to be authored by Nāgārjuna: the *Āśtamahāsthānacaityastotra* and the *Dvādaśakārānayastotra*. Both have very close
parallels with the *Niraupamyastava* 19-20. As we established above, these two verses provide a direct link with the Pūrvaśailas. Furthermore, both hymns advocate worship of the *caitiyas* as proper worship of the *dharmakāya* of the Buddha, which is typical of the Caitiya school from which the Pūrvaśaila and Aparaśaila sprang. 259

Thus we can see that Mabbett’s hypothesis linking Nāgārjuna with devotional practices and through that to the Andhakas at the time of Yajña Śrī (175-204) seems correct and is here supported by further evidence. Furthermore, in terms of the doctrinal content, all the works examined above show knowledge only of the two-body theory of the Buddha, show no signs of the *tri-svabhāva* theory, and do not mention the *tathāgatagarbha* (even though some do come close in referring to the *dharmadhātu*). Hence, the evidence suggests that they were composed prior to the Śrī-*Mālā* (which, according to Waymana and Wayman, had been authored in the 3rd century) but very likely in the same circles. Finally, it is evident that the hymns examined show considerable care in harmonizing their own doctrinal tenets with those of the Andhakas and show no evidence of antagonism towards any Andhaka school. All this may not be accepted as direct and hard proof that Nāgārjuna lived among the Andhakas sometime around 175-204 CE, but it certainly does not damage such an hypothesis. Hence, it seems safe to say that the evidence provided here, despite still being tentative, raises the level of confidence in that probability.

259 For more extensive discussion see Chapter 4.
Chapter VI: Conclusion

4. Nāgārjuna in the new context

We are now far removed from the view that Nāgārjuna did not attach much importance to the motive of obtaining merit, and from the position that sees Nāgārjuna’s enterprise purely in terms of philosophical analysis. Here we do not see his “not philosophical” works as less profound and important than his analytical ones. Hopefully, this study has shown that the excessive emphasis on Nāgārjuna’s philosophy and the neglect of his religious practices has more to do with Western presuppositions and preoccupations than with the author himself. Hopefully Gomez’s (2000a) remark that we know almost nothing of Nāgārjuna as a person is no longer true. We now know far more about his historical and geographical location, his social context and his religious practices. Nāgārjuna lived at a critical junction in Buddhist history, when the Mahāyāna was a minority movement and its institutional boundaries were being negotiated. He is one of the first datable Mahāyāna authors of whom a significant number of works have survived. Studying his works can help bring us to a better understanding of Buddhist social organisations, religious practices, procedures for incorporating new doctrines into orthodoxy and perhaps give us insight into the mechanisms of establishing authority in the monastic community. In order to take full advantage of the potential benefits, we need further studies of the śrāvaka schools in the areas where he lived, primarily of the Mahāsanghika schools from Andhra which, most likely, provided his primary audience and the environment in which he lived. We also need to edit and translate all the works attributed to Nāgārjuna and establish their authenticity. The authentic works will then need to be examined with a focus on
idiosyncrasies. Interestingly, after Lindtner (1982) selected thirteen works as authentic, many Western scholars have proposed more conservative views, but very few have expressed a readiness to include more. Even though theoretically scholars are open to the possibility of more authentic works, only a few of Nāgarjuna’s works have been studied closely, while the others have been marginalised as if they have nothing new or important to offer. As this study has shown, the marginalised works can reveal a lot about the author’s practices, concerns and idiosyncrasies, they can provide a more transparent picture of the context in which he lived, and they can help us see the shortcomings of the approach favouring only a few selected works.

This study has shown that we need to review the established opinions about the doctrinal scope of the master. Judging by the Niraupamyastava, the Dharmadhātustava and the Cittavajrastava, Nāgarjuna seems to have endorsed asūnya aspects of the doctrine of emptiness, at least in some stages of his authorship. Perhaps even more importantly, as the Paramārthastava shows most explicitly and several other hymns implicitly, Nāgarjuna seems to have employed worship and commemoration as methods for realising emptiness.

As to his place in the historical context: Nāgarjuna was obviously a doctrinal innovator but all those innovations seem to have passed the scrutiny by the administrative body in charge of orthodoxy. History shows that for another three centuries there was no mention of Mahāyāna as an independent movement in Andhra. This suggests that endorsing Nāgarjuna’s doctrines does not seem to have meant a conversion to Mahāyāna. In terms of religious practice, Nāgarjuna most likely continued with the established methods of worshipping and commemorating the Buddha.
Chapter VI: Conclusion

Regarding the hymns: for the first time a large number of those attributed to one author have been translated in one volume. This allows some general observations about the genre and a better view into its variations. It is no exaggeration to say that the hymns are a neglected genre of Buddhist texts that deserves a lot more attention. Interestingly, it was one of the first scholars of the hymns who offered the most insightful opinion about them. In his 1932 remarks to the edition of the *Niraupamyastava* and the *Paramārthastava*, Giuseppe Tucci has this to say:

We are naturally inclined to attach little importance to the hymnology of the Hindus, because, even if some of the *stotras* are very beautiful from the literary point of view, we think that they do not add very much to our knowledge of Hindu thought. But I venture to disagree. Many of the *stotras* are not mere prayers or hymns in praise of God. In a certain way they cannot be dissociated from the *dhyānas*, which very often are embodied in them, that is to say, their aim is to produce an inner ecstasy by which the vision of God is made possible. They are therefore essential moments of the complex process of *sādhana*, just as the *pūjā*, the *nāma-japa*, the *kirtana*, etc.; they are, in other words, instruments by which the intelligence grasps the religious truth therein expounded, while in a second moment the spirit focuses and visualizes, as it were, that same truth in a direct experience. It is therefore evident that the immense *stotra*-literature has a great bearing upon the study of Indian mysticism, and must be thoroughly investigated by the students of religious psychology or by those who want to understand the true and fundamental characters of Hindu religious experience.
In the *Catuḥ-stava* we are confronted, no doubt, with one of the best specimens of this kind of literature (Tucci, 1932:309-310).

Unfortunately, this point has not been taken any further by Tucci or by any other author. The present study demonstrates the value of his insight. Hopefully this study also shows how much we can learn about the religious concerns of the Buddhists among whom Nāgārjuna lived.

In addition to the study of the content, it is important to study the structure of the hymns. Our sample of eighteen showed that they can be further divided into at least four subgroups. The majority of the hymns show distinct concerns with enumerating and commemorating qualities of the Buddha and thereby generating merit through it. Apart from the *Lokāfītastava*, the *Niraupamyastava*, the *Paramārthastava*, the *Acintyastava*, the *Stūtyaṇītastava*, the *Aṣṭamahāsthānacaityastotra* (2024), and the *Dvādasākāranayastotra*, which were classified as authentic, in the same group belong the *Niruttarastava*, the *Āryabhāṭarakaṁajusṛiparamārthastutiṁāna*, the *Aṣṭamahāsthānacaityastotra* (2025), the *Vandanāstotranāma*, the *Prajñāpāramitāstotra* and the *Kāyatrayastotranāma*. However, the *Dharmadhiṣṭastava* and the *Cittavajrastava* are distinctly different in that they show none of the features examined above. On the contrary, they are concerned with proving doctrinal points and not at all with accumulation of merit. The *Sattvārūḍhanastava* is unique in the sense that in this hymn the speaker is the Buddha. Hence, it is neither concerned with generating merit nor with establishing doctrinal points. The Sanskrit title under which Lévi lists this work seems to be most appropriate considering the content:
Samyaksambuddhabhāṣitaṇi sattvārādhanani nāma mahāyānasūtrāntam (1929:256).

Indeed, this beautiful poem is much better defined as bhāṣita or sūtrānta. The Āryamaṇjuśrībhamāṇakaraṇaṇaḥ and the Narakoddharastava form yet another category in the sense that they are prayers of the fallen being lamenting his own deficiencies but have very little to do with commemoration, enumeration and merit generation (except, perhaps, in a parabolic manner, through establishing one’s own pitiful inferiority).

Regarding the ultimate authority, it can be either the Buddha, the perfect wisdom, the dharmaḥātu, the jewel-like mind, the three bodies, the caitya (which is the dharmaṅkāya) or the 10th level bodhisattva. Ultimately, it is always the enlightened quality, fully deserving its worshipful status.

Regarding the form, however, there is a need for comment on the choice Tibetans made in grouping the eighteen works. It seems the compilers of the canon had a rather broad idea of what constitutes a hymn. Indeed, looking at the Dharmaḥātustava, the Cittavajrastava and the Sattvārādhanastava one is perplexed at what is the characteristic that unites them with the other fifteen to give a definition of what a hymn is. The best we can do at this moment is to acknowledge that the genre is very wide and includes various subcategories.

As for the nine hymns accepted as authentic, they fall in two categories: seven commemorate the qualities of the Buddha and are concerned with generating merit and two showing none of those features but concerned with doctrinal analyses. Confronted with these observations, one may wonder whether the traditional classification of Nāgārjuna’s works into analytical, epistles and hymns is instructive. Our analysis shows that it would be more productive to classify works into those that
dedicate merit and works that do not. Under this scenario the *Yuktiṣaṭīkā* would be in the same group with the seven hymns, while the *Dharmadhātustava* and the *Cittavajrastava* would be in the same group as the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, the *Vigrahavyāvartanī*, the *Śūnyatāsaptati* and the *Ratnāvali*.

5. Summary

We conclude with a brief summary of this dissertation’s main contributions. To begin with, the present study has offered more comprehensive criteria for establishing the authenticity of Nāgārjuna’s works. It has also extended the discussion of Nāgārjuna’s historical and geographical location. In this work eighteen Buddhist hymns have been translated in one volume for the first time, offering a better view into some specifics of the *stotra* genre. Nine of those hymns were accepted as authentic works of Nāgārjuna. The analysis of their content allowed a better understanding of Nāgārjuna’s religious practices as well as providing better evidence of the scope of his doctrines and social concerns.

The dissertation started with the recognition of the limitations in approaching Nāgārjuna as a philosopher and studying him exclusively through the trans-cultural method of rational scrutiny. Such an approach creates no more than a partial picture devoid of historical context. Part of the purpose of the dissertation has been to bring Nāgārjuna home to his own context. And as we have seen in the context of the doctrinal, social and religious complexities in which he lived, Nāgārjuna navigated his way masterfully, introducing new ideas while maintaining orthodoxy, offering works profound and elegant, pious and yet revolutionary.
Appendix

List of the hymns attributed to Nāgārjuna:

The Tibetan canon ascribes 18 hymns to Nāgārjuna. They are listed in the Tantric section of the bsTan-'gyur as follows:

1. chos yi dbyins su bstod pa (Dharmadhātuśtrotā), Tangyur (bsTan-'gyur), 2010, folio 70a - 74b.
2. dpe med par bstod pa (Niraupamyastava), Tangyur, 2011, folio 74b - 75b.
3. 'jig rten las 'das par bstod pa (Lokāśūtastava), Tangyur, 2012, folio 76a - 77a.
4. sems kyi rdo rje’i bstod pa (Cittavajrastava), Tangyur, 2013, folio 77a - 77b.
5. don dam par bstod pa (Paramārthastava), Tangyur, 2014, folio 77b - 78a.
6. sku gsum la bstod pa (Kāyatrayastotrotanāma), Tangyur, 2015, folio 78a - 78b.
7. sem chen mgu bar bya’i bstod pa (Sattvārādhanaśtava), Tangyur, 2017, folio 82b - 83b.
8. shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin ma’i bstod pa (Prajñāpāramitāśtrotā), Tangyur, 2018, folio 83b - 84b.
9. bsam gyis mi khyab par bstod pa (Acintyastava), Tangyur, 2019, folio 84b - 87a.
10. bstod pa las 'das par bstod pa (Stutyaśītastava), Tangyur, 2020, folio 87a – 88a.
11. bla na med pa'i bstod pa (Niruttarastava), Tangyur, 2021, folio 88a – 88b.
12. 'phag pa rje btsun 'jam dpal gyi don dam pa'i bstod pa (Āryabhātārakānāṃjuśrīparamārthasūtināma), Tangyur, 2022, folio 88b – 89a.
13. rje btsun 'phags pa 'jam dpal gyi snying rje la bstod pa (Āryamaṅjuśrībhātārakarunāstotra), Tangyur, 2023, folio 89a – 90a.
14. gnas chen po brgyad kyi mchod rten la bstod pa (Aṣṭamāṅsthānacaityastotra), Tangyur, 2024, folio 90a – 90b.
15. gnas chen po brgyad kyi mchod rten la bstod pa (Aṣṭamāṅsthānacaityastotra), Tangyur, 2025, folio 90b – 91a.
16. mdzad pa beu gnyis kyi tshul la bstod pa (Dvādaśākāranayastotra), Tangyur, 2026, folio 91a – 92a.
17. phyag 'tshal ba'i bstod pa shes bya ba (Vandanāstotranāma), Tangyur, 2027, folio 92a – 92b.
18. dmyal ba nas 'don pa shes bya ba (Narakoddharastava), Tangyur 2028, folio 92b – 93a.
Appendix

Editions, Translations, Introductions and Commentaries of Nāgārjuna’s Hymns in Western Languages

Catuḥstava:

Editions:

Lokāśītastava

la Vallée Poussin, Louis de. 1813. Edited in Tibetan, short introduction, translation and notes, including *Niraupamyastava, Lokāśītastava, Cittavajrastava,*


Patel, P. 1932. Reconstructed into Sanskrit from Tibetan *Niraupamyastava* (pp. 317-319), *Lokāśītastava* (pp. 324-326), *Acintyastava* (pp. 689-593) and *Stutyaśītastava* (p. 701-703), “Catustava,” *Indian Historical Quarterly* 8.

Niraupamyastava

la Vallée Poussin, Louis de. 1813. Edited in Tibetan, short introduction, translation and notes, including *Niraupamyastava, Lokāśītastava, Cittavajrastava,*
Appendix


Patel, P. 1932. Reconstructed into Sanskrit from Tibetan Niraupamayastava (pp. 317-319), Lokāññattastava (pp. 324-326), Acintyastava (pp. 689-593) and Stutyaññattastava (p. 701-703), “Catustava,” Indian Historical Quarterly 8.


Acintyastava


Patel, P. 1932. Reconstructed into Sanskrit from Tibetan Niraupamayastava (pp. 317-319), Lokāññattastava (pp. 324-326), Acintyastava (pp. 689-593) and Stutyaññattastava (p. 701-703), “Catustava,” Indian Historical Quarterly 8.

Paramārthastava

Appendix

1-18


**Translations of Catustava:**

**English**


**French**

la Vallée Poussin, Louis de. 1813. Edited in Tibetan, short introduction, translation and notes, including *Niraupamyastava, Lokāṭṭastava, Cittavajrastava,*
Appendix


Italian


Spanish


Russian

Introductions and Commentaries:


______. *Lokatita, Niraupamya, Accintya* and *Paramartha-stavas,* summary, *The Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies* 8, 1999, pp. 182-184


Tola, Fernando and Carmen Dragonetti. 1985. (eds) (Using Tucci’s edition of
Appendix

*Niraupamyastava* and *Paramārthastava* and Lindtner’s edition of *Lokātītastava* and *Acintyastava*), commented and translated, with edition and translation of *Cittavajrastava*, “Nāgārjuna’s Catustava,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 13, pp. 1-54.


**Editions of other hymns attributed to Nāgārjuna:**

**Stutiṣṭṭitaśṭava**

Patel, P. 1932. Reconstructed into Sanskrit from Tibetan *Niraupamyastava* (pp. 317-319), *Lokātītastava* (pp. 324-326), *Acintyastava* (pp. 689-593) and *Stutiṣṭitaśṭava* (p. 701-703), “Catustava,” *Indian Historical Quarterly* 8.

**Cittavajrastava**

La Vallée Poussin, Louis de. 1813. Edited in Tibetan, short introduction, translation
Appendix

and notes, including Niraupamyastava, Lokāśītastava, Cittavajrastava, Paramārthastava, "Les Quatre Odes de Nāgārjuna," Le Muséon, Vol. XIV, pp. 1-18


Kāyatrāyastava

Lévi, Sylvain. 1896. Restored from Tibetan into Sanskrit, Revue de l’Historie des religions 34, pp. 17, 621.


Sattvārādhanaṣṭava

Appendix


Motilal Banarsidass. Input by members of the Sanskrit Buddhist Canon Input Project. Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon (www.uwest.edu/sanskritcanon), Stotra section, nos. 1 – 108, text no. 78: *Sattvārūdhānagārhā*. Edition of all 11 verses, most likely a reconstruction. The manuscript can also be found at http://www.sub.uni-goettingen.de/ebene_1/indiolo/gretil/1_sanskr/4_rellit/buddh/bst-108u.htm.

*Narakoddhara stava*


*Aṣṭamahāsthānacaitiastyastotra*


Prajñāpāramitāstotra

Appendix

(partially corresponding to the Tibetan version).


Translations of other hymns attributed to Nāgārjuna:

Sattvārādhana stava

French:


Kāyatraya stava

English:

Appendix

Narakoddharastava

English:

Aṣṭamahāsthānacāityastotra

English:

Prajñāpāramitāstotra

French:

Dharmadhātustava

Appendix

Cittavajrastava

English:

French:


Bareau, André. 1955. Les sects Bouddhiques du Petit Véhicule, Ecole Francaise
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Lewis Lancaster and Luis O. Gomez, eds., Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series,

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344.

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Yamaguchi, Susumu. 1966. “The Concept of the Pure Land in Nāgārjuna’s Doctrine,”

*The Eastern Buddhist, 1/2*, pp. 34-47.