

# An Exploratory Study of the Influence of “MūLamadymakakāRika” to Establish the Philosophical Basis of Early Buddhism

Ven. Opatha Samitha Thero  
Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Kelaniya  
opathasamithathero@gmail.com

*Mādyamaka* philosophy originated around the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century A.D. and became a more philosophical Buddhist School with *Mūlamadymakakārika* by *Nāgārjunapāda*. The author proved in *Kārikā* that, every phenomenon is impermanent in the world and empty by fractionating the soul theory and using the theory of causality, which is the same as in early Buddhism, to make an objective proof. According to the ideology of *Nāgārjunapāda*, everything that occurred under the theory of causality is non-self. Therefore, there is emptiness. However, no unanimity among recent scholars regarding the concept of emptiness was proved in *Mūlamadymakakārika*. A.K. Warder has questioned that “Was *Nāgārjunapāda* a Mahayanist?” by pointing out that there were no sufficient facts in *Kārikā* to identify *Nāgārjunapāda* as a Mahayanist. In contrast to the above, Chris Linder pointed out that he was a Mahayanist as there are thirteen books composed by *Nāgārjunapāda* and teachings of Bōdhichitta-Vivarana and Bōdhisambhāraka were included. Furthermore, the author addressed *Theravadas* by composing *Kārikā*. In addition to scholars’ ideologies, the teachings on emptiness included in *sutras* such as *Mogharaja and Suññata* during Buddha’s lifetime showed that the concept of emptiness included in *Mūlamadymakakārika* is not a new counter-theory to early Buddhism. Buddha has demonstrated that the world should be seen with emptiness in order to eradicate self-view. Similarly, *Nāgārjunapāda* mentioned the middle path, causality and emptiness for eradication of self-view in *Kārikā*. Accordingly, it is implied that the author has included the teachings of early Buddhism to eradicate self-view, and the other significant fact is *Kaccānagotta Sutta* of *Sanyutta-Nikaya* was also included. It is problematic that although *Kārikā* is a masterpiece that proves Mahayana attitudes, it is included with Theravada *Sutras* also. *Shaswatha (Eternalism)* and *Uchcheda (Nihilism)* views were rejected in *Kaccānagotta Sutta*, and the objective of *Kārikā* is also eradication of views. Therefore, that may be the reason for including *sutras* of early Buddhism. Accordingly, there is an academic issue in this regard. Whether *Kārikā* include seeds of early Buddhism is used as a research problem here, and it is expected to research the extent of early Buddhism included in *Kārikā* using primary and secondary sources under qualitative research methodology.

**Keywords:** Emptiness, Causality, Middle-Path, *Mūlamadymakakārika*, *Nāgārjunapāda*