

Philosophy and Critical Thinking
Prof. Gyan Prakash
Department of Humanities & Social Sciences
IIT (ISM), Dhanbad
Week- 10
Lecture 47: Buddhist Philosophy

Namaskar to all. Today, we are going to discuss a Buddhist philosophy. In last class we have discussed the early Buddhist philosophy or realist phase of the Buddhist philosophy or realist school of Buddhist philosophy where there is an argument that this world is real. And this world is made of Dhamma. Dhamma is the smallest part or building block of this world. So, Dhamma is a very important concept in Buddhist philosophy, where in early Buddhism, they argued that this is a real, and the real in the sense that this is real. exist outside of your mind. *Sarvam asti*, Sarvāstivāda who argued that this world is real. But again, the Dhamma and the concept of Dhamma is not eternal. So, this Dhamma is not eternal. We have been discussing about the substance from the first class at where we are. There are many pre-Socratic philosophers discussed about the substance and argued that that someone argued that there is water, which is substance, someone saying there is something else and all. Now, later, they also started talking about the atoms. Now, in Indian philosophy, we also have a similar kind of theory where someone is arguing or Vedanta philosophy argued that Brahman is the substance, Brahman is the reality, Brahman is the ultimately ontological real. Buddhist philosophy, especially in sarvāstivāda, he believed that atoms are real. Real in the sense that it exists outside of mind. Now, it exists it only means that we can perceive we are experiencing and getting an idea, so what we are doing we are coming in this world with lot of ideas right so what sarvāstivāda argued that these atoms are real and therefore there is a world is real, so real it means that we are perceiving an object. So, there is an object X, Y and Z and we are perceiving that an object. Now, he explained that human personality is not more than the five aggregates which we have discussed in the last class. Now, I would like to just mention one thing which is an important and it will help you to understand all the school of thought that idea of perception how do we perceive in an object right so for example there is an agent is X and he wants to perceive like P or C a candle. So, this is subject and this is object. Now, subject is once perceived both as seeing candle, that is an object, the intentional object. But since everything is changing, even the object, the dhamma, which is this object is made of dhamma, the subject is also made of dhamma, and each and every dhamma is continuously changing. It is in a momentary. And if it is in a momentary, then how it is possible to perceive an object? We cannot perceive an object in terms of momentariness. So, momentariness says that each dharma is changing. So, it is appearing and the same moment is disappearing. So, this appearing and then before its disappearance is producing another moment of dhamma. Now, this cause and effect, so this is what is producing means another

moment of dhamma and is disappearing. Again, the next dhamma is appearing, producing and disappearing. So, this is how each moment is related in cause and effect. So, Buddha has argued that everything is momentary. Everything is momentary is two things. First is he rejected the Upanishadic idea of self which we have discussed in the last week where Vedanta philosophy, or he again he rejected the idea of Uccheadavāda and the Charvakian philosophy though we have some idea while discussing the Indian school of thought where the Charvaka has identified the soul with the body. So, Buddha what he did he accepted or he argued for the Middle-path so where he argued that nothing is permanent, so everything is momentary. Now, if everything is momentary or everything is changing in every moment, then how the perception can take place? Because X is made of dhamma and C also is made of dhamma is changing in every moment. Suppose I want to perceive an object called this pencil. So, this is my intentional object. I am just trying to explain this on a very basic level. So, if this object is changing in every movement, it would not be possible for me to perceive an object. And this was a very difficult concept for the Sarvāstivāda, and they have, anyway, overcome this problem in the argument that how the Rūpa skandha stays more than a moment. And later on, the Sautrantika gave a different explanation saying that basically everything is there in your mind and it is just representing this object which is outside of your mind. Now, Yogācāra idealism, which is the topic of today, gives a very different explanation of everything. So, and that is the reason that in the last class I argued that how I see this Buddhist school of thought as a development of an idea. So, there is an argument, there is a problem and then there is a solution in the next school of thought. So, Sarvastivada faced, for example, many problems in their philosophy. Philosophy is not about only giving an explanation. You also have to justify or you have to defend the many theories. For example, when you are saying everything is momentary, then you also have to talk about the idea of personhood. What is a personhood, right? Now, how are you going to defend it? Now if you are going to defend it, then also they are going to talk about many things. Similarly, if you are talking about the momentariness, it is also important to talk about the continuity of a person. So, if continuity of a person means you have to defend that if everything is changing in every moment, then why a person faces the impression of the past karmas? Because this person is changing in every moment. So, these are the questions, very important questions and the Sarvāstivāda faced some of the questions, some of the arguments are there which they have given a solution, addressed the problem. But there are problems which is sometimes difficult for the perspective. Sautrāntika, again another school from early Buddhism. He tried a best to give a proper argument and explanation of the many problems. However, there are still there are no questions you can ask or Sautrāntika has presented with argument their philosophy. Now, what I see in Yogācāra idealism which we are going to discuss today is again a development and I see as a development of idea. So, Yogācāra philosophy gives a different explanation of the altogether, and also tries to criticize the Abhidhamma or give a different interpretation of this theory.

So, today what we are going to do is I am going to talk about the Yogācāra idealism or Mahayana Buddhist philosophy which is I will be discussing again today that what is called why it is called Mahayana Buddhist philosophy, and in Mahayana Buddhist philosophy we will be discussing Yogācāra idealism. So, this Yogācāra idealism we will be discussing in very basic level and just for our understanding that how Buddhist philosophy, how Mahayana philosophy has built with this world, how they have talked about the reality. Yogācāra literally means practice of yoga. It is also known as Vijañāvāda, the doctrine of consciousness, Cittamātra and Vijñaptimātra, impression only. They believe that only mind is real, that we will be discussing. So, citta in this Vijañāvāda idealism and in Vijañāvāda, Citta, manas and Vijñāna are spoken of a different because of appearance. So, Citta accumulates karma of potency of action, manas investigate, and the vijñāna distinguish, and the five sense cognitions discriminate the perceptible world. So, Citta accumulates the karma of potency of action that is very important because Yogācāra idealism or Buddhism gives importance to action, and argues that actions are very important and because of these actions we are in this samsara. Now, because of the action in the sense that the karmic force is leading us in this samsara. So, this is an important that in Buddhism, how Buddha has talked about the action. Action with a different inclination, action with a different kind of thought will lead you where in the samsara. Samsara is the cycle of birth and rebirth. Again, we have discussed while discussing the introduction to the Indian philosophy. They are the philosopher who talked about the three kinds of reality in the Buddhist philosophy. There are three and there are two. However, three reality is again accepted by this Yogācāra idealism is an imaginary. So, when you are in confused state, when there is an illusion, so that is an imaginary. Relating is what we see, what we are perceiving as a real, that is called relative knowledge, and then absolute knowledge. So, absolute knowledge is something which is ultimately real. Yogācāra idealism is arguing that the world is nothing but impression, since it manifests itself as an unreal object. So, for Yogācāra idealism, they started talking about that this world is just a projection of your mind. So, it is just an impression. This world is not real, it is just a projection of your mind. So, whatever you have and then this mind is projecting this world and therefore there is no world. Anything presenting itself as an external object when no such object exists is only an impression, like hairs on the moon seen by one with cataracts. So, if there is a problem in the sense organ and then you see there is a thing in your outside the world. So, they are arguing that this object which is appearing outside, basically it is not outside, it is because of you. So, there is an external object but there is no object inside, outside the mind. So, whatever it is there, it is just an impression. So, you have the idea and because of this idea, because of this impression, your mind is projecting the world outside. Therefore, the content of sensory experience are only impression. So, whatever we are perceiving in this world is not real, it is just an impression only. So, external objects are unreal like dream, mirage and sky flower. So, these examples are the example which is argues that this world, how this world is unreal. Similarly, the external objects are unreal. It is an important to understand here

that how Yogācāra idealism is talking about the world. In realism, they believe that this world is real. I mean, this is what main purpose of the Indian philosophy of philosophers, what they are arguing, they are describing, giving an explanation of this world and then there is a problem and then solution. Similarly, in Buddhism also, as we have discussed the four noble truth, where Buddha argued that how this world is full of suffering, and then he also talked about the solution. While discussing this world, Yogacara giving an explanation about the nature of world as Sarvāstivāda has done and we have discussed in the last class. So, Sarvāstivāda said that this world is real and therefore whatever we are perceiving is a real object. Yogacara is arguing that this world is not real. Now, there is a difference. in Shankaracharya philosophy and this Yogācāra idealism. Sankarian, what we have discussed in the last week, where we have discussed the Shankaracharya. Shankaracharya argued that this world is not real, but again this world is just a superimposition. So, this unreal object is projecting on something else. So, something else is appearing as something else. So, a snake is appearing because it is in a rope. So, rope appearing as a snake. So, this is what is an idea. Here in Buddhism, the world is not there. I mean there is no world outside of mind. Even there is no object outside of the mind. But what we are doing based on our impression, we are projecting that world. And therefore, there is a world for us. But this world is completely unreal, like a dream. So, this is what Yogācāra idealism says and idealism is basically when we have even, we have discussed about western philosophy we talked about how and for them is ideas are real right and the object is just a projection of the mind. So, similarly, Mahayana philosophy also argues about the Yogācāra idealism. Now, Yogācāra idealism claims that the consciousness manifests itself into subject as well as into object it arises out of its own set and then it manifests itself as an external object. So, there is only consciousness and this consciousness is what is doing is first projecting itself into subject, and then into an object. So, there is a consciousness is projecting first this is agent and then is projecting the different object, one object two, for example, a dream when I am dreaming what I am doing first I am projecting myself. So this is me and then I am projecting the other object, like for example, my friends, any sports equipment, for example, cricket, then ball, football or Lawn Tennis. So, there are many things we are projecting. So, first projecting myself and then other object and we are playing. Or we are projecting, for example, first myself, subject, and then there is another person and then we are discussing an argument. The question arises that, is that I, even a projecting itself, is in a real? Yogācāra idealism is saying, this is not real. Even other person, which is arguing with you, again he is not real. So, what is reality for them? It is just a consciousness is the only real. So, this is, in this explanation, only consciousness is everything. I hope it is not that difficult to understand. You take an example of your dream, where in dream what I am doing, I am projecting myself and projecting another person. And both of us are discussing on philosophy. Now, my friend is in my dream giving a very strong argument or better argument than me. Now the question arises that is his consciousness independent consciousness? So, my consciousness is what is basically projecting this person. And

whatever his argument is he is presenting, that argument is because of me. So, my consciousness is doing everything. So, the idea is even there is a subject and an object. So, this appearance of this subject and object because of this consciousness. So, consciousness is doing everything. And then consciousness manifests itself into subject and then an object. And therefore, this appearance of the subject and object is not more than this consciousness. So, this is how Yogācāra idealism is arguing. Now, let us take another example. For example, there is an apple, or there is any object, a blue object. We have discussed these things even in Western philosophy, where we have argued that when we are perceiving an object, what we are doing is perceiving the quality. We can only perceive the qualities. So, blue object is not more than the blueness. So, we have an idea of blueness, and when we are perceiving, there is a blueness. So, blueness, what is that blueness? Blueness is just a consciousness. So, any object is not more than its quality. So, for example, there is an object and this object is all about sum total of its quality, and these qualities are just unconsciousness. And therefore, what they are arguing is that only consciousness is real. In everything, including subject and object, it is just a false appearance or just an unreal appearance or just a projection of this consciousness. So, this is how they are arguing that all the objects in this world which we are perceiving and we believe these objects are real, in reality, that object is not real, because when we are perceiving an object, for example, red or red rose. So, red rose is not more than its quality, like softness and then redness, and so on. So, these qualities, what are the qualities, just consciousness, and therefore, this object is not more than the consciousness. So, what Yogācāra idealism is saying, only consciousness is real, not other thing, not just the subject and then object. Again, there is an argument that pure consciousness cannot be grasped by intellect as an object. But this does not mean that pure consciousness itself does not exist. So, the idea is, there is a question if you are going to talk about the pure consciousness. So, the question is, in what means, how do you know about the pure consciousness? What Yogācāra idealism is arguing that pure consciousness is not knowable by intellect as an object. For example, if we want to perceive an object or understand an object by intellect, so we need two things. First is subject, and then second is an object. So, when I want to understand this object, so intellect, so existence of this object is an important. So, any kind of knowledge, two things are important, subject and object, and then only, knowledge of this object will be possible. If there is no object, if there is no subject, then this perception and the knowledge is not possible. For example, in Shankaracharya, there is an argument that when you will remove Avidya, when this appearance, the false appearance vanishes, so there is no subject-object duality. No subject-object duality means there is no subject, there is no object. So, this kind of perception and knowledge will not be possible in that state when there is no object. So, any kind of knowledge, subject and object is very important. So, we are like wanted to know this one, for example, a table. So, for me, there is a table. Now, I am trying my best to understand. I am grasping this idea through my intellect and saying, look, this object is all about this. So, me is a different from, this object.

And that is the reason that this knowledge will be possible. Now understand that, now I want to understand myself through intellect. So, this pure consciousness for example, this is in a pure consciousness, now I want to understand it through intellect. And if I want to understand this pure consciousness, we need another consciousness so that I can take this concept as a subject and this is an object, and if it is known, then again it is something which is beyond this knowledge. We are not able to know. Because this is a concept of this consciousness. Then, if you want to understand this consciousness, you need another consciousness and so on. This is called infinite regress. And therefore, pure consciousness cannot be grasped by intellect as an object. I hope it is clear because when I am trying to understand my own consciousness as I understand as an object. If I am doing that, then I need, what I am doing, I am putting myself as an object. Then I need a subject who can see, we can understand things, who can grasp this consciousness, pure consciousness. And for that, we need the consciousness of this consciousness. And if you go like that, then this consciousness is knowable. I mean, you can understand this consciousness. So, if you have, you imagine there is another consciousness of this consciousness. But again, something which is not, you cannot understand, could not grasp by intellect. Then again, for this, you need another consciousness, and then another consciousness and so on. It is called infinite regress. Therefore, this pure consciousness cannot be grasped by intellect, as we are grasping the objects similarly, we cannot grasp this consciousness it can be directly realized by spiritual experience which transcendent the subject-object duality so it does not mean that we not be able to understand so this is it is just a matter of realization this pure consciousness. Yogācāra idealism argues that this objectivity is an illusion. So, there is no objective world, and there can be no objective dharma. So, dharma even it is not an objective. So, there is no substance apart from the consciousness. So, they argue that only consciousness is everything. So, if you apart from this consciousness, there is nothing. So, this is how Yogācāra has argued for the consciousness world. Now, the three important vijñāna, it is an important to discuss while discussing the Yogācāra idealism and it also comes in this basic philosophy. So, first, there is an alaya vijñāna. Alaya vijñāna is mind, this is as a storehouse consciousness where the seeds of all phenomena are present. So, whatever we are performing, we are performing an action that is storing where in alaya-vijñāna. This is very important to mention here that in Buddhist philosophy, actions and the karmic force are very important. So, because of the karmic force we are in this situation, we are in the samsara. So, if you take the Buddha teaching, it says that this samsara is due to the karma, and karma is important. Now he is explaining Yogācāra idealism, the process, where he said that whatever you are performing set of actions, all the impression of these actions is storing where, in this Alaya vijñāna. So, Alaya vijñāna is a storehouse consciousness where seeds of all phenomena are present. Pure consciousness, which is a permanent background of all phenomena, subjective as well as objective, and which ultimately transcend the subject object duality. Now, the disposition of actions accumulated in it. So, when we are performing an action, we have many different inclinations or Vasana,

which is accumulating where, in the Alaya vijñāna. It does not appear to be, again, it is not an individual mind. It is the all-conserving universal mind. So, this Alaya vijñāna is not an individual mind. So, this is what is an universal mind, Alaya is found all that has been doing on since beginningless because as I have discussed in the last class that how if you ask the Buddhist Buddha or Buddhist scholars or this Vedantic scholar or any Indian philosophical of a philosophical scholar for the matter, that what is the starting point? So, there will not be able to give you this proper explanation. They will be accepted as this is in a beginningless. Similarly, Yogācāra idealism also in arguing that Alaya is found all that has been doing on since the beginningless and time systematically stored up as a kind of seed. So, this is in Alaya vijñāna, it is stored as a seed, and this does not refer to an individual experience, but to something general beyond the individual making up in a way the background on which all individual psychic activities are reflected. Now, Alaya is originally pure and it is abode of Tathāgatahood. Now, if this is an Alaya vijñāna, where everything is stored there, now the second step is the Klišṭ Manovijñāna and Klišṭ Manovijñāna is basically is a manifestation of this individual subject and ego. So, there is an Alaya vijñāna the storehouse and because of this storehouse, there is another next step is an individual subject. So, we are projecting this individual subject. So, this is me, I am like this and so on. So, this ego is, is the next step of the Alaya vijñāna, where it is a product. This is after the Alaya vijñāna is the klišṭa Manovijñāna. And after once we have projected ourselves, when we have, and then we are projecting the external world. So, for that is in a various world, various external objects. So, what the Yogācāra idealism is arguing that the only consciousness is only reality, and there are like subject and there is a subject and object because of this Alaya vijñāna. So, Alaya vijñāna and then Klišṭa Manovijñāna and Viśaya-vijñapti. So, this is what was in Yogācāra idealism. In conclusion, this Yogācāra idealism has talked about that world is not real and it is just a consciousness. So, every object in this world is just a projection and because of this consciousness. So, consciousness is that he is projecting first the individual consciousness and then viśaya-vijñapti, then the various mental states and external objects.

The last, the ultimate reality is suchness in Yogācāra idealism, Tathata, and it is one and transcendental reality. It is essence of Tathagat. Now, in the last slide, I would like to also give a kind of an idea that two things is an Arhat in early Buddhist philosophy, and early Buddhist philosophy argues that Arhat is a state that attains cessation without reminder at the end of the life in which they become enlightened. So, this state is called Arhat. So, whoever is achieving the state is called Arhat. So, Arhat is important in early Buddhist philosophy. And later Mahayana Buddhist philosophy is a different concept. That is called Bodhisattva. So, the Bodhisattva choose to be reborn because while suffering has been overcome in this particular causal series, there are many other sentient beings who still suffer. So, this is what one of the basic differences between the early Buddhism and the Mahayana Buddhism. Mahayana, it is, Maha is a big, Yan is your big is plain. So, they are not going to attain this Nirvana alone. So, Bodhisattva, what, he is in a state where they

have done some practice. They have achieved that state. Now, they have, what they are going for, to reborn again, to serve other because they do not want to achieve this Nirvana without their, all this brother, all the sentient beings. So, they will be serving the sentient beings. So, they are like going for the birth and again rebirth in order to serve other. So, what they are saying, this Mahayana is going with all the sentient beings. So, Bodhisattva also talks about how achievement of the state and then finally you start serving other, you have countless opportunities to serve other. So, Hinayana or the early Buddhism, they talked about the *ātmadeepohavah* that they have a problem and then you have to go for the solution. Become enlightened. Mahayana philosophy talks about or gives some more importance to Bodhisattva. So, Bodhisattva is an important concept in Mahayana philosophy, where they talked about that serving other. All the sentient beings were suffering this world. So, this is what from the Yogācāra idealism in very basic level, just to give you an idea about the Buddhism, Mahayana philosophy. So, thank you so much. And this talk was based on these books, the Indian philosophy, the Introduction to philosophy and Buddhism as a philosophy. So, thank you so much for your kind attention. Thank you.