

## THE CONCEPT OF THE PURE LAND IN NĀGĀRJUNA'S DOCTRINE

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In Mahayana Buddhist literature reference is sometimes made to the "Pure Land"; in pre-Mahayana Buddhist literature such references are not to be found. Is then the Mahayanist idea of Pure Land a mythological element which is essentially alien to Buddhism?; or is it firmly rooted in the soil of Buddhist religion and philosophy?

In this article I want to make the answer to these questions clear by examining Nāgārjuna's concept of Pure Land as representative of the Mahayanist conception of Pure Land.

### *Śākyamuni's awakening to Mahayana depicted in his biography*

Before dealing with Nāgārjuna's thought, I would like to call attention to a significant part of Śākyamuni's life which depicts how the Buddha came to start his preaching activities, for it will throw light on the problem of the Pure Land in Mahayana Buddhism. The Mahayanist conception of the Pure Land is inseparable from the preaching activities of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, as will be discussed later.

According to Śākyamuni's life stories, he was absorbed in deep contemplation (*samādhi*) after Enlightenment, a contemplation said to have lasted four weeks, during which time he changed his sitting place four times. He pondered over the possibility of teaching and awakening others to the ultimate truth he himself had realized. The result was that the ultimate truth, the truth of interdependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) was so profound and so despairingly difficult for people to understand that, even if he were to preach it, no

one would understand it. He thought it better to keep silent and continue enjoying the blissful state of Enlightenment. Brahma, lord of the world, was shocked to learn the Buddha's mind; to him the Buddha's silence meant the spiritual devastation of the world. He immediately appeared before Śākyamuni, entreating him, "Please, be beneficent enough to begin preaching. There must be some people who are wise enough to understand you." Śākyamuni at first declined but, on Brahma's repeated and earnest request, made up his mind to start preaching despite his anticipated difficulties. Thus the Buddha gave his first sermon in the Deer Park.

In the contemplation immediately after Enlightenment Śākyamuni was, so to speak, standing at the crossroads of life. Should he live a secluded life, enjoying the blissful serenity of Enlightenment and detached from any thought of awakening others? This is the way of the *Pratyeka-buddha*.<sup>1</sup> Or else, should he resolutely set out to preach and awaken others, despite all difficulties? This is the way of the Buddha as *Tathāgata*.<sup>2</sup> As stated above, Śākyamuni finally decided to start preaching activities, upon the request of the Lord of the World, that is, for the sake of all human beings. In other words, the Buddha now appeared as the *Tathāgata* in the midst of the world.

The lofty motive underlying the Buddha's steps from contemplation to the beginning of preaching activities is definitely the same motive that underlies the development of Buddhism as "Mahayana." This motive finds expression historically in the "original vow" of Bodhisattvas which is said to drive them to their respective preaching activities. In other words, the original vow is an unequivocal expression of that lofty motive, namely the Mahayana spirit, in the form of taking the vow.

<sup>1</sup> 独觉 (*J., dokkaku*), the Buddha who lives in seclusion and obtains emancipation for himself only.

<sup>2</sup> 如来 (*J., nyorai*). Usually this term is taken to mean "the one who emerges out of suchness (*tathātā*)." But it should be remembered in this connection that the term has another meaning, "the one who preaches (the truth of) suchness" (*tathātā-āgata*), as referred to in the *Vimalakīrti-Nirdeśa*.

*Nāgārjuna and his Mūla-mādhyamika-kārikā*

Let us go into Nāgārjuna's *Mādhyamika* system of thought, the first philosophical exposition of Mahayana Buddhism, and examine what historical contribution he added in making clear the significance of "Mahayana."

The importance of the *Mādhyamika* system as representing Mahayana Buddhism has long been an established historical fact. I-ching, a Chinese Buddhist scholar who travelled to India in the seventh century writes as follows: "So-called *Mahayana* does not exceed the following two: one is the *Mādhyamika* and the other *Yogācāra*."<sup>1</sup> As mentioned before, the aim of the present article is to make clear Nāgārjuna's Mahayanist conception of the Pure Land. For that purpose I would like in the first place to recapitulate the central thought of his teachings as set forth in the *Mūla-mādhyamika-kārikā*,<sup>2</sup> and then discuss its bearings on his concept of the Pure Land as brought forth in the *Daśabhūmikavibhāṣya-Śāstra*.<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning of the *Mūla-mādhyamika-kārikā* comes the *gāthā*, or verse-song, of confessing faith: "I heartily bow before the Buddha who has disclosed the truth of interdependent origination which results in the 'eightfold negation' and the 'emptying of *prapañca*."<sup>4</sup> According to Candrakīrti,<sup>5</sup> any work beginning with the *gāthā* of confessing faith may well be regarded as the author's principal work and the *gāthā* itself as a symbol of the importance of the work concerned. If so, the present *gāthā* may be said to disclose the quintessence not simply of the *Mūla-mādhyamika-kārikā*, but

<sup>1</sup> Cf. I-ching 義淨: *Nankai-kikinaihō-den* 南海寄歸內法伝. The record of his journey across the South China Sea to seek the Dharma.

<sup>2</sup> 中論 A Treatise on the "doctrine of the Middle," consisting of verses by Nāgārjuna.

<sup>3</sup> 十住毘婆沙論 A Commentary on the first two of the *daśabhūmi* (ten stages) in the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* by Nāgārjuna.

<sup>4</sup> *Prapañca* semantically means "words." It is used by Nāgārjuna as denoting deluded words and thoughts. Cf. p. 39.

<sup>5</sup> Candrakīrti 月称. A scholar and one of the commentators of Nāgārjuna's *Mūla-mādhyamika-kārikā*.

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of the author's thought as a whole. Bearing this in mind let us examine the purport of the *gāthā*.

First of all we should remember that Nāgārjuna bowed before the "Buddha who had preached the truth of interdependent origination." The truth of interdependent origination is, as mentioned above, the very truth to which Śākyamuni was enlightened under the Bo tree. This Enlightenment is indeed the *sine qua non* of Buddhism. Its importance needs no discussing, but it is extremely difficult to understand intellectually, because it is beyond word and thought. Zen Buddhism, in particular, emphasizes this aspect of Enlightenment and exhorts men immediately to penetrate it. The Buddha who attained Enlightenment under the Bo tree is especially significant for Zen Buddhists as their ideal. No wonder a most intensive training called "*Rōhatsu Sesshin*" is held annually in every Zen monastery from the first to the eighth of December in commemoration of Śākyamuni's Enlightenment which is said to have taken place on the eighth of December.

It is the Buddha of the Bo tree who earned Nāgārjuna's adoration, the Buddha who, after long deliberation, resolutely started his preaching activities; in short, the Buddha who preaches.

### *The emptying of prapañca*

The *gāthā* of confessing faith refers to "the truth of interdependent origination which results in the 'eightfold negation' and the 'emptying of *prapañca*.'" Because of the limitation of space I will confine myself to the discussion of the interdependent origination as emptying of *prapañca*," omitting the description of the "eightfold negation." That should suffice for the purpose of clarifying Nāgārjuna's basic thought.

In early Buddhist sutras the truth of interdependent origination (*pratityasamutpāda*) is put into a group of conditional propositions as follows: "(Under the condition that) *this* is, *that* is; (under the condition that) *this* comes into existence, *that* comes into existence": And negatively: "(Without the condition that) *this* is, *that* is not;

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(Under the condition that) *this* falls away, *that* falls away.” From these propositions it follows that *this* and *that* are interdependent and correlative, and neither of them is self-existent. This truth was later given a further predication by the introduction of the term “empty” (*śūnya*): “Because of their interdependent origination, all the existent are not self-existent: because of their non-self-existency, they are empty.”

Once I was asked by a learned person who happened to hear a lecture of mine, “Can the truth of interdependent origination be as simple as you explain it? It is inconceivable that Śākyamuni really became the Buddha by merely awakening to such a simple truth.” Simple indeed, in so far as the form of expression is concerned. The meaning it conveys, however, is tremendously difficult to realize, because its meaning is primarily and deeply concerned with the existential problem of man.

The central problem to Buddhism is always the problem of the man who is actually living here and now. Categories such as the “five *skandhas* (five aggregates: the corporeal element and four psychic elements, namely; perception, imagination, emotion and act of consciousness),” the “twelve *āyatanas* (six sense-organs and six senses),” and the “eighteen *dhātus* (six sense-organs, six sense-objects and six senses),” invented and used since the early days of Buddhism, were really the tools with which to grasp the nature of the human existence here and now, however static their way of analyzing may seem to be. Yet I have no space here to dwell on these categories.

In the *Mūla-mādhyamika-kārikā*, Nāgārjuna viewed man’s actual existence here and now as bearing on the *karṭṛ* (maker)-*karman* (the made) relationships, such as those between the knower and the known, the speaker and the spoken, the maker and the made; in other words, the relationships between the functionally subjective and the functionally objective. As a matter of fact, man functions as the knower, speaker or maker as against the known, the spoken, or the made. Functionally, man is *karṭṛ*. This Nāgārjuna admitted as a matter of “empirical practice” (*laukikavyavahāra*).

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Despite this fact, however, an entanglement arises. In subject-object relationships of every kind, we as the subject work upon and grasp something as the object. This experience makes us affirm or reaffirm that "I," as the subject, really exist and possess this grasped thing as "mine." Here we have at once belief in, and attachment to, "I" and "mine." Our attachment to "I" and "mine" is more and more deepened and strengthened as our daily experience continues. The bearing of "I" on "mine" may be likened to that of fire burning wood. The actual state of our life is also "burning" with the fire of suffering. According to Shinran, the founder of Shin Buddhism, human life *is* "love and hate, and gratification and frustration (of thirsty cravings)," a fact of life equally true in the contemporary world.

The suffering of love and hate, the gratification and frustration of thirsty craving, originates in and is intensified by the illusory discrimination of, and attachment to, "I" and "mine." Such discrimination and attachment, together with the resultant sufferings, Nāgārjuna named *prapañca*. Semantically, the term *prapañca* means "word." Word presupposes thought and vice versa, so by this application of the term, Nāgārjuna emphasized the importance of thought in the life situation of man and accordingly regarded man's suffering actuality itself as a meaningless play of deluded words and thoughts.

As stated above, the discriminative attachment to the subjective and the objective as "I" and "mine" makes the flames of love and hate burn more and more fiercely. Yet, the truth is that the functionally subjective and the functionally objective are interdependent and correlative, just as fire and wood are interdependent and correlative in the burning. Neither of them is independent and self-existent in nature. Ontologically, they are empty. By awakening to this truth, *prapañca*—the attachment to the subjective and the objective as self-existent—is emptied. The emptying of the attachment means emancipation from the suffering of love and hate.

Once emancipated from suffering, one realizes clearly how long he has been suffering. In other words, the truth of interdependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) is precisely that truth by the

awakening to which one is forever emptied of *prapañca* and thus emancipated from the suffering of love and hate. As such it is tremendously difficult to understand for us who, from time immemorial, have been deluded by *prapañca* and who have been suffering from love and hate. Anyone who takes the truth as being simple and easy to understand is taking it in a shallow theoretical way. He is neglecting the fact that he himself is fallen in *prapañca* and suffering. In spite of the difficulty of understanding it, we should by all means awaken to the truth of interdependent origination, in other words, the emptiness of *prapañca*.

### *Śūnyatā in three aspects*

The truth of *pratityasamutpāda*, interdependence and non-self-existence of all existent beings, is designated as *śūnyatā* or "emptiness," in the sense that any hypostatizing apprehension of "I" and "mine" turns out to be empty in the awakening to this truth. It is further denoted as *tathatā* or "suchness," in the sense that all existent beings are seen as they really are. The one who has realized *śūnyatā* or *tathatā* is called "Buddha," the enlightened one. Śākyamuni became the Buddha the very moment he attained Enlightenment under the Bo tree.

Śākyamuni at this moment, however, was not yet the *Tathāgata* by which Nāgārjuna means "the Buddha who preaches the truth of interdependent origination," that is to say, "the *tathatā* which, by way of preaching, has reached, or emerged in the midst of, the world of sentient beings." If the Buddha were to remain in the enjoyment of *śūnyatā* or *tathatā*, he would have been the *Pratyekabuddha*, which means "Hinayana." Nāgārjuna emphasized the "Buddha who preaches."

Since his lifetime, Nāgārjuna has been exposed to adverse criticisms, most of which rest on the misunderstanding of his Buddhist thought. Some critics regarded his *śūnyatā* theory as nihilistic and *śūnyatā* as meaning mere vacuity. The others criticized him, as well as Buddhists in general, as being world-denying and

escapist for exclusively devoting himself to the union with *tathatā*. These critics were ignorant of the Nāgārjuna who emphasized the Buddha who preaches, and who devotes himself to others-benefitting activities.

Nāgārjuna comments on the various contemporaneous misunderstandings of his *śūnyatā* theory thusly: "In the last analysis these misunderstandings arise from a failure to distinguish the three aspects of *śūnyatā*. According to him, the first of these three is *śūnyatā*, the real nature of existent beings, the experience of which empties one of *prapañca*. It is utterly beyond word and thought.

The second is "the operation of *śūnyatā*," that is, *śūnyatā* as it empties *prapañca*. Its original term, "*śūnyatāyām prayojanam*" can be translated in two ways: Kumārajīva translated it as "to cause (awakening to) *śūnyatā*" and meant by this translation that the emptying of *prapañca* is necessary for *śūnyatā* to be realized. It can also be translated as "to apply *śūnyatā* in actual practice" and so interpreted as to mean that the emptying of *prapañca* is effected as the result of the operation of *śūnyatā*. The former is certainly a reasonable translation. We should, however, bear in mind that Nāgārjuna set forth this term in connection with *śūnyatā* and its expression in thought in passages dealing with misapprehensions of *śūnyatā* as something nihilistic. It then seems more probable that he meant by *śūnyatāyām prayojanam* that the emptying of *prapañca* is effected ever anew by the activities of the Buddha, the one who fully realized *śūnyatā*. This is the reason why I prefer the latter translation to the former and why I retranslate the term as the "operation of *śūnyatā*."

The conception of "the operation of *śūnyatā*" thus presupposes that a self-examination or self-criticism should be made by the enlightened one as to whether he is not in danger of viewing *śūnyatā* statically and becoming attached to its enjoyment. In reference to "Mahayana" in this connection, the awakening to Mahayana takes place as a result of such self-examination or self-criticism. Therefore a number of Mahayana sutras attach great importance to the problem of self-examination, lest the enlightened one should fall into Praty-

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ekabuddhahood, that is, in order that the enlightened one may start his practice of Bodhisattvahood. This emphasis upon the Bodhisattva practice may be said to be generally characteristic of Mahayana sutras.

Nāgārjuna stated the purport of “the operation of *śūnyatā* in other words: “*Śūnyatā* is also to be emptied.” Attachment to *śūnyatā* changes into something in the domain of *prapañca*, and so is no longer *śūnyatā*. Attachment to *śūnyatā* thus needs to be critically broken through ever anew. Through this repetition of emptying the *jñāna* (wisdom) of Buddha is more and more purified and deepened. This is one thing meant by the statement above: “*Śūnyatā* is also to be emptied.” It can be said to be the *jñāna* aspect of the principle.

But the statement has another aspect. As mentioned above the enlightened one clearly sees how he has been submerged in delusion and suffering from time immemorial. The enlightened one, being emancipated from attachment to “I” and “others,” now fully realizes the truth of non-self (*anātman*), that is, the truth of the equality of “I” and “others.” The moment he realizes that he has been immersed in delusion and suffering, he equally realizes that all sentient beings have been and are now immersed in delusion and suffering. Then an aspiration arises in him to break up the delusion and suffering, namely, *prapañca*, that captivates all sentient beings. *Prapañca* is to be emptied repeatedly and limitlessly. The principle, “*śūnyatā* is also to be emptied,” thus develops as the practice of *mahākaruṇā* (great compassion); preaching, instructing and emptying all sentient beings of *prapañca* and suffering. This is, then, the *karuṇā* aspect of the principle.

These two aspects remind us of the conception of “limitless light” and “eternal life” as set forth in the *Larger Sutra of Eternal Life*. The “limitless light” is symbolic of the *jñāna* aspect and the “eternal life” the *karuṇā* aspect of “*śūnyatā* as it empties itself.” A movement full of such light and life which necessarily evolves out of Buddha’s Enlightenment is called the “original vow” in terms of inwardness, and the “Bodhisattva practice” in terms of behavior.

<sup>1</sup> There are two Sanskrit terms for the “original vow”: *mūla-praṇidhāna*

The original vow is the long-cherished vow,<sup>1</sup> intended to put the emptying of *prapañca* into practice untiringly and ever anew. It is the vital expression of *śūnyatā* as it operates.

How then will the compassionate vow be fulfilled? It is, in the last analysis, through the Buddha's turning over to human beings the teachings of the *Dharma*, so that they may be awakened and emptied of *prapañca*. The Buddha's raising of the original vow and his putting it into practice are illustrated in the biography of Śākya-muni by his resolution to preach on the request of Brahma and by the deliverance of his first sermon at the Deer Park, resulting in the awakening and emancipation of the five mendicants.

For the Buddha, to preach means to awaken and empty sentient beings of *prapañca* through teachings consisting of words and thoughts. The words and thoughts of ordinary beings, as stated before, are *prapañca* and as such they cause attachment to "I" and "mine," bringing about *saṃsāra* and suffering, love and hate and the indulgence and frustration of restless desires. The Buddha's words and thoughts differ, in being thoroughly emptied and purified. They make up the teachings of the *Dharma* which, as something necessarily flowing out of *tathatā*, empties us of *prapañca* and thus takes us to the realm of *tathatā*.<sup>1</sup> The teachings, from the part of the Buddha, mean something which he, as *Tathāgata*, turns over to sentient beings. From our part, the teachings mean something turned over to us by *Tathāgata* which enables us to go to the realm of *tathatā*. In the Pure Land doctrine, the former aspect is called the "returning aspect," in the sense that the seeker for the ultimate truth now "returns" to the world of his fellow beings carrying with him the teachings to awaken and save them; the latter aspect is called the "going aspect" in the sense that we are enabled to "go" by the teachings. Underlying both aspects we see the natural, necessary flowing out of *tathatā*. Within teachings of the *Dharma*

(fundamental vow) and *pārva-praṇidhāna* (long-cherished vow). I prefer the latter to the former, for the latter is more expressive of the vow's enduring, untiring and prayerful nature.

<sup>1</sup> The necessary flowing out (of *tathatā*) is named "*niṣyanda*" (necessary consequence) in Sanskrit, "等流" in Chinese.

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are comprised both the Buddha and sentient beings; the former as the one who turns over the teachings and the latter as the recipient of the Buddha's teachings: both are inseparably combined in the teachings.

The teachings of the Dharma, as stated above, Nāgārjuna named "the expression of *śūnyatā* in thought" (*śūnyatā-artha*)<sup>1</sup> in his *Mūla-mādhyamika-kārikā*. According to Nāgārjuna, *śūnyatā* seeks to express itself by the means and resources available. In other words, *śūnyatā* provisionally borrows the worldly means and resources of words, thoughts, categories, etc. for the purpose of expressing itself. The categories of the knower and the known, the speaker and the spoken, and the maker and the made, as discussed in Section 3, cause man to be attached to "I" and "mine," and thus result in *prapañca* and suffering. Their *prapañca* character is thoroughly broken through and emptied in the experience of *śūnyatā*. Even then, they can be and are provisionally but reasonably rehabilitated as the means and resources by which deluded sentient beings are awakened to *śūnyatā*. In short, words and thoughts are provisionally used to express to a considerable extent the ultimate truth which is after all beyond word and thought, and to lead sentient beings to this truth. As a result we have the expression of "*śūnyatā* in thought," which is actually given as the teachings of the Dharma.

What matters in listening to the teachings of the Dharma is to be emptied of *prapañca*, and not to cling to the words as something absolutely authoritative. To cling to the teachings as unconditionally authoritative is to reduce them to a ruling force. When reduced in such a way, the teachings may keep alive, but they cease to be the expression of *śūnyatā* in thought. This is doubtlessly a distortion of what the teachings of the Dharma really means.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "*artha*" means "actuality of things." *Śūnyatā-artha* is thus taken to mean that things are re-examined and put right in accordance with the truth of *śūnyatā*.

*The conception of the Pure Land as set forth in Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣya Śāstra*

Bearing the foregoing discussions in mind, let us now examine Nāgārjuna's conception of the Pure Land in his *Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣya Śāstra*. The Pure Land, as defined by him, is the realm in which there is no impurity. By impurity he means the wickedness of both *sattva* (sentient beings as the subjects of *karman*) and *karman* (made by them). The wickedness, however, can be "denied and transformed"<sup>1</sup> into the corresponding merits of both sentient beings and *karman* in the realization of *śūnyatā*. These two kinds of merits themselves, he holds, make up the Pure Land.

We here again deal with the problem of subject and object. As long as we are attached to the subject and the object as independent and self-existent, we are caught in *prapañca*, which inevitably makes ourselves and our karma wicked. As a result we find ourselves in the realm of impurity (*saṃkleśa*).<sup>2</sup> But the moment *prapañca* is broken through in the light of the truth of interdependent origination, we experience *śūnyatā*. *Śūnyatā*, however, does not mean void nor nothingness, but is dynamic and creative with the inexhaustible merits of the enlightened one. *Śūnyatā*, definitely for this dynamicity and creativity, comes to be represented as the Pure Land standing beyond the turmoil of *prapañca*. The representation is made in terms of thoughts and categories of common use which are emptied of *prapañca* and then rediscovered as effective means and resources of instructing people. As such the Pure Land means neither a mythological reality nor a metaphysical reality; nor is it a negative

<sup>1</sup> The Chinese term for "to deny and transform" is 轉遮 (*J, ten-sha*). As for the original Sanskrit term for the phrase, we can not but guess from the Chinese translation, for neither the Sanskrit text nor the Tibetan translation of the present *Śāstra* is now extant. The term "*sha*" is easily traced to *pratīśedha* or *niśedha* both of which mean "to prohibit" or "to deny." As prefixed to "*sha*", "*ten*" may be taken to mean "over again" or "unceasingly." "To transform" is merely an implication of the term "*ten-sha*."

<sup>2</sup> The term *saṃkleśa*, as well as *kleśa*, has the connotation that defilement or impurity, once arising, becomes more and more aggravated.

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nothingness. Nāgārjuna defines the Pure Land as the realm of purity or purification (*vyavadāna*), meaning that the Pure Land is precisely *śūnyatā*, represented in terms of the realm which stores inexhaustible merits or possibilities of operating, instructing and purifying people by the means and resources mentioned above.

In this connection, a few words should again be given to the *Larger Sutra of the Eternal Life*, the sutra of the first importance in the Shin school of Buddhism. The purport of this sutra is essentially the same as Nāgārjuna's conception of the Pure Land. In the introductory part of the sutra, we find passages relating the excellent signs reflected in the person of the Buddha that foretell the wondrous teachings to come. The Buddha's beaming countenance at that time tells that he abided in the stillness of *śūnyatā*. Accordingly, Shinran, resorting to another version of the sutra, praises the Buddha in one of his hymns of the Pure Land as follows: "In the vast stillness of *samādhi* the *Tathāgata*'s countenance was wondrously beaming." The stillness symbolizes the emptying of *prapañca*, namely, *śūnyatā* itself. *Śūnyatā* is, as repeatedly stated, tremendously difficult for people to intellectually understand. Nevertheless, the enlightened one is urged to step out of the stillness of *samādhi*. It was in this way that Śākyamuni disclosed Dharmākara Bodhisattva's Original Vow, his Bodhisattva practice according to the vow for innumerable *kalpas* and his foundation of the Pure Land as the fulfilment of his Original Vow. This story of Dharmākara Bodhisattva depicts the operation of *śūnyatā* in terms of the Bodhisattva's vow and practice.

Further, Śākyamuni's proceeding from the stillness of *samādhi* to the sermon disclosing the establishment of the Pure Land is definitely what Nāgārjuna means by the term "to deny and transform over and over again" (*ten-sha*).

What is to be noted of the Pure Land thus established is its description in that sutra as follows:

The Pure Land is filled with lotus flowers made from many different jewels; each petal of the flowers sheds innumerable beams of light, from each beam of light appears countless

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Buddhas. Each of these Buddhas in turn sheds hundreds of thousands of light beams and each preaches the wonderful Dharma for the sake of all sentient beings in the ten directions. The Buddhas thus set countless sentient beings firmly on the right path to Buddhahood.

From this it is clear that the significance of the foundation of the Pure Land lies in that numberless Buddhas thence emerge into the world in the ten directions (Śākyamuni, as one of them, emerged in this world) and empty and purify all sentient beings of *prapañca* boundlessly and endlessly. That is nothing other than *tathatā* emerging in this world and reaching us, namely *Tathāgata*. The very fact that the teachings of the *Dharma* are actually disclosed before us and we can listen to it as we like makes the teachings of the Pure Land inexhaustibly meaningful.

On this dynamic aspect of the Pure Land, the aspect of sending forth innumerable Buddhas and teachings, awakening and purifying sentient beings of *prapañca*, Nāgārjuna laid special emphasis. For him the teachings of the Pure Land are after all one form, the loftiest form, of expressing the dynamic nature of *sūnyatā* in thoughts and categories of common, worldly use. In this sense his concept of the Pure Land is truly a development of his Mahayanist theory of *sūnyatā*.

(English adaptation by Hiroshi Sakamoto)