

# DECONSTRUCTION OF THE TRANSCENDENTAL SIGNIFIED IN PARAMĀRTHA-SATYA OF MĀDHYAMAKA SCHOOL OF BUDDHISM

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Nāgārjuna, the founder of the Madhyamaka tradition, does not distance himself from the early Buddhist notion of Nirvāṇa, where no amount of theorizing is applicable for very term, as it is it is beyond words, logic and reasoning (Atakkāvacara). Thus, Nirvāṇa is ineffable and incommunicable, the absolute reality realized through the highest mental training and wisdom, is beyond any cosmic experience and is beyond the reach of speech. Jacques Derrida came up with the idea of the “transcendental signified” that is a signified which transcends all signifiers. According to Derrida, any transcendental signified becomes metaphysics of presence that needs to be deconstructed, according to Derrida. In this study the critique of Derrida on Western philosophy is applied to Madhyamaka school’s claim on Nirvāṇa. Hermeneutic examination and deconstruction are used as the methodologies of the study. Critically evaluating and deconstruction of the Paramārtha-Satya showcasing aporia in it through depicting the presence of the transcendental signified, is the chief objective of the work. It is concluded that the central presence or full presence of Nirvāṇa in Madhyamaka school is deconstructible as it has no relation to anything in the contingent world. In accordance with Derrida’s idea, of “totalization”, desire to have a system, a theory, a philosophy, that gives remedy for everything, like in Niravana, creates a center. No such reconciliation or synthesis is possible and totalization of the project is impossible. Paramārtha-Satya is not a possibility as it castoffs the infinite play of signifiers. Nirvāṇa is the center or rationality and is irreplaceable and special. Negation plays nothing in Nirvāṇa and it cannot be defined in relation to other phenomena, by negative values. The idea of Nirvāṇa becomes a transcendental signified as it would be the ultimate source of meaning, as no other phenomenal thing, by any adequate signifier, can be substituted to the Paramārtha-Satya. The Ineffable Nirvāṇa of Nāgārjuna, its pure presence, the essence of the signified, shall be deconstructed as Nirvāṇa a signifier, the expression in the text, is free from the signified. The remoteness of a signifier from the signified, the difference between the textual meaning and the reality of Nirvāṇa, is deconstructible, as the signifier is unable, or may only be barely able, to reflect the presence of the signified.

**Keywords:** Nirvāṇa, Nāgārjuna, Madhyamaka school, Transcendental signified, Deconstruction