

A Comparative Study between Nagarjuna's Philosophy and Advaita Vedanta

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Abstract: This article is mostly about how Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka philosophy along with Advaita Vedānta are alike along with different when it comes to how they see truth, the self along with freedom. Because Nāgārjuna says that everything doesn't have its own existence along with only comes into being through dependent origination, he doesn't accept any fixed metaphysical claim that tries to grasp ideas. Advaita Vedānta, on the other hand, says that the world we see is made by ignorance (avidyā) along with that Brahman is the only real thing. Madhyamaka uses dialectical negation to get rid of all views, while Advaita says there is only one truth that is not dual by telling the difference between what is real along with what is not real. They both agreed that everyday experience is not the final truth along with that a big change in how we think about things is needed to be free, but their approaches along with conclusions could not be more different. These points of agreement along with disagreement are looked at both as philosophical positions along with as ways to end pain along with delusion from a spiritual point of view. The comparison shows that the two systems, which at first glance appear to be very different (the assertively metaphysical system along with the anti-metaphysical system), actually share an existential along with moral goal: to destroy connection through understanding.

Keywords: Nāgārjuna, Madhyamaka, Advaita Vedānta, Śūnyatā, Brahman, Dependent Origination, Non-duality, Avidyā, Metaphysics, Liberation, Comparative Philosophy, Indian Philosophy.

1. Introduction

Indian philosophy is one of the world's oldest along with most enlightening traditions that has been along with withered down through the ages. In opposition to traditions that view philosophy as academic discourse or theoretical speculation, Indian philosophers have consistently viewed philosophical inquiry as an existential along with practical undertaking. The ultimate purpose of knowledge, or jñāna, is not only to generate theories; rather, it is to eradicate avidyā, or ignorance along with achieve mokṣa, or liberation, from the endless cycle of reincarnation along with pain. Thus, according to this tradition's wisdom, seeing things as they truly are means liberating one's consciousness from the illusions that ensnare it. Other schools of thought that challenge the seeming duality along with multiplicity of the world emerged from Indian philosophy within this broader framework. The non-duality is notably illustrated in Śaṅkara's

Advaita Vedānta along with Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka Buddhism¹. Although they sprang from different theological backgrounds, both systems reject simplistic realism along with maintain that there is a truth outside the common realms of reasoning along with language. The former is based on the soteriology of Mahāyāna Buddhism, while the latter is derived from the Upaniṣadic along with Brahmanical traditions of scripture. Both of them cast doubt on the concept that empirical differences can be definitively shown. Despite their outward similarities, there is a significant conceptual gap between the two. Beyond being a negative outlook, Nāgārjuna's concept of śūnyatā (emptiness) provides a compelling case against ontological essentialism. His reasoning states that nothing possesses an inherent essence (svabhāva). Actually, all things, including mental experiences, physical items along with conceptual categories, originate from dependent origination, also known as pratītya-samutpāda. Nāgārjuna demolishes the concept of intrinsic existence, which is the bedrock of dogmatic reasoning, attachment along with philosophical absolutism. Deconstructing the tendency to reify everything, rather than liberating adherents by replacing one theory with another, is how the Madhyamaka path achieves its dialectical along with deconstructive goals².

Conversely, viveka is the method via which Advaita Vedānta distinguishes between reality along with illusion. Although Śaṅkara does not deny the falsity of the material world, he does not reject philosophical claims either. Rather, he states that Brahman, the one, indivisible, limitless consciousness, is the sole reality that underlies all external manifestations. The world of plurality is a miscommunication brought about by ignorance, much like how it is feasible to mistake a rope for a snake in dim light. The path to freedom is not completely abalong withoning existence, but rather seeing that the actual Self (ātman) is inseparable from Brahman. As opposed to Madhyamaka, which dissolves all ontological underpinnings, Advaita establishes a single, unchangeable foundation beneath the flux. Metaphysics (the study of ultimate reality), epistemology (the study of knowledge along with its discovery) along with soteriology (the study of redemption) are the three domains in which these two great thinkers are compared along with contrasted in this research. This analysis seeks to comprehend the similarities along with differences between Madhyamaka along with Advaita with regard to their non-dualism along with ultimate philosophical dedication by situating them within the larger Indian discussion on reality along with delusion. While the goal of both faiths is the elimination of ignorance along with pain, the methods they use to get there couldn't be more different: one religion firmly believes in an all-powerful absolute, while the other flat-out denies any possibility of such a thing³.

Table 1 — Ontological Comparison: Śūnyatā vs Brahman

Aspect	Nāgārjuna (Madhyamaka)	Śaṅkara (Advaita Vedānta)
Ultimate Reality	No inherent existence in anything	Brahman is the only ultimate reality
Nature of World	Empty, dependently originated	Appearance of Brahman under māyā
Attitude to Metaphysics	Deconstructive; denies all essences	Affirmative; asserts a single Absolute

¹ Aithal, P. S., & Srinivasan, R. (2025). Comparative analysis of Upanishadic and modern quantum physics concepts: Exploring parallels between Advaita Vedanta and quantum physics. *Poornaprajna International Journal of Basic & Applied Sciences*, 2(1), 24–37.

² Freihaut, F. D. (2023). *Non-dual metaphysics: Connections between Shankara's Advaita Vedanta and the thought of René Guénon* (Master's thesis, University of Lethbridge, Canada).

³ Friquegnon, M. (2022). The relation between meditation and analytic philosophy. In *Routledge handbook on the philosophy of meditation* (pp. 78–90). Routledge.

Goal of Analysis	Remove reification	Reveal underlying unity
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2. Historical Background

2.1 Nāgārjuna along with the Madhyamaka Tradition

Most people think that Nāgārjuna lived in the second century CE. He is traditionally credited with starting the Madhyamaka ("Middle Way") school of Mahāyāna Buddhism. To get back to the original point of the Buddha's lessons on dependent origination, he carefully reevaluated basic assumptions. This was done while he was writing, at a time when Buddhist thought was beginning to take on more along with more philosophical along with doctrinal layers⁴.

The Mūlamadhyamakakārikā (MMK), a short but wise essay written in verse, is his most important work. In it, Nāgārjuna carefully looks at all the possible types of reality, such as cause, motion, self, time, aggregates, nirvāṇa along with even the Buddha's lessons. He uses the caturko, a traditional dialectical tool, to show that all four possible truth positions for each claim are false.

- it is,
- it is not,
- it both is along with is not,
- it neither is nor is not.

Nāgārjuna doesn't say that phenomena don't exist, but he does say that none of these views can be supported without adding some kind of conceptual dependence or contradiction.

Emptiness, or *śūnyatā*, is a very important idea to him. It is said by Nāgārjuna that emptiness is not a rejection of all reality, but rather an awareness that everything is conditional along with can change (*pratītyasamutpāda*). Anything that is empty doesn't have *svabhāva*, which is a trait that everything has by itself. It's not that phenomena stay the same over time; they appear in connection to other things along with go away when those other things end. This means that emptiness is not just a theory; it's a tool that can be used to free the mind from mental fixation along with reification.

Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka doesn't completely reject reality; instead, it brings peace back to the middle ground between nihilism (the rejection of all reality) along with eternalism (the belief in essences that don't change). As a way to fix ignorance, it changes philosophical argument into a soteriological practice instead of a way to build new metaphysical systems.

2.2 Śāṅkara along with Advaita Vedānta

Advaita Vedānta's main builder along with systematizer is thought to have been Ādi Śāṅkarācārya, who lived around the 8th century CE. It was Śāṅkara who gave the basic non-dual principles philosophical

⁴ Gokhale, P. P. (2021). Buddhist approaches to impermanence: Phenomenal and noumenal. *Religions*, 12, 1081.

clarity along with a formal framework, even though they came from the Upaniṣads. Through his expert commentary on the Upaniṣads, the Bhagavad Gītā along with the Brahma Sūtra, he brought together different schools of Vedic thought into a single set of beliefs that had an impact on Hindu philosophy⁵. Śāṅkara says that Brahman, which is pure awareness that is not mixed with anything else, is the highest truth. Brahman, on the other hand along with, can't change, has no limits along with is satya (real in the highest sense). We don't completely reject the world we normally think of as real, but we call it māyā instead. It's an illusion that forms because of avidyā (ignorance) along with goes away when true understanding comes. Māyā is not a sign of total delusion; it is a sign of a temporary truth that only applies to everyday life along with not to the level of ultimate truth (paramārtha).

Karuna says that bondage happens because people think they are a single person with a limited body-mind complex instead of a real chain. Moksha, or freedom, comes from realizing that the ātman along with Brahman are the same thing. This understanding withing is not a change in the Self; it is the truth being shown. You can only be free through knowledge (jñāna), not through dedication or rituals, which can only get you ready mentally but not get rid of ignorance. In contrast to Nāgārjuna, who severely breaks down all ontological obligations, Śāṅkara keeps a metaphysical base. Śāṅkara says that both illusion along with knowledge have a basic, self-luminous along with self-evident absolute base, even though both view empirical plurality critically. He gave Hindu philosophical theology new life by explaining the principles of non-duality awareness in Advaita Vedānta. This set the stage for a lasting theoretical framework that can be used to understand with revelation, logic along with spiritual practice.

3. Ontology: Śūnyatā vs. Brahman

3.1 Nāgārjuna's Concept of Śūnyatā

Nāgārjuna's ontology, or more correctly, his critique of ontology, is based on the idea that there is no eternal, self-sustaining substance beneath phenomena. He thinks that nothing, not even the most delicate things or so-called philosophical absolutes, have svabhāva, which means they are naturally that way. Things can only come into being through causes, conditions, parts, mental imputation along with relational contexts. They can't have their own world because they are dependent on others, so they are called śūnya, which means empty.

However, Śūnyatā is not a nihilist view or a claim that nothing exists. The goal of Nāgārjuna is not life itself, but how people think about it wrong. When he says that phenomena are empty, he doesn't mean that they don't exist; he means that they don't have a separate nature. People say that something is "empty" when they mean that it is relational, changing along with based on other things, not static along with separate⁶.

Nāgārjuna explicitly positions śūnyatā as the middle path between two metaphysical errors:

Eternalism — the belief in enduring, independent essences

⁵ Hussain, S. (2024). A conceptual analysis of consciousness in Advaita Vedanta. *ASSAJ*, 2(4), 1071–1080.

⁶ Jones, R. H. (2022). Perennial philosophy and the history of mysticism. *Sophia*, 61(3), 659–678.

Nihilism — the belief that nothing at all exists or has meaning

In Mūlamadhyamakakārikā 24:18, he formulates the identity between emptiness along with dependent origination:

- “Whatever is dependently originated, that is explained to be emptiness.
- That, being a dependent designation, is itself the middle way.”

This verse says that to fully understand along with dependent origination, one must see emptiness along with to correctly see nothingness, one must stay away from extremes. "Śūnyatā" is not so much a theory that says nothingness is a replacement for substance, but rather a philosophical along with therapeutic change in how we see reality. Freeing oneself from reification along with getting rid of the mental states that cause attachment, pain along with fixed beliefs are the goals.

By showing that metaphysics is conditional along with not substantive, Nāgārjuna turns it into a constructive type of deconstruction that can offer freedom instead of destroying the world⁷.

Table 2 — Epistemology along with Path to Knowledge

Aspect	Nāgārjuna	Śāṅkara
Means of Knowledge	Dialectical negation, prajñā	Śravaṇa, manana, nididhyāsana
View of Conceptual Thought	Source of illusion (prapañca)	Instrumental until transcended
What is Known	Emptiness of all phenomena	Identity of ātman along with Brahman
Outcome of Knowledge	Cessation of views	Affirmation of non-dual Self

3.2 Śāṅkara's Concept of Brahman

Nāgārjuna strongly disagreed with Brahman, which is the ultimate along with unchanging truth. However, Śāṅkara strongly supported it. He thought that Brahman was the only objective truth that was both clear along with bright on its own, not just an assumption that was assumed. Sat-cit-ān along with a is a word that means the three virtues of pure being, pure awareness along with pure bliss. In contrast to the world of multiplicity, which is temporary along with falling apart, Brahman never ends, can't be broken along with is above all traits. Śāṅkara knows that the physical world is really real (vyāvahārika satya), which means it shows up in everyday life. Like a dream, this world seems real while it lasts, but it fades away when you wake up; it is uncertain along with short-lived. Just like a dream can't exist without the person who dreams it, Brahman is the only reality that can exist on its own. It seems to exist because of māyā, the cosmic illusion that comes from not knowing (avidyā), which makes the one, unbreakable constant seem like there are many of them. So, Śāṅkara's Brahman gives all appearances a good metaphysical basis, while Nāgārjuna's emptiness doesn't give anything a good final ontological basis. There is no such thing as an empty world. Everything in it is built on top of along with comes from the basis. Realizing that your true self (ātman) is connected to Brahman is the key to freedom, not denying that you exist. Instead of making a whole new state, knowing this identity removes the veil of ignorance that has been covering the truth for a long time. This is what makes Advaita Vedānta different from anti-ontological criticisms: it has

⁷ Kapstein, M. T. (2021). Indian philosophy. In *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Religion* (pp. 1–28).

a single ontological reality. While Madhyamaka doesn't say anything about what eventually exists, Śāṅkara says that there is one ultimate reality along with that reality is pure, undivided consciousness⁸.

3.3 Comparative View

When it comes to the fundamental truth, Nāgārjuna along with Śāṅkara are very different from each other. No matter if it's mental, physical, or metaphysical, Nāgārjuna's goal is basically anti-foundational because he doesn't believe that anything has svabhāva, which means it has its own essence. Madhyamaka philosophy doesn't believe in an ultimate ontological substrate, which is one way it stops the mind from getting stuck. Nāgārjuna says that when a final metaphysical principle is put forward, the mistake that causes pain along with dogmatism comes back to life. A kara, on the other hand, says that rejecting any ontological basis is wrong along with logically unstable. He thought that if everything is dependent, then the dependent variable must be built on an independent variable. Because he said that Brahman is one reality that is not affected by anything else, he was able to explain both the seeming variety along with the possibility of freedom. Without Brahman, there is no good way to explain reality along with this is an assumption that can't be thrown out.

In short:

- Nāgārjuna dissolves the ground to liberate the mind from reification.
- Śāṅkara establishes a ground to secure metaphysical coherence along with identity.

Both approaches have a spiritual goal: Nāgārjuna's method gets rid of conceptual attachment by breaking down philosophical claims along with Śāṅkara's method gets rid of ignorance by revealing a single underlying truth. One frees us by saying "no," along with the other by saying "yes." Both try to go beyond the real world along with its lies, but they do so in very different philosophical ways⁹.

4. Epistemology along with the Nature of Knowledge

4.1 Nāgārjuna's Epistemology

Nāgārjuna's method for academic research is linked to his ideas about how we know what we know. Instead of coming up with a good theory of knowledge, he uses dialectical critique to show that conceptual thought isn't enough. He thinks that all linguistic along with conceptual frames distort reality by putting artificial limits, categories along with set identities on things that are fluid along with relational. He calls this "praapañca," which means "mental proliferation" or "concept building." Nāgārjuna says that everyday thought works by solidifying reality. It breaks things down into different entities along with makes them look like they will last forever, but there is only conditional emergence. This way of thinking is what leads to stupidity. So, the way to real understanding withing is to see through mental thought instead of making it better¹⁰. The highest level of knowing is Rajñā, which is a direct, non-conceptual understanding withing of the void (cūnyatā) that is the source of all things. Prajñā isn't about learning new things; it's about

⁸ Laude, P. (2024). Non-dual reality and empirical existence in Advaita Vedānta and Ghazālī's metaphysics of unity. *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, 28(3).

⁹ Panda, K. (2025). *Indian and Western philosophy: A brief comparative study*.

¹⁰ Rajan. (2023). A review of *The making of contemporary Indian philosophy: Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya*.

getting rid of the false ideas that our language along with thought patterns create. In line with his ontological argument, this philosophical view says that thinking of things as intrinsically real is already wrong if they don't have intrinsic nature. People feel free when they let go of all their preconceived ideas along with stop linking their own existence to outside events. Nāgārjuna says that knowledge is not a picture of reality, but the breaking down of mental habits that make reality seem real. In this way, epistemology becomes a healing practice. So, Nāgārjuna doesn't replace one idea with a better one. Instead, he shows that the first step to real understanding is to see all beliefs as temporary along with give up on them. So, the point of epistemology is not to show anything about reality, but to clear up any doubts about its non-existence. This lets us see things for what they really are: empty along with dependent.

4.2 Śaṅkara's Epistemology

Śaṅkara's ideas about knowledge are based on the fact that he split truth into two groups: practical truth (vyāvahārika satya) along with absolute truth (pāramārthika satya). People know that things exist, that differences exist along with that daily life goes on based on what they sense, what they assume, what they read in scripture along with other reliable sources of information (pramāṇas). When it comes to everyday life, Śaṅkara doesn't say that this empirical knowledge is false; instead, he gives it temporary meaning. This level of truth can't show the final reality, though, because it's still limited to māyā, the realm of superimposition along with ignorance. At the basic level, knowledge is on a whole different level. Pramārthika jñāna is the direct experience of Brahman, the one truth that is eternal, has no limits along with is one with one's own inner being (ātman). There is no intellectual or sensory way to get this information¹¹. The only way is to have a self-realization, an insight that breaks down the illusion of multiplicity. Śaṅkara says there are three disciplined steps to reach this realization: first, carefully listening to Vedic teachings that state non-duality; second, thinking critically about these teachings to get rid of intellectual doubt along with clear up what seem to be contradictions; along with third, meditating deeply to internalize along with solidify the truth that has been revealed through scripture along with reason. In this case, philosophy is less of a way to understand along with how the mind works along with more of a way to find freedom. As a way to clear up confusion rather than a source of religious authority, the Bible's teachings serve along with logic is a way to get things done rather than a way to establish absolute truth. Getting rid of ignorance makes it easy to see that ātman along with Brahman are the same thing. This is not something that can be argued about; it is the basis of all experience. Śaṅkara says that knowing Brahman is like being freed all at once. This means that real knowledge changes things.

4.3 Comparative Reflection

Even though they had different ideas about what reality is, Nāgārjuna along with Śaṅkara both agreed that ordinary conceptual knowledge or discursive intelligence cannot lead to ultimate truth. But they are very different in how they deal with this limitation. As part of his extreme deconstructive approach, Nāgārjuna carefully breaks down all claims of knowledge, doctrines along with conceptual positions to show that thinking about reality is pointless. His method doesn't end with finding a new truth; it ends with explaining

¹¹ Rostitawati, T., & Anwar, F. (2025). Revisiting the concept of being: A comparative analysis of Heidegger and Eastern philosophical thought. *Pena Justisia: Media Komunikasi dan Kajian Hukum*, 24(2), 6333–6345.

withing ideas. Giving up all of your opinions is the only way to understalong with. It's not that Nāgārjuna doesn't know anything; his path to knowledge takes him to a disciplined philosophical silence where he doesn't have to state an ultimate thesis. Ka kara, on the other halong with, goes beyond destruction. He says that the seeker can come to a positive understalong withing of the absolute through scripture, argument along with deep meditation, even though he knows that conceptual understalong withing has its boundaries. He doesn't say no to any claims; instead, śravaṇa, manana along with nididhyāsana help him destroy ignorance along with show Brahman as the ultimate truth. Śaṅkara says that the non-duality of ātman along with Brahman will still be an ultimate claim after ignorance is gone, but Nāgārjuna says that all such claims must fall apart¹².

Thus, both paths transcend conceptual thought, but they do so in opposite ways:

Nāgārjuna clears along with internalizes knowledge to escape reification. Śaṅkara, on the other halong with, shows the absolute by clearing the field of knowledge. One path leads straight to non-dual awareness, while another leads to the peace that comes from giving up beliefs.

5. Illusion, Reality along with Liberation

5.1 The World as Illusion

Nāgārjuna along with Śaṅkara both say that the way most people see reality is wrong. But they come to different opinions about what along with where this illusion comes from. According to Nāgārjuna, the illusion is not in how things look, but in thinking that things have their own separate reality. Things happen along with are connected, but the mind gives them svabhāva, which is a set self-nature along with the world stops being real. It's a cognitive fallacy to think that something that only exists in connection to other things is real in along with of itself¹³. The idea of māyā, which Śaṅkara uses to explain illusion, adds many things to Brahman's one truth. Like how a snake looks real when a rope is read wrong in low light, the world seems real when you're in it. It's not so much that there is dependent origination as it is that people mix up the ultimate truth with the temporary, multifaceted world. Whatever ignorance (avidyā) projects seems real until understalong withing takes it away. In this sense, illusion, which is space-time superimposition, hides the one non-dual truth, not just a mistake in assignment. Both thinkers agree that ignorance is the cause of slavery, even though they disagree on other issues. The world isn't limited in along with of itself; beings just don't understalong with what it is, which keeps them stuck in saṃsāra, the cycle of pain along with rebirth in both systems. Seeing empty things as real (Nāgārjuna) or putting yourself on top of Brahman (Śaṅkara) are both examples of the same mistaken way of thinking: avidyā distorts perception along with freedom can only come after that distortion is removed.

Table 3 — Liberation along with Ethical Implications

Aspect	Nāgārjuna (Nirvāṇa)	Śaṅkara (Mokṣa)
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¹² Srinivasan, R., & Aithal, P. S. (2025). The concept of self in Advaita Vedanta and Western Idealism: A comparative analysis of the Advaitic idea of Atman–Brahman identity with Immanuel Kant's transcendental idealism or Hegel's absolute idealism. *Poornaprajna International Journal of Philosophy & Languages*, 2(1), 48–62.

¹³ Tewari, A. (2023). Zero, Śūnya and Pūrṇa: A comparative analysis. *Comparative Philosophy*, 14(1), 12.

Nature of Liberation	Freedom from conceptual fabrication	Realization of unity with Brahman
Ethical Outcome	Compassion through interdependence	Universal love through oneness
Ego along with Self	No self with intrinsic nature	Self is Brahman, not body-mind
Basis of Ethics	Emptiness removes separation	Non-duality erases difference

5.2 The Path to Liberation

Even though both Nāgārjuna along with Śāṅkara think that freedom is the best thing that people can do, their different philosophical views are clear in the ways they show. In Nāgārjuna's explanation, the path that includes deep understanding withing (prajñā) along with boundless compassion (karuṇā) is known as the Bodhisattva path. Once a person understands with that everything is empty, they can let go of attachment along with conceptual fixation. This leads to knowledge. Realizing how much we depend on each other blurs the line between self along with other, which means that we can't help but feel kindness. Liberation, in this way of thinking, is not running away from truth, but rather achieving nirvāṇa along with ending duality along with illusion. Aṅkara says that the road of understanding withing, or jñāna yoga, is a very different way to move forward. To be free, he says, it's more important to know who you are as the Self than to destroy all your ideas. The seeker finally understands with the truth in the mahāvākya "aham brahmāsmi" (I am Brahman) by practicing śravaṇa, manana along with nididhyāsana. These are listening to scriptural revelations of non-duality, using logic to clear up doubt along with integrating deeply through deep contemplation. Instead of looking for a new government, to be free means to accept that something has always been true. Karāa leads the seeker to freedom by confirming their non-dual identity, while Nāgārjuna leads the practitioner to freedom after the dualities are broken down. The highest point of the first is the silence of losing all concepts along with the highest point of the second is the radiant faith in the Self as absolute¹⁴.

5.3 Nirvāṇa along with Mokṣa

The final goal, according to both Nāgārjuna along with Śāṅkara, is to break free from the cycle of ignorance along with suffering. However, the details of this freedom are different depending on their respective philosophical bases. Nirvāa is not a separate state or a transcendent world; in Nāgārjuna's mind, it means the end of mental grasping along with reification. We end our suffering along with break down dualities when we let go of our attachment to our own points of view along with stop giving other events their own reality. Nirvāa is a bad discovery because it doesn't mean emptiness in the usual sense. It means freedom from all mental along with spiritual constructs. Śāṅkara's mokṣa, on the other hand, is clearly good. Realizing that Brahman, the eternal along with unchanging basis of all life, is actually the true Self (ātman) is the first step toward freedom. For Moksha, it's not about getting rid of ideas; it's about discovering your true self in union with the absolute. When you reach liberation, you'll be in a state of knowing that lasts forever. During this state, the certainty of non-dual awareness will win over any feeling of separation. They don't always agree, but they do agree on one thing: freedom is more than just an intellectual idea. It means that illusion, connection along with service are over. But there is a difference in how they understand with philosophy. Nāgārjuna said that freedom comes when a person

¹⁴ Timalisina, S. (2024). Time and change in Advaita—Gauḍapāda in dialogue with Vasiṣṭha and Nāgārjuna. *Religions*, 15(2), 167.

understanding with that they have no self along with that all ideas are meaningless. However, Śaṅkara says that it is when one finds an eternal along with unified Self that all experiences are based on.

6. Ethical along with Existential Implications

Even though they come to different ontological conclusions, Nāgārjuna along with Śaṅkara's ideas have important ethical along with psychological effects that are connected. When the idea of emptiness is understood, Nāgārjuna says, the myth of separateness is destroyed. When you understand with that everything depends on causes along with conditions, everything that is based on ego-centered ties falls apart. When you realize that your pain is the same as or different from other people's, you can't help but feel compassion (karuṇā). The Bodhisattva ideal, which means putting off your own nirvana to help all other beings, is a direct ethical expression of how everything is linked. According to Advaita by Adi Shankara, moral change comes from realizing that all living things have the same Brahman. If there is one Self that shows up in different bodies along with thoughts, then hurting someone else is the same as hurting oneself. This understanding with leads to nonjudgmental kindness, calmness along with disconnection, not because it's a command from above, but because it's a natural result of understanding with. The jīvanmukta is free while they are still living, so they don't live for selfish reasons like want, fear, or gain. Instead, they know that all differences are temporary along with live their lives that way. So, both religions say that living for your own ego is wrong. It leads to a shift from promoting oneself to not caring about others, whether it's through realizing that things don't have their own nature (Nāgārjuna) or realizing that everything is just a form of the one Self (Śaṅkara). Being free means changing how you see yourself on an existential level as well as a metaphysical level. It means stopping seeing yourself as an independent being along with starting to act more from understanding with, kindness along with detachment. In these two schools of thought, metaphysics turns into a way of life along with understanding with into ethics. Realizing the ultimate truth is not just something you think about; it's something you experience¹⁵.

7. Conclusion

Nāgārjuna along with Śaṅkara both reject dualistic knowledge, but their ideas about ultimate truth are very different. This is clear from comparing their Madhyamaka along with Advaita Vedānta texts. According to both schools of thought, freedom from servitude is the most important psychological along with existential goal along with ignorance is what makes people servile. According to Śaṅkara, Brahman is the metaphysical base of the world of appearances. On the other hand with, Nāgārjuna destroys all claims to intrinsic existence, leaving emptiness as the key to freedom. Regarding philosophy, Nāgārjuna uses dialectical critique to weaken conceptual thought, which leads to a state of not understanding with silence. Advaita Karā's process of improving thinking, which includes reading scriptures, reasoning along with meditation, leads to the final goal of realizing non-duality. Nirvāṇa means freedom from all ideas along with moksha means realizing that one's Self is one with Brahman. Either goal means the end of pain along with delusion. Although they disagree on some doctrines, both systems agree on what is right along with wrong along with what exists. Both interdependent emptiness along with metaphysical oneness show that egoism is false along with encourage charity. Within both, selfish, identity-based existence is replaced

¹⁵ Vaishnav, P. (2025). Beyond duality: Exploring “nothingness” in the Advaita Vedānta and the Madhyamaka traditions of Indian Buddhism. *Asian Studies*, 13(3), 213–243.

by compassion, distance along with inner freedom. Ultimately, the two schools of thought called Madhyamaka along with Advaita offer two psychologically similar but structurally different views of non-duality: Advaita is positive along with ontologically certain, while Madhyamaka is negative along with apophatic. India's search for truth includes not only logic along with epistemology, but also ethics along with freedom. Their ongoing conversation shows how broad along with complicated Indian philosophy is.

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