Sadvidya Journal of Sanskrit and Indian Knowledge Systems
DOI: 10.18311/sadvid/2025/52214

# Vipaśyanā and the Attainment of Supreme Consciousness: A Study of Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākramaḥ* and its Contemporary Relevance

**Atanu Bandyopadhyay**

Assistant Teacher, Government Upgraded Middle School, Naya Latma, Ranchi, under the School Education and Literacy Department of the State Government of Jharkhand and ex-student of Acharya (M.A.) in Sahitya from Central Sanskrit University, India; enigma.atanu007@gmail.com

## Abstract

This study examines the role of *vipaśyanā* meditation in the attainment of supreme consciousness as articulated in Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākramaḥ*. Drawing on Yogācāra Buddhist sources, it explores the interrelationships among mindfulness, insight, and the path to Buddhahood. The paper situates *Bhāvanākramaḥ* within the broader framework of Mahāyāna meditation theory and traces its philosophical influence on Tibetan Buddhism and modern meditative yoga. Through comparative analysis of primary texts and recent scholarship, it argues that *vipaśyanā* constitutes not merely a contemplative method but a transformative epistemic process integrating ethical, psychological, and metaphysical dimensions. The concluding section analyses its impact on contemporary *vipassanā* movements and mindfulness-based yoga practices.

**Keywords:** *Bhāvanākramaḥ*, Consciousness, Kamalaśīla, Meditation, Mindfulness, *Vipaśyanā*, Yogācāra

## 1. Introduction

Over the last few decades, Indologists have been fascinated by Indian culture, literature, philosophy, art, history, and numerous other domains. However, both Indian and Western scholars have shown little interest in meditative-related research as found in the Yogācāra tradition. Scholarly works in this field are a comparatively recent phenomenon. Even though we can see there are some major developments, due to the character of the evidence, the findings are still inadequate. Modern Yogācāra-related research emerged from vague to vogue during the beginning of the twenty-first century in developed and developing societies around the world. According to Yogācāra Buddhism, the concept of consciousness only or *vijñaptimātratā* is that all phenomena in the world as we realise are not a direct reflection of ultimate reality; instead, it is a repercussion of our minds, and outside things have no real presence. Mere-representation or *vijñaptimātra* is a central doctrine in the Yogācāra or Vijñānavāda school of Mahāyāna Buddhism, which emerged in India during the 4th or 5$^{th}$ century CE. The Yogācāra school developed a theory of consciousness to understand how all phenomena appear in our mind as a unified existence of all experiences that we have is a complex mental factor, which is mind-made or consciousness-only (*citta-mātra*) and not an innate existence.

According to Yogācāra, the concept of consciousness is based on three principles: first, *pratītyasamutpāda*, which is the theory of *bīja* and *pratyaya* to understand that all phenomena are mind-made only, and there is no existence of independent reality. The second is *satyadvaya*, or two levels of truth, *i.e.*, *saṃvṛtisatya* is the ordinary truth that expounds the world we experience from our senses, and *paramārthasatya* is the truth that exhibits the ultimate reality, which is beyond all of our thoughts and experiences. Third, eight consciousnesses (*aṣṭa vijñānakāyāḥ*), which comprise

*Author for correspondence

Article Received on: 30.09.2025 *Peer-reviewed* Accepted on: 05.12.2025

the five sense consciousnesses, including sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. The sixth consciousness constructs in our mind (*manas*) the image of the outside world and produces sensory input from the five sense consciousnesses. The storehouse consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) is the assortment of all our thoughts and experiences. Yogācāra describes all the other consciousnesses as an exposition of the storehouse consciousness, and it is the ultimate reality. The concept of consciousness in Yogācāra is very impactful in Mahāyāna Buddhism and often plays a crucial role in understanding the foundation of universal reality and the connection between body and mind. Schmithausen claims that the first mention of the concept of consciousness can be found in the *Yogācārabhumiśāstra*, and it is also referenced in the *Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra* and Asaṅga's *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*. The ambition of Yogācāra practice is to free ourselves from the bondage of suffering, achieve *bodhi* (awakening), and attain *śūnyatā* or fundamental emptiness (Schmithausen, 1987).

## 2. The Emergence of Yogācāra in the Indian Subcontinent

Yogācāra is primarily associated with mindfulness and meditation practices, and its core concept is entangled with the non-duality of the self. The literal meaning of Yogācāra is (yoga and *ācāra*), one who practices yoga, so it is a school of Buddhist yogins who were associated with the practice of yoga and meditation during the first millennium CE. Mādhyamaka and Yogācāra are the two most important traditions of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India. Yogācāra is also widely known as Vijñānavāda (theory of consciousness), Vijñaptivāda (theory of ideas and perception), and Vijñaptimātratāvāda (theory of mere representation). During the first century CE, some Buddhist yogins in north India from Sarvāstivāda and Sautrāntika traditions gradually started accepting Mahāyāna ideas and developed the Yogācāra meditation movement and finally completed its independent nature in the fifth century CE. The roots of the Yogācāra movement can be traced to the two classic philosophers and brothers' pioneering efforts, namely Asaṇga and Vasubandhu, from the Gandhāra region presently located in north-western Pakistan and north-eastern Afghanistan during the fourth to fifth century CE, who organised this Buddhist school (Mark, 2021). After that, during the seventh and eighth centuries CE, Xuanzang and Śāntarakṣita transmitted the ideas and textual corpus to Tibet and East Asia, which eventually played a crucial role in the formation of Tibetan Buddhism and East Asian Buddhism.

The concepts of *vijñaptimātra* (consciousness only) or *cittamātra* (mind only) are the main characteristics of Yogācāra philosophy; however, some contemporary scholars reject this literal meaning and claim that the accurate translation would be representation only (Kochumuttom, 1999). Indian scholar Saam Trivedi claims that Yogācāra is similar to Kant and Berkeley's idealism (Trivedi, 2005), whereas German Indologist Lambert Schmithausen contends that Yogācāra is a middle-way idealism, where the real existence of the mind and the external world is rejected (Schmithausen, 2005). The ancient Yogācāra text *Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra* explains the theories of *ālayavijñāna*, *vijñaptimātratā,* and *trisvabhāva*. *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra* also contains various Yogācāra-related ancient materials, though traditionally, Yogācāra is associated with Asaṇga, Bodhisattva, and Maitreya. Contemporary scholars claim that *Yogācārabhūmi* is a collection of several authors' texts related to the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition (Delhey, 2013). Asaṇga wrote some important Yogācāra treatises, including *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* and *Abhidharma-samuccaya*. His brother Vasubandhu was an important scholar of the Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika Abhidharma tradition, and his texts *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* discuss the theory of these thoughts. He also wrote *Vimśatikāvijñaptimātratāsiddhiḥ* and *Trimśikā-vijñaptimātratā* (Thirty Verses on Manifestation Only).

*Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra* elaborately describes the meditative practice of *śamatha* (calm) and *vipaśyanā*; *śamatha* meditation practice focuses on the process of attaining the rapt attention of the mind, while *vipaśyanā* meditation practice focuses on the concentration of mental images. These two meditations at the higher level unite together, which is called *yuganaddha* (the unification of insight and skilful means) to attain *cittaikāgratā* (mind focuses on one point). This unification leads the practitioners or yogins to realise the *pratibimba* (images) in mind, which are nothing but the realisation of *vijnaptimātra* or representation only. In Indian Buddhism, Yogācāra

held an important position even after the death of Asaṇga and Vasubandhu; their significant works highly influenced this tradition.

During the middle period, the Yogācāra movement emerged with important branches, namely *pramānavada* and *hetūvidya* traditions associated with thinkers like Dignāga, Dharamakīrti, Prajñākaragupta, Śākyabuddhi, *etc*. Another branch is related to exegetical and scholastic thinkers such as Sthiramati, Dharamapala, Śīlabhadra, Xuanzang, *etc*. At the end of the eighth century, all these scholastic doctrines eventually became obscure, and the *tathāgatagarbha* synthesis came into the limelight as a new mixed school. Sthiramati in *Lankāvatārasūtra* elaborately explains its amalgamation with the basic doctrines of Yogācāra. Dignāga and Dharmakīrti's *pramāṇa-vāda* played the role of the main epistemological school in Indian Buddhism and became a famous school in Magadha, especially in Nālanadā and Kashmir during the eleventh century CE (Dreyfus, 1997).

Lusthaus claims that the *tathāgatagarbha* synthesis is closely linked with the *ālayavijñāna* doctrine, and the synthesis was a primary interpretation of Yogācāra in East Asian Buddhism by the eighth century (Lusthaus, 2018). The Yogācāra and *tathāgatagarbha* tradition was very influential in Tibet and East Asia. During this time, Xuanzang travelled to India to collect more authentic and orthodox concepts of Indian Yogācāra because, at that time, Chinese Yogācāra landed up in confusion related to the actual attainment process of Buddhahood (Lusthaus, 2014). The Indian Yogācāra tradition was also entangled with various philosophical and religious ideologies and widely spread to different countries during the Vajrayāna tantric era (Brunnholzl, 2015). East Asian Zen and Pure Land Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, and all the Mahāyāna schools and their associated texts were influenced to some great extent by the Yogācāra tradition. Famous texts such as *Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra*, *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, *Yogācārabhūmisāstra*, *Mahāyānasūtralamkāra*, *Mahāyānasaṃgraha, etc.*, and thinkers like Asaṇga, Vasubandhu, Dignāga, Sthiramati, Dharmapala of Nālandā, Śīlabhadra, Ratnākaraśānti, *etc.*, are the jewels of this mesmerising and glorious tradition.

## 3. Kamalaśīla and *Bhāvanākramaḥ*

This section examines how Kamalaśīla conceptualises vipaśyanā as both cognitive and ethical transformation. Kamalaśīla, the author of *Bhāvanākramaḥ*, was a renowned Buddhist scholar and master who lived in Nālandā Mahāvihāra, India, during the 8$^{th}$ century CE. He was known for his expertise in the Mādhyamaka school of Buddhist philosophy and his contributions to the development of the Yogācāra school. Kamalaśīla was likely born around 740 CE in Vanga, modern-day Bengal, and became a student of Śāntarakṣita at Nālandā, modern-day Bihar. Śāntarakṣita came to Tibet twice, in 763 CE and 775 CE, where he founded the Samyé monastery and lived until he died in 788 CE (Frauwallner, 1961). He recommended Kamalaśīla to come to Tibet after his death, which Kamalaśīla did, and after that, he participated in a debate with Ch'an Buddhists at Samyé (Tucci, 1958). Tibetan historians estimated this debate occurred between 792 CE and 794 CE, and Kamalaśīla died shortly after, around 795 CE (Frauwallner, 1961). Kamalaśīla and his teacher, Śāntarakṣita, played a crucial role in bringing Buddhism to Tibet. Kamalaśīla wrote two commentaries on his teacher's works, namely *Madhyamakālaṃkārapañjikā* and *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā*. His best-known works are *Madhyamakāloka* and *Bhāvanākramaḥ*. Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākramaḥ*, a seminal text in the Buddhist tradition, presents a systematic approach to the development of *vipaśyanā* for the attainment of Buddhahood. Despite its significance, the role of *vipaśyanā* in the attainment of Buddhahood remains a topic of debate and requires further exploration.

The *Bhāvanākramaḥ* is a composition of three revered Buddhist texts written in the Sanskrit language and primarily a set of practice manuals, which is the source for mental development and meditation practices in Buddhism, influencing the tradition greatly for many, many years. Though only Tibetan translations of the text presently remain, parts 1 and 3 also exist in Sanskrit. The 14th Dalai Lama has written a commentary on the middle text and holds it in high regard as one of his favourites. In his work on meditation, Kamalaśīla outlines several frameworks that describe the stages a Buddhist follower goes through in their exploration of Buddhahood. These include the five paths (*pañcamārga*), the four types of

meditation, and the three types of knowledge (*prajñā*), each with its own distinct set of characteristics. Kamalaśīla describes the five paths (*pañcamārga*) as sequential stages on the singular Buddhist path. The five stages, which are known as *saṃbhāramārga* (the path of accumulation), *prayogamārga* (the path of application), *darśanamārga* (the path of seeing), *bhāvanāmārga* (the path of cultivation), and *aśaikṣāmārga* (the path of no more learning), cover the entirety of the path and are non-overlapping.

The student begins their journey as a Buddhist practitioner on the path of accumulation, following a moral code (*śīla*) and accumulating merit (*puṇya*). Upon consistently adhering to the moral code and accumulating sufficient merit, the student begins practising attention-based meditations (śamatha) and vipaśyanā, marking the beginning of the path of application. The student continues practising until they realise the emptiness of phenomena, at which point they enter into the path of seeing. Once a Buddhist practitioner completes the realisation of the emptiness of phenomena during the path of application, they enter the path of seeing, which is a stage within the five paths. During the path of seeing, the practitioner experiences the entire path of seeing, after which they enter the path of cultivation. On the path of cultivation, the practitioner engages in various meditative practices to eliminate morally dysfunctional dispositions, known as obscurations (*āvaraṇa*), until all obscurations are removed and the practitioner enters the path of no more learning. This final stage marks the end of the path, and the practitioner becomes a Buddha.

Kamalaśīla's division of the path further subdivides the latter three paths into stages of the *bodhisattva*, with the first stage of the *bodhisattva* (*bodhisattvabhūmi*) corresponding to the beginning of the path of seeing and the final stage of the *bodhisattva* corresponding to entering into the path of no more learning. Kamalaśīla, in addition to the five paths, also identifies four types of meditation that practitioners use. These same meditations can be found in *Śrāvakabhūmi*, which is the first book in the foundation of the yoga practitioner collection (*Yogācārabhūmi*). *Bhāvanākramaḥ* (The process of Meditation) III lists these four meditations based on their object of focus: *śamatha*, which focuses on nonconceptual content (*nirvikalpapratibimbaka*); *vipaśyanā*, which focuses on conceptual content (*vikalpapratibimbaka*); meditation that focuses on the limit of entities (*vastuparyantatā*); and meditation that focuses on the perfection of the goal (*kāryapariniṣpatti*). Among these four, only *vipaśyanā* is conceptual, while the other three are nonconceptual. Kamalaśīla explains that the first two meditations, *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*, are practised together and eventually merge into a state known as the union of *vipaśyanā* and *śamatha* (*śamathavipaśyanāyoga*).

Vipaśyanā aims to perceive the elements of reality (*dharmas*) in their true form. The attainment of *vipaśyanā* is a gradual process that is facilitated by the effect of *śamatha*. Therefore, it is *vipaśyanā* that is ultimately accomplished through the practice of *śamatha*. The practice of these meditations culminates in the meditation on the limit of entities, which is connected to the path of application. This meditation continues into the path of cultivation, where it is used to remove the practitioner's obscurations. Once all obscurations are eliminated, the practitioner reaches Buddhahood, which is the path of no more learning. At this stage, meditation focuses on the perfection of the goal. The ideal cognitive state is known as true discernment, and it is what the *vipaśyanā* practitioner strives to achieve (Schmid, 2020).

The purpose of Kamalaśīla's work was to correct some misinterpretations of Buddhism that were prevalent in Tibet at that time. The *Bhāvanākramas* (Bhk) are widely quoted texts in Indian Buddhism, with critical editions of Bhk 1 and Bhk 3 provided by Tucci in 1958 and 1971, respectively, including Sanskrit and Tibetan translations. The original Sanskrit of Bhk 2 is lost, and the first folio of the Sanskrit of Bhk 1 is missing, along with the edges of many pages of the manuscript of Bhk 3 edited by Tucci. However, all three texts are fully preserved in the Tibetan Tanjur, with a critical edition of the Tibetan text of Bhk 2 prepared by K. Goshima in 1983 based on Narthang (N), Peking (P), Derge (D), and Cone (C) editions (Adam, 2006). An edition of the Sanskrit and Tibetan manuscripts, along with Hindi translation and Sanskrit restorations of Bhk 2 and the first folio of Bhk 1, has been published by the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies to clarify Tucci's research work (Namdol, 1997).

Edward Conze describes that the first part of the Bhk explains the Mahāyāna doctrine, the second part elaborates on the possible ways in which it can

be meditated upon, and the third part discusses the outcome of meditation (Conze, 1975). The 14th Dalai Lama has provided a commentary on Bhk 2, namely "Stages of Meditation". The focus of this commentary is on understanding the nature of the mind and developing techniques to achieve perfect clarity and mental stability, also known as calm abiding. Through these techniques, one can gain profound insight into the true nature of reality (Jorhen, Ganchenpa and Russell, 2001).

The *Bhāvanākramas* have had a significant impact on meditation historically, with scholars acknowledging their influence on Mādhyamaka meditation practice. According to Paul Williams, these texts are the main Indian sources for integrating emptiness teachings into meditation (Williams, 1989). Additionally, they are considered to be the origin of the Tibetan tradition of meditation, as stated by Taniguchi (Taniguchi, 1992). Martin T. Adam, in his dissertation, describes in detail the meditation and concept of insight as found in the text through a translation and a commentary on three works of Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākramas* (Adam, 2002). The translations are from both Sanskrit and Tibetan sources, while the commentary is centred on the concepts of meditation and insight (*vipaśyanā*) found in the texts. Later, Karl Schmid, in his doctoral dissertation, explains the nature of *vipaśyanā*, its function, and its benefits. The author argues that some of these properties are already present in our perceptual experiences and that the perception of them can be explained by Wilfrid Sellars's theory of perception (Schmid, 2020).

Kamalaśīla's presentation of *vipaśyanā* has been influential not only within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition but also in other Buddhist traditions and contemporary meditation practices. For example, in the Theravada tradition, *vipaśyanā* is associated with the development of insight into the nature of reality. It has become increasingly popular globally as a means to reduce stress, increase self-awareness, and deepen spiritual practice. The practice of *vipaśyanā* meditation is going on in many countries, including Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, the United States, Europe, and India. It is taught in monasteries, retreat centres, and meditation centres, with various traditions and texts emphasised in different countries. Despite its diverse forms of practice, *vipaśyanā* has become a widely recognised and practised form of meditation around the world.

## 4. Important Textual Sources

Buddhist literature was popular during the time of Aśvaghoṣa (80-150 CE). Many important Mahāyāna *sūtra*-s were written in Sanskrit during this time. Nālandā and Vikramaśilā were two renowned learning centres for Buddhist studies and various other subjects in India during the Gupta Empire (4th–6th CE) and the Pāla Empire (8th–12th CE). Meanwhile, thousands of Sanskrit manuscripts were transmitted to Tibet and China by various pilgrims such as Yijing, Xuanzang, *etc*. Unfortunately, a lot of Sanskrit Yogācāra Buddhist texts are lost at present; however, a number of Yogācāra texts are still available in Sanskrit, and many more texts are becoming available through various manuscript projects by translating from Tibetan to English (*i.e.*, the collection of Sanskrit manuscripts at the China Tibetology Research Centre).

Ratnākaraśānti was a very influential Vajrayāna tantric practitioner and famous scholar at Vikramaśilā from the late 10th to the mid-11th century, known as a great yogic master and one of the eighty-four mahāsiddhas. He wrote more than forty works, including influential commentaries on Mahāyāna *sūtra*-s, with a focus on the Hevajra tantra. He tries to unify the notion of both Yogācāra and Mādhyamaka philosophies in *tri-svabhāva-mādhyamaka* (the middle way of the three natures) and promotes the concept of *nirākāravāda* (without images) in the Yogācāra tradition. Another renowned Buddhist scholar, Abhayākaragupta, who held a prominent position at Vikramaśilā during the late 11th to early 12th century CE, wrote twenty-seven texts (according to the Tibetan canon), was mainly known for his remarkable text the *Vajrāvalī* on tantric liturgy, where he explains different types of tantric ritual traditions very skillfully, and started a *prakriyā* (standardised ritual sequence) to achieve a harmonious balance between Yoginī-tantra and Yoga-tantra works. Abhayākaragupta's scholarly works expand from the Mahāyāna tradition to the world of tantric Buddhist rituals and practices.

Asaṅga's *Abhidharmasamuccaya* exhibits a profound understanding of how a practitioner follows a path according to the Yogācāra of Mahāyāna Buddhism to

develop oneself and ultimately attain Buddhahood. The full text is well preserved in Chinese and Tibetan translations, and two-fifths of the original Sanskrit text was rediscovered by Rāhula Saṅkṛtyayana in Tibet in 1934. Pralhad Pradhan rewrote the whole Sanskrit version with the help of the Chinese and Tibetan translations in 1950. Karl Brunnholzl comments that the prominent Yogācāra philosopher Asaṅga's *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* is a compilation of ten chapters that provides a detailed understanding of the concept of *ālaya-vijñāna* (storehouse consciousness), *trisvabhāva* (the three forms of existence), *pañcamārga* (the five paths), and the *dharmakāya* (Brunnholzl, 2015, p. 118).

The *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra* is the collection of the largest Sanskrit Mahāyāna Buddhist Indian texts on meditation that exhibits the correlation between body and mind and contains unique Yogācāra doctrines such as the eight consciousnesses and the *ālayavijñāna*. Ulrich Timme Kragh claims that these texts are a massive collection of Mahāyāna scriptures, which represent the term *bhūmi* as the foundation of a field of true knowledge, and they also include other Sanskrit texts such as *Bodhisattva-bhūmi* and the *Śrāvaka-bhūmi* (Kragh, 2013). Vasubandhu's *Triṃśikā-vijñaptimātratā* (thirty verses on manifestation only) or *Triṃśikā* (4th or 5th century CE) comprehensively discussed different levels of consciousness and key concepts of the storehouse consciousness. Sthiramati wrote the most influential commentary on the *Triṃśikā* in India during the 6th century. Xuanzang studied the *Triṃśikā* at Nālandā. After that, during the late 7th century or early 8th century, Vinītadeva, who also worked at Nālandā, provided commentaries on both the *Triṃśikā* and the *Vimśatikā* (partly surviving in Sanskrit).

Vasubandhu's *Vimśatikāvijñaptimātratāsiddhi* (twenty verses on consciousness only) critically examines the theory of pure consciousness (*vijñapti-mātra*) as explained by the Yogācāra school. *Madhyāntavibhāga* is a seminal Mahāyāna Buddhist text in the Yogācāra tradition and consists of *kārikā* (verses) of Maitreya or Asaṅga, *bhāṣya* (commentary) of Vasubandhu, and *tika* (sub-commentary) of Sthiramati. The *Madhyāntavibhāgakārikā,* a compilation of 112 *kārikā*-s (verses), describes the *vibhāga* and the relationship between *madhya* (the middle) and *anta* (the extremes). It consists of five chapters, *i.e.*, *lakṣaṇa* (attributes), *āvarana* (obscurations), *tattva* (reality), *pratipakṣa-bhāvanā* (cultivation of antidotes), and *yānānuttarya* (supreme way). Indologist Rahul Sankrityayan found a single Sanskrit manuscript in Tibet, and later, Gadjin M. Nagao in 1964 constructed a Sanskrit edition of the text (D'Amato, 2012).

## 5. The Concept of Consciousness in Yogācāra

Consciousness has a rich history in the religious tradition of India, where the attainment of liberating insight has been a central theme in its practices and philosophy. Over the last several years, there has been an ongoing debate about whether the nature of consciousness in Yogācāra Buddhism can be said to be similar to the contemporary meditative yoga in some sense, as was once a common notion among earlier scholars. The present research explores the role of consciousness in attaining liberation as elucidated in this medieval Indian religious tradition, at least as found in the Sanskrit textual corpus.

The study seeks to uncover the fundamental nature of consciousness and its significance in transcending ordinary existence by examining primary texts, commentaries, and contemporary scholarship. The pan-Indian religious culture and yogic milieu are very complex dynamics and juxtaposed on many levels with regional contemplation. Hence, to confine the research on this subject, it ascertains a general overview of the previous scholarship using a philological research methodology with a special focus on primary sources to understand the formative period of yoga and its relevance to contemporary meditation-oriented yoga.

The key concept related to consciousness, which explores the definitions, characteristics, and importance of this concept, includes terms like *vijñāna* and *ālaya-vijñāna* in Yogācāra. Consciousness is a central concept in the Yogācāra tradition, which introduced a new doctrine, namely the structure of eight consciousnesses and cognition of phenomena, which is a transformation of awareness of the mind, as stated in the Yogācāra tradition, so there is just consciousness only, and there are no objects external to consciousness. The conception of *trisvabhāva* (three natures) includes *parikalpita*, *paratantra,* and *pariniṣpanna-svabhāva* (the imaginary, dependent, and perfected nature of things) developed by Yogācāra. The positive measurement of

the true emptiness of consciousness is explained in the *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya* or Heart-sūtra (Schmithausen, 2007, pp. 212-244).

## 6. The Impact of *Vipaśyanā* on Contemporary Meditative Yoga

The *vipaśyanā* meditation emerged during Gautam Buddha's time at Bodh Gaya to get liberating insight and to understand absolute reality. The literal meaning of the *vipaśyanā* word consists of two parts: *vi,* meaning special or clear, and *passana,* meaning seeing or perceiving, so the whole meaning of the word is clear seeing (Pali: *vipassanā* and Sanskrit: *vipaśyanā*). Furthermore, *vipaśyanā* provides real insight into objects and clarifies our misconceptions about things in our minds. In the *Sutta Piṭaka,* meditation practices are often referred to as *dhyāna* to attain liberating insight, but the term *vipaśyanā* is rarely mentioned in it because it is in many *suttas* described as a quality of the mental state. The *vipaśyanā* practice eradicates all impurities from our minds to prepare us to get the highest level of insight. The practice was obscure from mainstream Buddhist meditative practices, which were revived during the eighteenth century by Medawi, largely in Myanmar, which subsequently led to the rise of the *vipaśyanā* movement in the twentieth century.

During the tenth century CE, Buddhist meditative practice in the Theravada branch was slowed down due to the ongoing disbelief that the attainment of liberation would not be possible until the arrival of the future Buddha, *i.e.*, Maitreya. In *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa states that *śamatha* is the preparation stage of the mind to attain mindfulness, which is the objective of *vipaśyanā* meditation practice to eventually get liberation. The *vipaśyanā* movement, also known as the "Insight Meditation Movement," was prevalent in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand. Its famous teachers are Mahasi Sayadaw, Nyanapanika Thera, Joseph Goldstein, Ledi Sayadaw, Mother Sayamagyi, S.N. Goenka, Sayagyi U Ba Khin, and many more. Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa* describes that through practising *smrtyupasthāna* (mindfulness), *vipaśyanā* practitioners reach *samādhi*. As per the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* Asaṇga's thoughts, the *vipaśyanā* practice is the preliminary stage of the Bodhisattva path.

Kamalaśīla's seminal text related to Mahāyāna Buddhism, *Bhavanakramaḥ* (stages of meditation), explains the concept of absolute reality and *vipaśyanā* practitioners as *bhutapratyaveksha* (the discernment of reality) to understand regional characteristics of *dharmas* (Adam, 2008, pp. 194-209). His texts highly influenced Tibetan Buddhism, and many translations and commentaries have been written on his works, which largely spread throughout Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal, Mongolia, and northern Indian regions such as Ladakh, Sikkim, the Himalayas, *etc*. Kamalaśīla states that there are nine levels of mental training required in *śamatha* practice before preparing our mind to engage in *vipaśyanā* practice, those are, *cittasthāpana* (placement of the mind), *samsthāpana* (continuous placement), *avasthāpana* (repeated placement), *upasthāpana* (close placement), *damana* (taming), *śamana* (pacifying), *vyupaśamana* (fully pacifying), *ekotīkarana* (single pointing), *sāmadhāna* (balanced placement).

In practising *vipaśyanā* meditation, only deductive analysis reasoning is transmitted to Tibet as a *sūtranāya* context to understand the nature of reality. However, in Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, *vipaśyanā* meditation is associated with both inductive and deductive reasoning. Deductive analyses evaluate specific outcomes from general rules, whereas inductive analysis engages in formulating general rules from particular observations to gain a comprehensive understanding of reality. Thus, deductive analysis provides insights that are closely intertwined with Vajrayāna Buddhism and similar other practices in Hinduism, such as the sixth limb of *aṣṭāṅgayoga* and *dhāraṇā* in Raja yoga.

## 7. Conclusion

Kamalaśīla's integration of *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā* anticipates contemporary understandings of mindfulness as a union of concentration and insight. His framework thus provides not only a historical foundation but also a living philosophical paradigm for twenty-first-century contemplative studies.

## 8. References

**Primary sources**

1. *Abhidhamma Pitaka*. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2008.
2. *Abhidharmasamuccaya*. Translated by S. B. Webb, 2001.

3. Anacker, S., translator. *Vimśatikāvijñaptimātratāsiddhi*. New Delhi, 1984.
4. Bhattacharya, V., editor. *Yogācārabhūmi*. Calcutta, 1957.
5. Brunnholzl, Karl, translator. *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*. 2019.
6. Buescher, editor. *Triṃśikāvijñaptibhāṣya*: Sanskrit Edition, 2007.
7. Johnson, P. L., translator. *Triṃśikā-vijñaptimātratā*. Washington, 2018.
8. Kamalaśīla, Acarya. *Bhāvanākramaḥ*: Sanskrit Restoration and Hindi Translation. Sarnath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1997.
9. Kragh, Ulrich Timme, editor. *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra*. 2013.
10. Lamotte, E., translator. *Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra*. 1935.
11. Lamotte, E., editor. *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*. Louvain, 1938.
12. Lopez, D. S., translator. *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya*. New York, 1988.
13. Mori, M., editor. *Vajrāvalī*. Tring, 2009.
14. Nagao, G., editor. *Madhyāntavibhāgabhāṣya*. Tokyo, 1964.
15. Powers, J., translator. *Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra*. Berkeley, 1995.
16. *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi.
17. Shukla, K., editor. *Śrāvaka-bhūmi*. Patna, 1973.
18. Vaidya, P. L., editor. *Prajñāpāramitā*. Darbhanga, 1960.
19. Wogihara, U., editor. *Bodhisattva-bhūmi*. Tokyo, 1930–1936.

**Secondary sources**

1. Adam, Martin T. Meditation and the Concept of Insight in Kamalaśīla's Bhāvanākramas. PhD diss., McGill University, 2002.
2. "Some Notes on Kamalaśīla's Understanding of Insight Considered as the Discernment of Reality (bhūta-pratyavekṣā)." Buddhist Studies Review, vol. 25, no. 2, 2008, pp. 194–209.
3. "Two Concepts of Meditation and Three Kinds of Wisdom in Kamalasila's Bhavanakramas: A Problem of Translation." Buddhist Studies Review, vol. 23, no. 1, 2006, pp. 71–92.
4. Asaṅga. A Compendium of the Mahāyāna: Asaṇga's Mahāyānasamgraha and Its Indian and Tibetan Commentaries. Shambhala, 2019.
5. Brunnhölzl, Karl. When the Clouds Part: The Uttaratantra and Its Meditative Tradition as a Bridge between Sutra and Tantra. Shambhala Publications, 2015, p. 118.
6. Conze, Edward. Further Buddhist Studies: Selected Essays. Bruno Cassirer, 1975, p. 117.
7. D'Amato, M., and V. Maitreyanātha. Maitreya's Distinguishing the Middle from the Extremes (Madhyāntavibhāga) along with Vasubandhu's Commentary (Madhyāntavibhāga-bhāṣya): A Study and Annotated Translation. Columbia University Press, 2012.
8. Delhey, Martin. The Yogācārabhūmi Corpus. University of Hamburg, 2013.
9. Dreyfus, Georges B. J. Recognizing Reality: Dharmakirti's Philosophy and Its Tibetan Interpretations. State University of New York Press, 1997, pp. 15–19.
10. Frauwallner, E. "Landmarks in the History of Indian Logic." Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens und Archiv für indische Philosophie, vol. 5, 1961, pp. 125–148.
11. Kochumuttom, Thomas A. A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogacarin. Motilal Banarsidass, 1999.
12. Kragh, U. T., editor. The Foundation for Yoga Practitioners: The Buddhist Yogācārabhūmi Treatise and Its Adaptation in India, East Asia, and Tibet. Vol. 1, Harvard University, Department of South Asian Studies, 2013.
13. Lusthaus, Dan. Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogacara Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-shih Lun. Routledge, 2014, pp. 8–10.
14. "What is and Isn't Yogācāra." Yogācāra Buddhism Research Association, 2018.
15. Namdol, Gyaltsen. Bhāvanākramaḥ of Ācārya Kamalaśīla (Tibetan Version, Sanskrit Restoration and Hindi Translation). Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1997.
16. Schmid, Karl T. "Kamalaśīla's Theory of Vipaśyanā: An Exposition and Philosophical Defense." PhD diss., Emory University, 2020.
17. Schmithausen, L. Ālayavijñāna: On the Origin and the Early Development of a Central Concept of Yogācāra Philosophy. The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1987.
18. On the Problem of the External World in the Ch'eng wei shih lun. The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 2005.
19. "Aspects of Spiritual Practice in Early Yogācāra." Journal of the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies, vol. 11, 2007, pp. 212–244.
20. The Genesis of Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda: Responses and Reactions. International Institute for Buddhist Studies of the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies, 2014.
21. Siderits, Mark. Buddhism As Philosophy. Hackett Publishing Company, 2021, p. 146.
22. Taniguchi, Fujio. "Quotations from the First Bhāvanākrama of Kamalaśīla Found in Some Indian Texts." Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 5th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies 1989, edited by Ihara Shoren et al., Naritasan Shinshoji, 1992, pp. 303–307.
23. The Dalai Lama. Stages of Meditation. Translated by Ven. Geshe Lobsang Jorhen, Losang Choephel Ganchenpa, and Jeremy Russell, Snow Lion Publications, 2001.
24. Trivedi, Saam. "Idealism and Yogacara Buddhism." Asian Philosophy, vol. 15, no. 3, 2005, pp. 231–246.
25. Tucci, Giuseppe. Minor Buddhist Texts, Part I and II: First Bhāvanākrama of Kamalaśīla. Rinsen Book Co., 1958, p. 8.
26. Minor Buddhist Texts, Part III: Third Bhāvanākrama. Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1971.
27. Williams, Paul. Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations. Routledge, 1989, p. 103.