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**A Comparative Study on the Concept of
Sukhāvatībhūmi in Sukhāvativyūha Sūtra**

තේපාලයේ සංකීව්ව හිමි

ලියාපදිංචි අංකය: HD/Ph.D./2000/615

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Abstract

This dissertation consists of four chapters.

1. A special study on Sukhāvātīvyūha Sūtra.
2. A comparative study on Sukhāvātī-Bhūmi and the Nibbanic concept in Theravāda tradition.
3. A comparative study on Sukhāvātī-Bhūmi and the concept of the final goal of Mādhyamika sect or Nihilism.
4. Summary and conclusion

The first chapter examines the background that led to the emergence of "Sukhāvātībhūmi" (the land of bliss) and "Amitābha Buddha" concepts. Then it discusses the summaries of Mahāsukhāvātī (Larger Sukhāvātī), Cūlasukhāvātī (Smaller Sukhāvātī) and Amitāyur-dhyāna (meditation on Amitāyur) Sūtras which are the main sources of Sukhāvātī tradition and their editions, commentaries, Chinese and Tibetan translations. Thereafter, it compares larger and smaller Sukhāvātīvyūhas; discusses the history of Sukhāvātī sects that prevailed in China and Japan; includes information of pure and impure worlds, the land of bliss as described in the Sukhāvātīvyūhas, critical analysis of the land of bliss, the concepts of devotion and rebirth as depicted in the Sukhāvātīvyūhas and the land of bliss mentioned as the ultimate goal in other Mahāyāna Sūtras beside the Sukhāvātīvyūhas. Here a special attention is given to the description of the land of bliss. Also I stress upon its modern interpretations as the metaphorical depiction of the mental development by Suzuki (a Japanese scholar) and master Hui- Neng (the sixth patriarch of Chinese Chan sect).

The second chapter especially discusses Nibbanic concept of Theravāda Pāli tradition besides dealing with the concept of Nibbāna (emancipation) in Mahāyāna tradition in India and other sects connected to it. Besides, this chapter contains the theories of various scholars on Nibbāna and the path leading to Nibbāna. Moreover, it also compares the concepts of 'the land of bliss' and 'Nibbāna' and the concepts on paths leading to Nibbāna as depicted in these two traditions. Here it is asserted that being born in the land of bliss is similar to acquiring the mental development through Anāgāmi fruition, the third stage on the way to Nibbāna as described in Theravāda.

First part of the third chapter deals with the main points of Mādhyamika philosophy and then it is compared with the concept of the final goal as described in Sukhāvātī tradition. Accordingly, the chapter comprises of the critical discussions on Nāgārjuna (the founder of Mādhyamika school), the history of this tradition that prevailed in India, China, Tibet, Japan and Korea, the method used by Nāgārjuna to express the theory of emptiness, Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika interpretations of Mādhyamika, the modern interpretations of these two modes, logical form of *catuṣkoṭi*, the religious and philosophical meaning of emptiness, the forms of emptiness, the idea of emptiness in Yogācāra school, the emptiness in Mādhyamika that prevailed in China and Japan. The emptiness, discussed here is understood according to the theory of Paṭiccasamutpāda (the theory of dependent arising) and it needs to be realized through the wisdom (Prajñā) and realizing emptiness is as attaining Nibbāna in Mādhyamika tradition.

The final chapter contains the summaries of each chapters and their conclusions arrived with a thorough analysis. Last but not least, it also compares all concepts of the ultimate goal as depicted in these three traditions.