

The Three-Natures Theory (*Tri-svabhāva*) of *Yogācāra* from the Early Buddhist and *Madhyamaka* Philosophy

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Abstract

Tri-svabhāva, a Sanskrit term, rendered as ‘three natures’, is the notion brought forth by the *Yogācāra* school as a definition for the characteristic patterns of all things, namely, ‘conceptualized nature’ (*Parikalpita-svabhāva*), ‘other-dependent nature’ (*Paratantra-svabhāva*) and ‘consummated nature’ (*Pariniṣpanna-svabhāva*). Establishing the doctrine of ‘three natures’ is mentioned to be the main purpose of the *Sandhinirmocana-sūtra*, a *Mahāyāna* sūtra belonging to 2nd Century C. E., where the first evidence of *Yogācāra* ideas is found. Although the theory was introduced by the *Yogācāra* school, its root can be traced back to Early Buddhism, and the perceptibly developed throughout the *Theravāda* and *Madhyamaka* philosophies in terms of the double truths: the conventional truth and the ultimate truth. In this paper, the aim is not to examine the origin and development of the theory, but an attempt is made to see the theory of three natures on a comparative basis with Early Buddhism and the *Madhyamaka* school. Upon an investigation into each nature, we will observe how this concept may have originated in early Pali *nikāyas* representing the Early Buddhism, and in *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* of *Madhyamaka* school.

Keywords: *Three-Natures Theory, Early Buddhism, Conventional Truth, Ultimate Truth, Madhyamaka School*

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