**ICPR Workshop on “Buddhist Text – *Vigraha Vyavartani*”**

**(8th to 15th October 2018; Department of Philosophy, NEHU, Shillong)**

**Invitation for Participation**

The Department of Philosophy, NEHU, Shillong, will organize a seven days ICPR Workshop on “Buddhist Text - Vigrahavyavartini from **8th to 15th October 2018**. The Department invites participation from interested scholars. Application proforma can be downloaded from the link given below, which is to be duly filled and sent to the following email address: ausharma17@gmail.com. Last date for application is **17th of September, 2018**. Kindly note that seats are limited.

Concept Note:

The Vigrahavyāvartanīis a Buddhist text attributed to the 2nd century Indian Buddhist philosopher,Nāgārjuna. The subject of the text is the quelling of doubts and criticisms that come as a response to the thesis of śūnyatā, translated as doctrine of emptiness, nothingness, openness amongst others. Though there is a thematic unity between this text and Nāgārjuna’s magnum opus *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā,* the scope, purpose and style are evidently different. In *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*the purpose is mainly exposition of the thesis and its relation to other doctrinal and philosophical concerns of Buddhism, whereas in Vigrahavyāvartanī the style is dialogical, and the purpose a defense of the thesis in the light of criticisms. This difference, and Nāgārjuna’s treatment of topics related to epistemology and philosophy which he does not discuss much elsewhere afford a different set of scholarly interest in favour of Vigrahavyāvartanī*.*

There are four important themes in Nāgārjuna’s *Vigrahavyāvartanī*: (1) All things are devoid of own-being (svabhāvaśūnya); (2) unqualified rejection of all the ‘accredited’ means of knowledge (pramāṇa); (3) it has no (philosophic) view/proposition (pratijñā) of its own to advance or establish and yet (4) in the last verse it draws the paradoxical conclusion, “For whom emptiness prevails, all things prevail; nothing prevails for whom emptiness does not prevail.”

The theme of is śūnyatā, is one of the logical explicationsof the doctrine of pratītyasamutpāda, the seeing of which is identified with the seeing of dharma itself.An immediate reaction that the thesis suggests is the perennial philosophical concern regarding self-reflexivity. If the thesis says that everything is empty, then self-reflexively, the thesis is also empty. This raises problems regarding the ontological as well as the epistemological status of the central thesis of Nāgārjuna. Nāgārjuna embraces one horn of the dilemma, saying that the thesis is empty but not non-existent which the detractors try to deduce. Nāgārjunaasserts its existence clarifying that emptiness and existence are not different but presupposes one another. For, existence is causal efficacy; the existence and truth of śūnyatā liberates.

Notwithstanding the clarifications of Nāgārjuna, questions still remain as to how we understand his, atleast apparent, paradoxical statements. To suggest that these statements are at “the limits of thought” engenders a further enigma as to why he engages in discourseswhich has acceptable structure and logic, which falls within the domains of communicability.Further questions as to the conditioning of śūnyatā itself, its relation to dukkha and nirvāṇaoffer revisits in this workshop on Vigrahavyāvartanī*.*

The following topics may guide the structure of the workshop.

(1) Emptiness

(2) Rejection of all means of knowledge and contradiction

(3) Claim of no view/proposition

(4) Relation with *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*

(5) Different interpretations of the *Vigrahavyāvartanī*

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Note: TA will be paid as per ICPR guidelines.