

**THE DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES  
Harvard University**

**THE SENIOR HONORS THESIS**

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**I. Introduction**

The thesis is an essay that affords the student in this concentration an opportunity to deal in a thorough way with a topic in the field of South Asian studies that is significant and of particular interest to him or her. In selecting a topic students should keep in mind both of these criteria and also the fact that the paper should be an example of what the word *essay* means: a careful effort to develop and test the writer's analytical and interpretative powers. The honors thesis is not to be a small-scale Ph.D. dissertation. In other words, a thorough command of the topic is not expected, but rather a sustained critical reflection on an issue or text.

The subject matter of the theses will naturally vary widely, by virtue of the nature of the field of specialization. In every case, the subject should be specific enough to allow for depth of treatment. At the same time, however, it should not be so narrowly and technically construed as to allow the writer to lose sight of its relations to broader issues in the study of South Asian studies. Approval of the topic will be based upon its cogency and its suitability as subject matter for a senior honors thesis in the field of South Asian Studies.

All concentrators are expected to designate the area or the general topic of the thesis in May of their Junior year. A prospectus approved and signed by the senior thesis advisor is due by the middle of October of the Senior year. Primary concentrators will also submit a summary of the thesis, including a detailed chapter outline in mid-November and a draft of one chapter of the thesis in mid-December in order to receive a "Satisfactory" for South Asian Studies 99r. A draft of a second chapter is due during the third week of the second semester. The completed thesis is due (the beginning of spring break?) of the Senior Year. 5 p.m. is the deadline on each of these dates for submission of the appropriate material in the offices of the Department of South Asian Studies.

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**II. Calendar of Deadlines and Events for 2019-2020**

**October 4, by 5 p.m.:**

A 1-2 page prospectus of the thesis, approved and signed by the thesis advisor, along with a bibliography and working title.

**November 8, by 5 p.m.:**

A 6-page summary of the thesis, including preliminary, yet detailed overviews or outlines of each chapter; OR a 6-8 page draft of some portion of the thesis.

**December 6, by 5 p.m.:**

A 12-15 page draft of one chapter of the thesis, along with the latest title.

**January 31, by 5 p.m.:**

A 12-15 page draft of a second chapter of the thesis, along with the latest title.

**March 6, by 5 p.m.:**

Completed thesis. Thesis length: 50-80 pages (based on double-spaced 12-point type). This is equivalent to approximately 12,500-25,500 words.

**March 31, by 5 p.m.:**

Three bound copies of the thesis.

*Please note: These dates apply for June degree candidates only.*

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**III. Prospectus Guidelines**

Due 5:00 p.m., October 4, 2019

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines a prospectus as “something (as a statement or situation) that forecasts the course or nature of something not yet existent or developed.” As you begin to draft your prospectus, keep in mind that the purpose of this document is to provide yourself and your advisors with a statement of your intentions for your thesis. This is a kind of road-map or blueprint for your project. A prospectus is, by definition, a forecasting tool for a work in progress—it is neither final nor immutable.

Your senior thesis prospectus should include the following elements:

1. A working thesis title
2. A 1-2 page statement of the thesis topic, argument and methodology
3. A preliminary bibliography of 2-3 pages
4. A signature of approval by your thesis advisor

Your prospectus should introduce the topic of your thesis and explain why the subject you have chosen is significant to you. A helpful way to begin thinking about your thesis, as well as to begin your thesis prospectus, is to formulate a question with which you plan to grapple in your thesis. Instead of beginning: “My thesis will examine the vrata tradition in India and its significance for Hindu women,” try beginning: “What are vrata rites? What role do they play in the Hindu religious tradition? What significance do they have for Hindu women in particular?”

Formulating your topic as a question, or series of questions also sets you up to discuss how you propose to go about researching and answering these queries. Although it is likely that you do not have a fully formulated thesis statement at this stage of the process, you should indicate how you intend to undertake the research that will help you to make an argument about the issues you have raised. What methodologies or approaches will you take in your research? Will your project be based upon close, textual analysis? Will you be conducting ethnographic interviews? Will you be observing rituals? Comparing various historical phenomena? These are the kinds of questions you will want to ask yourself as you draft your prospectus.

The prospectus should also indicate how your thesis topic and the questions it generates relate to broader issues in the study of South Asian Studies. What kind of contribution to the field of South Asian Studies do you hope to make? What conversations within the diverse field of South Asian Studies will your project participate in? What kind of voice do you want to speak in? What kind of an argument do you hope to make—analytical? theological? ethical? historical? sociological? Please remember that these categories are only suggestions, and certainly not exhaustive or mutually exclusive.

Additional questions that you may find helpful as you formulate your prospectus include:

Are you beginning with a question that is unresolved? What puzzles you? What do you want to find out?

Do you care about the question? Are you clear about what you are asking? What observations have led you to ask this question? What hunches do you have about possible answers?

Is the topic interesting? What interests you about it? Can it be made interesting to others?

Can the topic be researched? How can it be researched? What kinds of information are needed to answer the questions posed?

Does the topic present problems that can be explored or solved with analysis? Does it provide you with an opportunity to do some creative or original thinking?

Examples of prospectuses from previous years may be found at the back of this booklet.

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**IV. Preliminary Outline Guidelines**

Due 5:00 p.m., November 8, 2019

This assignment differs from the thesis prospectus in several ways. First, it is assumed that you have undertaken a significant amount of research since writing the prospectus. Perhaps your research has led you to question the assumptions you stated in your prospectus, or even to modify your argument entirely. This assignment provides you with an opportunity to begin to think through (in written form) how you will use the data you are collecting in your research to support, and perhaps to reformulate, the argument of your thesis. Second, this assignment should include preliminary, yet detailed overviews or outlines of each chapter that you envision. The goal of this requirement is to help you to begin the process of organizing your research in a coherent manner.

You may structure this 6-page assignment in the format that seems most suitable to you. You may wish to submit an alpha-numeric outline; or, you may choose to submit a narrative overview; or, you may submit a graphically-structured flow chart! In any case, your submission must include detailed, thoughtful content that helps you and your advisors to begin to envision the thesis in its final form. Please pay close attention, however, to the word “preliminary.” While the purpose of this assignment is to encourage you to begin thinking systematically about your data and your argument, we do not expect or require that the final draft of your thesis conform to this preliminary outline.

Although you are highly encouraged to try to organize your initial thoughts in outline form, we recognize that some students do not find outlines to be useful writing tools. Therefore you may submit, if you prefer, a 6 to 8 page draft of some portion of your thesis. If you choose this option, the draft you submit must present a coherent, focused, and structured argument that is supported by appropriate citations and evidence. Since the piece you submit will not represent an entire chapter, please indicate how it fits into your overall argument as you currently envision it. Additionally, please be aware that if you choose this option, you may not count this submission towards the page-requirement for later chapter-draft submissions. In other words, if you choose to build upon the 6 to 8 pages you submit in November and include them in a future chapter-draft, you will need to compose an additional 12-15 pages in order to meet the requirement for that submission. (Example: if you turn in 8 pages in November, and include these same 8 pages in your first chapter draft, due December 11, your December submission will need to be at least 20 pages in length.)

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**V. Chapter Guidelines**

First Chapter Draft due 5:00 p.m., December 6, 2019  
Second Chapter Draft due 5:00 p.m., January 31, 2020

Each chapter draft must present a coherent, focused, and structured argument that is supported by appropriate citations and analysis. Your submissions should represent carefully considered and researched drafts of the more polished arguments that you will produce in the final thesis. Free-writing, though very helpful in the process of producing these assignments, is not appropriate in this context.

If you do not envision your submission as a self-contained chapter, please preface your draft with a description of how the piece fits into your overall argument as you currently envision it and what possible structures you are considering for that overall argument.

Please remember, however, that a *draft* is, by definition, preliminary. We do not expect these submissions to be in their final form, and assume that you will revise your work throughout the thesis-writing process. Additionally, these drafts need not follow a rigid chapter-by-chapter progression. For example, you may choose to submit a draft of what will ultimately become your third chapter at the first deadline.

Each chapter draft should be roughly 12-15 pages, although you may submit longer drafts if you desire.

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**VI. Content and Style Guidelines**

Format           The thesis has three parts: *preliminaries*, *text*, and *back matter*. The *title page*, a *table of contents*, and a very brief *preface* (or simply *acknowledgments*) are ordinarily the only necessary *preliminaries*. The *text* is the thesis itself. The *back matter* comprises: (1) the *bibliography*, which is always necessary; and (2) *appendices* (including *glossaries*, *charts*, *indices*, *maps*, etc.) when they are needed. The bibliography may take one of several appropriate forms, but it should always include full bibliographic information on every important source used in the preparation of the thesis. Whenever you make use of a book or other source—not simply when quoting directly from a text—you should include it in the bibliography.

Style            Good theses not only present illuminating and original arguments, they do so in lucid language and polished prose. Attention to the quality of your prose style should not be reserved for the final stages of editing the thesis; be sure to take into account issues of style as you are drafting and revising your essay, as well. Since you are devoting the better part of a year to examining and writing about a specific area of interest, you owe it to yourself to employ language that reflects your understanding of and enthusiasm for your topic. Please recognize, however, that you are addressing an audience that may not share your degree of expertise on your topic; be careful to avoid jargon and to define clearly any technical terms that you feel are crucial to your argument.

In the final stages of editing, be particularly attuned to misspellings, typographical and grammatical errors, and insufficient or inaccurate documentation. Errors of this kind, while they do not necessarily reflect the amount of work that has gone into the thesis, will distract your reader from the substance of your argument and suggest that the argument is as sloppy as the prose in which it is conveyed.

Style  
Manuals:       Several publications offer help in matters of form and style. With regard to the details of style and presentation of the thesis, one approved manual should be chosen and used consistently in determining the format of citations, bibliography, and other stylistic elements. *The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk, Jr., and E. B. White (4th edition, 2000) is a useful starting point. *The Chicago Manual of Style* is the most common citation and style guide in publications concerning religion. Unless another style is preferred in your sub-field, it should serve as the basic reference for your citation system and basic questions of form. A shorter work based on the Chicago manual and available in paperback is *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, by Kate L. Turabian. Again, whatever style you choose to employ, use it consistently throughout the thesis.

Notes and Citations

A footnote or endnote supplies the reader with a reference to the source(s) of factual information, specific ideas, or direct quotations used in the text of the thesis. A note may also provide supplemental information that is relevant but tangential to your argument. The tendency of many writers is to use the first kind of note too sparingly, and the latter kind too much. The rule for the former is simple: any passage or idea that is not your own should be credited to its source. To do otherwise is to plagiarize. As to the use of notes for supplemental information, the discretion of the writer must suffice. Note, however, that the value of a piece of scholarship is not judged by the length and abundance of its notes. And recall that discursive endnotes are difficult to follow while reading the main text. If particular information is necessary to the argument, incorporate it into the main text. For guidelines on notation, see the manuals described above.

Direct Quotation

Direct citations from other sources must be treated with the utmost care and precision. To misquote someone else is a serious fault in any kind of writing. Every direct quotation must be reproduced exactly as it stands in the original. Except where integration of a quotation in your own sentence structure requires a change of type-case or end punctuation, the capitalization and punctuation in the quoted passage must be carefully reproduced. Italics in the original must be retained in your quotation. When using ellipsis to eliminate unneeded words or phrases from a quoted passage, be sure not to change or misrepresent the original author's intention and meaning. Any addition to a quoted passage must be enclosed in brackets (not parentheses).

Foreign Words and Phrases

Foreign words and phrases should be underlined or italicized. Passages in foreign languages should be given in English translation when used in the text. If the translation is not your own, the translator must be acknowledged. When it is important to do so, the text in its original language and wording should be given in a note either in transliteration or in the appropriate script.

Illustrations and Photographs

Illustrations in a thesis may include graphs, charts, maps, line drawings, or photographs. These illustrations are normally placed on separate pages, with their legend typed either beneath the figure or on the front or back of the preceding page. Pages of illustrations and figures should be interleaved with the text of the thesis. If illustrations, as in the case of photographs, need to be mounted on the page, a good quality commercial paste or dry-mounting adhesive should be used. Like citations from other sources, illustrations must be credited to the appropriate sources.

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**VII. Format and Submission Guidelines**

- Length      The minimum length is 12,500 words (50 pages in double-spaced, 12 point type). The maximum length is 25,500 words (80 pages in double-spaced, 12 point type). Theses should be produced on a laser printer or an inkjet printer with a print quality of at least 600 dpi (i.e., letter-quality). The font used should produce between 9 and 12 characters per inch. These limits refer to the preliminaries and main text of the thesis, excluding endnotes and back matter such as appendices and bibliography. Within these limits, the length of the thesis should be determined by the demands of the particular topic. No thesis may fall outside of these limits without prior written permission from the Director of Undergraduate Studies.
- Copies      Three unbound laser printed copies on 8 1/2 inch by 11 inch paper are required by 5 pm, March 6, 2020.  
For final submission, by March 31, 5 pm, the following copies are required:  
1) One unbound laser-printed copy on 20 lb. (or higher), acid-neutral, 25% rag (or higher), non-corrasable bond paper (the University Archives recommends Howard Permalife or Crane's Thesis Paper). All theses that receive grades of *magna* or *summa* will be placed in the University Archives.  
2) One laser printed copy for the Department of South Asian Studies, bound in a spring binder or a clamp binder (no ring binders). Paper and binders are available at the Coop, Bob Slate Stationers, and Staples. The title of the thesis and name of the author should appear on a label firmly fixed to the front cover and the spine of the binder (adhesive labels are preferable).  
3) One soft copy sent by email to the Department of South Asian Studies: southasianstudies@fas.harvard.edu  
If the thesis is to be entered in competition for a prize, additional copies should be prepared.
- Format      The thesis should be printed on one side of the page, double-spaced (except for indented quotation and foot- or endnotes) with margins of 1 inch at the top, bottom, and on the right hand side, and 1 1/2 inch on the left hand side. Notes should be placed either at the bottom of the page (footnotes) or altogether at the end of the essay (endnotes). All pages should be numbered: preliminary matter with Roman numerals, and the remainder of the thesis, beginning with the first page of the Introduction and continuing to the last page of the bibliography, with Arabic numerals. The title page should conform exactly to the following model:

[TITLE]

A Thesis Presented

By

[Full name, including middle name, of author]

To

The Department of South Asian Studies

in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

[Harvard University]

[month and year of submission of the completed thesis]

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**VIII. Evaluation of the Thesis**

Thesis Evaluation Committee The thesis evaluation committee consists of the thesis readers. There are usually three readers of the thesis: the faculty thesis advisor, a scholar not directly involved in the student's sub-discipline, and a faculty member with a special interest in the subject matter of the thesis. The graduate student thesis advisor may also serve a third reader for the thesis. Seniors are encouraged to suggest possible readers for their theses. The final choice of readers, however, is subject to approval by the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

Evaluation Theses will be read and commented on by faculty members, as well as by the graduate student advisor if she or he is serving as a reader. Readers' comments will be made available to the student prior to the oral examination. Theses will be graded on a scale of *cum laude* (minus or plus), *magna cum laude* (minus or plus), and *summa cum laude* (minus). The range from *summa cum laude* to *cum laude* minus corresponds to the letter grade range of A plus to B minus (B minus being the lowest honors grade).

A *summa* essay (*summa*, *summa* minus) is equivalent to an A plus. It should make a significant contribution to knowledge; whether it presents successful research on a new or little studied problem, or provides an original and perceptive reassessment of familiar questions, it should be a contribution that a scholar in the field would feel compelled to cite in his or her own work. While a *summa* thesis does not necessarily have to be in publishable form in its current state, it should show a thorough command of the literature on the subject, rely on appropriate primary sources, be well-written, provide a concise, well-organized argument, and offer first-rate creative thinking with respect to the problem(s) it addresses. A *summa* essay is expected to include work with texts in the original languages.

A *magna*-range essay (*magna* plus, *magna*, *magna* minus) is equivalent to an A or A minus. It is an excellent piece of undergraduate work, showing original research, strong writing skills, a well-crafted argument, incisive and creative thinking, and a good grasp of the issues at stake. A *magna* essay is expected to include work with texts in the original languages.

A *cum*-range essay is equivalent to a B (*cum* plus = B plus, *cum* = B, *cum* minus = B minus). A *cum*-range thesis, considered worthy of "honor," must show serious thought and effort.

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**XI. Advising Resources**

Senior  
Thesis  
Advisors

By the end of the junior year, a student should have a general topic for the senior thesis, and some idea of who might best guide him or her in the research and writing of the thesis. We advise students to speak with possible thesis advisors near the end of their junior year and, if possible, to line up a thesis advisor for the senior year. The Director of Undergraduate Studies will be glad to advise students regarding possible thesis advisors. Senior thesis advisors should normally be members of the Harvard faculty or advanced graduate students. We strongly recommend that students find both a graduate student advisor and a faculty advisor.

During the senior year, students are expected to meet at least once every two weeks with their thesis advisor(s) to discuss work-in-progress. In general, students meet with their graduate student advisors weekly, and their faculty advisors approximately monthly. The faculty advisor often assumes the role of “expert in the field,” helping the student to determine how his or her thesis contributes to current scholarship and identifying relevant secondary literature with which the student ought to be familiar. The graduate student advisor often serves as a conversation partner who helps the student to focus and communicate her or his arguments through weekly dialogue and through commenting on written drafts.

Senior  
Tutorial:  
South  
Asian  
Studies 99r

The Senior Tutorial is a year-long tutorial, graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory, which culminates in the completion and submission of the senior honors thesis. In order to receive a “satisfactory” in South Asian Studies 99r for the fall term, a student must submit a thesis prospectus, a preliminary outline or a 6-8 page draft of some portion of the thesis, as well as one chapter of the senior thesis to the Director of Undergraduate Studies by the stipulated due dates. Submission and acceptance of the senior thesis in April fulfills the South Asian Studies 99r requirement for the spring term.

Other  
Professors

Students may also find it helpful to discuss their thesis topics and progress with other professors in related fields of study. Although Harvard faculty are quite busy, undergraduate education is the core of the activity of the University. Don’t hesitate to make an appointment with a faculty member to discuss your ideas or to ask for reading recommendations.

D.U.S.

Richard Delacy, 617-496-4749, Director of Undergraduate Studies, is willing to discuss any general questions or problems related to the creation of a senior thesis.

Libraries You may need to reacquaint yourself with the many Harvard Libraries, their holdings, their layout, and their personnel. The obvious choices are Widener and Lamont.

The Writing Center The Writing Center offers individual consultations to senior thesis writers on an occasional or regular basis. The Writing Center advisors address the research and (especially) writing needs of thesis writers. Although they are not experts in your specific field, they offer invaluable advice on writing strategies. Check out their website: [writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/](http://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/), or contact them directly: [writingcenter@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:writingcenter@fas.harvard.edu).

Bureau of Study Counsel The Bureau of Study Counsel serves to support Harvard students in their learning, growth, and development. The Bureau offers resources to help you hone your academic skills and approaches, make challenging choices, develop a sense of voice and authority in your scholarship, cultivate healthy relationships, discover what leaves you feeling enlivened and engaged, and make meaning of your work and your life. Among the many concerns students bring to the Bureau are time management, procrastination, exam anxiety, concentration, attention, relationships with others, productivity, motivation, and making choices. In particular, the Bureau offers workshops and discussion groups, individual counseling and consultation, peer tutoring and ESL peer consultation, the Harvard Course in Reading and Study Strategies, and self-help materials available in the Cranium Corner of the Bureau's waiting room and online. To make an appointment, call 617-495-2581. To find a full listing of the Bureau's workshops and groups, brief bios of the Bureau counselors, and other information about the Bureau's offerings, visit the Bureau's website at [bsc.harvard.edu](http://bsc.harvard.edu).

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X. Sample Prospectus and Bibliography

Allison Aitken

A.B. Thesis Prospectus: South Asian Studies and the Comparative Study of Religion

**Reflections on Reality: Śrīgupta in the Intellectual History of Madhyamaka**

What is the nature of reality? Why do we experience suffering? For many Buddhists, these two fundamental questions are intimately connected. To ask one is to implicate the other, since from a Buddhist perspective, it is the mistaken understanding of the nature of reality that binds all living creatures to a perpetual cycle of suffering. Consequently, it is correctly realizing the nature of reality that liberates one from suffering. The quest for enlightenment is, then, the quest to eliminate suffering. Given the inextricable link between Buddhist philosophy and soteriology, the importance of providing convincing arguments to prove the correct view of reality cannot be overstated.

What is this correct view? According to the Madhyamaka Buddhist text tradition, the nature of reality is explained through the emptiness (*Skt.*: *śūnyatā*) of essence (*svabhāva*), meaning that in the final analysis, all internal and external phenomena—including the self—are wholly bereft of any intrinsic nature, which is what many non-Buddhists claim makes a thing what it is. One of the most important and frequently utilized arguments for emptiness throughout the history of Madhyamaka Buddhism is known as the Neither One Nor Many Argument (*Skt.*: *ekānekasvabhāvarahitahetu*, *Tib.*: *gcig du bral gyi gtan tshigs*). This argument aims to demonstrate that things can have neither a single essence nor a multiple essence. With no third option, an essence is thereby shown not to exist. The conclusion that things are empty of essence became a central doctrine of Madhyamaka Buddhism. The origin of this particular argument's use to *this* doctrinal end can be traced to the work of the as yet under-studied seventh century Indian Buddhist scholar Śrīgupta, entitled *Exposition on Entering Reality* (*Skt.*: *Tattvāvataravṛtti*, *Tib.*: *De kho na la 'jug pa'i 'grel pa*).<sup>1</sup> In this text, Śrīgupta makes innovative contributions to the closely linked doctrines of the emptiness of essence and the Madhyamaka theory of the two truths (*satyadvaya*), which were highly influential in both Buddhist India and Tibet.

Given the impact of this philosophical pioneer, it is striking how little modern scholarly attention Śrīgupta has received, and in my thesis I aim to illuminate his contributions to the Madhyamaka Buddhist tradition. Since his *Exposition on Entering Reality*, now extant only in Tibetan though originally composed in Sanskrit, has not yet been translated into English, as a component of this thesis I plan to produce an annotated translation of this text so that this significant work may be made more easily accessible. Furthermore, I intend to do more than document the first instance of his important argument, but rather I hope to make it the center of a

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<sup>1</sup> Although there is scant biographical information available on Śrīgupta, due to his position within lineage lists, Ruegg has tentatively placed him in the seventh century (1981: 67).

contextualized study. More specifically, I will seek to understand not only Śrīgupta’s influences, but also to appreciate the impact of his philosophical contributions within the larger temporal and spatial picture of the Buddhist world.

The first chapter of my thesis will be devoted to an exploration of the history of ideas leading up to and influencing Śrīgupta’s innovative work. Looking to the prehistory of Śrīgupta’s text reveals that he did not invent the Neither One Nor Many Argument for the emptiness of essence in isolation. Rather, he drew on the vibrant intellectual community in contemporary Buddhist India as well as on the works of previous scholars, weaving together ideas and logical techniques from his Mādhyamika predecessors as well as from members of the rival text tradition, Yogācāra. In fact, he is the earliest scholar to be classified as a Yogācāra Mādhyamika by later Tibetan doxographers who recognized his reliance on thinkers of both traditions.<sup>2</sup> Vasubandhu (fourth century C.E.), in particular is renowned for his use of the Neither One Nor Many Argument in his Yogācāra text, *Twenty Verses (Viṃśatikā)*, and may be responsible for its formulation as such. His version of the argument is distinct from Śrīgupta’s, however, since he employs it to a different doctrinal end, seeking to disprove non-mental objects, rather than essence.<sup>3</sup> The founder of the Madhyamaka text tradition, Nāgārjuna (second century C.E.), also appeals the notion of one or many to argue against an essence of causal processes in his *Seventy Verses on Emptiness (Śūnyatāsaptati)*. His formulation of the argument, however, is dissimilar to that used by Vasubandhu and taken up later by Śrīgupta, being founded on the relativity of the concepts of one and many.<sup>4</sup> Earlier versions of this argument including these two will be examined as a component of this thesis in order to gain an understanding of the historical context of ideas out of which Śrīgupta’s argument developed.

As mentioned above, Śrīgupta made important contributions not only through his Neither One Nor Many Argument, but also to the Madhyamaka theory of the two truths (*satyadvaya*). According to this theory, all existing things are understood to be either conventionally real (*saṃvṛtīsatya*) or ultimately real (*paramārthasatya*). The prehistory of this component of Śrīgupta’s work also calls for investigation. For example, it is in Śrīgupta’s *Exposition on Entering Reality* where one finds the first instance of the three-fold definition of conventional reality later propagated widely in the Madhyamaka tradition.<sup>5</sup> Śrīgupta’s definition carries through the most basic definition of conventional reality promoted by Nāgārjuna, stating that

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<sup>2</sup> In his *History of Buddhism (Chos 'byung gsung rab rin po che'i gter mdzod)*, Bu ston rin chen grub (1290-1364) identifies Śrīgupta as a Yogācāra-Mādhyamika (Ruegg 1981: 67). Others, such as ‘Jam mgon Kong sprul blo gros mtha’ yas (1813-1899), classified him as a Svātantrika-Mādhyamika in the tradition of Bhāviveka (Kong sprul 2007: 50). The Tibetan classification system and Śrīgupta’s contended place within it also warrants attention as a part of this project of investigating the impact of Śrīgupta’s philosophical innovations in Tibet.

<sup>3</sup> Dharmakīrti, presumably influenced by Vasubandhu, also employs the neither one nor many argument in his *Commentary on Valid Cognition (Pramāṇavarttika)*. His version of this argument also demands comparative analysis since it seems that Śrīgupta drew on the work of Dharmakīrti in other ways which will also be explored. According to the much later Tibetan scholar Tāranātha (1575–1634), Dharmakīrti and Śrīgupta were contemporaries (Ruegg 1981: 67)

<sup>4</sup> Nāgārjuna’s student Āryadeva employs an argument from verses 212 to 215 of his treatise *Four Hundred Stanzas (Catuḥśataka)* which deconstructs partless particles in a way similar to and preceding Vasubandhu, and requires further analysis. Additionally, the analysis engaged in by Candrakīrti and later by Śāntideva investigating whether the self is one with or separate from its parts may be classified as a subcategory of the “neither one nor many” argument, but it is different than the version examined here.

<sup>5</sup> This definition reappears in the work of Śrīgupta’s student, Jñānagarbha, and according to Eckel, also in that of Śāntarakṣita (2008: 25). Śāntarakṣita’s description of conventional reality, however, begs comparative analysis, as it seems that his presentation in his *Commentary on the Ornament of the Middle Way (Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti)* was more deeply influenced by Yogācāra notions (Blumenthal 2008).

whatever is conventionally real is dependently arisen. Śrīgupta adds two additional criteria that, M. D. Eckel suggests, resulted from the influence of possible contemporaries, Candrakīrti (seventh century) and Dharmakīrti (seventh century) (2008:25). Firstly, Śrīgupta adds the qualification that something which is conventionally real satisfies when not analyzed (*avicāramaṇīya* or *avicāramanohara*), meaning that the object meets common sense notions of what is existent without any deeper investigation. Eckel conjectures that this added criterion is a response to the first chapter of *Clear Words (Prasannapadā)* of Candrakīrti in which he critiques Bhāviveka, the putative teacher of Śrīgupta (*ibid.*).<sup>6</sup> Secondly, Śrīgupta takes up the criterion of causal efficacy (*arthakriyāsamārtha*), from Dharmakīrti. While for Dharmakīrti, causal efficacy is the exclusive mark for things to be deemed ultimately real, for Śrīgupta and subsequent Mādhyamika scholars, causal efficacy becomes a criterion for that which is only conventionally real, distinguishing it from the conventionally unreal. Through examining the relevant works of Candrakīrti and Dharmakīrti I aim to develop a more detailed ascertainment of their respective influences on Śrīgupta's seminal definition of conventional reality.

Once I have developed an account of the philosophical ancestry of Śrīgupta's central arguments, in a second chapter I will turn to an analysis of his *Exposition on Entering Reality* on its own terms. Here I will survey the details and implications of his assertions, together with his style of argumentation and the cogency of his logic. The basis for this chapter will be my annotated translation of Śrīgupta's *Exposition on Entering Reality*.

This will be followed, in chapter three, by an exploration of the reception of Śrīgupta's innovative ideas and philosophical techniques in both India and Tibet. Śrīgupta holds a prominent position within a lineage that was influential not only in Buddhist India, but which also played a pivotal role in the early dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet, profoundly influencing philosophical developments in the various strands of Tibetan Buddhism throughout the subsequent centuries. The disciple of Śrīgupta's student Jñānagarbha (700-760)<sup>7</sup> was the Nalanda Monastery abbot Śāntarakṣita (725-788), who visited Tibet in the eighth century. Śāntarakṣita transmitted the Sarvāstivāda monastic ordination lineage to Tibet, ordaining the first Tibetan Buddhist monks, and also established Samye Monastery, the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet. Śrīgupta is significant, however, not merely due to the impact of his lineage, but more importantly for his philosophical contributions that influenced the character of this lineage. For example, Śāntarakṣita introduced Śrīgupta's three-fold definition of conventional reality to the burgeoning Buddhist community in Tibet. In addition, Śāntarakṣita and his student, Kamalaśīla (740-795)<sup>8</sup> who also travelled to Tibet, took up the Neither One Nor Many Argument

<sup>6</sup> Although Śrīgupta is frequently cited as a student of Bhāviveka, and monastic ordination lineage lists place them successively, since neither of their dates are definitively known, their direct teacher-disciple relationship is difficult to establish with certainty. Nevertheless, Śrīgupta's work is clearly influenced by this earlier master.

<sup>7</sup> Śrīgupta's famed disciple, Jñānagarbha, also takes up the neither one nor many argument in his *Commentary on the Distinction Between the Two Truths (Satyadvaya-vibhaṅga-vṛtti)*, however his version of the argument applies the methodology of Śrīgupta to causation, as emphasized by Nāgārjuna and Bhāviveka, though he takes up the arising of cognition rather than external objects (Eckel 1987: 23; 2008: 26).

<sup>8</sup> Śāntarakṣita's explication of this argument comprises the first two thirds of his *Ornament of the Middle Way (Madhyamākalaṅkārikā)*, though while Śrīgupta applies the argument to all internal and external phenomena more generally, Śāntarakṣita applies it to the entities put forward by his various philosophical opponents. Eckel observes that Śāntarakṣita's opening verse is taken almost verbatim from Śrīgupta's *Exposition on Entering Reality* (2008: 26). Kamalaśīla also utilizes it in the first volume of his *Stages of Meditation (Bhāvanākrama)*. It is noteworthy as well that the later Mādhyamika Jitāri (ca. 950-1000) also took up this argument in his *Differentiating the Sugata's Texts (Sugatamatavibhaṅgākārikā)* and his *Explanation of "Differentiating the Sugata's Texts*

emphatically, leaving an indelible mark on Tibetan Buddhism such that later Tibetan scholars across traditions continually heralded the Neither One Nor Many Argument as one of the four, or sometimes five great logical proofs for emptiness.<sup>9</sup> The final portion of this thesis, then, will be devoted to an analysis of the impact of both Śrīgupta’s version of the Neither One Nor Many Argument and his account of conventional reality in India and Tibet.<sup>10</sup> By comparing Śrīgupta’s work with that of his successors, I will explore commonalities and variances in the style and logical flow of argumentation, the nature of the philosophical agenda, the relative cogency of the argument, and the larger textual and historical contexts within which each occurs.

In summation, my thesis will consist of an analysis of (1) the prehistory of Śrīgupta’s work, (2) the *Exposition on Entering Reality* itself, and (3) its reception in India and Tibet. In this way, I intend to explore the import of Śrīgupta’s contributions specifically for Madhyamaka Buddhist philosophy, and if possible for the history of Buddhist philosophy more generally.

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(*Sugatamatavibhaṅgabhāṣya*), as did his student, Vikramaśīla abbot, Atiśa (982-1054) who was a key figure in the establishment of the Gsar ma traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. Verse fifty of Atiśa’s renowned *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* (*Bodhimārgapradīpa*, *Byang chub lam gyi sgron ma*) presents the Neither One Nor Many argument, and in his autocommentary to this text (*Bodhimārgapradīpapañjikā*), Atiśa quotes two verses from Śrīgupta’s *Exposition on Entering Reality*. Additionally, in his commentary to Śāntideva’s (700-750) *Engaging in the Conduct of Bodhisattvas* (*Bodhicaryāvatārapañjikā*), when explicating the second verse of the ninth chapter which presents the two truths, Prajñākaramati (950-1000) cites and discusses the first verse of Śāntarakṣita’s *Ornament of the Middle Way* which lays out the neither one nor many argument (Lindtner 1981: 182).

<sup>9</sup> As noted by T. Tillemans, this listing of four or five arguments is not without precedent in Buddhist India (1984: 371-2). Prior to Śrīgupta, Bhāviveka (ca. 500-570) speaks of four reasons, without mention of the neither one nor many reason, in his *Madhyamakārthasaṃgraha* (though the authorship of this text is in question), while the post-Śrīgupta Atiśa describes four reasons, including the neither one nor many reason, in his *Commentary to the “Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment”* (*Bodhimārgapradīpapañjikā*). Kamalaśīla presents five reasonings in his *Illumination of the Middle Way* (*Madhyamakāloka*) that accord with later Tibetan listings, and which does include the neither one nor many reason.

<sup>10</sup> In particular, Go rams pa Bsod nams seng ge (1429-89) cites Śrīgupta’s *Exposition on Entering Reality* while explicating the Neither One Nor Many argument on pp. 573-74 of his commentary to the *Abhisamayālamkāra*, entitled *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa’i man ngag gi bstan bcos mngon par rtogs pa’i rgyan ’grel pa dang bcas pa’i dka’ ba’i gnas rnam par bshad pa yum don rab gsal* (Collected works, vol. 6, pp. 7-756). Additionally, Klong chen Rab ’byams pa Dri med ’od zer (1308-1364) addresses Śrīgupta’s account of the two truths in his *Theg pa chen po’i man ngag gi bstan bcos yid bzhin rin po che’i mdzod kyi ’grel pa pad+ma dkar po* (Collected works, vol. 7, pp. 139-920).

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