PREFACE

It is generally assumed that causes necessitate their effects in such a manner in which effects can never be said to necessitate their causes. It may be termed as "causal asymmetry. But the question is: how we understand it? The problem of understanding the differences between causes and effects is the problem of causal asymmetry. This dissertation is an attempt to pose the problem and find a solution, after making a survey of some of the recent approaches to the problem.

In recent years there have been attempts to alienate human action from the realm of natural phenomena. There is an ever growing tendency to discard the causal theory of action, viz. that actions are caused by the intention to act. The revival of interest among the analytic philosophers concerning the theory of action opened the possibility of viewing the causal notions in a larger conceptual framework. Von Wright's analysis of causality and that of causal
asymmetry open a new horizon of philosophical debate, his great contributions in the logic and theory of Action obviously play a significant role in his analysis of causal asymmetry. For von Wright, in principles an event must be brought about by an agent to be causally efficacious. The event which can be brought about by an agent more directly is a more plausible candidate for being the cause while the consequent of the action is the effect of the event brought about by the action.

This dissertation is divided in five chapters. The first chapter is concerned with introducing the problem and is devoted to give a brief historical background, in order to trace how the concept of cause has undergone shifts in meaning from Greek to modern times. The second chapter deals with some associated problems, for example, oncological framework, semantical framework, causes and conditions, counter-factual dependence and Direction of causation. Any account of causality must take into consideration such related issues in order to clarify the conceptual topography surrounding the concept
of cause. The third chapter is concerned with different approaches to the problem of causal asymmetry. This chapter critically discusses five main approaches viz. (i) Regularity theory, (ii) Fixity thesis, (iii) Counterfactual view, (iv) Theory of transference and (v) circumstantial approach. The fourth chapter deals with von Wright's approach to the problem of causal asymmetry, his approach has been discussed critically and an attempt has been made to defend his position as far as possible. The last chapter- the conclusion- explores the conceptual similarities between action and causation in order to establish that the notion of 'action' is a conceptual prerequisite, for the concept of 'cause'. however, this thesis, as such, may be seen as too much von Wrightean. Attempt has been made to show a kind of conceptual muddle(circularity) in von Wright's thesis. Thus a need was felt to go beyond. The suggestion is to view, the concept of 'cause' as an. extension of the concept of 'action' in
the sense that the relation between the 'result' and 'consequence' of an act of an agent is to be causally related as it the 'action' and 'result' of the acts of nature are causally related. Such an extension of the von Wrightean view helps us to give an account not only of causal asymmetry but also some of the other related problems.