

CHAPTER VII

CAUSALITY : ITS METAPHYSICAL SIGNIFICANCE IN BUDDHISM

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It is appeared that Buddha himself was not concerned so much with the problems of philosophy as with the practical problem how human misery can be removed. He regarded it as a waste of time to discuss metaphysical problem, while man is writhing in misery. But though averse to theoretical speculation he could not avoid philosophical discussions altogether. Thus we find from early literature one of the theory, namely, the theory of Dependent Origination among his teachings, i.e., all things are conditional; there is nothing that exists by itself.

In answering the second question of the cause of suffering Buddhism has recourse to psychological analysis and metaphysical speculations. The Upanisads have already indicated the cause of suffering. To them the eternal is bliss and the transient painfull. Yo vai bhūmā tad aṣṭam anyad āraṇam. The eternal unchanging is the truth, freedom and happiness, but the world of birth, old age and death is subject to suffering. The law of causality conditions all being which is in a state of perpetual becoming, arising and passing away. All pleasures are transient. The fundamental proposition of the system that life is sorrow is dogmatically accepted from the Upanisads.

Ignorance is the main cause out of which false desire springs. Ignorance and false desire are the theoretical and practical sides of one fact. Ignorance of truth is the antecedent condition of life.

A wonderful philosophy of dynamism was formulated by Buddha 2500 years ago, a philosophy which is being recreated for us by the discoveries of modern science and the adventures of modern thought. The electro-magnetic theory of matter has brought a revolution in the general concept of the nature of physical reality. It is no more static stuff but radiant energy. Impressed by the transitoriness of objects, the ceaseless mutation and transformation of things, Buddha formulated a philosophy of change. He adopts a dynamic conception of reality. Life is nothing but a series of manifestations of becomings and extinctions. It is a recurring rotation of birth and death.

Change is the stuff of reality. There is neither permanence nor identity with regard to the world. Identity of objects is an unreality. In dealing with the world we have to employ relations of different kinds, such as substance and quality, cause and effect etc. All these relations are contingent and not necessary. They are not true, as Kant would say, of things in themselves. Life is a continuous movement or change. It is the Bergsonian attitude in germ.

Identity of objects is only another name for continuity of becoming. A thing is only a series of states of which the first is said to be the cause of the second, for they seem to be of the same nature. To account for the continuity of the world in the absence of a permanent substratum, Buddha announces the law of causation and makes it the basis of continuity. The law of universal causation, with its corollary of the eternal continuity of becoming is the chief contribution of Buddhism to Indian thought. Existence is transformation. It is

series of successive states. All things undergo the changes indicated in utpāda (origination), sthiti (staying), jarā (growth), and nirodha (destruction). "Know that whatever exists arises from causes and conditions, and is in every respect impermanent". Whatever has a cause must perish. "All component things must grow old". A thing is only a force, a cause, a condition. It is called a dharma "I will teach you the dharma", says Buddha, "that being present, this becomes; from the arising of that, this arises. That being absent; this does not become; from the cessation of that, this ceases."¹ For Buddha, as for the Upanisads, the whole world is conditioned by causes. While the Upanisads say that things have no self-existence as such, but are products of a causal series which has no beginning or end, Buddha says things are the products of conditions. The Upanisads are as clear as early Buddhism, that in this world of unresting change and eternal becoming there is no firm resting place for man.

That which constitutes being in the material realm of things is only the Paṭicca-samuppāda (in Pali), or the origin of one thing in dependence on another. Causality is always a self-changing or becoming. The essence of a thing, its dharma, is its immanent law of relation. There is no being which changes. There is only a self-changing or self-forming, We cannot say as in the Nyāya Philosophy, that one thing is the cause of something else. For a thing is what it is, and it cannot become

1. Majjhima Nikāya, 11, 32

something else. As the world-process is affiliated to conscious growth, so is the force of causality related to inner motivation. Organic growth is the type of all becoming. The difficulty of external causation is due to the fact that in the outside world our knowledge is confined to relations of phenomena. But in our inner consciousness we know that our will determines acts. The same force operates throughout. Schopenhauer calls it 'will'. Buddha calls it 'karma'. It is the one reality, the thing in itself of which the whole world is the working out. In the external world causation becomes uniform antecedence. This is the cause, given which another occurs. After all the trouble of modern philosophy, causation is not defined in more adequate terms. Students of natural science ask us to replace the idea of causation by the category of correlation. Cause and effect represent earlier and later stages of a continuous process. We describe the course of events by the aid of the formula of causality, but do not explain why things happen as they do. Ultimate causes may be the province of metaphysics, but observation is limited to secondary cause. The aim of Buddhism is not philosophical explanation, but scientific description. So Buddha answers the question of the cause of any given state of a thing by describing to us the conditions of its coming about, even in the spirit of modern science.

The causal evolution is not to be viewed as a mechanical succession of movements, in which case the world process becomes a series of extinctions and fresh creations, but is one state working itself upto another state or informing it with a ceaseless pulsation. It is the determination of the present by the

past. Buddha believes in transitive causation, where one state transmits its paccavasatti, or causal energy, to some newly conceived germ. Causal relations are of the type of the seed growing into the tree, where the one is necessary for the other. All life is force. Though we can never see the working of the force, it is nature; in consciousness we feel its presence.

David Hume, on the other hand, maintains that we have no sense-impression of any force or power passing from the cause to the effect. "When a moving ball strikes another and the second ball begins to move all that we actually perceive is that at a particular moment the movement of the first ball is followed by that of the second." "The mind feels no sentiment or inward impression from the succession of object."² The fact that we cannot explain why our will has influence over some parts of the body and not all shows that we do not really understand the nature of the force or power by which the will performs its operations. A great many events takes place between a certain volition and the movement of a limb, but we do not know the nature of the intermediate chain of events. Hence it is wrong to suppose that we are conscious of any power or energy when the movement of a limb takes place in response to a certain volition in the mind.

The will to live is the ground of our existence Its negation is our salvation. It is this simple fact that is elaborated in the causal chain. It embodies the second great truth that suffering originates from desire, and sums up the conditions of existence. In the doctrine of Prativityā-samutpāda we find the

2. Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding - Pg. 63.

interrelated or mutually dependent order obtaining throughout the world of sentient existence.

The rise of the world is accounted for as usual by a metaphysics of metaphors. Ignorance or avidyā is said to be the root cause of the world. The explanation of the world is that there is in reality no world at all but avidyā produces it. Whence did this negative principle of ignorance come? No answer is given. We project the element of avidyā into pure being hypothetically, illusorily, apparently. The world of experience is a manifestation of pure being conditioned by avidyā. However illusory in its ultimate nature, avidyā must exist in the being of the tathatā. Avidyā starts the cosmic process. Intellectually we can only say that this element of negativity is in the very heart of the absolute.

We may note one very important contribution made by Indian thinkers in general and Buddha in particular; namely, the conception that the external phenomenon of life or the living organism is due to an internal impetus of desire, conscious or unconscious. The evolution of life is sought to be explained mechanically by modern biologists — both Darwinians and anti-Darwinians — with the help of material conditions, inherited and environmental. The famous contemporary French Philosopher Bergson shows that the development of life cannot be satisfactorily explained as merely accidental, but that it must be thought to be the outward expression of an internal urge or life impetus (elan vital). Buddha's basic principle of the explanation of life, namely that bhava (internal predisposition) leads to

birth (existence of the body) or that consciousness is the condition of the development of the embryo, anticipates the Bergsonian contention, that the living body is not caused simply by collection of pieces of matter; but is the outward manifestation or explosion of an internal urge. Incidentally we may note that Bergson's philosophy of reality as change resembles the Buddhistic doctrine of impermanence.

Buddha does not deny the continuity of the stream of successive states that composes human's life. Life is an unbroken series of states : each of these states depends on the condition just preceding and gives rise to the one just succeeding it. The continuity of life-series is, therefore based on causal connection running through the different states. This continuity is often explained with the example of a lamp burning throughout the night. The flame of each moment is dependent on its own conditions and different from that of another moment which is dependent on other conditions. Yet there is an unbroken succession of the different flames. Again, as from one flame another may be lighted. And though the two are different, they are connected causally. Similarly the end-state of the life may cause the beginning of the next. Re-birth is, therefore, not transmigration, i.e., the migration of the same soul into another body : it is the causation of the next life by the present.

We have seen some special significance of Buddhist theory of causation. There are three formulas given by Stcherbatsky³,

3. Buddhist Logic - Vol. I, Th. Stcherbatsky, Pg. 121.

which disclose the meanings and implications of the Buddhist theory of causation. The first is "this being the appears",⁴ the second is "there is no real production, there is only interdependence"⁵ and the third is "all elements are forceless"⁶ The full meanings of the formulas can be grasped only in contrast to the thesis of the other schools existing at the times with which Buddhism had to fight. There was, on the one hand, the satkāryavāda of Sāṅkhya according to which there was no new production, no creative causation, but just a manifestation of the already existing stuff — it was a production out of one's ownself. There was on the other hand the asatkārya-vāda of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas, according to which the effect is something new, not existing in the self of the cause; it is a causation out of another self. There was also the Yaddrochā-vāda of the Cārvākas, which admitted haphazard production and denied all strict causal laws. To all of these theories the Buddhist answer was : "Not from one's own self, not from another self, not haphazard are the things produced. A thing is, in fact not produced at all; it arises in functional dependence upon its causes."⁷ The third formula refutes the idea of instrumental causation which is not possible in Buddhism where reality is not instantaneous and has no time to exert force on some other thing.

4. asmiṁ sati idaṁ bhavati.

5. Pratitya tat samutpannaṁ natpannaṁ tat svabhāvataḥ /

6. Nirvyāpārāḥ (akimcit-karāḥ) sarve dharmāḥ /

7. na svato na parato, napy shetutaḥ, pratitya tat samutpannaṁ, natpannaṁ tat svabhāvataḥ.

Again according to Buddhism everything is a cause. To say that all elements are forceless does not mean that they are not efficient. In fact, all reality, according to Buddhists, is efficient. Efficiency here means the power to give rise to its effect. Everything that exists is efficient in the sense that it produces its effect and dies out. Whatsoever really exists, therefore is necessarily a cause.⁸

Buddha held that the law of causation is sufficient to explain all the phenomena of the world. This causal evolution is not merely a mechanical succession of movements. It is rather a theory of determination of the present by the past. We may note here one very important contribution made by Buddha is that his causal theory is independent of any extraneous agency like God. This causal law operates automatically, but not according to the willed directions of an ordinary mind.

A metaphysical monism enables the Buddhist not to dichotomise cause and effect, but to consider them as two aspects of the same reality. Buddha was unwilling to discuss metaphysical questions, because he believes them to be unanswerable. He plainly rejected metaphysical dualism and taught a combined monism and pluralism.

Buddha has maintained that becoming is undeniable and extremely significant fact about the world of finites. Causality has become universalized and impersonalized. "The wheel of the cosmic order goes on without maker, without known beginning,

8. Cp. arthakriyasamartha and usyate.

continuously to exist by nature of concatenation of cause and effect." (quoted Radhakrishnan). Again causality is conceived as a relation between substances based on the expression of personal or material energy and as an invariance of order between events and their conditions. And it refuses to categorise the metaphysical status of thing involved in becoming.

Buddha propounded the theory of universal change, impermanence and momentariness. Everything in the universe is changing. Reality is a continuous flux. Change is the stuff of reality. There is neither permanence nor identity. Only becoming is real. What we call identity is only an appearance.

His theory of Dependent Origination states that complex and composite things developed out of the combination of several factors. Everything depends on every other thing. Nothing in this universe is self-created. All is devoid of one's own nature (*svabhāva śūnya*). Causality is nothing but the co-existence and co-ordination of innumerable momentary existences. Everything has a relative stability and permanence. Thus, for Buddha, every event happens in a realm of relations; everything is conditioned by and dependent on every other thing and so there is only the reign of relativity. He has maintained that reality is a continuity of Becoming and an ordered succession. There is no inner teleology in causation. There is necessity in the causal series only in that, once a series begins, it will not cease as long as the conditions under which it began continue.

For Buddha, there is nothing permanence in this universe. If it is so, what, then, is permanent, if anything? Buddha

answers the law of Karma. Metaphysically karma refers to cause and Effect or Dependent Origination. Every existence is organic and the substance of its existence is a continuity of changes, each of which is absolutely determined by pre-existing condition.

It is stated that¹⁰ the advent of European colonialism in the eighteenth century and the diffusion of western values and institutions throughout Asia participated for reaching strains and innovations, which have significantly modified the traditional social role and teachings of Buddhism. The scepticism of Hume had challenged all the basic human concepts such as those of Self, Substance and Causality. The schools of the Yogācāra and the Mādhyamika whose similarity with Hume cannot be ignored by any student of comparative philosophy.

Buddha was reluctant to discuss metaphysical questions at length, believing them to be unanswerable ultimately, although pragmatic reasons could be given for choosing one alternative over another.

One pragmatic justification Buddha offered for his metaphysical views was that acknowledging the inevitable cause-effect relationship would make us more sensitive to our actions setting up a long chain of undesirable results. Again, if we believe that the only karma which we carry is the causal law of of Dharma, whereby our present state arises from the conditioning of some past state, then we are simultaneously freed of the Yoke of Determinism and the gambling of chance; we can undertake

11. International Encyclopedia of the social sciences, Vol. 2. Bank to Coll. Editor David L. Sills. The Macmillan Company & and the free press, Pg. 182.

to change our state with resolution, confidence and hope.

Buddha believed strongly that reality is inter-related and inter-dependent. Event B occurs as a result of prior event A. Just as an act of suffering is due to a previous cause, so it can be overcome by a subsequent act or chain of events.

Causation in early Buddhism is not subjective and is not a category imposed by the mind on phenomena. Its objectivity is emphasized : "Causation is to said to have the characteristics of objectivity, necessity, invariability and conditionality."¹¹

The occurrences which are causally connected are considered to have the following relation, namely that (1) whenever A is present, B is present' (imasmin sati, idam hoti) and (2) 'whenever A is absent, B is absent' (imasmin asati idam na hoti). This means that B does not occur unless A is present and occurs only when A is present. Thus a one - one correlation is established between the conditions constituting the cause and their effect. This is a scientific view of causation as opposed to the practical common-sense view.

The purpose for which the 'chain' was employed was to substitute an empirical cause explanation of the (relative) origin and development of the individual in place of an explanation in terms of metaphysical first causes or final causes. In the face of this evidence it is surprising that many scholars (Kern, Jacobi etc.) should have tried to explain this 'chain'

11. Early Buddhist theory of Knowledge - K.M. Jayatilleke
George Allen and Unwin Limited.

as a "Kosmische. Emanations formel" (Thomas, History of Buddhist Thought, Pg. 79), comparing it with the Jāṅkhya series. In fact it is expressly implied that 'ignorance' (avijñā) is not a first cause.

From the Use made of causation in the Nikāyas, one could see that causal empirical explanations were everywhere substituted (e.g. theories of perception, knowledge, consciousness etc.) for prevalent metaphysical theories.

The Buddhist theory is said to be empirical since it spoke only of observable causes without any metaphysical pre-suppositions of any substrata behind them. At the same time it is necessary to note that the Buddhist theory of causation was not deterministic since it included mental decisions among the causal factors and these were not considered to be strictly determined.

Buddha showed little interest in any other worldly life but sought to discover the means of improving man's moral life and releasing people from their present sorrows and suffering. Thus he did not indulge in abstract metaphysical speculation; his approach was more practical than theoretical.

We may maintain that the Buddhist metaphysics from the very start partook of the Humean and the Kantian; in admitting the reality of the separate elements the Buddhists were like Hume and unlike Hume but like Kant they ascribe the origin of the substance notion to avidyā which is beginningless and non-empirical in origin. This standpoint is present in essentials

in the Pāli canons and is well-developed in the Abhidharma literature and the Milinda Pañho.¹²

Buddhism rejects the existence of substance, soul and all relations of things. The rejection of these is Humean in character. Hume recognises two main principles of his Philosophy : "that all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences and that the mind never perceives any real connexion among distinct existences."¹³

But there is a very important difference which should not be lost sight of. Hume would account for the notion of substance causality etc. through the operation of the empirical laws of association and habit. The Buddhist was alive, like Kant, to the fact that these notions are a-priori and are not of empirical origin. With their rejection of the substance-view and the acceptance of the real as momentary states, the Buddhists developed the complementary doctrine of avidyā and vikalpa; with a metaphysic largely Humean, they elaborated their analysis of knowledge more or less on Kantian lines. The Buddhists brought their epistemology¹⁴ and ethics into full accord with their anātma-metaphysic.

12. The Central Philosophy of Buddhism - T.K.V. Murti George Allen and Unwin Limited, Ruskin House,

13. Treatise of Human Nature, Appendix, pp. 635-6
(Selby Bigg's edition).

14. If the momentary and the unique is the ultimately real (Paramārtha sat), that alone is the true object of perception (Pratyakṣam kalpanapodham tasya viṣayah svalakṣanaḥ).

Some have characterized Early Buddhism (Hīnayāna) as a system of metaphysics which contained an analysis of existence into its component elements, and established a certain number of ultimate data (dharma). Every combination of these data was then declared to represent a nominal, not an ultimate, reality. A substantial soul was thus transformed into a stream of continuously flowing discrete moments of sensation or pure consciousness (vijñāna) accompanied by moments of feeling, of ideation, volition (vedanā- saṃjñā - saṃskāra) etc. Matter was conceived on the same pattern, as a flow of momentary flashes without any continuant stuff, but characterised by impenetrability, and representing the senses (āyatana 1-5) and sense data (āyatana 7-11). The world was thus transformed into a cinema.¹⁵

In the earliest period of Buddhism more attention was paid to the four noble truths than to systematic metaphysics. The doctrine of Pratityā-samutpada was offered only to explain how sorrow came in and not with a view to the solving of a metaphysical problem. The discussion of ultimate metaphysical problems such as whether the world was eternal or non-eternal or whether a tathāgata existed after death or not, were considered as heresis in early Buddhism.

The Buddha believes in causation as the basic law of the world process.¹⁶ Experience presents to us change everywhere. Nothing is static or permanent. Even what appears to us as stable is really a flux of processes. We are so constituted

15. Buddhism - Richard A. Gard., Pg. 113

16. The Religion of the Buddha and its relation to Upanisadic Thought - Bahadur Mal.

that we carve out of changing events, a world of identical things. It is only reflection, which reveals to us, that at each instant changes are taking place and even the seemingly most stable things like rocks and stones consist of an unceasing series of changes. A thing is and is not at the same time.

To Buddha it is a world of constant change but in which the change takes place according to a certain system. He enunciates the law of causation to account for continuity in the world-process, and to explain each event in terms of the conditions of its occurrence. The origin of one thing is dependent upon another. There is nothing in the world which does not depend upon something else for its existence. A depends upon B, B upon C and there is no end to this process of dependent origination.

The Buddha is not interested in applying the causal law to the explanation of natural phenomena. The world of nature is outside his domain. He makes use of the law of dependent origination to explain the origin of suffering in all its forms.

The law of causation, as Buddha enunciates it, presupposes the moral structure of the world. The world is not indifferent to moral values. The world of the Buddha, therefore, is of a different nature from that of a materialistic philosophers, according to whom the moral efforts of human beings have no significance for the world which moves on in utter disregard of the hopes of mankind.

Pratityā-samutpāda meant that every process in the material and spiritual was strictly deterministic. Everywhere the law of

of causality is the ruler. Nothing can exist without a cause. The universe emerged without a cause, without a known beginning and the world remain for ever under the influence of cause and effect.

"Rāhul Sankrityayan"¹⁷, a great authority on Buddhism writes:

"Buddhist philosophy in its basic form presented by the pratityā-samutpāda and the theory of momentariness was essentially revolutionary. It proclaimed that the whole world, society and man were undergoing changes every moment. Therefore no purpose would be served by sitting back and Yarning for the good old days that had gone by. So Buddhism called upon all to realise the changes around them and to work for social reform under the changing circumstances. Though this implication of the Buddhist Pratityā-samutpāda was capable of frightening the rich classes, the theories of Karma and Pratisandhi could be reassuring to them."

The Buddhist thinkers maintain that all existence is flux, as everything in this universal is becoming and changing. This flux can be compared to the ever-passing currents of the river, as Heraclitus forwarded, and flying clouds, as advanced by Hume.¹⁸ The Buddhists say that as the currents of water endure for a moment and then pass away, so the existence of phenomenal things.

17. Rahul Sankrityayan - Visva Darsan.

18. Quoted from Schools of Indian Philosophical Thought,
- S. Prajñānanda, Published by Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyaya,
257 B. Bipin Behary Ganguly Street.

According to the Bhāva-chakra, man is conceived of in the present, as merely a creature of the past and as an agent to the future. There is a moral law working in the Universe, which joins the past, the present and the future. This law works in concert with an intellectual factor, which either contributes to rebirth, or leads to salvation. Buddha postulated a philosophy, by which, the necessity for an omniscient God is altogether eliminated. He held that the law of Karma or the law of causal connection, was sufficient, to explain all the phenomena of the world. This chain of causal law, is constituted by twelve links, called the *pradasa Nidanas*, each preceding one, being responsible for the next.

The Buddhist, the Jaina and the Brahmanical systems, all subscribe to the principle of causality as governing all phenomena.¹⁹ For the Mādhyamika it is confined to proving that causality and other categories are of empirical validity only. To adopt Kantian phraseology, we might say that the categories are empirically real and transcendently ideal (subjective false). The Mādhyamika establishes the conclusion by showing that all the possible ways in which the categories can be understood under the forms of identity, difference or both, or neither are riddled with contradiction. This shows their relativity and their limitation to the phenomenal realm.

For Kant the problem was first to vindicate the empirical reality, that a-priority of causality, substance etc., against the contention of Hume who reduced them to association of ideas

19. Critique of causality - Ch. VII Application of the Dialectic, Pg. 167-168.

and habit. For Hume, causality etc. were invalid (subjective) even empirically; they are not true of phenomena even. As such his position militated against science and commonsense. It has been already pointed out that though Buddhism is usually thought to be Humean in its outlook, this should be confined to the dictum that existents are discrete atomic entities. Unlike Hume, The Buddhists accepted causality as a universal and objective principle, ultimately valid of the unconditioned too. Even with regard to the substance (soul), they held that this was not of empirical origin, being beginningless as avidyā (satkāyadr̥ṣṭi). For Kant then there was a double task : to prove the categories of the understanding to be a priori (this he does in the analytic) and then to show that they are valid within phenomena alone and are not constitutive of the noumenon. This he does in the transcendental Dialectic. The Mādhyamika procedure is simple and direct. He had not to indicate the empirical reality of the causal principle, but only to urge its restriction to the sphere of phenomena.

The Buddhist doctrine of causation maintains that one cannot obtain emancipation and happiness, if he does not understand and remove the cause of his distress, but it does not discuss cosmic forces like karma and Māyā. Such discussion the Buddha considered unprofitable and perhaps he may have felt that insistence on cosmic law came dangerously near to fatalism.²⁰

20. The Pitakas insist that causation applies to mental as well as physical phenomena.

We have seen that the world-view of Buddha differs fundamentally from that of all the other religions in general. For the Buddha the whole of Nature has always existed and is self-sustaining. It is a succession of events without a substance; rigidly self-regulated by an internal law expressing itself as an unalterable chain of cause and effect.

In regard to man also the *pratityā-samutpāda* holds good. Man too, like the rest of Nature, is a succession of changes without any permanent entity within him called the soul.

The later history of Buddhism would however show that by silence the Buddha could not put down the metaphysical inquisitiveness of his followers. Speculations started very soon and even so many metaphysical schools developed among Buddhist thinkers. The Buddha's two doctrines also appear to be mere dogmatic assumptions to its critics. The theory of Dependent Origination, which assumes Nature to be a fact requiring no explanation and self-dependent system of cause and effect. This is the scientific view too. The analytic description of Nature attempted by Buddha and also which science has achieved is not understandable explanation of Nature at all to many. Without maintaining that a self-transcending intelligence is involved in it, the regularity and purposefulness of Nature as assumed in the law of Dependent Origination can be understood at all. The assumption of a Deity immanent in nature yet transcending it is thus a basic assumption for a spiritual world-view. An internally co-ordinated Nature as an expression of Him is in no way inconsistent with such a view. A capricious interference

is not a necessary presumption of it. It was however, to be remembered that according to the latest developments of science mere thermic agitation left to the laws of chance cannot account for the combinations of molecules needed for the development of life and intelligence.

For Buddha not merely things, but ideas themselves are related and caused and therefore capable of a rational explanation; the world is not merely a physical or an intellectual order, as contemplated by the ancients, but a moral as well as a logical order.

While Buddha adopts the position of the Upanisads in holding that absolute reality is not the property of anything on earth, that the world of saṁsāra is a becoming without beginning or end, he does not affirm the reality of the absolute. He does not tell us anything about the state of enlightened after death, whether it is existent or not, both or neither, about the nature of the world, whether it is eternal or not, both or neither, whether it is self-made or made by another. These are the different sides of the one fundamental problem of metaphysics. His avoidance of all metaphysical problems is irritating in its vagueness to the modern historian of philosophy.

But when we come to the Mahāyāna Buddhism, we will find that a metaphysical substratum is admitted. Mahāyāna metaphysics is monistic. All objects in this universe are of one reality. The world of experience is phenomenal and not real. The Mahāyāna Buddhists liken the universe to māyā, mirage flash of lightning

or so forth.²¹ The whole universe has its unchanged aspect as well as its changeable one. The Mahāyāna holds the middle position regarding the nature of the world. It is neither real nor unreal. The world is a phenomenon, impermanent, subject to flux and change.

The speculative schools attached to the Hīnayāna belong to the Sarvāstivāda or pluralistic realism which is also known as causationalists. The Sarvāstivādins avoid the difficulty of causation. Because they maintain that cause and effect refer to two phases of one thing. The phases are momentary, but the substratum is permanent. Āryadeva puts his view of causation in the following words : "The cause never perishes, but only changes its name when it becomes an effect having changed its state. For example, clay becomes the jar, having changed its state, and in this case the name clay is lost and the name jar arises."²²

The second school of the Hīnayāna is that of the Sautrāntikas, which admit the extra-mental existence of the phenomenal world. According to them these outer objects are only momentary. When the Sautrāntikas maintain that we have ideas and through them we infer things, it is clear that if there were external

21. Lalitavistara.

22. Cp. Abhidharmakosabhasya : "Are we to think that wood perishes by contact with flames ? Yes, for we no longer see the wood, when it is burnt.

bodies we cannot know them and if they were not, even then we may think that they were.²³ If a cause is necessary for ideas, that cause may not necessarily be the outer world. Yet with regard to ideas which are not voluntarily produced, all that we can say is that there must be some cause.

In Mahāyāna schools - we find that Yogācāra doctrine is frankly idealistic. The priority and productivity of thought is the central thesis here. In the Yogācāra, metaphysically all is due to the one reality that is thought. The Yogācāra doctrine did a great service to the science of logic, by pointing out the necessity of thought for all reality.

The Mādhyamika doctrine (Mahāyāna school) is an ancient system which can be traced to the original teaching of Buddha. In metaphysics Buddha condemned all extreme positions, such as that everything exists or that nothing exists. The Mādhyamika theory of the phenomenal nature of the world follows from the doctrine of Pratityā-samutpāda. Of the Mādhyamika philosophy, the main text is the Mādhyamika-sutras of Nāgārjuna. Nāgārjuna admits that relations constitute the world. The world is a mere complex of these relations. He maintains that the whole world of experience is an appearance, a mere network of unintelligible relations. Matter and soul, space and time, cause and substance etc. are all alike the baseless fabric of the vision which leave not a rock behind. Nāgārjuna believes that things seem to be real in virtue of the relationships of causality, dependence, contiguity and conditionality.

23. Berkeley : Principles of Human Knowledge

The contradictions of the causal relation are brought in the Mādhyamika-sūtras. Nāgārjuna argues that an effect separate from or cause separate from effect is non-existing. A thing is born neither from itself nor from another, nor from both, nor without cause. Production seems to be logically impossible.²⁴

Further he says that, absolutely speaking there is no cause or effect, no production or cessation.²⁵ Sometimes cause is taken as the whole Sāmagri or totality, which is also shown to be arbitrary and difficult to comprehend.²⁶ From the above analysis it follows that the process of change is unintelligible. Causation cannot for change, since it itself is an impossible conception. The Pratityā-samutpāda doctrine, that it is the nature of dharmas to be produced by concurrent causes, and what is so produced is not produced in itself, and therefore does not exist in itself. All is declared Śūnya, empty, because there is nothing that is not the product of universal causation.

Thus from the above discussion we may say that all the four schools of Buddhism have discussed the concept of causality from the metaphysical point of view. Buddha has always insisted upon the universality and inexorability of the causal law. The Buddha, rejecting the opposite views of eternalism and nihilism, applied the principle of causality especially in the context of moral responsibility. As we know that his silence about the

24. Chapter IV. 7.9 - Mādhyamika Sūtras.

25. Ch. XXI, Mādhyamika Sūtras.

26. Ibid., Ch. XX.

metaphysical side is the most important. The interpretation which makes out that Buddha refused to give answers to metaphysical questions simply because he had none to give, is hardly favourable to Buddha's genius. Buddha's whole attitude is a predominantly ethical one and naturally the ethical aspect of the absolute its character as righteousness appeals to him most.

Thus in the end we may come to the conclusion that all the four schools of Buddhism which are also recognised as the metaphysical schools, have described the concept of causality from the metaphysical point. But the Buddha has recognised this problem as the ethical one. We may regard this ethical problem as the logical deduction from the metaphysics. "Whatever metaphysics we have in Buddhism is not the original Dhamma but added to it (abhidhamma)²⁷. Buddhism is essentially psychology, logic and ethics and not metaphysics."²⁸

27. Abhi - Beyond, Dhamma - Physics.

28. Quoted from Indian Philosophy, Vol. I, Pg. 353.
- Radhakrishnan.