Chapter– IV

BUDDHA’S CRITIQUE OF TRADITIONAL THEORIES OF CAUSATION
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Buddha had to abandon most of the explanation of reality introduced by his predecessors. His search for the nature of things led him to the discovery of uniformity of the causal process. He had to give up various metaphysical theories as such in Brahmanical notion of soul, (atman), self and inherent nature (svabhava). Even the Jaina theory of action appeared to him to be too metaphysical.

For the explanation of the nature of existence, Buddha summarized it in one word ‘Dependent arising’ (Pratityasamutpada) being a past participle, refers to some thing, event, or idea that has occurred. Formulating the principle of Dependent arising he was attempting to avoid the search for any mysterious entity or substance in the explanation of phenomena. By the origination and destruction can be explained all phenomena. There is no absolute anywhere, not even ‘absolute motion’. What we call energy is relative to and dependent and prior state. Henri Bergson observed that actuality in motion without an apparent moving thing, everything in the world is in a state of change, whatever we see substantial is unreal. There is only origination and destruction, rise and fall. During the period of Buddha the philosophical atmosphere in India was having a number of views regarding the problem of causation. The main concentration of the pre-Buddhist thinkers was on the origin and development of the world. The cosmological speculation is well manifested in a number of theories during those times. Some of them accepted a first cause such as being (Sat) and explained the World as the final product of evolution, by way of self-causation. Others conceived that first cause as a personal creator or God. However, on the empirical and logical grounds, Buddha avoided any discussion of the problem of the origin of the world process and therefore of life. He emphatically stated that it is not possible
to determine the first cause such as being (Sat) and the beginning of the cycle of existence. In respect of this view, Buddha’s theory is a product of synthesis of all these ideas. Such types of theories were more popular. These are follows:

(a) Vedic Theories:

1. Self causation (*Sayam Katam*)

2. Theories of Divine Creation

Let us explain these theories one by one:

1. Theory of Self-causation

   A metaphysical theory was intimately related to two concepts: conception of self and the conception of evolution. This thinking can be traced to the time of tenth book (*mandala*) of the Rg-veda. A very important feature of the philosophical hymns of Rg-Veda was that they partake of idea of mechanical as well as creative evolution. According to this theory, chance has no place in the evolution of the world. For the principle of movement/development, the immanent self is found in the man as well as things of the outer world, they denied the producing of desired results of any factor outside the self. It was often said that Prajapati created the world out of himself. The immanent power of phenomena to evolve thus being considered the power of Prajapati. They believe that Prajapati is not merely creative of being but part and parcel of them.

   There are different approaches to the theory of self causation. Here we would like to explain the philosophy of Mahidasa Aitareya in the *Aitareya Aranyaka*. There, he conceived the idea that unity of one thing there is a succession of different states. According to him, all changes and diversity in the world have an immutable ground of unity. In view of the same change as the transformation of single bodily reality, from the potential to the actual is quite similar to Sankhya view. Mahidasa's elaboration of the theory of self-causation is set forth in the following passage:
Then come the creation of the seed. The seed of the Prajapati is the gods; the seed of the gods is the rain; the seed of the rain is herbs; the seed of the herb is the food; the seed of food is the living creature; the seed of the living creature is the heart; the seed of the heart is the mind; the seed of the mind is the speech; the seed of speech is action; the act done is this man, the abode of Brahman.

In the above passage, Mahidasa’s use of the term ‘seeds’ (reetas) is a clue to the meaning of causation. He applied the word ‘seeds’ (reetas) in reference to Prajapati, the Supreme God—the First Cause of this universe. He thinks that all changes and diversity in this world have immutable ground of unity, the plurality of gods powers are mere manifestation of One Supreme God (Prajapati). He also believes that just as seed produces sprout, so Prajapati produces gods and provides them different powers through which they produce rain and so on. In this way, we can assume that relation of cause and effect was established and these long chains become the origin of universe. Mahidasa says:

Was it water? Was it water? This world was water. This was the root (mula); that the shoot (tulla) this the father; those the sons. Whatever there is of the son’s, that is the father’s whatever of the father’s, that is the son’s.

In view of the above statements, Sayana admits that there is unity or oneness between the cause and effect and there is no distinction between the two as between clay and a Jar made of clay. Again Mahidasa point out that the cause (the root, mula) passes its characteristics on to the effect (the shoot, tula), just as a father bestows some of his characteristic, physical as well as mental, on the son or son inherits the characteristics of father. Thus, we can say that Mahidasa tried to attempt the nature of
causality in accordance with his theory of evolution and change. In the above argument about the theory of self–causation, it is clear that at that time mind of Indian people for cosmological speculation was so much expansive, and it was compelled at least to give a rational explanation of the problem of the evolution. Whereas, on the other hand, the Buddhist theory of Causation applies the general formula of causation to explain the process of evolution.

In the Samyuttas-Nikaya a dialogue took place between a man Acela Kassapa and the Buddha. Kassapa raises the question whether suffering is self-caused Buddha gave a negative answer. Buddha argued that “A person acts and the same person experiences (result) this Kassapa, which you emphatically call ‘suffering archaic past or past part of work, account to the eternalist.” In the view of this, Buddha was well aware the problem of Personal identity was connected with the theory of moral responsibility. He rejected the theory of self-causation of happiness and suffering because he knew that the acceptance of theory of self-causation results in the adoption of metaphysical entity such as permanent soul (atman).

Buddha focused attention on practical problems of the causation and removal of suffering and laid down for the conquest of suffering the eightfold noble path. Buddha discouraged all curiosity and speculation about trans empirical reality, analysed the facts of experience to show the constant changing nature of things exploded the myth of substances both material and spiritual traced all suffering of human being in the ignorance, attachment to the imagined ego and thought that they are real and permanent. Buddha remained silent about inexperienced things because there one cannot apply theory of causation. It is possible to explain and understand in the world of experience. Thus, also causality is the main philosophy of Buddhism that is also my aim to highlight through this thesis.
2. Theory of Divine Creation

This theory was also very popular. It pertains to the Vedic tradition and maintained that the creation of the world was worked out by the omniscient and omnipotent God (Issara, Isun yu). For the conviction of God and creation of the world, as it appears in the Vedas and the Brahmans, seem to have been arrived at by recourse to two types of argument; cosmological and teleological.

In the theory of self-creation we have seen that a phenomenon produce from within itself another phenomenon, and the Vedic thinkers posited primordial substance such as heavenly water (apas) as the material cause, that is inanimate and insentient after that Upanisadic thinkers attempted to explain such primordial substance as being sentient. However, according to Cosmological argument Being that possessed characteristic opposite to those of the world of experience, the concept of personal God and creator of the universe did not appear. Barua has observed that, Hiranyagarbha and Visvakarma showed a significant idea of God. The Sun which was Golden germ (Hiranyagarbha), was considered the extensive power of the Universe, other powers and existence, divine and earthly are derived from it. It represents the ‘origin of life’. In the teleological argument, the conception of the creator God found in the hymn addressed to Visvakarma. They believed that original substance out of which the universe was fashioned derives its being from the creator God.

Thus the rational justification of the existence of God and creation of the world was not ended; but continued during the period of Aitareya Aranyaka. Mahidas Aitareya defines that, things arise as effect (tula) from the causes (mula). Through these causes, one arrives at the conception of water (apas). The first root of which the universe is made. This primordial matter, which was passive and which served as the substratum of change, had to be energized.
The rational explanation rather than mystical experience seems to be characterizing feature during the period of Vedas and Brahmans. Nevertheless, the creation of world and existence of God continue being postulated during the early and middle Upanisads. In the *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad*\(^\text{12}\) We find a hypothetical theory relevant to the idea expressed in the Vedas, *Brahmanas* and *Aranyakas* tries to explaining how being gave rise to the world of manifold variety. As it is obvious that the self (*atman*), which served the function of a creator God, was solely responsible for the creation of the world of diversity. Brahma assumed the role of the personal creator God. It is a stratum of thought that is preserved in the *Mundaka Upanisad*. It says, “Brahma arose as the first among the gods, the maker of the universe, the protector of the world.”\(^\text{13}\) These intuitional methods of verifying the existence of God, criticized in the *Brahmajala–suttanta*\(^\text{14}\) Buddha does not take up the negative approach his means that treats all forms of religious experience as illusions or hallucinations. He chose sober attitude towards them. In reality, he criticized the sages who maintained that they had witnessed God in their trance. He expresses the argument in the form of a Parable. He says:

*At the dissolution of the world process, some of the beings are born in the realm of Brahma, and of these, the Being who is to be born in that realm first comes to be of long life, good complexion and is powerful. Being who follow him are inferior. It so happen that one of the being who came later, having passed away the realm, is reborn in this world. After being reborn here he adopts the life of a religious mendicant and by practicing mental concentration is able to search such rapture of thought that he can recollect his past births up to some moment (of his life in the Brahma world) and not beyond. Thus with regard to the being who was*
first born in the realm of Brahma, he maintains that “he is great Brahma, the Supreme one, the mightily, the all-seeing, the ruler, the lord of all, appointing to each his place, the ancient days, the father of all that are and are to be, and we must have been created by him.\textsuperscript{15}

According to this imaginary account, it indicates us to deny the idea of creation. It is obvious that Buddha is well aware about such difficulties in which religious teachers had fallen. Once this thing is more clear by the above parable it shows that he refutes the view. It is not only that they were fallen in hallucination, what they gave were also in misdescriptions on an aspect of reality, that refer to extrasensory perceptions.

Further, in the view that origin of the world was due to the creative activity of God was refuted by the Buddha, because he rejected to the each of salient features of Vedic theories. \textit{First}, view that the world process had a Conceivable beginning is denied. It is suggested that the process is one of dissolution (\textit{samvatta,huai}) and evolution (\textit{vivatta, pien}) without a beginning. \textit{Second}, the Upanisadic idea that the first being become as big as a man and women embracing each other and that the parting of this body into the appearance of man and wife is rejected. The Buddhist text maintains instead that just like first being, another being appeared in this world. However, the question is how the being who came first misconstrued that he was the creator of the other beings who came later. They think that the being that appeared first was their creator.\textsuperscript{16} According to \textit{Maha bodi Jataka}, if God were to determine the life of all being including there happiness and suffering, virtue and voice then man is carrying out the commandments of God. Therefore, it would be God who would be smeared by their action.\textsuperscript{17} Buddha objection to the above point of views that the world of being with their happiness and suffering is created by an omnipotent and omniscient God is based. It denies the doctrine of
moral responsibility of man and second it is detrimental to the religious life.

(b) Non-Vedic Theories

1. External Causation (Param Katam): Theories of Naturalism

2. A combination of self-causation and external causation
   (Sayam Katam and Param Katam)

Let us explain the non-Vedic theories in a bit detailed form:

1. External causation (Param Katam): Theories of Naturalism

   In the history of Indian system of thought, there are three types of views of naturalism:

   **The First Kind of Naturalism:**

   The first one is synonymous with materialism, which accounts all facts of Universe as sufficiently explained by a theory of matter. According to it, Matter is considered as the ultimate fact of the universe including the phenomenon of consciousness. The thought is represented by Indian philosophy in especially by Charvaka (Lokayata or Barhaspatya) system of Thought. It observed that all the transformation of material molecules take places according to inherent nature (svabhava).

   Materialism is generally thought to be the product of rational attitude of the Vedas, Brahmanas and the idealist metaphysics of the substantialist schools who accepted that functioning of phenomena was due to their inherent nature (svabhava). Partially there are some references in the materialist teachings like Jaina and Buddha. According to their views, the inherent nature (svabhava) is a principle of governing physical nature and man himself is determined by the physical principle and his psychic personality is playing no effective part in his behaviour.

As we notice noticed that the theory of self-causation was at the basis of the philosophy of change, the material elements, which were considered
sentient, were able to produce out of themselves succeeding elements. Even the Sankhya school of Philosophy and Sankara school of Vedanta do considered that material elements to be insentient. In view of this, being (sat) unable to explain how movement can be initiated in matter (prakrti). In the Sankhya, the primordial substance is insentient. When purusa and prakrti cooperate with each other, the whole chain of causation become active. Finally, the external spiritual principle Purusa, which creates movement in matter and the materialists denied the spiritual principle as accounting for movement and instead attributed change to inherent nature or Svabhava.

Although, in materialistic theory, there is a plurality of elements and the phenomenal world is the product of the evolution of these material elements. They reject interdependence of any form of causation and believe that everything is inherent in nature (Svabhava) as the appellation of non-causationist (ahetuvada). If Svabhava is to be understood as inherent, in self - nature, then why Jaina and Buddha include it under the category of external causation (Param Katam) in contrast to self-causation? The basic idea of the theory of self-causation- The atman as considered to the reality in man as well as in things. However, when we drawn attention to Svabhavadin naturalistic framework accepted that principle of inherent nature. In the view of the same, the individual was only an automatically functioning according to the dictates of the stuff out of which his physical personality was composed. The power of nature to which human beings had no control was external to them. In the wider sense, the application of Svabhavavada to include psychic phenomena cannot be found in the teaching of materialist who alone gives the progressive idea of the theory of inherent nature (Svabhava) before the advent of Buddhism.20
The Second Kind of Naturalism:

It is advocated by the Ajivika, who accepted the materialistic conception of the Universe. He laid stresses on the theory of perfect natural determinism. According to him being influence by the biological evolution; he unlike believes in the materialistic conception of transmigration and observed that every thing happened according to unalterable law of nature. Makkhali Gosala was the main exponent of the Ajivikas determinism. He holds that evolution of things are determined by three factors- destiny (niyati), species (sangati) and inherent nature (svabhava) and there are no other forces to change the nature of being such as chance or effort. His meant that species, destiny, inherent nature, (svabhava) continues run through out the life of being. He says, “Samsara is measured as with a bushel, with its joys and sorrow and its appointed end. It neither can be less nor be increased nor is there any excess of deficiency of it. Just as a ball of thread will, when thrown, unwind to its full length. So fool and wise alike will take their course and make an end of Pain”21. In view of his argument we understand that that the conception of nature (svabhava) are such a force, continue to run parallel with life of human being, who is unable to control and change its nature. In fact, the above approaches which is taken up by Ajivikas are purely determinism (niyati) fall in the category of noncausationists (ahetuvadi), because they have did not any form of causation other than species and nature.

However, Buddha was strongly criticized and did not in favors of such type of interpretation and views of Ajivikas determinism. He argued that if happiness and suffering are caused by destiny or species than all human being undergoes the extreme form of pessimistic. But it is not mere facts or true approaches regarding the evolution of being. He is of the opinion that happiness and suffering is the direct result of human effort and actions; where individual responsibility is clearly manifest his
severe pain inflicted upon them. There is no place for any external and supernatural forces put pressured on human activity and man himself responsible for his own blunders.22

**The Third kind of Naturalism:**

It does not fall into the category of either materialism or determinism. It is mainly concentration on mental phenomena, not conjoined to physical nature. They observed only fundamental constitute of Universe. In Buddhist text such type of naturalistic views explain in the way of (dhammata)or nature of things and suggested that every individual endowed with right understanding that whatever kind of offence he fall into, they confessed and disclose it co-religionists views. According to him, there is no place for extra-sensory perception and super natural power recognized by Buddha and its followers. They believed that only mental concentration built up there natural causal occurrences. Its does not determine by external forces, destiny, inherent nature (Svabhava) etc.

Thus, Buddha’s approaches are very different from materialists and Ajivikas doctrines. According to him, those who accepted that whatever activities and evolution of life process determined by external forces or determined by destiny or inherent nature (Svabhav) etc are called under absence of mental concentration and lackness of intuitive insight. He is of the opinion that these process did not merely determined by destiny (niyati, wei ming) or any such thing which is adopted by Ajivikas. However, they are only natural causal occurrence. They are also analysed that human personality categorized into five kind of casual patterns, these casual patterns realized by physical personality of human being in one aggregate form (rupa), while, the psyche personality analyzed into four aggregates ways namely viz. feelings or sensations, dispositions, perception and consciousness. These significant five-fold classification predominated in the early teachings of Buddha and strongly objectified
against his critics; and clearly manifest that every activity of life process on the bases of this five-fold aggregates. Beside, the above of these, it is one of the vital aspect in Buddhist philosophy they accepted only five-fold causal precepts and refuted the conception of self or soul which was adopted by Vedic and Upanishad thinkers.23

Finally, these four percepts (or immaterial aggregates) recognized by Buddhist, merely represent the different aspects of psychic personality, which was early classified denoted by the element of consciousness. Hence, we can says that Buddhist set of these five characteristics have been called the aggregate forms of grasping and constituting what may be called causally conditioned or (Dependent Origination).

Buddha criticized the theory of external causation by two reasons. Firstly, we deny human action and assume a principle external to man as the cause of his pleasure and pain. Secondly, because they led to a belief in annihilation of mind. He says that, in the theory of self-causation, a person who acts (the cause) and the person who experience (the effect) are one and the same the identity of the two individuals (Cause and the effect) being maintained on the basis of a permanent substance and the theory of external Causation lead to an opposite (a belief is annihilation). For the person who acts, and another who experiences the result are the two different people. In this way, Buddha refutes both these theories, the doctrine that posited a permanent soul (atman) on the basis of which the personal identity, moral responsibility and survival were explained and the second doctrine that did not posit such a soul, denied personal identity, moral responsibility. In this manner, Buddha rejected both these views on the empirical grounds.
2. A Combination of Self-Causation and External Causation
(Sayam Katam and Param Katam)

This theory of Causation is an attempt to combine the first two theories namely self-Causation and external Causation Theory. This is a relativist theory put forward by Jaina, carried with all its metaphysical assumptions of both these theories. They account for the various forms of experience such as change, continuity, impermanence and duration and supported by their epistemological standpoint that absolute judgments are not possible at mundane level. They maintained that being is multiformal in that it exhibits the characteristic of productiveness and destructiveness.

The focus of their theory of Causality was on its commentary by Silanka. Here Mahavira criticizes several theories concerning the causality of suffering. He says, “Suffering and Happiness are not caused themselves or by other; they are due to one own lot or species” (Samgaiyam). The use of Phrase, ‘Caused by Oneself’ is defined by Silanka as ‘Caused by One’s Own exertion’. However, Jaina denied it, because sometime when there is equal human effort the result differs or even there is no result. Explaining the phrase caused by another, Silanka lists number of existing theories of Causality: destiny (viyaati), time (Kala), God (Isvara), nature (Svabhava) and action (Karma). Here I quote a Silanka commentary in this respect, as below:

*When thing are partly determined and party... undetermined”, that is to say happiness, etc. are partly determined brought about necessarily and partly undetermined brought about by one’s own exertion. God (Isvara) etc. Therefore they are ignorant they have no knowledge of the cause of happiness, suffering etc. But in the teaching of jaina some part of happiness, suffering etc. is due to destiny. It is said to be caused by destiny because of the necessary manifestation Karma as a cause*
at some moment. Similarly, some part is undetermined that is caused by human exertion. God, Nature, Karma etc. Since An action yield results, and action depends on human exertion it has been said: “One should not give up one’s effort thinking is due to destiny. Without effort that would be able to obtain oil from sesame seeds?” But the inequality result, obtained when there is equal human exertion although said to be fallacy, is not a fallacy is such case. The difference in human exertion is the cause inequality of results, if some person equal exertion produce no result, then it is work of unseen. Thus we consider a Causal factor in the statement that verity in the world is not possible because of the oneness of time but accept Karma too; therefore, cosmic variety is not a fallacy.25

Mahavira’s statement, in the view of the Silanka’s commentary, shows that there are the two main features regarding theory of causation. Firstly, the epistemological point of view, he refused to unconditionally (ekantena) posit one single cause. They analyse each of causes assumed by various thinkers in their explanation of the causality of suffering, such as human exertion, destiny, time God, nature, action and Karma and showed that these do not by themselves, constitute causes. Secondly, they agreed that these causal factors are depending on different point of view from which they were considered.

In this way, the Jaina theory shares of relativity as well as plurality of causes. However, the plurality of causes can be divided in two categories. The first group is included under the category of self-causation and second under external causation. We are inclined to believe that Karma that is determined to occur is past Karma and while undetermined (aniyata) refers to present and future. By maintaining the Karma is a
necessary cause, the Jaina viewed that being as strictly determined by past Karma. However, the question is raised if we are strictly determined by the past; there is no freedom of will. Nevertheless, this argument is unavoidable by the way, in which undetermined cause is explained, such as human exertion. Jaina recognized human exertion as a causal factor under certain circumstances. This means that one’s present state is determined by one’s past Karma. One can change the future because one’s own exertion is an effective method.

Buddhists criticize the Jaina view, in the Pali-Nikayas and the Chinese Agamas the theory of complete determinism in spheres of moral responsibility, that everything is due to past Karma is clearly attributed to Jaina thought but is not a relativist theory of internal and external causation. This is evident from Mahavira’s dictum that ‘things are partly determined and partly undetermined’. It was the main problem deliberated upon by them by asserting that man’s present life is completely determined by the past Karma he was able to make room for the theory of determinism according to which a person experiences what is due to past behaviour. It is only corollary of the philosophical thought. However, his theory cannot consider a strictly individualistic theory that would defeat the purpose for which it was formulated by Mahavira. He admits that an individual is responsible for his acts, they completely determine his future and then because they are external to him he cannot control them. Buddhists consider the Jaina theory that purports to explain moral responsibility as leading to denial of moral responsibility.26

In the above analysis of Vedic and non-Vedic theories of causation, we find that, as to the Divine Creation Theory, Buddha rejected it because they were mis-descriptions of an aspect of the reality that pertain to extrasensory perception. He classified it as external causation because it’s working was purely physical and that had no power over nature. He was also influenced by naturalist theory of inherent nature’ (Svabhava).
However, it is slightly different in two respects. Firstly, we looks that Buddhist Causality is not bound to physical causation alone. There are so many factors as such in the causal sequence Buddhism diagnoses the moral, psychic, social and spiritual realms, whereas in naturalist framework, everything is subordinate to physical causation. Secondly, naturalistic accepted that principle of inherent nature is strictly determined and nothing can change the course of nature. Buddha accepted the causal principle more/less as a theory of conditionality.

Thus, an examination of some features of causal nexus of the above theories as discussed in Vedic and non-Vedic thought, and worked out in the above lines, will be helpful in understanding the nature and scope of the Buddhist Causality.

REFERENCES


4. Aitareya Aranyaka 2.1.3. cf. Ibid., p.8

5. Aitareya Aranyaka 2.1.8. cf. Ibid., p.8


7. Digha-Nikaya 3.28, Majjhima-Nikaya 2.222; Anguttara-Nikaya 1,173; Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo 1.1135b. cf. Ibid., p. 15.


23. *ibid.*, pp. 42-43

