Cause - Effect Relationship in Buddhism - An Overview

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Introduction

The subtle unnoticed factor that binds the various facets of a Nation is its unique culture. India, Our Nation is a holy one and the people who live here are fortunately blessed due to the greatness of the spiritual wealth which our nation and people possessed thousands of years ago. This spiritual wealth can be seen in the Vedas. The origin of Indian Philosophy may be traced in the Vedas, the oldest literary monument of Indian Culture. The Indian mind being independent gave rise to several philosophical systems. Among the Heterodox groups of Indian Philosophy Buddhism of Gautama Buddha was recognized as a world religion and system of thought.

The title 'Buddha" means the "awakened one". There were so many controversies regarding his date. By the predictions of the great scholars it is 6th century B.C. Dr. Chandradhar Sharma also depicts that the date is 6th century B.C. Buddha was a king, named Siddhartha before enlightenment. In the kingship period, he happened to see the sorrows and hardships of the masses. When he saw the realities of life of a sick man, an old man, a dead body and a monk he knew he had a message to give to the worldwide. The first vision of the sick man showed the Buddha that life was, is and will be suffering: he envisioned the first of the four great noble truths (ārya Satya) that there is suffering. When he saw the second vision, of the diseased individual, Gautama envisioned the second truth, that there is a cause of suffering.

The third vision of a dead body, made him envision the great Noble truth, that is there is a cessation of suffering. Then came before him the fourth and the last vision: that of a monk. When he saw the monk, he envisioned the final ārya Satya: that there is a way leading to cessation of suffering. These observations affected him deeply and

made Gautama realize the sufferings of all beings, and compelled him to begin his spiritual journey.

After his enlightenment, Buddha preached his lessons for the public, first at the deer park in Sārānath. When the Buddha gave his first sermon he began the "Turning of the Dharma Wheel". This wheel represents the Dharma. Buddha choose the beautiful symbol of the wheel with its eight spokes to represent the Noble Eight fold path. This Noble Eight fold path leads to the highest good that is the end of all suffering. The main teachings of the Buddha were the four noble truths, the noble Eight fold path and the doctrine of dependent origination. The doctrine of dependent origination is the foundation of all the teachings of Buddha.

Doctrine of Dependent Origination

Doctrine of dependent origination is contained in the second noble truth which gives us the cause of suffering, and in the third noble truth which is the cessation of suffering. It says that everything in this world arises depending on the cause and is, therefore, impermanent. The fundamental principle of the Buddhism is the theory of causation or Dependent origination.

Doctrine of dependent origination means "arising after getting". It means the production of an effect out of a complement of cause and conditions. When the cause and conditions disappear the effect appears. "This being, that arises", ie; 'Depending on the cause, the effect arises'. The cause and the effect both are impermanent. The cause vanishes then the effect emerges. The cause cannot continue in the effect. The effect arises from an aggregate of cause and conditions. For eg:- A seed is the cause of a plant. But soil, water, light, manure etc:- are its condition. The formula for this theory is "from the existence of this, that becomes; from the happening of this that does not happen" .

When Buddha wandered alone to know the cause of suffering Doctrine of dependent origination is the solution which he found. Everything arises out of something ie; Everything has a cause. Old age, disease and death is considered as the three basic miseries. The cause of these miseries are depicted in a chain, and this chain has twelve links. The twelve links are the following. We shall start with the final effect.

Jarāmaraṇa, Jāti, bhāva, upādāna, trṣṇa, vedāna, sparśa, saḍāyatana, namarūpa, vijňāna, samskara and avidya.

- Old age, disease and death constitute misery (Jarāmaraṇa).
- We are unable to overcome them, because there is rebirth (Jāti).
- There is rebirth, because there is the tendency or will to be born (bhāva).
- The tendency to be born is due to clinging to the objects of enjoyment (upādāna).
- The clinging to objects is due to desire or thirst for them (trṣṇa).
- There is desire for the object, because there is experience of the object (vedāna).
- There is experience of the object, because there is sense contact with the object (sparśa).
- There is sense contact, because we have sense organs (saḍāyatana).
- There are the six organs, because there is the body-mind (namarūpa).
- There is body-mind, because there is the embryonic consciousness (vijňāna).
- There is the embryonic consciousness, because there are the inner drives and impressions (samskāras), which are blind and unconscious.
- And these unconscious drives and impressions are due to ignorance (avidya) of the truth and being rooted in ignorance.

Out of these twelve links Ignorance and samskara are related to past life, Birth or rebirth, old age and death belongs to future life and the rest to present life. This is the cycle of birth and death. This is the twelve spoked wheel of dependent origination. This is the vicious circle of causation. It does not end with death. Death is only a beginning of a new life. It can be destroyed only when its root cause, Ignorance is destroyed. And ignorance can be destroyed only by knowledge. So knowledge is the sole means of liberation. Ignorance is bondage, knowledge is liberation.

Conclusion

Among the Heterodox schools of Indian Philosophy Buddhism

was recognized as a world religion and system of thought. Gautama Buddha, the light of Asia is regarded as the founder of Buddhism and his actual date is fixed as 6th century B.C. He was a king before enlightenment and in the kingship period, he happened to see the sorrows and hardships of masses. This invoked him to put forth the ideal of the Four Noble truths, the doctrine of dependent origination and the Noble Eight Fold path. After his enlightenment Buddha preached his lessons for the public.

Just as a good doctor tries to discover the cause of malady before administering a remedy, the Buddha, the great spiritual doctor, tried to find the ultimate cause of worldly suffering, not only the suffering of human beings but that of all animate creatures. He found the cause to the ignorance or craving arising from it. The doctor removes the cause of the patient's disease and thus cures it. The Buddha similarly asks the people to remove their ignorance of truth and their craving for happiness. The cessation of suffering is called Nirvāṇa, the summum bonum, beyond logical reasoning and beyond description.

In Buddhism one cultivates one's wisdom. The mind is the ground and thoughts are seeds. Deeds are ways one cares for the garden our faults are weeds. Pulling them out is like weeding a garden. The harvest is real and lasting pleasure.

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