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# BUDDHA'S FUNDAMENTAL INSIGHT THAT ALL THINGS ARISE FROM DEPENDENCE ON CONDITIONS

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**ABSTRACT:-**

*Paṭṭhāna belongs to the "higher teachings" of the Buddha, the Abhidhamma of Theravāda Buddhism. The term "Paṭṭhāna" (Pāḷi) is composed of the prefix "pa," various, and "ṭhāna," cause or condition; thus, Paṭṭhāna means "various causes or conditions," or "a system of relations." Paṭṭhāna is usually translated as "conditional relations."*

*Causality or conditionality plays an important role in Buddhism. Already in his first sermon, the Buddha taught about cause and effect: the first noble truth, suffering (dukkha), as effect, and the second noble truth, craving (taṇhā), as the cause for suffering. Then, in his doctrine of dependent origination (paṭiccasamuppāda), the conditionality within the cycle of rebirth (saṃsāra) is explained with 12 factors which are themselves conditioned and condition the next factor.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Causality, Conditionality, Dependent origination and Conditional relation.*

## INTRODUCTION :

The Buddhist philosophy of causality is primarily a theory (*naya*) of the human world. Its methodology, however, is objective and critical. It rejects the weight of mere authority or tradition, relies upon experience and reason, and emphasizes the critical examination and verification of all opinions. Although the Buddhist conception of knowledge and truth has a strong empirical and pragmatic bias (cf. *Nyāya-bindu* 1.1), its conception of experience does not exclude introspection, rational intuition or mystical intuition (cf. *Nyāya-bindu* 1.7–11). Although its conception of reason creates a logical gulf between reason and experience, the gulf is bridged by a transcendental illusion (*avidyā*). Its employment of reason is highly analytical and it seeks to discover the ultimate elements constituting the structures of objects and experience. The constituent elements as the locus of causation are regarded as more real than their composite structures – *dharma, dhātu* or *kṣana* as contrasted with *saṅghāta* or *santāna.* At the same time, it raises dialectical questions and seriously considers the possibility of the empirical world being merely a working illusion. It discounts the apparent stability of objects, stressing their transience, finally defined as momentariness (see, for example, Ratnakīrti's *Kṣaṇa-bhaṅgasiddhi*). It rejects the category of substance for that of process. Causality is thus regarded not as a dynamic interaction between substances, but as a functional, many-one relationship of order characterized by invariance and uniformity within any given type of process.

Conditionality is "*an exploration of the Buddha's fundamental insight that all things arise from dependence on conditions*". Practical exercises and reflections are included to prompt readers to explore how conditionality works in their own lives.

## The Principle of Causality:

*The concept of causality, determinism.* All certainty in our relationships with the world rests on acknowledgement of causality. Causality is a genetic connection of phenomena through which one thing (the cause) under certain conditions gives rise to, causes something else (the effect). The essence of causality is the generation and determination of one phenomenon by another. In this respect causality differs from various other kinds of connection, for example, the simple temporal sequence of phenomena, of the regularities of accompanying processes. For example, a pinprick causes pain. Brain damage causes mental illness. Causality is an active relationship, a relationship which brings to life some thing new, which turns possibility into actuality. A cause is an active and primary thing in relation to the effect. But "after this" does not always mean "because of this". It would be a parody of justice if we were to say that where there is punishment there must have been a crime.

Causality is universal. Nowhere in the world can there be any phenomena that do not give rise to certain consequences and have not been caused by other phenomena. Ours is a world of cause and effect or, figuratively speaking, of progenitors and their progeny. Whenever we seek to retrace the steps of cause and effect and find the first cause, it disappears into the infinite distances of universal interaction. But the concept of cause is not confined to interaction. Causality is only a part of universal connection. The universality of causality is often denied on the grounds of the limited nature of human experience, which prevents us from judging the character of connections beyond what is known to science and practice. And yet we know that no scientist restricts his reasoning to what he can immediately perceive. The whole history of humanity, of all scientific experiment knows no exception to the principle of determinism.

The connection between cause and effect takes place in time. This temporary relation may be defined in various ways. Some people believe that cause always precedes effect, that there is a certain interval between the time when the cause begins to act (for example, the interaction of two systems) and the time the effect appears. For a certain time cause and effect coexist, then the cause dies out and the consequence ultimately becomes the cause of something else. And so on to infinity.

Other thinkers believe that these intervals partially overlap. It is also maintained that cause and effect are always strictly simultaneous. Still others maintain that it is pointless to speak of a cause already existing and therefore taking effect while the effect has not yet entered the sphere of existence. How can there be a "non-effective cause"?

The concepts of "cause" and "effect" are used both for defining simultaneous events, events that are contiguous in time, and events whose effect is born with the cause. In addition, cause and effect are sometimes qualified as phenomena divided by a time interval and connected by means of several intermediate links. For example, a solar flare causes magnetic storms on Earth and a consequent temporary interruption of radio communication. The mediate connection between cause and effect may be expressed in the formula: if A is the cause of B and B is the cause of C, then A may also be regarded as the cause of C. Though it may change, the cause of a phenomenon survives in its result. An effect may have several causes, some of which are necessary and others accidental.

An important feature of causality is the continuity of the cause-effect connection. The chain of causal connections has neither beginning nor end. It is never broken, it extends eternally from one link to another. And no one can say where this chain began or where it ends. It is as infinite as the universe itself. There can be neither any first (that is to say, causeless) cause nor any final (i.e., inconsequential) effect. If we were to admit the existence of a first cause we should break the law of the conservation of matter and motion. And any attempt to find an "absolutely first" or "absolutely final" cause is a futile occupation, which psychologically assumes a belief in miracles.

The internal mechanism of causality is associated with the transference of matter, motion and information.

Effect spreads its "tentacles" not only forwards (as a new cause giving rise to a new effect) but also backwards, to the cause which gave rise to it, thus modifying, exhausting or intensifying its force. This interaction of cause and effect is known as the principle of feedback. It operates everywhere, particularly in all self-organising systems where perception, storing, processing and use of information take place, as for example, in the organism, in a cybernetic device, and in society. The stability, control and progress of a system are inconceivable without feedback.

Any effect is evoked by the interaction of at least two phenomena. Therefore the *interaction phenomenon* is the true cause of the *effect phenomenon.* In other words, the effect phenomenon is determined by the nature and state of both interacting elements. A word conveying tragically bad news may cause a condition of stress in a sensitive person, whereas it will bounce off an insensitive or phlegmatic individual like "water off a duck's back", leaving only a slight emotional trace. The cause of stress in this case was not the word itself but its information-bearing impact on vulnerable personality.

The cause-effect connection can be conceived as a one-way, one-directional action only in the simplest and most limited cases. The idea of causality as the influence of one thing on another is applied in fields of knowledge where it is possible and necessary to ignore feedback and actually measure the quantitative effect achieved by the cause. Such a situation is mostly characteristic of mechanical causality. For example, the cause of a stone falling to the ground is mutual gravitation, which obeys the law of universal gravitation, and the actual fall of the stone to the ground results from gravitational interaction. However, since the mass of the stone is infinitely small compared with the mass of the earth, one can ignore the stone's effect on the earth. So ultimately we come to the notion of a one-way effect with only one body (the earth) operating as the active element, while the other (the stone) is passive. In most cases, however, such an approach does not work because things are not inert, but charged with internal activity. Therefore, in experiencing effect they in their turn act on their cause and the resulting action is not one-way but an interaction.

In complex cases one cannot ignore the feedback of the vehicle of the action on other interacting bodies. For example, in the chemical interaction of two substances it is impossible to separate the active and passive sides. This is even more true of the transformation of elementary particles. Thus the formation of molecules of water cannot be conceived as the result of a one-way effect of oxygen on hydrogen or vice versa. It results from the interaction of two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen. Mental processes are also a result of the interaction of the environment and the cortex.

To sum up, all processes in the world are evoked not by a one-way or one-sided action but are based on the relationship of at least two interacting objects.

Just as various paths may lead to one and the same place, so various causes lead to one and the same effect. And one and the same cause may have different consequences. A cause does not always operate in the same way, because its result depends not only on its own essence but also on the character of the phenomenon it influences. Thus, the heat of the sun dries out canvas, evokes extremely complex processes of biosynthesis in plants, etc. Intense heat melts wax but tempers steel. At the same time an effect in the form of heat may be the result of various causes: sun rays, friction, a mechanical blow, chemical reaction, electricity, disintegration of an atom, and so on. He would be a bad doctor who did not know that the same diseases may be due to different causes. Headache, for instance, has more than one hundred.

The rule of only one cause for one effect holds good only in elementary cases with causes and effects that cannot be further analysed. In real life there are no phenomena that have only one cause and have not been affected by secondary causes. Otherwise we should be living in a world of pure necessity, ruled by destiny alone.

To understand the cause that engenders a change in the state of an object we should, strictly speaking, analyse the interaction of the object with all other objects surrounding it. But experience shows that not all these interactions are equally significant in changing the state of the object. Some are decisive while others are insignificant. So, in practice, we are able to single out a finite number of decisive interactions and distinguish them from those that are secondary.

In the sciences, particularly the natural sciences, one distinguishes general from specific causes, the main from the secondary, the internal from the external, the material from the spiritual, and the immediate from the mediate, with varying numbers of intervening stages. The general cause is the sum-total of all the events leading up to a certain effect. It is a kind of knot of events with some very tangled threads that stretch far back or forward in space and time. The establishing of a general cause is possible only in very simple events with a relatively small number of elements. Investigation usually aims at revealing the specific causes of an event.

The specific cause is the sum-total of the circumstances whose interaction gives rise to a certain effect. Moreover, specific causes evoke an effect in the presence of many other circumstances that have existed in the given situation even before the effect occurs. These circumstances constitute the conditions for the operation of the cause. The specific cause is made up of those elements of the general cause that are most significant in the given situation. Its other elements are only conditions. Sometimes an event is caused by several circumstances, each of which is necessary but insufficient to bring about the phenomenon in question.

Sometimes we can clearly perceive the phenomenon that gives rise to this or that effect. But more often than not a virtually infinite number of interlocking causes give rise to the consequences we are concerned with. In such cases we have to single out the main cause-the one which plays the decisive role in the whole set of circumstances.

Objective causes operate independently of people's will and consciousness. Subjective causes are rooted in psychological factors, in consciousness, in the actions of man or a social group, in their determination, organisation, experience, know ledge, and so on.

Immediate causes should be distinguished from mediate causes, that is to say, those that evoke and determine an effect through a number of intervening stages. For example, a person gets badly hurt psychologically, but the damage does not take effect at once. Several years may elapse and then in certain circumstances, among which the person's condition at the time has a certain significance, the effect begins to make itself felt in the symptoms of illness. When analysing causality we sometimes speak of a "minor" cause giving rise to major effects. This so-called "minor cause of a major effect" is the cause not of the whole long and ramified chain of phenomena that produces the final result, but only the cause of the first link in the chain. Sometimes the "minor cause" is merely a factor that starts up quite different causal factors. These are "triggering" factors, factors relating to the initial stage of avalanche processes and to a whole system's loss of labile equilibrium.

Any phenomenon depends on a definite diversity of conditions to bring it into existence. While it is only one of the circumstances conducive to a certain effect, the cause is the most active and effective element in this process, it is an interaction that converts necessary and sufficient conditions into a result. We sometimes treat the absence of something as a cause. For example, some illnesses are attributed to lack of resistance in an organism or a lack of vitamins. However, absence should not be regarded as a cause but merely as a condition for disease. For a cause to actually take effect there must be certain conditions, that is to say, phenomena essential for the occurrence of the given event but not in themselves causing it. Conditions cannot in themselves give rise to the effect, but the cause is also powerless without them. No cause can give rise to illness if the organism is not susceptible to it. We know that when a person's organism is infected with certain microbes he may fall ill or he may not. The way a cause takes effect and the nature of the consequence depend on the character of the conditions. Sometimes there is only one direct and immediate cause of death or injury—a bullet. But more often the causes and conditions are intricately combined, some of them being only secondary circumstances.

When discussing the relationship of cause and condition one must remember that the term "condition" is used in two senses, the narrow and the broad. Apart from what we mean by condition in the narrow sense, conditions in the broad sense comprise such factors as "background" and "environment" and various factors of a causal nature. But there is no strict and consistent dividing line between the two basic senses of the term, just as there is no dividing line between condition and cause. This fact often leads to an incorrect use of the two terms and to wrong definition of the various

conditioning factors. Avoidance of incorrect usage is made all the more difficult by the overlapping of the accepted meanings of the two terms "cause" and "condition" and also the term "foundation".

Science is gradually evolving special concepts relating to the categories of "foundation", "condition" and "cause", which, when used together with these categories, make it possible to define genetic links more exactly.

In various fields of knowledge the problem of the relationship between cause and condition is solved in different ways, depending mainly on the complexity of the relationships that are being studied, their uniformity or, on the contrary, the distinctness and comparative importance of separate factors. But the degree of abstraction usually employed in the given science also affects the treatment of this question. So the meaning of the cause and condition categories in the system of concepts of various sciences may also differ considerably. One could scarcely apply the relation of cause and condition that is revealed in studying, for example, physical phenomena, to physiological processes, or vice versa.

Every phenomenon is related to other phenomena by connections of more than one value. It is the result both of certain conditions and certain basic factors that act as its cause. That is why the cause-effect connection has to be artificially isolated from the rest of conditions so that we can see this connection in its "pure form". But this is achieved only by abstraction. In reality we cannot isolate this connection from the whole set of conditions. There is always a closely interwoven mass of extremely diverse secondary conditions, which leave their mark on the form in which the general connection emerges. This means that there can never be two exactly identical phenomena, even if they are generated by the same causes. They have always developed in empirically different conditions. So there can be no absolute identity in the world.

One and the same cause operating in similar conditions gives rise to similar effects. When we change the conditions we may also change the way the cause operates and the character of the effect. But this principle becomes far more complex when it is applied to such unique events as those of geology and social science. While stressing the close connection between cause and condition, we should never confuse the two. The dividing line between them is mobile but significant.

By creating new conditions we can even preclude the earlier possible causes of a certain event, that is, we can "veto" the manifestation of one cause and allow free play to another. This explains the fact that by no means every cause unfailingly produces the expected effect.

A distinction should be made between cause and occasion, that is to say, the external push or circumstance that sets in motion a train of underlying interconnections. For instance, a head cold may be the occasion for the onset of various diseases. One should never exaggerate the significance of occasions, they are not the cause of events. Nor should one underestimate them because they are a kind of triggering mechanism.

One way of discovering causal connections is to study functional connections. The causes of illness may be revealed by uncovering certain breakdowns in the functioning of the organism. A functional connection is a dependence of phenomena in which a change in one phenomenon is accompanied by a change in another. Whereas, for example, a sociologist may be interested in population growth over a period of time and a physicist may be investigating changes in gas pressure in relation to changes of temperature, a mathematician sees here only a functional dependence of X on Y.

The functional approach is particularly useful when we are studying processes whose intrinsic causal mechanism is unknown to us. But when we wish to explain a phenomenon we have to ask what caused it.

The concept of cause is identical not to the general concept of regularity but to the concept of causal regularity, which expresses the fact that a regular sequence of phenomena and conditions always takes the form of realisation of causal connections.

In science the deterministic approach seeks to explain a process as being determined by certain causes and therefore predictable. Thus determinism is not a mere synonym for causality. It involves the recognition of objective necessity, which in turn implies objective accidentality. Hence there is a close connection between the category of determinism and that of probability. The relationship between determinism and probability is one of the crucial philosophical problems of modern science. In

quantum mechanics it is associated with the indeterminacy relation, and in living nature with that of cause and aim. Determinism should not be contrasted to probability. There is no special "probabilistic causality". But there do exist probability, statistical laws, which are one of the forms of manifestation of determinism.

Determinism proceeds from recognition of the diversity of causal connections, depending on the character of the regularities operating in a given sphere. Every level of the structural organisation of being has its own specific form of interaction of things, including its specific causal relation ships. Higher forms of causal relationships should never be reduced to lower forms. From a methodological point of view it is essential to take into account the qualitative peculiarities and level of the structural organisation of being.

The dialectical approach is incompatible with mechanistic determinism, which interprets all the diversity of causes only as mechanical interaction, ignoring the unique qualities of the regularities of various forms of the motion of matter. Determinism was given its classical expression by Laplace, who formulated it as follows: if a mind could exist that knew at any given moment about all the forces of nature and the points of application of those forces, there would be nothing of which it was uncertain and both future and past would be revealed to its mental vision.

Mechanistic determinism identifies cause with necessity and accident is completely ruled out. Such determinism leads to fatalism, to faith in an overruling destiny. The development of science has gradually ousted mechanistic determinism from the study of social life, organic nature, and the sphere of physics. It is applicable only in certain engineering calculations involving machines, bridges and other structures. But this kind of determinism cannot explain biological phenomena, mental activity, or the life of society.

The character of causality is conditioned by the levels of the structural organisation of matter. In nature causality manifests itself in a different way from its manifestation in society. And in human behaviour causality emerges in the form of motivation. In nature determination acts in only one direction, from the present, which is a result of the past, to the future. Because of people's knowledge of the world, human activity is determined not only by present things but also by things, objects, events that are absent, not only by what surrounds man but also by that which may be far away from him in time and space, not only by the present and the past, but also by the future, which is viewed as an aim and becomes a motivation for men's activity. Determination may thus have a two-way direction. Knowledge introduces the future into the determining principle of the present.

The animal's active relationship with the environment is associated with a new type of determination: the conditioning of its behaviour by the task with which it is confronted. For example, birds build their nests in order to breed their young and protect them.

The principle of determinism involves recognition of the objectivity, the universality of causal connections and has always played a vastly important methodological and heuristic role in scientific cognition. The primary assumption for any scientific research has always been that all events of the natural and intellectual world obey a firm regular connection, known as the law of causality. Any field of knowledge would cease to be scientific if it abandoned the principle of causality.

When observing the astonishing adaptation and "rational" organisation of plants and animals, or the "harmony" of the celestial spheres, people even in ancient times asked themselves where this harmonious organisation of all that exists had come from. Thinkers have proceeded from various principles in trying to explain this phenomenon. The teleologists assume that there is an underlying purpose in everything, that at bottom nature has some intrinsic expectation and intention and is full of hidden meaning.

The idea of teleology arises when a spontaneously operating cause comes to be regarded as a consciously acting cause, and even one that acts in a predetermined direction, that is to say, a goal-oriented cause. This implies that the ultimate cause or aim is the future, which determines the process taking place in the present. The doctrine that the universe as a whole is proceeding according to a certain plan cannot be proved empirically. The existence of an ultimate goal assumes that someone must have put it. Teleology therefore leads to theology. Instead of giving a causal explanation of why

this or that phenomenon occurred in nature, teleology asks for what purpose it occurred. And to prove his case the teleologist usually refers to the purposeful structure of organisms in nature. One has only to observe the structure of the wing of a butterfly, the behaviour of an ant, a mole, a fish, in order to realise how purposefully everything is constructed. The crudest form of teleology is the claim that nature provides some living creatures for the sake of others, for example, cats are provided in order to eat mice and mice are there to provide food for cats. The goal of the whole process of evolution of the animal world is man and all the other animals were created to make things comfortable for man.

Heinrich Heine tells the story of the contented bourgeois with a "foolishly knowing" face who tried to teach him the principles of such teleology. He drew my attention, says Heine, "to the purpose and usefulness of everything in nature. The trees were green because the green colour was good for the eyes. I agreed with him and added that God had created cattle because beef tea was good for man's health, that He had created the donkey so that people could make comparisons, and that He had created man himself so that man could eat beef tea and not be a donkey. My companion was delighted at finding a fellow thinker in me, he beamed with joy and was quite sorry to leave me."

Heine took the humorous view, but the scientific argument against teleology in nature was provided by Darwin, who not only struck a blow at teleology in the natural sciences but also gave an empirical explanation of its rational meaning. Teleology feeds on the belief that everything revolves around us and has us in mind. Instead of giving a causal explanation why this or that natural phenomenon occurred, teleology offers conjectures about the purpose served by its appearance. But can one ask nature, as though it were a rational being, why it created such a strange world of forms and colours? Can one accuse it of malicious intent when it produces ugliness? Nature is indifferent, it does not care whether it creates a lion or a fly. The relative perfection that allows its creatures to orient themselves in the environment, the adaptation to conditions and the adequacy of their reactions to external stimuli, which is found in all animals and plants, are real facts. The structure, for example, of the stem of a plant can serve as a model for an architect who sets himself the task of designing the strongest possible structure with the smallest quantity of materials and the greatest economy in weight. Spinoza, who provided a splendid criticism of teleology in his day, did not deny purpose in the structure of the human body. He urged us not to gape at it "like a fool" but to seek the true causes of the miracles and consider natural things with the eyes of a scientist. This was exactly what Darwin did, and he revealed the natural mechanism of this amazing adaptiveness of the organism to the conditions of its existence. His theories on natural selection showed that delightful blossoms exist not to please our aesthetic feelings or to demonstrate the refinement of the Almighty's taste, but to satisfy the extremely earthly needs of vegetable organisms, i.e., the normal process of pollination and perpetuation of the species.

Changes in the world of animals and plants come about through interaction with their conditions of life. If these changes benefit the organism, that is to say, help it to adapt to the environment and survive, they are preserved by natural selection, become established by heredity and are passed on from generation to generation, thus building up the purposeful structure of organisms, the adaptiveness to the environment that strike our imagination so forcibly. Brightly coloured flowers attract the insects by means of which pollination takes place. The beautiful plumage of male birds was developed by means of sexual selection. But adaptation is never absolute. It always has a relative character and turns into its opposite when a radical change in conditions occurs, as can be seen, for example, from the existence of rudimentary organs.

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, then, what we have is selection without a selector, self-operating, blind and ruthless, working tirelessly and ceaselessly for countless centuries, choosing vivid external forms and colours and the minutest details of internal structure, but only on one condition, that all these changes should benefit the organism. The cause of the perfection of the organic world is natural selection! Time and death are the regulators of its harmony.

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