

## Chapter-9

### Buddhist Critiques of *Samavāya*

#### I

According to the school of the Elders or Theravāda, Buddha taught the four Aryan Truths, *āryasatyas*, often translated as noble truths. They are the truth of suffering (*dukkhasatya*), the truth of causation (*samudayasatya*), the truth of cessation (*nirodhasatya*), and the truth of way (*mārgasatya*). These truths are interpreted as: Everything is misery; everything is caused; if the cause destroyed, the effect is destroyed; and there is a way to destroy the cause. But although the truths are simple, their interpretation and exposition gave rise to some of the grandest philosophies and a large number of schools. First, the doctrine of momentariness was developed out of the first truth. There is suffering in every drop of existence, because it is born, decays and dies. There is nothing in the world that is not subject to change. According to the conservative Buddhists, every bit of existence is born, stays, and dies at the same moment, giving place to another bit of existence. Existence or Being is a momentary event and contains its own non-existence or Non-being. There is, therefore, no being without its non-being. Everything is both positive and negative at the same place and time. This doctrine of flux is called the doctrine of momentariness or *kṣaṇikavāda*.

The stability of things is only an appearance. Everything that appears to stay or events passes on its pattern to the next group of events, and we think that the same object continues to exist. But it is really a series of aggregates of events following the same pattern. Apart from the aggregates, the thing is nothing. It is a whole of parts. A chariot is nothing but its parts. Man is nothing but the parts that constitute him. Every ultimate part of man is a momentary event. But although the events themselves are momentary, the

patterns are not momentary, but continue for a time. Practically they play the role of universals in Buddhist thought. But they are neither real nor unreal. The Buddhists do not accept the reality of universals.

Out of the second Aryan Truth, that every event has a cause is developed the main Buddhist doctrine of causation. Nothing happens without a cause, and the causal relation is fixed between two events. Otherwise anything can originate out of anything. The acorn can produce only the oak, but not an apple tree. Yet since everything is momentary, the cause has to die before the effect originates. There is, therefore, no material cause continuing into the effect. The effect originates, depending on the cause, but not as a new form of the cause. From the side of the effect, causation is called dependent origination or *pratityasamutpāda*. From the side of the cause, it becomes a necessary occasion for the appearance of the effect. Without it, the effect cannot arise.

The rest of the noble Truths are salvific and are of ethical import, and we refrain from discussing them. However, through the course of a few centuries, the four Aryan Truths taught by Buddha were recast and were accepted in a new form. The Truths in a new form are: Everything is misery (*sarvam duhkham*); everything is momentary (*sarvam kṣaṇikam*); everything is self-less (*sarvam nairātmyam* or *anātmam*); and everything is void (*sarvam śūnyam*). The third and fourth follow from the doctrine of aggregates and momentariness.

The whole is nothing but its parts. The self (*ātman*) which experiences itself as "I am" is an aggregate of psycho-physical aggregates. The concept of selfless-ness (*anātmata*) and natureless-ness (*niḥsvabhāvatā*) was extended to all objects of the world. The chariot has no self or nature of its own apart from that of

its parts. As everything is caused by certain causes, it cannot have a self or nature of its own apart from that of its causes. Every one of the causes also cannot have a self or nature of its own apart from that of its own causes. Then nothing in the world can have a self or nature of its own. So everything is a void (*śūnya*), self-less, nature-less.

We may say that, throughout the philosophy of Buddhism, the two ideas that everything its own nature (*sarvam svalakṣaṇam*) and nothing has its own nature (*sarvam nihsvabhāvam*) almost run parallel, sometimes separately and other times mixing up with each other in different ways. Nagarjuna wanted to show that ultimate reality cannot be described either in positive or negative terms. It cannot have any characteristics, not even that of suchness (*tathvatā*). Also the phenomenal world has its own nature. He developed one of the most devastating dialectics ever written in the world and exposed the natureless-ness (*nihsvabhāvatā*) and attacked the view that everything has its own nature (*svalakṣaṇa*). If everything can be shown to have only relative existence then which thing can have its own nature? And if everything is devoid of its own characters and is, therefore, void and there is nothing that is not void, the absolute reality must be void. What we see is only an appearance of the void. Appearance is the empirical truth (*samvṛtisatya*); the void is the Absolute Truth or *paramārthasatya*. So everything that belongs to this world is only an empirical truth. If the world is not real, it could not have been born and was, therefore, never born. This doctrine is known as an *ajātivāda*. Nagarjuna disapproved the reality of causality. An example will suffice to illustrate his method. When we say every event has a cause, do we speak of real events or unreal events? Real events are already real and existent and do not need a cause. Neither do unreal events need a cause. Then what is causality for? Causality is, therefore, unreal. Nagarjuna calls himself the follower of the middle

path (*mādhyaṃika*). Reality is neither such-ness nor consciousness (*vijñāna*); even these two terms are characterizations. It is only void. Indeed, even to call it void is to characterize it.

## II

It will have been seen by now that the Buddhist formulates his views and presuppositions in so radical a manner that availability of such notions as *avayavi* and *avayava*, the container and the contained, etc. is rendered impossible. Yet, it is the case that the older Nyāya engaged itself with the Buddhist. The polemic was even sided, and we have the *locus classicus* of the Buddhist antique of the very concept of *sambandha* itself in Dharmakīrti's *Sambandha Parīkṣā*.

In the present context we propose to concentrate on the statement of Dharmakīrti:

*Pāraṅtryaṃ hi sambandhaḥ siddhe ka paraṅtratā ।*

*Tasmāt sarvasya bhāvasya sambandha nāsti tattvaḥ ॥<sup>1</sup>*

What is significant is that Dharmakīrti rejects admitting *sambandha* from the point of *tattvaḥ*. Or to put it in another way, relations could be admitted empirically, at the level of *saṃvṛti*, but *not* real *per se*, i.e., from the *paramārtha* point of view.

Dharmakīrti proposes to understand *sambandha* in either of the following senses: (a) *pāraṅtrya*, (b) *rūpaśleṣa*, or (c) *aniṣpanna*. Relations then can be asserted to obtain between relata of dependent character, or in the case of the amalgam of the two relata, or between two relata that are not at all produced. And each of the sense is shown to be inadmissible.

Now we take the case of *pāraṅtrya* first. If a and b are the relata, and R is the relation in aRb, and if a and b are endowed with *sattā* or existence prior to their being related by R, what then is the

function of R? If R has no function as to a and b, they can hardly be called 'relation'. If the reference of the relata is opaque, R becomes problematic. The point is that R can be asserted only if a and b are mutually dependent.

Then as regards *rūpaśleṣa*, that is amalgam of forms in the case of *sambandha*. R, instead of existing apart from a and b, is now considered as an amalgam of a and b or the mixture of their forms, e.g. the two halves or *kapālas* of *ghaṭa*. If the relata are distinct objects existing without reference to the other, the *rūpaśleṣa* or their amalgam is hardly noticeable. Therefore, no *sambandha* as *rūpaśleṣa* can be admitted. If ab is the *rūpaśleṣa* or amalgam of a and b, irrespective of R, what then is the function of the *āśleṣa* or the amalgam?

It may be conjectured that the concept of *rūpaśleṣa* corresponds to the Nyāya idea of *samavāya*. If that is the case, then inadmissibility of *rūpaśleṣa* should disallow *samavāya* as well. Since on Dharmakīrti's premises no relation in the above three senses is possible, *samavāya* too would remain an impossibility.

Again, *rūpaśleṣa* may be interpreted as *nairantaryam*, i.e., having no spatio-temporal gap between the two relata. This possibility is also ruled out as the phenomenon cannot be conceived as real. No relation admits such a gap. Relation is something positive, and in its absence, *nairantaryam*, relation becomes negative in import, and it goes against the idea of relation itself. Nor can the *abhāva* of *nairantaryam* be taken as a relation.

Now we take the case of *rūpaśleṣa* further. It may be asked, is the amalgamation total or partial? Between two atoms in total *rūpaśleṣa* might give rise to a larger in size than either of the relata, but this is not conceivable. Again, if the *rūpaśleṣa* is partial, the

question would be if it is identical with the whole or not. If the *rūpaśleṣa* is partial, it amounts to saying that an atom, which is definitionally *niramśa*, has parts. This is not to be allowed. In either case, the dyadic complex in the *rūpaśleṣa* of a and b will remain problematic. If the *rūpaśleṣa* is total, the identity of a and b will be erased, and if a and b retain their identity in partial *rūpaśleṣa*, it makes no sense at all.

Dharmakīrti proliferates the argument in another way. If  $R \neq (a \cdot b)$ , a and b remain but no R. if  $R = (a \cdot b)$ , R alone remains, without a and b. neither of the two possibilities are admissible and conceivable. Dharmakīrti summarizes his position in the following manner:

*rūpaśleṣo hi sambandho dvitve sa ca katṭhāṃ bhavet |*

*tasmāt prakṛtibhinnānām sambandho nāsti tattataḥ ||<sup>2</sup>*

The matter is that Dharmakīrti finds 'the concept of *sambandha* logically inadequate to be admitted' into philosophical vocabulary. Let us take a few more examples of his arguments. If relation is understood in the sense of *parāpekṣā* or dependence of one relation on another, the relatum will have to be either existent (*sat*) or non-existent (*asat*). If the relatum is non-existent, it makes no sense to say that it depends on another, since 'dependence' or *parāpekṣā* cannot be said to be the property of a non-existent object. If, on the other hand, the relatum is existent, it cannot be said that it is dependent on another relatum *necessarily*. Being *kṣaṇika*, as per the definition of *sat*, the relatum, the question of dependence will not arise.

The Buddhist view holds that if a relatum is *sat*, it wills causal efficacy or *arthakriyākāritva*. But it is causally efficacious, why should it depend on any other object? In this manner Dharmakīrti does away with the concept of relation as *parāpekṣā*.

Again, Dharmakīrti refers to the problem of *anāvasthā*. This is of some interest. Let there be a book on the table. There is *samyoga*. But since *samyoga* is a *guṇa*, and the table is the possessor of the *guṇa*, that is the *guṇī*, the case of supposing *samavāya* comes up between them. But between the *samavāya* and the book there should be another *sambandha*, and so on. Thus for Dharmakīrti, only the relata remain, relation being a null concept.

If relation is a positive entity, R would have been a *svalakṣaṇa*, just as the relata, a and b are so. A *svalakṣaṇa* is referentially opaque, and therefore, a, R and b are and would remain unrelated. R stands unrelated to a and b, just as a and b are to each other. The logic of *svalakṣaṇa* renders relation impossibility.

More interestingly, Dharmakīrti criticizes the realist's contention as regards the reality of the relation between cause and effect. According to Nyāya, causal relationship is characterized by the property of *dvitatva*, existing in two relata. 'Cause' and 'effect' are not simultaneous occurrences. Simultaneity does not entitle one event to be called 'cause', and another 'event'. The left and the right horns of a cow exist simultaneously but neither is the cause of the other. It cannot be said that the causal relation in either of the relata in a successively manner, for had it been so, the relation may exist in either of the relata, in the absence of the other. This is absurd and a travesty of the notion of that relation. The concept of relation is binary, R (ab), and answers the questions of 'of whom' and 'with whom'. Hence *sambandha* abides in two relata, and never in either of them. The causal relation, *kāryakāraṇabhāva* entails both the relata. *ekavṛttimāna sambandha* is a causal misnomer.

Dharmakīrti appears to suggest that causal relationship is nothing but a form of *anvaya-vyatireka* mode of thinking. *Anvaya-vyatireka* consists in considering *bhāvābhavau*, that is taking both

positive and negative instances together. The assertion of causal relation is redundant. For Mill, the Joint Method of Agreement and Difference is a method finding necessary connection between cause and effect. But for the Naiyāyika would contend that *anvaya-vyatireka* and *kārya-kāraṇatā* are two different things, and not synonymous expressions.

At this point, Dharmakīrti makes a psychological move. Arguing that meaning of words and sentences depend on the intention of the speaker (*vivakṣā*), he argues that as the speaker speaks in a context, and intends or understands *anvaya-vyatireka* as *kārya-kāraṇatā*, it follows that apart from *anvaya-vyatireka*, there is no relation that could be said to be *kārya-kāraṇatā*.

Dharmakīrti further asks whether the cause and the effect are different or identical with each other. If cause and effect are different, i.e., not related to each other, to talk of relation between them is useless. Again, if they are identical, i.e., not separated, it would be senseless to talk of any relation between them. Supposing that cause and effect are taken as related through a separate entity, say R, the independent status of cause and effect would be jeopardized. This should not surprise us. For a follower of *ajātivāda* could not do otherwise.

There are many conceptual niceties in Dharmakīrti's *Sambandha Parikṣā*. We need not take all of them into account. But the main thrust of the argument appears as follows. If relation or *sambandha* is a null concept for Dharmakīrti, or for that matter any Buddhist follower of Nagarjuna, it should follow immediately that no so-called relations admitted by the realists, be it *saṃyoga* or *samavāya* would not find any room in that scheme of thought. The ontological presuppositions like *kṣaṇikatā*, *svalakṣaṇa*, unreality of

*samudaya*, etc. have been at work behind his critique of the reality of relations.

Before we close, we may take note of the arguments of Śāntarakṣita as he advances in *Tattvasamgraha*. Togetherness is not enough to establish *samavāya*, and he does not accept the *ihapratyayahetu*, the container-contained relationship defining *samavāya*<sup>3</sup>. Even if two things remain in a close contact, e.g., fruits in the basket, we are hardly entitled to infer the one from the other, nor can they be said to be inseparable in the sense of endorsing *samavāya*. The container-contained relationship does not obtain in ordinary experience<sup>4</sup>. Śāntarakṣita would only admit *saṃyoga*, instead of *samavāya* in the case of fruits in the basket.

Śāntarakṣita finds it difficult to accept such views of *samavāya*, as *ekatva*<sup>5</sup> (oneness) and *nitya*<sup>6</sup>, etc. he asks for grounds for such assertions. He holds that to admit one eternal inherence relating each and every inseparable pair should imply much inherence as there are many pairs but *not one*<sup>7</sup>. For him, *saṃyoga* should be sufficient for explaining both the separable and allegedly inseparable relations. *Samavāya* as a relation is a redundancy. Further, as for *nityatva* of *samavāya*, Śāntarakṣita argues, if *samavāya* were *nitya*, nothing would pass into annihilation<sup>8</sup>. A wrong view or notion abides in the self in *samavāya* relation. When the wrong view is overcome or destroyed, what happens to the relation? If the relation too goes off along with the wrong view, it makes no sense in saying that *samavāya* is *nitya*<sup>9</sup>. It appears that Śāntarakṣita offers this argument in *reductio ad absurdum* to that of the Naiyāyika.

## Notes and references

1. *Sambandhparikṣā, kārikā* No. 1.
2. *Sambandhparikṣā, kārikā* No. 2.
3. "*tantuṣveva patohmiṣu vīraṇeṣu kaṭaḥ punaḥ.  
ityādīhamaterbhāvātsamavāyohvagamyate*".- Verse 823.  
Śāntarakṣita (63).
4. "*tadetadihavijñānaṃ pareṣāmeva varttate.  
svasiddhāntānurāgena na dṛṣṭaṃ laukikaṃ tu tat*".- Verse 827.  
Ibid.
5. "*sarvasminbhāvavattveṣa eka eva pratīyate*".- Verse 825. Ibid.
6. "*kāraṇānupalabdheśca nityo bhāvavadeva saḥ.  
na hyasya kāraṇaṃ kiñcit pramāṇenopalakṣyate*".-Verse 826. Ibid.
7. "*yadekaḥ samavāyaḥ syāt sarvesveveva ca vastuṣu.  
kapālādiṣvapi jñānaṃ paṭādīti prasajyate*".-Verse 835. Ibid.
8. "*nīyatvenāsyā sarveḥpi nityāḥ prāptāḥ ( ghaṭādayaḥ).  
ādihāreṣu sadā teṣāṃ samavāyo na saṃsthiteḥ*".-Verse  
854. Ibid.
9. "*svādhāraissamavāyo hi teṣāmapi sadā mataḥ.  
teṣāṃ vināśabhāve tu niyatāhsyāpi nāśitā*".-Verse 856. Ibid.