

SOME SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS OF BUDDHIST LOGICIANS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

I shall confine myself here mainly to some contributions of the Buddhist logicians in the fields of metaphysical, epistemological and logical enquiries.

The contribution of these master-minds is unmistakably felt not only in the formulation of their independent systems of metaphysics, epistemology and logic, which are of inestimable value, but also in the impact of their arguments on the thinkers of rival schools. In the face of penetrating Buddhist criticisms the philosophers of *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* and *Mīmāṃsā* schools had to make continual revisions of their original standpoints. The scope of the present paper will not permit me to discuss, even in a nutshell, what I consider to be the most noteworthy contributions of the Buddhist logicians mentioned above. Let me, instead, try to remind the readers of just one or two significant achievements of the Buddhist logicians, merely by way of illustration.

These achievements are traceable primarily in the formulation of certain maxims. I am inclined to call these 'achievements', primarily because of the fact that the Buddhist insistence on the validity of these principles compelled philosophers of the opposite camps to modify their original positions time and again. Moreover, although the critics of Buddhist logicians may, at the outset, seem to have clinched the issues finally, yet further probing would certainly prove that the Buddhist case is still open for a further hearing.

I shall start by exploring the field of metaphysics. Here I would like to invite the reader's attention to the Buddhist doctrine of universal flux and an important presupposition of it.

One of the important presuppositions of the Buddhist doctrine of universal instability is the maxim that *a capacity must be exercised at once*. It follows from this that *there is no such thing*
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as an unrealised capacity. This principle emerges in the course of the Buddhist and Naiyāyika polemics regarding the enduring nature of causes. The formulation of this principle may be considered an important Buddhist contribution. Buddhists seek to establish universal impermanence with the help of the argument that causal efficacy is the hall-mark of the real, and in order to be causally efficacious a cause must be instantaneous. In course of their exposition the Buddhist logicians try to expose the absurdity involved in the Naiyāyika's alternative of the enduring nature of causes. Such enduring causes, they point out, would be impervious to change. Hence, if they are capable of producing the effects, they must have been having the potency always. As a result, even the seed in the granary would have been able to produce the sprout just as much as the seed in the field. Hence, a cause would, in that case, be able to bring into being the effect even without the auxiliary causes (but, as a matter of fact, a cause is unable to do so). If, on the other hand, such static and enduring causes lacked fecundity at the initial stage, then it would be illogical to say that they come to acquire such a generative efficacy at a later stage. The reason is, causal efficacy (*kriyā*) and inefficacy (*akriyā*) are two diametrically opposed properties. How can they inhere in one and the same thing? Besides, if incapacity belong to the thing as its innate characteristic, it would always remain incapable. A transmutation in the nature of an *abiding and invariable object* is a contradiction in terms. (*na tu sthiraikasvabhāveṣu bhāveṣu svabhāvasyānyathā-tvasambhavāt samarthāsamarthasvabhāvānām kriyākriyānupapattē*).¹

Faced with the difficulty involved in maintaining that a cause comes to acquire the causal efficacy from its contact with auxiliaries, the *Naiyāyikas* may try to save the situation by urging that efficacy is indeed an intrinsic property of the cause. Yet the cause possesses this efficacy in a *latent form*. When certain conditions are fulfilled, the latent capacity becomes fully realized.

Dharmakīrti, however, vehemently opposes such a line of arguing. He points out that if something had the capacity to produce an effect by itself, then it must actually produce it *at once*. (*Samartheti cet, Kim na karoti, akurvan katham samarthah?*)²

The *Naiyāyikas* retort by saying that there is no rule laying down that, if a thing has the capacity to produce another thing, then it must produce it then and there³. The Buddhists are only too eager to point out the inanity of such a line of thinking. If 'being the producer of y' is an intrinsic property of x, then no power on earth can stop it from producing y then and there. (This argument has, as a matter of fact, been put forward at several places in the *Hetubindu* and its *Tīkā*. See especially "*tasmāt svabhāvasyānyathātvāsambhavāt, tad-dharmans tathābhāvo'ntyāvasthā-vad anivāryaḥ*"⁴. Only in respect of an acquired property can it be sensibly said that the thing concerned does not possess it now, but will come to do so at a later stage when certain conditions will be fulfilled. But such a statement cannot be made with regard to a *connate property*.

The Buddhist presupposition mentioned above inevitably caused resentment among the critics. *Naiyāyikas* naturally subjected the maxim to the severest of criticisms possible. The maxim also seems to be shaking the foundation of our commonsensical beliefs very badly. After all, we are so much used to talking in terms of 'potentialities'.

Now, the Buddhist position might seem to be quite an absurd one in the light of the meaning attached to the conception of 'potentialities' both by commonsense and by a large section of philosophers. But, on a closer scrutiny, shall find that the Buddhist position, in fact, involves no absurdity. It seems to me that the dispute between the Buddhist and his opponent is really a controversy arising out of the adoption of different languages; and not any debate with regard to any facts about causation. Let me try to elucidate my position with the help of the following example.

Suppose that a mixture of lemon juice, honey and hot water cures a bad cough. Now, each of these ingredients, in isolation, is *incapable* of curing the cough. Yet, we tend to think, albeit wrongly, that since the capacity to cure is attributable to the combination of three, it must also somehow, be attributable to each of them in isolation. And the only way such a capacity can be attributed to any one of them singly, seems to be, by using

the terminology of unrealised potentiality. We can say for example, that honey is *potentially* capable of curing a cough, although the full realisation of this latent capacity depends upon the fulfilment of certain conditions. If we said simply that honey by itself is capable of curing, that statement would plainly be untrue. And we avoid saying this by suggesting that honey is *potentially capable* of curing.

We must, however, realise that, in order to explain the causal situation referred to above, we need not *necessarily* use the terminology of 'potential capacity'. The situation can also be analysed in terms of properties in actual existence, not potential ones. We can, for example, talk of certain things possessing certain capacities/properties in such a way that a desired result can be brought about only with the help of a certain *combination* of these things, each of which, however, by itself, is incapable of bringing about the result. The Buddhists have, as a matter of fact, adopted such a parlance. A combination of the properties of all of these three things mentioned above is both necessary and sufficient for bringing about the desired result, and yet none of these things, by itself, is sufficient for that purpose. And this is really what is expressed in a different way, by saying that each of them has the 'capacity, which is yet to be realised', to bring about the result. It thus appears to me that those who speak of 'unrealised potentialities' have not really discovered a *queer sort of entity*, which is completely different from the positively existing properties. With the help of positively instantiated properties alone, objects can perform various causal activities. What the advocates of 'unrealised potentialities' are doing, is, thus, not pointing to any *additional facts* about causation which the Buddhists have failed to notice, but merely describing the same facts about causation with the help of a language different from that adopted by the Buddhists.

Let me try to illustrate my point further with reference to 'dispositional properties', which are also supposed to be potential in character.

Let us take a dispositional property like 'solubility'. This property can be explained in terms of certain existing non-dispositional chemical and structural properties of the soluble thing and certain causal laws.

For example, "x is soluble" can be reduced into : "for some non-dispositional existing property P (viz. chemical and structural properties), an x is P, and it is a causal law that whenever x is brought into contact with water, x dissolves". (In the same vein we can say that honey, lemon juice and hot water have certain chemical properties, and it is a causal law that whenever they are brought into contact with one another, they relieve irritations in soar throat.)

Some one may object by saying that no matter what pattern of explanation you may bring forward to explain dispositional properties, the fact remains that there is a crucial difference between a dispositional and a non-dispositional one.

In answer we would like to point out that the pattern of explanation which we have quoted above is also applicable to the so-called 'non-dispositional properties' like 'red', 'white', 'hot', 'cold', 'sweet' and so on. For example, "x is red" can be reduced into "the surface of x has certain structural properties, and it is a causal law that whenever a thing like x is brought into contact with sunlight, it emits wavelengths of light which, by contact with our optic nerves, produces the sensation of redness in a normal percipient. It is thus obvious that, in spite of the fact that the same explanatory pattern is applicable to properties like 'soluble' and some other properties like 'redness' which are, by common consensus, supposed to be non-dispositional, our demurrer is insisting that the former deserves a special status and that we ought therefore to put it into a separate category.

Let us now direct our attention to some important observations made by Buddhist logicians in the logico-epistemological fields. These observations are distinctly Buddhist in nature. They sparked off most interesting debates between the two contending groups—the Buddhists and the non-Buddhists. Even in the face of the most scathing criticisms, the Buddhists stick to their original standpoint. And, in my opinion, the Buddhist position still merits further investigation.

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In my opinion, however, even the latest *Navya-Nyāya* manoeuvre mentioned above still does not make the *Nyāya* standpoint decidedly a superior one, as far as the law of contradiction is concerned. As far as I can see, even with the introduction of the concept of *avacchedaka* or delimitor the *Navya-Nyāya* position seems to be *substantially* the same as that of the Buddhist logician. The *Naiyāyika* can no longer stubbornly insist that the unbaked dark pot remains *strictly identical* with the later baked pot which becomes a different red colour. He can at best claim that the dark unbaked pot is *identical with itself* in respect of its delimitor, 'dark colour'. He will be forced to grant that the unbaked dark pot is *different* from the red baked pot of later times with respect to the delimitor, 'red colour'. The position is not in fact very different from that of the Buddhist who insists on the following :

- (i) The dark pot of t_1 is *identical with itself* in respect of the property (*dharma*), darkness.
- (ii) The dark pot of t_1 is *different* from the red pot of t_2 in respect of the property, redness (*viruddha-dharmādhyāsāt bhinnah*).

The *Naiyāyika's* position that the Law of Contradiction does not hold good with respect to an entity at *different times*, can strictly be said to have been established only if the *Naiyāyikas* could prove that the unbaked pot of the earlier time *remains identical with its later new fangled form*. (And the *Naiyāyikas* admitted that the dark pot is *different* from the red baked pot in respect of the delimitor, red colour). What they have succeeded in proving is only that the dark unbaked pot is *identical with itself*.

Thus the difference between the standpoint of the *Naiyāyikas* and that of the Buddhists seems mainly to be a difference of technical vocabulary. The *Navya-Naiyāyikas* seem to be expressing the same fact about the Law of Contradiction which the Buddhists are expressing, only with the help of the notion of delimitor.

Let me now take the opportunity of citing an example of some insightful observations made by Buddhist logicians in the field of logic. Take for example the discussions centering around the nature of *vyāpti* (pervasion). According to the *Nyāya* way of

looking at it, *vyāpti* consists of a relation of universal concomitance (*niyata sambandha*) between the reason (*hetu*) and the thing proven (*sādhya*). Because there is no exception to their correlation, the relation of *vyāpti* is also referred to in *Nyāya* texts as an invariable relation (*avyābhicāra niyamaḥ*). *Dharmakīrti* points out that the *Nyāya* analysis of *Vyāpti* suffers from an inadequacy. If the relationship between the reason (*hetu*) and the thing proven (*sādhya*) is to be an invariable one, then, *Dharmakīrti* points out, the two of them must be necessarily related. It is not enough, as the *Naiyāyikas* would have it, that the *hetu* just happens to be correlated with the *sādhya* in every case. This necessary relation between the two, again, *Dharmakīrti* maintains, is possible only if the *hetu* and the *sādhya* are related by their very nature. (*na hi yo yatra svabhāvena na pratibaddhaḥ sa tam apratibaddhaviṣayam avaśyam eva na vyābharati.*)⁷ *Dharmakīrti* tells us of two different ways in which the *hetu* and the *sādhya* can be related by their very nature (i.e. necessarily related). There must subsist between them either (i) a relation of *tādātmya* (co-extensiveness / integral relationship) or (ii) a relation of *tadutpatti* (relation of cause and effect). For example, there is a necessary relation of *vyāpti* between the property of being a tree and the property of being a *śiṃśapā*, because there is a necessary relation (of *tādātmya*) between the generic and specific properties. Again, there is a necessary relation of *vyāpti* between the property of being a fire and that of being smoke, because a cause and an effect are necessarily related by their very nature.

Dharmakīrti admits the validity of *vyāpti* in cases which do not apparently exemplify either a relation of *tādātmya* or a relation of *tadutpatti*.

Yet, such cases of *vyāpti*, e.g. as that between a certain taste and a certain colour, can, in his opinion, be subsumed under the relation of *tadutpatti*.

Protagonists of the *Nyāya* school may, at this stage, try to argue that even the *Nyāya* system also envisaged the possibility of a necessary relation between a *hetu* and a *sādhya*. Yet, as far as I can see it, the *Naiyāyikas* can, at best, demonstrate the existence of an *empirical* necessity in a case of *vyāpti*. It would, on no account, qualify as an instance of *logical necessity*.

Buddhist logicians can successfully claim the existence of logical connection between the *hetu* and the *sādhya* by virtue of their insistence that the *hetu* is *connected by its very nature* to the *sādhya*. There is a logical contradiction (not merely a practical difficulty of *vyāghāta*) in thinking of the *śiṃśapātva* of a thing without also thinking of its *vṛkṣatva*. If *x* is to pervade *y*, then *y* cannot be absent where *x* is present. And the 'cannot' here is simply a *logical* 'cannot'.

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NOTES

1. *Dharmakīrti's Hetubinduḥ*, Text I, Ed. by Ernst Stein Kellner Wien, 1967, p. 63.
2. *Ibid.* p. 53.
3. *Hetubindutikā* by Arcaṭa Bhaṭṭa as found in *Hetubindu-prakaranam*, Gaekwads Oriental Series. No. CXIII, Baroda, 1949. p. 119.
4. *Hetubindu*, p 55, see also the commentary on that passage on p. 119 of the *Tikā*.
5. *Tattvacintamani* with commentary by Mathuranatha Ed. Kamakhyanatha Tarkavagisha, 4 vols. (Calcutta : Asiatic Society of Bengal), p. 660.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Nyāyabindu* with *Tikā* : Ed. by Chandrashekhar Shastri, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 2nd Edition, 1954, p. 31.

