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CAUSATION IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT:

Before we consider the theories accounting for the change and the difficulties involved in the concept, it will be worthwhile to know importance of the concept. The importance of the concept is twofold: Metaphysical and Logical. If we are able to account for the change, that will, to a very great extent, throw light on the nature's Reality. Is all Reality intrinsically active, i.e., changing by itself, e.g., the Prakriti of Sankhyas, or is it intrinsically passive, as the atoms of Nyaya-Vaisesika, and acted upon by some other active agency? There are the questions which are intimately connected with the change, and thereof, with the concept of causation. If we are able to account for the change, we are, in

fact, able to know the nature of Reality. Again, much of our inference is based on causation. The validity of inference depends, to a very great extent, on the validity of the law of causation. If we are able to establish some connection between two occurrences, we can infer and thus, predict that if one event occurs, the other will also occur. We can, thus, pass on from what has happened in the observed cases to what is likely to happen in cases which have not been observed.

KEYWORDS: Aristotle, Cause-Effect, Nyaya-Vaisesika.

INTRODUCTION:

Before discussing the Indian concept of causation, it will be worth to be acquainted with the Western treatment of causation, because it will help us to get an insight into the problems of causation and shall equip us with the capability of looking at Indian treatment in comparison with that of the Western.

ARISTOTLE'S FOUR CAUSES:

A systematic treatment of causation in early Western philosophy is found in Aristotle's philosophy. Aristotle, drawing upon the traditions of his predecessors, distinguished

four quite different kinds of causes. These are: (i) the Efficient cause, i.e., the cause by which some change is wrought, (ii) the Final cause, i.e. the end of the purpose for which a change is produced, (iii) the material cause, i.e., the matter in which the change is produced, and (iv) the Form cause, i.e., the form into which something is changed. In producing a statue, for example, the sculptor who produces it, is the Efficient cause, the purpose, viz., possessing a beautiful object, is the Final cause, the piece of marble, with which the statue is produced, is the Material cause, and the form with the distinctive features of a statue is the Formal cause.

MEDIAEVAL AND MODERN CONCEPTIONS OF CAUSE:

In Scholasticism, the four causes mentioned by Aristotle have been distinguished. The Scholastics also distinguished between a cause cognoscente, i.e., the reason or ground for a truth, and a cause fiend, i.e., the cause of the existence of something. But the term 'cause' is now used mostly in the latter sense; it is rarely used in the former sense.

In modern philosophy and science there is no much room for Material and Formal causes and the Final cause too finds some place only in Biology to understand the Biological or developmental phenomena, or in Psychology in the form of 'goals'. But the role of Final cause in the

forms of goals too is highly controversial. Some other kinds of causes have also been distinguished by the philosophers of the modern age. Spinoza introduced the distinction of 'Immanent' and 'Transient' causes. Immanent cause is one which produces a change within itself, e.g., the man who produces his own voluntary motions and thoughts. Transient cause is that which produces a change in something. Again, Thomas Reid and J.S. Mill made between 'Efficient' cause and 'Physical' causes. Efficient causes, according to them, are performing voluntary acts while the Physical causes are those through which the act is done.

UNIVERSALITY AND UNIFORMITY OF CAUSATION:

Universality of causation means that no change ever occurs without some cause, or in other words, every event has a cause. Uniformity of causation, on the other hand, means that the causal relation can be expressed in the form of general laws that similar causes always produced similar effects.

The universality of causation is quite different from the uniformity. The universality of causation has usually been regarded as quite obvious, rather self-evident. But doubts have been expressed these days and we find many thinkers now regard certain changes in the minutest constituents of matter to have no cause at all. The voluntary actions too are not regarded by some philosophers to be causes in any generally accepted sense of cause. Thus, the universality of causation, which was considered to be obvious and self-evident once, has now a point of controversy. We cannot, in any way, prove the universality of causation, because, in order to prove it we shall have to demonstrate some sort of absurdity in its denial. But, in fact, there is no logical absurdity in imagining a change occurring without cause. The universality of causation, according to J.S. Mill, is 'co-existence with human experience', but it cannot be said to be strictly true, because, in our practical life, in many cases, we do not actually perceive for so many changes, we only infer the causes there on the basis of other causal connections.

THEORIES OF CAUSATION:

According to A.C. Ewing¹ there are three theories of causation as like: (i) the Regularity theory (ii) the Entailment theory and (iii) the Activity theory.

The Regulative Theory:

The common sense notion of causation consists in a causation producing its effect. But what is meant by 'producing' cannot be easily explained. The concept of 'producing' implies some sort of necessary connection between cause and effect and Hume has shown that such necessary connection does not exist objectively; it is only an inauguration of our mind. In our experience we only see one event following the other event. This is some time regular, sometimes irregular. When we regularly see one kind of event, we make a generalization and start saying that the preceding event cause the following event. We regularly see that striking a match with a match box produces aflame and from that conclude that striking the match is the cause of the production of the flame. But in these cases we do not see any other factor expect the regular sequence. Thus, the philosopher, who has a bent towards empiricism, will likely adopt a view regarding causation which identifies or approximates to identifying causation with regular sequence, since regular sequence is the only factor that can be observed empirically. If A and B stand for events, then, A causes B will simply mean that A is always followed by B. This is the Regularity theory.

Entailment theory:

Entailment is a term of Logic and stands for the relation between the premises and the conclusion in an argument where the latter follows necessarily from the former. It is also sometimes used for the relation between the objective facts expressed by the premises and by the conclusion. It implies a logical necessity; it is also used for the theory of causation, where some sort of necessary connection is assumed between causes and effects, so that we can say that given the causes, the effects

must follow. In Regularity theory we have seen that causes and effects are regarded as two separate unconnected facts, the former not implying the latter with a necessity. But in the Entailment theory of causation, a cause is supposed to be intrinsically connected with its effects so that a cause implies its effect; an effect cannot fail to occur if its cause occurs.

Activity Theory:

The primitive of cause ascribes causation to some agency. A cause, according to it, is what makes things happen. This view is expressed in the definition of cause given by Locke. "A cause," says Locke, "is that which any other thing to be, and an effect is that which had its beginning from some other thing."² Cause and effect are here defined as terms in a relation of producing. Cause, according to this view, is an active agent which makes an effect, which is regarded as passive. This view, thus, assumes a power in the cause which compels the effect to be. This is known as Activity theory of causation.

INDIAN TREATMENT OF CAUSATION:

Stress on Material Cause:

We have that in Western treatment of causation it is mainly the efficient cause that has figured. They have, for the most part; neglected material cause or the material cause has come into consideration there only secondarily, as when considering the whole cause preceding the effect, where actually the difference between the material and the efficient cause has disappeared. But when we come to the Indian treatment of causation, we find an altogether different approach in this matter. Indian thinkers, though mostly accept the efficient cause as one of the causes, have not bothered much about it. Their main subject of treatment is the material cause, i.e., the matter which, due to the activity of the efficient cause, takes a new shape. This material cause has of course appeared in different shades in different systems of Indian philosophy. In Sankhya, for instance, it is the permanent basis of the changing states which are real; in Vedanta, it is the permanent basis of the changing states which are not real but only appear due to illusion; and Nyaya-Vaisesika, it appears in altogether different conception of inherent cause which is in the form of a substratum of newer states as well as never and altogether different substances in the form of 'wholes'. One more point to be noted that this material cause, in Indian thought, it is always passive: Prakrti of Sankhya, which constitutes the material cause of the whole universe, is an active body, always itself inherently changing and Brahman of Sankara Vedanta, which is the substratum of the whole illusory appearance of the universe, is itself a material cause as well as instrumental cause. The conception of material cause here is parallel to the conception of immanent causality of the Western thinkers.

Main Problems of Causation Discussed by Indian Thinkers:

While the Western thinkers are troubled and occupied by the considerations of the relation of the efficient cause with its effect, the main problem discussed by Indian thinkers is that of the relation of the material cause with its effect. Where from the essence of effect is derived? Does the material cause impart any essence of effect is derived? Does the material cause impart any essence to its effect or is it completely external to the cause so far the essence is concerned? Is the essence then derived from void, i.e., the effect is created out of nothing? In the Nyaya-Vaisesika conception of cause, for example, as an effect is a completely new entity when its essence different from that of its inherent cause and side by side with it, the problem of different weights of the cause and effect has been a cause of much botheration. This and such of the related problems we shall see in the course of our discussion of the individual theories of the different schools.

Problem of Essence of Effect: Two Main Theories:

The problem of the essence of effect is the basic problem of Indian thinkers and, in fact, the whole of the division of Indian theories of causation is based on its consideration. There are only two possibilities with regard to the essence of effect: either an effect derives its essence from its cause or it

does not. If an effect derives its essence from its cause, it will mean that so far the essence of the effect concerned, it is existent in some form even prior to coming into formal existence. If an effect does not derive its essence from its cause, it will mean that it is not at all existent in any form whatsoever prior to its coming into formal existence. This is the basic of the two broad divisions of the Indian theories of causation: *Satkarya-Vada*, i.e., the theory of the existent effect, and *Asatkarya-Vada*, i.e., the theory of the non-existent effect. *Satkarya-vada* maintains that an effect is existent even before its coming into formal existence so far its essence is concerned, i.e., the effect is existent before coming into actual existence in a latent or potential form; it is only manifested by the cause process. *Satkarya-vada*, on the other hand maintains that an effect is completely non-existent before the causal process; it is completely a new entity not only with regard to its form but also with regard to its essence, i.e., it does not at all derives its essence from its cause. The main exponents of *Satkarya-vada*, in Indian systems are *Sankhya-Yoga* and *Vedanta*, and of *Asatkarya-vada*, are *Nyaya-Visesika* and *Buddhists*. All the schools, of course, have individual differences and advocate their theories with different shades of *Satkarya-vada*, or *Asatkarya-vada*.

Satkarya-Vada: Its Two Forms

Satkarya-Vada maintains that an effect is existent in a potential or latent form before the causal process. Now, this theory can be split up into two forms according to the two different conceptions of Reality. If we believe that through a causal process change actually occurs and cause actually takes the shape of effect, it will be one kind of *Satkarya-vada*. It is specially called *Parinama-vada* or *Vikara-vada* and is advocated by *Sankhya* and *Yoga*. Both of them believe that the Reality which forms the basis of the phenomenal universe. i.e., *Prakriti*, is made up of ever changing more constituent *gunas* and through the intermixture of these *gunas* it adopts newer and forms which are actual and real. If, on the other hand, we believe that the ultimate Reality is unchanging and all kinds of changes are only apparent and illusory, it will be another kind of *Satkarya-vada*, specially known as *Vivarta-vada*, i.e., the theory of unreal change. *Sankara* school of *Vedanta* is an advocate of this theory.

Asatkarya-vada: Its Two Forms

According to *Asatkarya-vada* an effect is altogether a new entity, it is not existent in its cause in any form. But a question may be asked what happens to the cause when its effect comes into existence? Is the cause annihilated or continues to exist with effect? With these two alternative answers there have come into existence two types of theories in *Asatkarya-vada*. The schools of *Naya* and *Vaisesika* maintain that the cause, which is in the form of parts of the effect, continues to exist even after the appearance of the effect. But a difficulty in this conception will have to be confronted- if the effect is quite different from its cause and has a separate essence of its own, how is it that even after the appearance of the effect, there does not appear separate weights of cause and effect. If the cause continues to exist after the production of the effect, and the two have separate essences, it is quite obvious that they should have separate weights. It wills here, therefore, to be maintained that either the effect has no separate essence, or if it has, the cause is annihilated after the effect comes to the existence, *Buddhists* adopt the latter position and declare that cause is completely annihilated after giving rise to its effect. Therefore, according to *Buddhists*, is momentary and these moments for each themselves dying out. The specific name of the *Nyaya-Vaisesika* theory of causation is also *Arambha-vada* which means that an effect starts a fresh existence; it has no existence before.

A Classification of Indian Theories of Causation:

We can now attempt a classification of the Indian theories of causation. There are, firstly, two broad kinds: *Satkarya-vada* and *Asatkarya-vada*. The *Jain* theory, which is a middle course of the two, is the third and it can be called *Sad-Asatkarya-vada*, though this name is not used. *Satkarya-vada* is further divided into *Parinama-vada* or *Vikara-vada* advocated by *Sankhya* and *Yoga*, and *Vivarta-vada* advocated *Sankara Vedanta*. The *Asatkarya-vada* is divided into *Arambha-vada*, advocated by *Nyaya-Vaisesika* and followed by *Mimamsa*, and *Pratitya-Samutpada-vada*, advocated by *Buddhists*. The

middle course of the two, which can be called Sad-Asatkarya-vada, is advocated by Jainas and also by theistic schools of Vedanta. There is, however, another theory of causation, called Svabhava-vada or Yadrcha, advocated by Carvakas, which denies causality.

CONCLUSION:

A critical study of the theory of causation of all the important schools of Indian Philosophy in general and that of Nyaya-Vaisesika in particular, has been attempt in this work. A brief survey of the Western treatment of causation has also been, however, attempted, so that as insight may be attained into the problems of causation and the Indian treatment of the problem may be examined in the modern perspective.

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