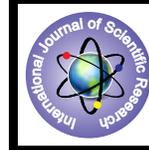


## An Analysis of Buddhist Philosophy of Relations



## Philosophy

**KEYWORDS :** Relation, Pratīyasamutpāda, Paṭṭhāna-Naya, tilakkhana, Paṭṭhāna-Naya,

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### ABSTRACT

*The whole of Buddhist philosophy circles around the theory of relations. The three basic worldview of Buddhism is analysed and reviewed in line with this theory. Pratīyasamutpāda, and Paṭṭhāna-Naya is better understood if an analysis of them in terms of relations is provided. Infact, this paper does the same as well as coax us to engage with a few intriguing questions.*

### Introduction

Relation has been understood widely as the connection that a thing has, or the reference an idea makes, to other things or ideas. The concept of relation has had philosophic importance in treatments of categories, logic, and metaphysics by western philosophers, wherein most of the major listening of philosophic categories "Relation" has been treated as a category. Buddhists have treated relation as a fundamental concept on which depends the Theory of Impermanence, Four Noble Truths and Theory of Dependent Origination. This paper, therefore, is an endeavour to explicate the concept of relation to Buddhist understanding of the world and the self.

### Buddhist Concept of Relations

Buddhist philosophy of Relations deals with the causal relation, namely, "When that exists, this comes to be; on the arising of that, this arises. When that does not exist, this does not come to be; on the cessation of that, this ceases". (Pandey, K.C. 2008, p. 108). Ledi Sayādaw, the famous Buddhist thinker, states that the relation is that by which a connection between things- as between cause and effect- is marked. (Sayādaw, Ledi. 1986, p. 4). Therefore, in causal chain of Dependent Origination 'marks' (*lakkhana*) characterize the different features of the chain. Marks of impermanence, marks of conditioned things and marks of causation have a greater say in Buddhist philosophy. The Relations (*Paṭṭhāna*) or the *Mahā-Pakarana* ("The Great 'book' or 'treatise'") is discussed in the seventh book of *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. Buddhism has mainly analyzed the concept of relation through the Law of Dependent Origination (*Praṭīyasamutpāda*) and the System of Correlation Dependent Origination deals with the causal relation, by which we are enabled to say 'on this happening that must arise'. The links of causal relations in Dependent Origination has twelve factors and are as follows:

- 1 Ignorance - (*Avijjā*)
- 2 Activity of mind/Volitional formation - (*Saṅkhāra*)
- 3 Consciousness - (*Viññāṇa*)
- 4 Mind-and-body - (*Nāmarūpa*)
- 5 Six organs/sense bases - (*Saḷāyatana*)
- 6 Contact - (*Phassa*)
- 7 Feeling - (*Vedanā*)
- 8 Craving - (*Taṇhā*)
- 9 Grasping - (*Upādāna*)
- 10 Becoming (*Bhava*)
- 11 Birth - (*Jāti*)
- 12 Decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, ill, grief, and despair. (Varma Chandra B. 1992. p. 102)

System of Correlation (*Paṭṭhāna-Naya*) deals only with the principal relations between invariable causes and inevitable effects. The System of Correlation mainly comprises of conditions, object, co-existence, sufficing conditions, antecedence and consequences, associations, dissociation, abeyance, presence, continuance etc. among other kinds of relations. These relations are mentioned below. When a happening is determined it is called relating thing (*paccaya-dhamma*) and when it determines it is termed as relating thing (*paccayuppanna-dhamma*). The deter-

mination is called the correlativity (*paccayata*). Apparently there are many kinds of determinations and accordingly there are twenty four kinds or relations. Such relations are as follows:

1. Root Condition: *Hetu-Paccaya*
2. Object Condition: *Ārammata-Paccaya*
3. Predominance Condition: *Adhipati-Paccaya*
4. Priority Condition: *Anantara-Paccaya*
5. Contiguity Condition: *Samanantara-Paccaya*
6. Co-Nascence Condition: *Sahajāta-Paccaya*
7. Mutuality Condition: *Aññamañña-Paccaya*
8. Support Condition: *Nissaya-Paccaya*
9. Decisive Support Condition: *Upanissaya-Paccaya*
10. Pre-Nascence Condition: *Purejāta-Paccaya*
11. Post-Nascence Condition: *Pacchājāta-Paccaya*
12. Repetition Condition: *Āsevana-Paccaya*
13. *Kamma* Condition: *Kamma-Paccaya*
14. *Kamma*-Result Condition: *Vipāka-Paccaya*
15. Nutriment Condition: *Āhāra-Paccaya*
16. Faculty Condition: *Indriya-Paccaya*
17. *Jhāna* Condition: *Jhāna-Paccaya*
18. Path Condition: *Magga-Paccaya*
19. Association Condition: *Sampayutta-Paccaya*
20. Dissociation Condition: *Vippayutta-Paccaya*
21. Presence Condition: *Atthi-Paccaya*
22. Absence Condition: *Natthi-Paccaya*
23. Disappearance Condition: *Vigata-Paccaya*
24. Non-Disappearance Condition: *Avigata-Paccaya*. (Thera, Narada Maha, 1998 p. 412-413)

### Critical Analysis of Buddhist concept of Relations

The Buddhist concept of Relations is analyzed in twofold ways i.e. by the Dependent Origination and by the way of the Correlation. Analyzing Dependent Origination taught us about what happens in a certain existence. Hence, we know that:

1. The causes for our coming into this present existence are due to our ignorance i.e. of not knowing suffering, not knowing the origin of suffering, not knowing the cessation of suffering, not knowing the way leading to the cessation of suffering., which is the formations of past existences;
2. The cause for our change to another existence is due to the *kamma*-becoming which brings about our birth, decay and death in another existence;
3. The present existence of ours is due to the re-birth consciousness, mentality-materiality, six-sense bases, contact, feeling, craving and attachment.
4. Analyzing the Buddhist's philosophy of relations clearly makes us to accept the three marks or characteristics (*tilakkhana*) of existence in the worldly phenomena. The three marks are

- Impermanence (*aniccā*).
  - Grief-inflicting characteristic (*dukkhā*)
  - Non-existentiality of any eternal, ever-stable or transmutable substance like soul. (*Anattā*) (Varma, Chandra B. p. 56)
- The concept of relations suggests that when this condition oc-

curs, that condition follows. On this condition arising, that condition arises. This clearly shows us that the worldly phenomenon of existence is impermanence or transient as this condition helps other condition to arise as cause and what follows is effect. The condition itself is not stable and permanent it is subjected to change and produce another condition. The worldly phenomena and even the objects which appear to us as motionless are in continuous flux of change and subject to birth, death and decay. This is the law of the nature or world. A constant thing is only accessible to us as an idea, just as water in a river is actually a succession of events. Although it is changing every moment, it appears to be always the same river. For an example, a man is born, and passes the stages of infancy, boyhood, adolescence, young adulthood, old age then to death and decay. This shows that the origin of man itself is subjected to continuous flux of change from one stage to another. And also the law of causal relations (*Paṭṭhāna-Naya*) is said with reference to the existence of conditions that relate to one another. (Thera, Nārada Mahā, 1998, p. 398). *Paṭṭhāna-Naya* explains the Buddha's teachings on the conditions for the phenomena of our life.

Being in the world one is subjected to suffering. As it is said "Now this is a noble truth concerning suffering. Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, disease is suffering, death is suffering, union with the unpleasant is suffering, the separation from the pleasant is suffering, and any craving that is unsatisfied, that too is suffering". (Nakamura, Hajime 1986, P. 35). In brief, the five aggregates (body, feeling, perception, disposition, and consciousness) which spring from clinging is suffering. (Ibid. p. 35) Dependent Origination basically explains us the root conditions of suffering and how one can eradicate it once and for all. Cessation of suffering is possible when one follow and practice the Eightfold Path in our daily life i.e. when one cultivate the Right Observations or Views of The Four Noble Truths; to have Right Determination of the truths and not just a mere knowledge of it. Hence it is possible only when one gets rid of the attachment of the worldly things and evil thought toward other beings and also constraints oneself from doing harm to even the smallest being like an ant. One's Right Determination should further be put in practice and this will lead us to perform the Right Speech in our daily life i.e. of not lying, not to use abusing words, frivolous talk etc. To have the determination to perform the Right Action and it is of desisting oneself from killing, stealing, sensuality, lying and intoxication. One should have the Right Livelihood by abiding by the Right Action and Right Speech and forbid the wrong action and speech. One should strive for the Right Effort to eradicate the evil thoughts and stop arising anew by cultivating the good thoughts and ideas in our mind and retaining it till the end. To cultivate Right Mindfulness and to have it one should not claim oneself that "This am I, or This is mine". (Chatterjee S. and Datta D, 2007, p. 120). (By stating this Buddhists has in mind that "Aham Brahmsmi" or "Tatvam Asi" of *Vedānta* is unacceptable) But one should be able to know that body is body, mind is mind, and mental state is mental state. This will help us to develop right mindfulness about the absolute truth. When one has to follow all the seven steps of the path one further goes forth with Right Meditation which makes him detach the worldly objects and pleasure and leads him to attain *Nibbāna*. After attaining *Nibbāna* one is out of the realm of suffering and thus overcomes the sea of painfulness. In a simple word we can say that it is the right cultivation, the proper way of living or right living. Proper way of living means using the wisdom to defeat one's ignorance and using knowledge to stop foolish way of living, or maintaining mindfulness, especially with external objects. We can say right living is having perfect right mindfulness. Thus, there is Wisdom or Right View not foolishness and ignorance in one's life. Right living leads us to a life without suffering.

The causal relations deal with the no-self or soul in Buddhism.

As *Paṭṭhāna* deals with the conditioned (*sappaccaya*) and formed (*saṅkhata*) state which arise and cease at every instant of time without any break and make the animate and inanimate things to come into existence or become. The becoming of the animate and inanimate beings is dependent on the root and many other conditions rather than at the will and mercy of some deity or supreme powerful being. The becoming of animate and animate is not from one cause alone, but from many causes such as the conditioning forces given in the analytical exposition of the conditions. So *Paṭṭhāna* can be said as the teaching of no-self or no-soul (*anattā*). But there are many people who believe that there is *attā*, soul, etc., i.e. an ego-entity, and are so attached to this wrong view that they do not have the sense of ignorance and therefore give up such false theory. As most of the religions of the world have taught us that we have the entity like soul or ego inside our body, which is considered as permanent entity or everlasting and it will go to heaven or hell after our death based on our actions done in our life time. But the Buddhist philosophy clearly explains us that the entity like soul does not exist because all the things arise with conditions of many forces and there is a conditional relation between every entity that exists. It gives us clear cut explanation which help us to understand this concept. It explains that man or being is a combination of five aggregates of existence or materiality-mentality, also called the Five *Skandhas* or the five heaps (Form, Sensation, Perception, Mental formations and Consciousness) and nothing else beside it. When these aggregates are separated one by one and nothing left then there will be no being to be called as person. This clearly shows that the entity such as soul in beings does not exist but the formation or existence of the so called being is just a combination of five aggregates or materiality-mentality. As *Nāgaseṇa* said "There is no soul in the breath. These inhalations and exhalations are merely constituent powers of the bodily frame." (Bhikkhu, Pesala (ed.). 1991, p. 36)

Critically viewing the system of relation is not a way to pose a threat to the theory, but being in the research field one is forced to look into the questions that seems obvious to a reader. First of all concerning the cycle of twelve chains; why Buddha propounded only twelve links or chains and why not more or less. If it is his enlightenment that showed him only twelve links then one must wonder how the ignorance can be a cause of an intellectual human being. This leads us to another question as to how a child is responsible for the past action if that child happens to be born for the first time, and if it is his second or third birth then where is his first birth. A child must be born for the first time logically. And that first birth surely is not due to ignorance. Thirdly, if the system of co-relation is true that all phenomena of the world are the events in succession of time then this very determination is a permanent thing. Moreover the cycle of birth and rebirth is a permanent thing, just like our earth is a permanent thing with changes in it every day. The last of these is that how can a single entity the first cause Ignorance be the cause of activities (*saṅskhāra*)? For an activity is done only in relation to another thing. It is impossible to even think without thinking anything.

With these few questions in my mind with which I struggle to find the answers and unable to do so, I end the discussion. My attempt has been an analysis of the Buddhist system of Relations. This was neither a constructive nor a critical approach, but merely an exposition of the system which may help us to understand and comprehend the Buddhist theory itself.

### Conclusion

Buddhist's view of Relations is fundamentally different from the other types of philosophical relations that can be explored. *Prāṇīyasamutpāda* and the system of Co-relations have shown how the human existence is mutually related with nature and the world. It has depicted clearly that *Sabbe dukkhā* has root

cause in ignorance, it has shown the process to overcome *dukkhā* and it has analyzed the very function of co-relations which deals with the events in the world having in a succession of time. Nothing is permanent. Things undergo change according to these *niyamas*. This realization was profound for Buddha.

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