Chapter VI

Conclusion

6.1 Concept of Person in Buddhism

It is objected that in Indian Philosophy concept of person is not as strong as it is in Western thought. J. N. Mohanty says that it is wrong to think that Indian Philosophy does not have the concept of person, but for him in Indian Philosophy concept of subject is the dominating concept, under it the concept of person is underdeveloped. He mentions three important points.[1]

(a) Almost all Indian theories of knowledge conceive of knowing as manifesting, revealing, illuminating, and unconcealing the object of knowledge. Although Indian epistemologists recognized the role of body and mental faculties in the acquisition of knowledge, its sole function is to manifest its object.

(b) In the autonomous concept of person, namely in the theory of action, we also find shadows of the dominance of the concept of subject. Person performs actions out of desire and the intention to bring about a consequence leads to pleasure and pain. But for freedom a person has to perform with non-attachment. But how can the person who, by definition, leads a life of interest act without attachment?

(c) In Indian philosophy the concept of person is a 'weak' concept as it formulates a unity that is analyzable into components (*cit and acit*). A concept of person is strong if it formulates an irreducible and unanalyzable unity.

However, in Buddhism the concept of person is not a weak concept, as they developed it without accepting a permanent substance. There is no witness self, observer, or pure

consciousness. For them, consciousness is not a special quality of permanent, eternal substance. It is produced by the combination of physical elements (*rūpa*) and mental states (*nāma*). According to Buddhism, the person is a psycho-physical organism that is constituted by five *skandhas* (aggregates), twelve *āyatanas* (bases) and eighteen *dhātus*. In these three broad kinds of elements (*dharma*), no permanent substance is admitted for the basis of consciousness. Consciousness is produced by the interconnection of external object and senses, which is regulated by the different stages of mind. Mohanty rightly observes, "Buddhism alone had the concept of knowledge as construction, but even there the constructing, synthesizing agent is not a subjective unity, an ego or a person; infact there is no agent other than the series of instantaneous cognitions with their inherited, but beginningless, tendency to conceptualize and objectify."[2] However, most schools of Indian Philosophy have given more space to the notion of subject as a knowing agent. The epistemic nature of subject dominates over and above the notion of person.

We find in Buddhism the development of a concept of person rather than the development of an idea of subject. The contact of the senses with an external object produces a feeling that produces an idea and with the regulation of mind, knowledge is produced. In the process of cognition (*vijñāna*) three stages (*vedanā, saṁjñā and saṃskāra*) are admitted by Buddhism. Sensation is produced by the contact of sense organs and the respective object. Particular sensations are obtained by the particular sense faculties and cognized by *Manovijñān*, which is common for cognizing all sensations. This shows the dynamic nature of consciousness where two processes are present: sensation and understanding. First, the sensation produced by the interconnection of senses and objects and then mind as a whole cognizes the object by

applying its reflections. "Sensation immediately followed by its feeling tone (*Vedanā*) and becomes cognized as a whole (*Saṁjñā*), the process is experienced repeatedly till it is pushed into Impression or *Saṃskāra*."[3] So cognition means the relation between mind-consciousness and the five sensations.

Knowledge (*vijñāna*) has an affective-volitional aspect as it is related with other *skandhas*: *vedanā*, *saṁjñā* and *saṃskāra*. This knowledge gives rise to desire, motivates action and leads to the consequence of success and failure, pleasure and pain. But Mādhyamika Buddhism admits two sides of knowledge, empirical and transcendental knowledge. The latter kind is more akin to subject than person.

Buddhism has given importance to the disciplined life for the cessation of suffering and to lead the life in the way of *Nirvāna*. One has to control his desire and follow the strict ethical life for attainment of liberation. Mohanty holds that person by nature performs actions out of desire and questions how the person who, by definition, leads a life of interest can act without attachment? Person is a rational animal. He has the capacity to develop knowledge about himself and about the world. By his pure *prajñā* he can control his desires and attachment to the objects. And for pure mental peace (*Nirvāna*), by true knowledge, he can renounce his desires and give up attachment and work for the benefit of others, for the society.

Following the third point it can be said that the concept of person in Buddhism is not a weak concept. Buddhism never makes the separation of physical matter and mental states (*rūpa* and *nāma*). Both physical matter and mental states are placed in the same category, *Skandha*. Person is the combination of *āyatana*, *dhātu* and *skandhas*, but these are only

the divisions of *dharma* according to their nature. We cannot separate them as they are interconnected and inter dependable. Hence, the Buddhist concept of person is irreducible and an unanalyzable unity; therefore, it is a strong concept. Since Mohanty is of the opinion that it is a strong concept of person it is not further divisible and analyzable. I think Buddhism has a very strong notion of person. However, in other schools of Indian Philosophy the concept of person is weak, since it can be analyzable and reducible to different component parts.

It can be concluded that person in Buddhism is not a weak concept. Buddhism is a philosophy of man, here the person is given so much importance, that most of the time they remain silent about the metaphysical discussions. Buddhism developed the concept of person properly and strongly.

6.2 Concept of Person in Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika

Vaibhāṣika developed the notion of selfless person as aggregates of *dharmas* (75 kinds) and they admit that the root cause of suffering is the mistaken view of admitting the existence of self in person. Vaibhāṣika criticizes Pudgalavādins and Tirthikas theory of self and established the view that there is no permanent entity or self in person. Person is the combination of a physical body that is constituted by 11 *rūpas* and 46 mental states. We find in Vaibhāṣika a detailed explanation of mental states which has a good amount of similarity with modern psychology.

Vasubandhu from the Vaibhāṣika standpoint holds that the concept of person is the combination of two components: referential component and descriptive component. "The conception of a person is the conception of an object (a) to which we refer when we use

the first person singular pronoun to refer, and (b) of which we say, by convention, that it possesses as parts a body and mind that enable us to perceive objects, think about them, have feelings when they are perceived or thought about, perform actions for the sake of acquiring or avoiding them etc."[4] Vasubandhu asserts that the referent of the conception of person is the same in existence as a collection of aggregates and it has real existence.

Vasubandhu's theory of person is called the substantially established reality version of the ultimate existence theory of person which asserts that we are the same in existence as collection of aggregates. Person is a phenomenon that processes substantially established reality. "Substantially established reality are entities that process mental constructed identities and yet possess ultimate existence by reason of possessing as extrinsic parts different kind of substances independent upon which their identity is constructed."[5] Thus, person as collection of aggregates implies that it possesses substantially established reality. That is to say we are the same in existence as the collection of aggregates in dependence which we are conceived. The collection of aggregates process ultimate reality, which are existed independently being conceived. Hence, for Vasubandhu, though person existed in dependence upon aggregates, yet it has real existence.

Vaibhāṣika maintains that *Nirvāna* is real, good and eternal. As it is an *Asaṃskṛta dharma*, it has real existence and it can be achieved by following certain disciplines (*śila, samādhi* and *prajñā*). *Nirvāna* is not mere negation; it is a *dharma* in which there is the absence of *Saṃskāras*; in itself it is a positive entity. It is destruction of *kleśa* by *prajñā* and freedom from suffering.

Sautrāntika like Vaibhāṣika admits the selfless person that is constituted by the five aggregates, twelve *āyatans* and eighteen *dhātus*. But Sautrāntika does not believe in the real existence of person and also reduces the number of *dharmas* after critical examination. Sautrāntika restore the *dharma* theory to the notion of a series (*saṁtāna* or *pravāha*). Sautrāntika like Vaibhāṣika, makes similar arguments against the existence of soul and rejected the Vātsiputriyas and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory of self and said that belief in the soul arises from clinging to the soul; defilements are generated and produced suffering. *Nirvāna* for Sautrāntika is only the cessation of suffering, hence it is *abhāva* (absence of passion etc), and it is a result produced by the *mārga*. *Nirvāna* is not real or eternal.

Both Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika advocate the threefold discipline of *śila, samādhi* and *prajñā* regarding the ethical life of a person. *Śila* (morality) is the preparatory stage for *Samādhi* (meditation) and by following various stages of *Samādhi* one attains *Prajñā* (knowledge). By cultivating different good qualities one attains the different stages of moral life *Sotāpatti, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi,* and lastly *Arhatta*. They specifically mention attainments of the adept as they progress from one stage to another, obtaining in the last stage complete knowledge, which according to them, is the same as that attained by Buddha.

6.3 Momentariness and Concept of Person

Pratityasamutpāda (dependent origination) is the foundation of all the teachings of Buddha. The main teaching of the theory is that everything is relative, dependent, subject to birth and death, hence impermanent. All theories of Buddhism are developed on the

basis of this theory. Interpretations of *Pratityasamutpāda* differ in four schools of Buddhism according to their philosophy. Momentariness (*kṣanikavāda*) is also an important theory of Buddhism. According to this theory, everything is changeable, things exist only for a moment. "Thus, every man, everything, is ever changing and can never be the same for even two consecutive moments. The five *skandhas* or aggregates of being are repeatedly produced and destroyed in every *kshaṇa*."[6] In the concept of person in Buddhism these two theories play a significant role.

In the *Abhidharmakośabhyāṣyam*, Vasubandhu describes the whole realm of the existence of a person on the basis of *Pratityasamutpāda* (AKB pp.417-419). According to Vasubandhu, *pratityasamutpāda* is merely the *saṃskāras* that is conditioned (*saṃskṛta*) *dharmas*. The threefold action (bodily, vocal and mental) is *saṃskāras* that exist by reason of ignorance. Because of the *saṃskāras* the consciousness is produced. "Given the force of the project of action, the series of the consciousness, due to the series of the intermediary existence, goes into such and such realm of rebirth, as long as it may be, in the manner in which a flame goes, that is, in a perpetual renewing."[7]

From consciousness *nāmarūpa* arises in this realm of rebirth. These are the five *Skandhas*. Then through the development of *nāmarupa*, there arises the six organs; these are the six *āyatanas*. From the encounter of the three (the consciousness, the six *āyatanas* and *viṣaya* (objects)), there arises the contact, which is susceptible of being experienced as agreeable etc. From the contact threefold sensation arises. Depending upon these threefold sensation, threefold desire arises: desire for *kāma*, *rūpa* and *ārūpaya*.

Then, from the desire there arises fourfold attachment (*upādāna*). Attachment to the object of sense pleasure (*kāmopādāna*), attachment to view (*dṛṣṭyupādāna*), attachment to rules and rituals (*śilavratopādāna*), and attachment to theories concerning the soul (*ātmavādopādāna*).

Because of attachment, accumulated action produces a new existence; this is *bhava*. By reason of *bhava*, and by means of the descent of the consciousness, future arising (*janama*) is birth, which is made up of the five *skandhas*, being *nāmarūpa* in nature. Because of birth old age and death arise.

In this way on the basis of *pratityasamutpāda* the whole realm of present life of a person and rebirth is explained. "It is sufficient unto itself (*kevala*)-that is, without any relation to an *ātman*-there is produced this great mass of suffering, great because it has neither beginning nor end."[8]

Sarvāstivāda admitting the theory of *Pratityasamutpāda* holds that the existence of things depends on conditioned (*saṃskṛta*) *dharmas*, which cannot be eternal. "Such an entity has necessarily to be non-eternal, which for Buddhist means that conditioned things are impermanent."[9] The person as a combination of *saṃskṛta dharmas* (conditioned elements) is also impermanent. No permanent entity is present in person. It has real existence for a moment but not eternal.

Vaibhāṣika admits the existence of *dharmas* (elements) in three phases of time past, present and future. Hence, person has real existence as it is constituted by *dharmas*. But it is not permanent or eternal as it undergoes the phenomena of change; everything is momentary. Vaibhāṣika explains the momentary character of elements: "Every element

appearing in phenomenal life is affected simultaneously by four different forces (*saṃskāras*), the force of origination (*utpāda*), decay (*jarā*), maintenance (*sthiti*), and destruction (*antyatā*)" (AKB II, 46). "These forces affect every element at every moment of its existence; they are the most universal forces, the characteristic feature of the manifesting force of phenomenal existence (*saṃkṛta-lakṣaṇāni*)."[10]These four characteristics exist in all composite things and owing to possession of them all things undergo modification and are subject to repetition of themselves in endless revolution. These four characteristics existed simultaneously in the same moments.

In Sarvāstivāda these two theories, the momentariness of objects and *sarva-asti* (all exist), seem to be inconsistent. In fact, the Sarvāstivāda conceives the reality of all 72 *dharmas*, in a limited sense in three phases of time. They actually hold that the present moment is the meeting point of past and future, past and future objects are only inferred, not perceived. "The present mind forms the objects from *Manovijñāna*, the awareness of consciousness. The objects which previously existed become the object of mind, awareness (*Manodhātu*). Similarly, the future objects remain dormant, unmanifest in present state of consciousness."[11]Thus, for Sarvāstivāda the existence of *dharmas* does not mean the actual existence of thing in three phases of time. They have only ideal existence. They exist in thought in three phases of time, but change in every moment.

Sautrāntika explains the momentariness of object in a more reasonable way. They deny the reality of the four manifestation-forces and hold that they do not refer to a single moment, but to series of them (AKB II, 46). The elements appear and disappear themselves, there is no need of supplementary force for this. "The Sautrāntika,

persistently adhered to the opinion that the four characteristics do not exist simultaneously but spread themselves successively over the limits of a life-period."[12]

Sautrāntika does not admit the substantial-existence of *dharma* and rejects the permanent existence of *dharma* in three phases of time. *Dharmas* exist for as long as they manifest themselves, they have no past and future existence. *Dharmas* manifest when they have causal efficacy (*kriyā*) and cease to exist when they do not. "This account of *dharmas* focused upon the immediacy of what is presented to consciousness and explicitly repudiated the Vaibhāṣika analysis which distinguished the existence of *dharmas* from their causal efficacy."[13]

6.4 *Dharma* Theory and Concept of Person

Buddhist *dharma* theory has a good account of the concept of person. All four schools of Buddhism explain the *dharma* theory according to their philosophy that varies in their understanding of the concept of person. In a general sense *dharma* refers to the categories that constitute the physical world and the person. Vaibhāṣika admits 75 *dharmas* which are divided in two groups: *saṃskṛta* (3 kinds) and *asaṃkṛta* (72 kinds). The 72 *asṃskṛta dharmas* are conditional *dharma*, so subject to birth and decay and constitute the person. Hence person is impermanent. These *dharmas*, according to Vaibhāṣika, have real existence in three phases of time, thus the person has real existence.

Sautrāntika critically examined the *dharma* theory of Vaibhāṣika and reduced the number of *dharmas* to 43 and treats the rest as a result of mental construction. They have given proper justification regarding this reduction. For Sautrāntika person is a

combination of 43 *dharmas* that includes 10 *rūpa,* or physical elements and 33 mental states (*caittas*). No single metaphysical element is admitted by Sautrāntika.

Sautrāntika does not admit the Vaibhāṣika point that *dharmas* exist in three phases of time. *Dharmas* exist but we do not know them directly. Sautrāntika restores the *dharma* theory to the notion of a series (*saṁtāna* or *pravāha*). Being a critical realist, Sautrāntika, rejecting the Sarvāstivāda view holds that the so-called characteristics of a condition elements have no real existence. "Continuous existence of entity (*dravya*) is fragment of imagination. They are series rather than to the moment."[14]

Yogācāra advocates the idealistic view and maintains consciousness as the only reality and that the objective world is only appearance. For them *dharmas* have no real essence, like the objects have no independent existence. *Dharmas* are not real they have existence as pertaining to consciousness. Diversification of consciousness moment to moment cannot be explained without object. For individuality of consciousness *dharmas* are required. Thus the external *dharmas* pertain to consciousness only in its infected or bifurcated aspect; they are evolved only in its phenomenal state. But these *dharmas* for Yogācāra have no ultimate reality; they belong only to the empirical realm. They admit 100 kinds of *dharmas*. Thus for Yogācāra person exists as a content of consciousness that make possible the individualization of consciousness. Apart from this it has no real existence.

Mādhyamika on the basis of their *Sūnyatā* theory rejects the *dharma* theory. Mādhyamikas do not admit the real existence of five aggregates (*skandhas*) and *dharmas* as they are relative and are produced by cause. For them the cause and effect, substance

and attribute, whole and part, subject and object etc. are mutually dependent, relative. Hence they are not things-in-themselves. Person only has existence in the sphere of *Saṃvṛtisat*; in *Parmārthika* stage it has no existence.

6.5 *Anātmavāda* and Concept of Person

 The Buddhists selfless person is criticized by different schools of Indian Philosophy. According to Nyāya-Viaṣeśika the self is permanent, substance and immaterial. Consciousness is its accidental and adventitious quality. Nyāya-Viaṣeśika holds that without *ātman* desire, aversion, volition, knowledge, ethical responsibility, etc. cannot be explained. It is the *ātman* that controls and guides the mind, senses and the process of consciousness. Self is independently identifiable and owner or processor of mental activities. So memory, consciousness and other mental activities, action and its result, according Nyāya-Viaṣeśika, are cannot explained without self.

Vedāntins also criticized the Buddhist no-soul theory on the ground that there is no principle which can act as an agent or which can store memories. Vedānta raises a question: how do we recognize in our daily life a person whom we have seen a few days ago? Because every moment consciousness is changing there is no principle which coordinates different memory episodes. The answer by the Buddhist is that a special kind of memory is generated, with the help of which we recognize the person, whom we saw another day, does not satisfy the Vedāntins. How does the special memory help us in recognizing the person as the same one whom we saw a few days ago? In the absence of a permanent entity, it is impossible to account for memory.

Buddhism rejects the Nyāya-Vaiṣeśika and Vedāntins views that the self is the essence of consciousness and substratum of other mental states of a person. Vasubandhu denied the existence of self for remembering an object. He replied that an object is remembered because immediately before the memory occurs a special kind of mind arises that is connected to discrimination of the object to be remembered (RTS 4.1). Memory and recognition are generated immediately, through a certain type of mind called *Citta-viśesa.* In this mind previous ideas are stored. To recognize/remember an object, the idea related to the thing, which is stored in the mind resembles that thing, and recognizes it (AKB p.1339).

Nyāya claims that the activity of consciousness exists in dependence upon self, as every activity exist in dependence upon agent. For instance, walking is an activity, which exists in dependence upon Devadatta (agent), a walker. Consciousness is an activity, and exists in dependence upon self. What apprehends must exist.

However, Vasubandhu replying to the Naiyāyikas says, the assumption that there is an agent to apprehend an object, fails to establish self in Devadatta. They are assuming that he is self, but he is not just one thing but a collection of causally conditioning phenomena, to which this name, Devadatta has been given. So it is not self, but a collection of aggregates, that we refer to when we say that Devadatta moves or apprehends (RTS-4.4.1).

Tirthikas also conceive the self as the underlying support of feeling, pleasure and pain. According to Vasubandhu, the underlying support of feelings are the six bases of perception, the six organs of perception. They emerge from the six internal bases of

cognition in the way that flowers come to be on a tree and fruits come to be in a garden (RTS 4.11).

Vaiśeṣika maintains that consciousness is produced from a soul, which is made possible by the conjunction (*saṁyoga*) of the soul with mind. Vasubandhu responded that no conjunction is proved here between soul and mind. Another reason is that for the conjunction of two things, they should be delaminated, i.e. localized in a distinct place. Their definition of conjunction, 'possession succeeding upon non-possession' admits that the soul is delaminated, localized, and that the soul is not omnipresent (AKB p.1346).

Vaiśeṣika holds that the self is the support of the thought-*saṃskāra* just as earth supports smell, colour, taste, and touch. However, Vasubandhu replied that this establishes the non-existence of the soul, because earth cannot be perceived independently of smell etc.; it is the mere designation of the smell etc. Likewise there is no soul apart from the thought-*saṃskāras*.

Performing action and the fruits of action are dependent, according to Naiyāyikas, on self. Self is conceived as the agent of action and subject that experiences the fruits of action. Without self there will be no reason to undertake an action (RTS-4.9). Agent is independent in relation to various effects e.g. bathing, eating, walking and so on (RTS-4.12). Vasubandhu agrees that action is undertaken by reason. But the 'I' for whose sake, an action is undertaken is understood to be the same in existence as a collection of aggregates. If an agent is required for action, with the same argument, Vasubandhu argues that the five aggregates, not the self, become agent (RTS-4.12.1)

Tirthikas asks how, if there is no self, an action produces results in a future that does not exist? Vasubandhu's counter question was how, if there is a self, can an action that no longer exists produce a result in the future? They reply that an action produces result because the self is the underlying support of merit and demerit of action. But it is rejected by Vasubandhu, he says that the self cannot be the underlying support of merit and demerit of action. Action that exists no longer cannot produce results in the future. A result arises from an action because of a special development in the continuum of action. It is in the way a fruit arises from a seed. This continuum is the occurrence of a sequence of mind that arises from prior action, and a development in it is the production-mind of a different in character from moment to moment (RTS 4.14).

Vaiśeṣika admits that past action produces its result; it is generated from merit or demerit (*dharma*, *adharma*), inherent attributes (*guna*) of the soul, and is supported by the soul. Vasubandhu regards this as irrational as he criticizes the idea of a substratum. He also maintains that "future result is not generated from destroyed action; results are generated from the last moment in the evolution of a series that has its origin in action" (AKB p.1352).

It is questioned how if there is no self, rebirth is possible? According to Vasubandhu, a special kind of development in mind occurs at the time of death; the causal continuum produces an action that produces a rebirth. It may be called the rebirth producing mind. Three kinds of actions are acknowledged by Vasubandhu which have the most power to produce rebirth-producing mind: weighty, the recent and the habitual. An action performed close to the time of death has greater power than an action performed in earlier life with regards to the rebirth producing mind. A habitually performed action has

more power to influence the rebirth-producing mind than an action not habitually performed at the time of death. Vasubandhu said that an action loses its power after producing rebirth (RTS 4.14).

Vedāntins admit self as self-evident, which can be affirmed from the statement 'I know' etc. "The self-evident existence of the self, therefore negates the Buddhist doctrine of no-self. The Buddhist theory of no-self fails to account the existence of the ego-principle in our knowledge."[15] For what does the 'I' stand for in statements like 'I know'? The 'I' naturally refers to a cognizing self.

But according to Buddhism, for the ego-principle there is no need to postulate the permanent entity. 'I' is the aggregate of *skandhas*. In the statement 'I know', 'I' stands for a special kind of mental states that is produced by the contact of senses and objects.

Kumārila asserts that cognitions have no possibility to exist outside the self, they are identical. The multitude of cognitions occur not because of the intrinsic nature of the self, but because of the diversity of data. "The objects of cognition are not cognized in simultaneously, because the self cognizes those objects in succession that are presented to it by the senses."[16]

Buddhism does not hold that diversity always exists outside of consciousness. The diversity of cognitions cannot be accounted for simply by restoring to the idea of multiplicity of data. In *manovijñāna* diversity exists, as it is produced by the contact of senses with different objects.

Thus, for Buddhism 'Person' is a collection of aggregates (*skandhas*), conventional reality, and substantially established reality under the universal change and there is no

permanent entity (self) in person. It is because all schools believe in momentariness (*kṣanikavāda*) and dependent origination (*pratityasamutpāda*). Person is a combination of *dharmas*. Regarding the existence, nature and numbers of *dharmas* different views are advocated by different schools on the basis of their philosophy. Accordingly, slightly different views are found, regarding person in four schools of Buddhism. Suffering comes from ignorance regarding the real nature of *dharmas* and worldly objects. And it is the *prajñā* that makes enlightenment, unveils the real nature of things, ceases the suffering allowing one to attain *Nirvāna*. Hinayānist ethical views are slightly modified by Mahāyanaists and the concept of *Bodhisattva* seems to be a more developed stage than *Arhatta*, to some extent. By introducing the *Bodhisattva* concept Mahāyāna imposes the social responsiblity to person. That person should not think only for himself, for his benefit only; he has to think for others, his fellow men, for society and has to work for the social benefit for the cessation of suffering of everyone by applying his *prajñā* (knowledge) that was acquired through disciplined life. This is the true *Nirvāna*.

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