

CHAPTER 7

Liberation from Suffering

As knowledge and conduct go together, metaphysics and ethics are intertwined in Indian traditions. The origins of metaphysical speculation is usually found in the attempt to understand or explain the problems of existence and Liberation. Early Buddhism also appears to be mainly concerned with these basic problems. The four-fold truths are centered on this very axis, i.e. Liberation from suffering.¹ Causality² and its sub-law Kamma are also connected with this problem. So a discussion of the problem of Liberation from suffering involves various theories about moral causality.

The Pāli Nikāya present a variety of theories on the causality of suffering, and reject them. Those views are criticised as extremist positions and the refutation of them follows by taking the middle way which is devoid of the dangers that those theories carry. Some of the extremist theories reported to be held by non-Buddhist teachers are:

1. The fortuitous origination theory or negation of any casual possibility. Fatalism and determinism can also be classified under this group.
2. Belief in the past Kamma as the non overridable shaping factor of the present life.
3. Belief in an Omnipotent God after whose will or design everything takes place.

In other places these views are presented in an abstract form by submitting them to the four-fold method of view-forming. According to that classification, thinkers are divided into four groups proposing that happiness and suffering of the individual is;

1. Self caused (*sayam katam*)
2. Other caused (*param katam*)
3. Self and other caused (*sayam katañ ca param katañ ca*)

1. For dukkha (suffering) in the Nikāyas, Pande, *Origins*, pp.402ff.

2. On the Buddhist theory of causality; Karunaratne, *Development*, passim; Kalupahana, *Causality*, Passim; Thomas, *History*, pp.58ff. Jayatilleke, *Theory*, pp.445ff. Pande, *Origins*, pp.407ff.