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Hossō sect of Japanese Buddhism in the era of Globalisation

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Introduction

The term ‘globalisation’ connotes the increasing worldwide integration of religious, cultural, economic, political and social systems. It would not be wrong to say that Buddhism is really a diverse family of religious and philosophical traditions which have developed over the past 2500 years in many different cultures. Emerging originally in India, Buddhism quickly spread throughout the Indian sub-continent, moved into southeast Asia, then into Central Asia, on into China, Korea, and Japan. Since Buddhism is global, the term ‘globalisation’ is significant here. It is evident from the entire history that wherever Buddhism went it took the culture of that region and influenced a lot by Buddhist thought. And, as a teaching of Buddha were embraced by the people in very different culture and religious settings, Buddhism itself changed in significant ways, resulting in the enormous teachings and practices among contemporary Buddhists. But, in spite of all the diversity all Buddhist trace their belief and practices, in some sense, back to the awakening of Gautama the Buddha under the Bodhi tree and to the teachings that derive from his experience.

Our perception of the world, we perceive now, is filled in two aspects: crisis and opportunity. Buddhist theory of interdependence allows us to incorporate with any genuine tradition and merged with another socio-cultural background across the globe. There is a necessity for responsible studies of other religion. For not only does religion continue to be prominent in our world but the way in which people think about in practice religion are being
transformed by globalisation. So, if we wish to understand the current religious realities, it’s not enough to study and then perpetuate somebody’s assumptions from the distant past. On empirical level religious beliefs, practices and self-understandings change over time. Thus, in considering contemporary religion, it’s important not only to look at its past-history but also to examine how it shapes today through encounter with current challenges. What happens, for example, when a very ancient religion encounter with modernisation and globalisation? Zen Buddhism, in particular, is using it to illustrate how ancient religious traditions take on fresh manifestations and adept to very different and do context.

Religion is greater than any other local group and cannot be confined to the cultural boundaries of any particular region. They are religious traditions with universal pretentions and global ambitions. Buddhism has been always a missionary religion moving intentionally beyond its land of origin into very diverse culture and societies. Buddha sent out his followers on missionary journey to spread the dharma for the benefit and welfare of many.

The inception of Buddhism in Japan can be traced back to sixth century\(^1\), which flourished in China and assimilated to Japan via Korea. Assimilation of Buddhism became so accustomed for transplantation, as it had already established its root from India to China and from China to Korea. It happened not only due to missionary activities and efforts of the King Paekche, who sent a gilt-bronze Buddha image and the Buddhist scriptures but also due to the Japanese mind of recognizing Buddhism. Japanese always encouraged learning throughout the ages. However, the main objective of the King Paekche was clearly political.

**Nara Buddhism\(^2\)**

Wherever Buddhism goes, it adopts the culture of that place. During the Nara period, Shintoism was the dominant religion in the Japanese society. Emperor Genmei built the first

\(^1\) As per *Nihonshoki* list, it is 552 CE. However, this date has been discussed and disputed among the scholars. In this concern, year 538 is more precise.

\(^2\) A form of Buddhism which belongs to Nara Period (710-784).
permanent capital of Japan to a new city\(^3\) named as Heijōkyō (Nara), the Nara capital. It was a result of natural consequence of the Taika Reforms (645-).\(^4\)

The Fujiwara (former Nakatomi) clan was very dominant in Japanese politics, the Emperor and his Fujiwara consort contributed much in promoting Buddhist thought. Resulting, Buddhism became the “Guardian of the State”.

The establishment of Nara and a new form of religion, which was the mixture of Buddhist thought and Chinese culture expanded its roots and influenced a lot to the Japanese population. Emperor Shomu (729-49) promoted Buddhism and initiated various activities like building new temples, buildings, Buddha-statue of bronze and wood and so on. The emperor placed the world’s largest bronze statue of the Buddha Mahāvairocana in the Todai-ji temple of Hossō sect in Nara. In addition, Japanese educational system began in Buddhist temples, for example Chinese medicine, hospitals and asylums were introduced by Ganjin; civil engineering was introduced by Dōshō and his disciple Gyogi, they also built bridges and dams, irrigation systems, wells and highways, etc. No Cremation system exists before; it was started after the death of Dōshō. During this period, Japanese had not only Cultural similarity with china but also had a good contact and that took Japanese to it new height in developing Buddhisitc thought and culture.

These growing contacts with China, several sects of Buddhism from T’ang China made their way to Japan. The Nara emperors deeply reverenced the Buddhist teaching called “the Sutra of Golden Light” (Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra) which advocated the protection of the state by Buddhist faith.

This strong faith also gave rise of the position of Buddhist Monks in Nara. Empress Shōtoku (718-770) wished to make Dōkyo (700-772), a Hossō monk, emperor. This incident led to the

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\(^3\) According to Shintoism, the place where death occurs is considered to be impure, that was the reason they changed their capital.

\(^4\) A series of political and social innovations established by Emperor Kotoku in 646, which followed the suppression Prince Naka noe and Nakatomi Kamatari.
exclusion of women from imperial succession and the removal of Buddhist monks from positions of political authority.

In the last phase of Nara period, Emperor Konin, who ruled from 770 to 781 CE tried to reassert imperial discipline by replacing forced military service with a system of regular forces, thus creating the basis of the warrior class.

**Scholastic Sects of Nara Buddhism**

The credit of academic study of Buddhism in Japan goes to the six sects of Nara Buddhism. Traditionally, it is believed that they have been established between 747-751. They are as follows: Kusha Sect⁵; Jōjitsu Sect⁶; Sanron Sect⁷; Hossō Sect; Kegon Sect⁸; and Ritsu Sect⁹. Among them, Hossō, Kegon and Ritsu have survived till date.

The Sanron and Jōjitsu sects are officially arrived in 625 and were followed by the Kusha, Hossō, Kegon and Ritsu. Among the six sects, the Sanron, Hossō, Kegon and Ritsu attracted much more members of the aristocracy than the Kusha and Jōjitsu sects.

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⁵ Based upon the Sarvāstivādin treatise *Abhidharmakośa*, an ideal forerunner of *Vijñānavāda* school. It was written by an Indian master Vasubandu in the fifth century CE and translated into Chinese by Paramarthu between 563-567 and by Hsiuan-tsang in between 651-654.

⁶ Based upon the *Satyasiddhi Śāstra*, written by an Indian master Harivarman in third century CE. This text criticizes the Sarvāstivādin thought. Presently no Sanskrit version exist and we do not have any record for its popularity in India.

⁷ This was the most influential and dominant school of Early Nara period. It is based on the Indian *Mādhyamika* thought of at least three masters, namely, Pingala, Aryadeva and Nagarjuna. It also corresponds to Chinese Sanlun schools of Buddhism. The school was brought to Japan by the Korean monk Ekwan. It offers a way discover the true meaning of Buddhism by means of the middle way of the two levels of truth.

⁸ It is based on the *Buddha-avatāṁsaka-mahāvaipulya-sūtra*, one of the profound and perfect elucidations of Mahāyāna thought. This text was completed in third century CE by the effort of an unknown Indian master.

⁹ This sect is devoted to the moral precepts of the Buddhist sangha. Each school have their own form of Vinaya but Ritsu places all rules and regulations before meditation and philosophy as a means of attaining perfect awakening.
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It is true that the six sects of Nara Buddhism did not convert the masses, nor even the aristocracy to a proper understanding of Buddhism, but the Nara thought played an important role as a foundation stone for the future Buddhist developments.

Buddhism was non-sectarian in nature in its first three quarters of a century after its official inception to Japan. Linguistically, the term 群 refers to a group of adherents gathered together to study one tradition, but practically it did not work in Nara period. Likewise, the Indian Nalanda tradition, Japanese temples of Nara period were not only restricted to study and practice a single tradition but it was open for all Buddhist tradition under the same roof. That is why; all six sects of Nara were housed simultaneously at the Tōdaiji temple.

Even in the last quarter of century, when Japanese sectarian movements were evolved, Japanese concept of 群 had never been denoted the type of doctrinal differences; they function much closer to the medieval concept of religious order.

**Hossō Sect**

Indian Mahayana Buddhism has two wings: Yogācāra and Madhyamika. Hossō as a noun refers to a name of a Japanese school of Buddhism\(^\text{10}\), which belongs to the Indian Yogācāra (Vijñānavāda;) system of thought. Hossō sect, which is the continuation of the Chinese Fa-hsiang school\(^\text{11}\) of Buddhism travelled to Japan via China around the year 654 CE. The first patriarch of Fa-hsiang school of Buddhism in China was the famous Chinese traveler Hsüan-tsang, who studied under Śīlabhadra\(^\text{12}\) at Nalanda University in India. He brought several Indian Buddhist texts to China, which he later translated\(^\text{13}\) into Chinese. Jōyuishikiron (Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi śāstra) can be regarded as the core text of this sect, which is based upon several commentaries and the following six major sutra-s: Daihōkō butsu kegongyo (Buddhavaṁsakanāma mahāvaipulya

\(^{10}\) It is the continuation of the Chinese Faxiang school of Buddhism

\(^{11}\) The She-lun sect (Samparigraha) is the predecessor of Fa-hsiang school.

\(^{12}\) Śīlabhadra (529-645) and Dharmapāla (born mid-6th century) are considered to be the other famous patriarchs of Vijñānavāda sects in India.

\(^{13}\) He translated the Saṁdhinirmocana sutra, the Yogācārabhūmi Sāstra, and the Mahāyānasamgraha.
sūtra); Gejin mikkyō (Saṁdhinirmocana sūtra); Daijō nyuryōgakyō (Laṅkāvatāra sūtra); Daijō mitsugonkyō (Ghanavyūha sūtra); Nyorai shutsugen kudokoshōgonkyō; and Abidatsumakyō.

The transmission of Hossō teachings can be traced at least on these four separate occasions (Prebish and Keown, 2009: 254): a) Dōshō, travelled to China in 653 and studied under the guidance of Hsüan-tsang, b) Chitsū and Chitatsū, who went to China in 658 also studying under Hsüan-tsang and his disciple K'uei-chi; c) Chihō, Chiran, and Chiy, who went to China in 703 studied under Chihi-chou; and d) Gembō, who went to China in 716 and studied under Chihi-chou.

Hosso split out into two: southern and northern. Dōshō’s lineage, passed on through the monk Gyōgi (668-749) and it represents the Southern Temple, while Gembō’s lineage represents the Northern Temple. There are various important temples, even now, which represents the treasure-houses of Japanese religious art belong to the Nara. For example, Horyū, Yakushi, and Kōfuku.

The roots of Yogacara school, which later took a form of Fa-hsien and Hosso school, was founded in India during approximately the fourth century CE, by the quasi-historical Maitreya and the two brothers Asanga and Vasubandhu. However, its major hypothesis and principle idea were already disseminated around third century CE, which is evident from the Saṁdhinirmocana sūtra, the root text of Yogacara Buddhism.

14The literal meaning of Yogācāra (as an adjective) is ‘one whose practice is Yoga’. It is said that Yogācārin are those who base themselves on the Asaṅga’s magnum opus, the Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra. Perhaps, the name of the school is influenced by this text only. According to Chinese tradition this text is authored by Maitreya (-ātha) whereas Tibetan attributes this to Asaṅga. It is very possible that the fundamental and the earliest section “Mauli-Bhūmi” was by Maitrya (-ātha) and the other portion “Viniścaya” by Asaṅga.

15Vasubandhu also authored the text Abhidharmakośa, on which the Japanese Kusha school stands. This was why, it is not so surprising that the Kusha subsequently became an appendage of the Hossō sect, as they do have considerable similarity in analysis of the dharma-s.

16Saṁdhinirmocana sūtra is the earliest text to declare that all is mere-cognition (vijñapti-mātra). Moreover, it propounds the threefold intrinsic nature and threefold absence of intrinsic nature for the very first time. It
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Some of the unique features of this school, which defines Buddhism in a new perspective, are ‘the third turning of the dharma-wheel’\(^{17}\); ‘emphasizing mere cognition only’; ‘threefold intrinsic nature’; and ‘the theory of eight consciousnesses’.

Literally, the term Hossō means the dharma characteristics, which emphasizes investigation and realization of the true nature of all phenomena. The philosophy of this school is commonly known as Yuishiki (Vijñaptimātratā), which can be translated as ‘mere cognition only’ ‘consciousness only’ ‘mind only’ and so on. According to it, it is the basis of the appearance of all phenomena in this objective world and the subjective mind. Some scholars like Chatterjee (1987) have tried to interpret as the metaphysical idealism\(^{18}\) but Lusthaus (2007) claims it as misinterpretation. He argued that, in the Yogācāra text, consciousness is not ultimate; it is only conventionally real as it originates from moment to moment depending on its determinants or causes and conditions, but because this consciousness is the cause of the karma, which they were seeking to be eliminated. Tagawa (2009) says that the mind distorts reality and projects it as reality itself (cf. Choedron). Early Yogacāra does not teach “idealism.” When we minutely see this doctrine, we find that epistemologically consciousness does not cognize anything outside itself. However, ontologically we can say, no entities exist apart from the consciousness. According to Hosso sect, all sentient beings do not possess the Buddha nature. The beings that belong to the three yana-s, namely, śrāvakayāna, pratyekabuddhayāna, and bodhisattvayāna, are only real since they belong to the real world (Takakusu, 1998:93).

**Three Turning of the Dharma Wheel**

It is evident from the Buddhist literature that the Buddha turned the wheel of the Dharma for three times. Since, the Buddha taught the doctrine on the basis of the mental elevation of the

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\(^{17}\) In the first turning, the Buddha implicitly taught the four noble truths to his immediate disciple (śrāvakas-s); in the second turning the Buddha implicitly taught the concept of emptiness to the early Mahayanist; and lastly in the third turning of the Dharma-wheel he taught the Yogācāra teachings, which is ultimate.

\(^{18}\) Only mind is real, everything else is just a projection of mind.
personality concerned, the first turning of the Dharma wheel belongs to the immediate disciples (śrāvaka-s) of Śākyamuni, where he implicitly taught the four noble truths; the second turning the Buddha implicitly taught the concept of emptiness to the early Mahayanist; and finally the Buddha taught the Yogācāra, which is the ultimate doctrine in the third turning of the Dharma-wheel. Yogācārin claims that it is the middle way which avoids the two extremes, namely, belief of existence and the belief of non-existence.

The Threefold Intrinsic Nature

Although the exposition of Śunyatāvāda school represents a clear picture of Yogācāra views on emptiness and the middle way, but the fundamental section of the Yogācārabhūmi criticizes that all the doctrines of Śunyatāvāda lie within the scope of two levels of truths, which is nothing new since it is already taught in the Abhidharma and the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra-s in terms of the twofold intrinsic nature: the intrinsic nature of conceptualization and the ineffable intrinsic nature. Later Yogācārin further developed the concept of trilakṣaṇa or trisvabhāva: parikalpita, paratantra and parinispanna, which constitute a doctrine of three levels of truth. The Viniścayacsaṁgrahāṇī of Yogācārabhūmiśāstra claims that contemplation of these three intrinsic nature (lakṣaṇa) is of utmost importance in order to understand reality (tattvārtha). Trilakṣaṇa can be seen as the elaboration of twofold intrinsic natures proposed in the fundamental section of Yogācārabhūmi.

All the dharma (100) can be analyzed under the category of these three intrinsic nature representing three levels of cognition and three corresponding degree of reality.

The completely imagined/conceptualized intrinsic nature (parikalpita): It is the unreal appearance of subject-object aspect that conforms to manner of speech (vyavahāra) and its designation is based on conventional expression (Nāma-saṅketa). The unenlightened, through their general understanding, understand phenomenal appearance as true which is unreal, non-existent and śunya.

The other-dependent intrinsic nature (paratantra): It recognizes that phenomena exist conventionally and dependent of their causes and conditions. Those phenomena are subject to change and impermanent. It is relatively existent, not śunya.
The fully accomplished intrinsic nature (parinīspaṇṇa): It is the non-conceptual insight (nirvikalpa-jñāna); absence of subject and object. It is defined as the tathatā, śunyatā, dharmatā and so on. of the dharma. Parinīspaṇṇa is empty and independent of paratantra. It is absolutely existent, not śunya.

These three natures are not only helpful in attaining the perfect enlightenment but also for the enlightened one who wish to come and communicate in the realm of daily life. This is one of the special features of the Hossō school.

Eightfold Consciousness

The concept of eight consciousness is the innovation of Yogācāra. They are, namely, 1-5. five sensory consciousness; 6. mental-consciousness (mano-viññāṇa); 7. ego-consciousness (kliṣṭa-manas); and 8. storehouse-consciousness (ālaya-viññāṇa). The last consciousness ālaya-viññāṇa is said to be the source and base for all other seven consciousness (called pravṛttī-viññāṇa).

Mind is said to be the key of enlightenment, through the power of mind, which is very hard to guard, one can eliminate the notion of self (etam mama; eso hamasmi; and eso me attā) and accomplish the state of eternal bliss. That is why, it is said that in Pāli Dhammapada: “mano pubbaṅgmā dhammā.”

Mano-viññāṇa, the intent mind, collects and integrate the mental image produced by the five senses. Vasubandhu in Trīṁśikā says that mano viññāṇa always manifests; on some occasion only its function does not take place either contemporary or forever. They are, namely, i) the stage of naiva saṅjñā

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19 In early literature, at least we have three terms that connotes the English word “mind”. However, ‘mind’ does not convey any of these Pāli term adequately; it can be just understood in context. Roughly, the Pāli term viññāṇa, mano, and citta can be confined by Yogācārin first six consciousness, kliṣṭa-manas, and ālaya-viññāṇa respectively. It is true that the concept of ālaya viññāṇa is not developed in Theravāda but to some extent the term bhavaṅga-viññāṇa has some roots of it. In addition, I quote from Pāli Dīgha Nikāya: ālayārāmā kho panāyamajjaṁ ālayamudittā. Here, ālaya refers to the ‘five chords of sensual passion’ but Yogācārin found this useful in justifying their theory.

20 Manoviññānasambhūtāḥ sarvadā asañjñikadṛṣte / Samāpattidvayānmurcanādapi acittakāt //16//
naivāsaṁjñā; ii) the stage of Saṁjñāvedayita nirodha; iii) torpor and fainting; and iv) state of no-awareness (acittaka). They only proceed through the mutual dependence (anyonyavaśād) and imagination are born accordingly.\(^{21}\)

**Kliśta-manas**, the false mind, plays intellectual functioning and create the false notion and ego. This ego-consciousness is a subtle notion of 'I', 'mine', 'I-making', and the conceit 'I am'.\(^{22}\) Vasubandhu says, it is always associated with (samprayukta) the four passions, namely, self-view, self-delusion, self-pride, and self-love. These four impure passions are ethically neutral.\(^{23}\) Due to the attachment of these four passions, this consciousness is called saṁkleśa. Again, he says that it possesses all form of cognitions and emotions, namely, sparśa, manaskāra, vedanā, saṁjñā, and cetanā. It does not exist at the stage nirodha samāpatti of the arahats, and in the supramundane path.\(^{24}\)

Ālayacvijñāna (also called ādānavijñāna, mūla-vijñāna, sarvabījakacvijñāna)\(^{25}\), the storehouse, the true mind, is a source where all mental images, ideas, perceptions, residual forces (vāsanā) of all past experiences are stored.

Discriminating and imagining power of mind works together with the image of our objective world.

Our consciousness, which coordinates with all mental image and stores them, is called the storehouse consciousness. This is also not an independent but also an existence of casual combination of pure and impure. Pure portion of the ālaya purify the defiled part and develop right understanding. Only the Buddha’s mind can flash out the pure ideation. It is the ‘wisdom of magnificent mirror’ that constitute the fourfold wisdom of the Buddha.

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\(^{21}\) Yāti anyonyavaśādyena vikalpaḥ sa sa jāyate //18//

\(^{22}\) Ahaṁ, mameāti, ahaṁkāra, and asmimāna.

\(^{23}\) Kleśaiscaturbhiḥ sahitaṁ nivṛta avyākṛtai sadā/ātmadṛṣṭi ātmamoha ātmamāna ātmasneha saññitai//6//

\(^{24}\) Yatrajastanmayiranyaiḥ sparśa-ādyāścāḥrato na tat/na nirodha samāpattau mārge lokuttare na ca//7//

\(^{25}\) The She-lun school gives a new name to ālaya-vijñāna as amala-vijñāna, which is which is pure and taintless as tathatā. This new consciousness is regarded as the ninth consciousness that the Parmartha claim.
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One gets the right understanding of the real truth (parinispam) based on the world of parikalpita and the paratantra. At this stage, the ālayavijñāna becomes invisible and free from subject-object duality. Hence called the stage of ultimate reality (aparisthita-nirvāṇa).

This is the basis of the subject-object duality, which exist within the mind of a lay-person and the imagination of his empirical world. But it does not mean that Yogācārin believe in permanent self, in fact they assert that the ālaya-vijñāna itself is interdependent. It should be noted that the imagination of his empirical world, which is the product of past associations and present conditions, does not exist. It exists but only an enlighten person are capable to perceive with its true nature. Vasubandhu in Trimśikā says, as a container of all seeds (sarvabijaka), it functions from one life to another as a foundation (mūla) for all other seven consciousness which is matured or ripen (paripāka) as its result (vipāka). He compared it with the water on which the waves arise. He says, depending on causes and conditions, they (manoviññāna, manas, and ālaya-viññāna) arise either together or separately as the wave arise upon the water. The seed of ālaya-viññāna possesses six characteristics, they are: i) they do not exist eternally but are created momentarily; ii) when the subject-object cognition takes place, it make an interdependent relationship; iii) cognized objects are consistent and do not change erratically; iv) they have definite characteristics as wholesome, unwholesome and neutral; v) it cannot function based on the seed alone, it needs various causes; and vi) each seed produce its own respective fruit (Mastunaga, 1974: 82-83). The manifestation of ālaya-viññāna is a constantly uninterrupted process and associated with contact attention, sensation, ideation, and volition. It is said that until reaching arahat-phala, ālaya-viññāna being the only viññāna remained functional in the absorption into the saṁjñā-vedayita-nirodha and maintain the body alive in order to attain the fruit of arahatship.

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26 ---tatra ālayākhya viññānam vipākaḥ sarvabijakaṁ//2//
27 ---viññānaṁ saha na vā taraṅgāṇām yathā jale//15//
28 ---sādā sparśa manaskāra vít-sajñā cetanā avitām//3//
Impact of Nara Buddhism
Six sects of the Nara Buddhism represent their first exposure to theology and systematized schools of Philosophy. Although Kamakura period is said to be the golden age of Japanese Buddhism but the foundation of Kamakura thought lies in the philosophy of Nara Buddhism.

The great impact of Nara Buddhism upon Japanese society caused various Buddhist institutions of China to be transferred to Japan in the Nara period and the majority of the masses were hardly aware of the new religion. In this concern, a question arises for those who were ordained by the government- how many were ordained and did they really understand the basic teachings of the Buddha? But at that time, Buddhist leaders in Japan were so active and they could easily sort out what was needed for the masses in subsequent times. Thus, the effort of Nara Buddhist became the foundation stone for future Japanese Buddhism.

Japanese thought and culture was influenced by the Buddhist and they developed the following concepts: the idea of vegetarianism, avoidance of hunting for pleasure and non-veg food in order to became very close to the nature; the idea of impermanence (anicca); and the concept of emptiness. I quote: The more I comprehend the emptiness of this world, the sadder I become” (cf. Mastunaga 1974; Manyoshu 793).

Nara period the most crucial time of assimilation in Japanese Buddhist History. Apart from Hosso, the other sect, too, developed. The root of Zen, Early Pure Land Thought, and Tantric Buddhism can be seen clearly.

Conclusion
Buddha’s words have been influential not only to Asian culture but also to western culture especially in the field of meditation and non-violence. Through its vibrant spiritual tradition, Buddhism, has ennobled the lives of millions and open the doors of liberation to all classes of society as its Universalist project by comprehending the true nature of all phenomena with non-duality. What is the most unique feature about the doctrine is its crystal clarity. The teaching is open and lucid, simple but deep. It combines three gradual steps, such as, morality, concentration and wisdom with fidelity to the facts of day to day living experience.
As we know that, Kusha school and Hosso sect has considerable similarities in defining the dharma, we can say, here, the Hosso sect developed the theory of Kusha school ‘causation through action-influence’ to ‘causation through mere cognition only’. Japanese Hosso sect is still surviving and flourishing in this global era because of the openness of the dharma. Its philosophical elements can be practiced and realized through meditation, which are common in Indian, Chinese, Korean, and Tibetan Buddhism with other name or designation.

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