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# KARMA AND REBIRTH

L. D. SERIES 38

GENERAL EDITOR  
DALSUKH MALVANIA

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DHARWAR



L. D. INSTITUTE OF INDOLOGY AHMEDABAD 9

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## INTRODUCTION

The L. D. Institute of Indology has great pleasure in publishing the three lectures on Karma and Rebirth, delivered by Dr. T. G. Kalghatgi in L. D. Lecture Series. They were first published in our Journal Sambodhi Vol. I.

‘The concepts of Karma and Rebirth have been woven in the very texture of Indian thought and Society.’ They constitute the basis of Indian Religion and Philosophy. The learned Doctor has tried to find out the Western counterparts of these Indian concepts. Moreover, he clearly examines as to what is exactly meant by Karma. He is critical about those who interpret it in the sense of habit. He gives a lucid account of the Karma theory as found in Jaina, Buddhist and Patañjala Yoga systems. He feels that Karma theory is the legacy of the aborigines of India who were conquered by the Aryan intruders. While dealing with the problem of Rebirth he takes into account Aurobindo’s view and discusses at length the arguments for and against Rebirth advanced by the modern Western philosophers. In McTaggart one finds the powerful pleader for the case of Rebirth. His arguments are forceful and interesting.

I am thankful to Dr. Kalghatgi for these three lectures which he prepared at our instance. I have no doubt that the students, teachers and others interested in this subject will find this book interesting and of genuine help in understanding the problem of Karma and Rebirth—a problem of enormous importance to mankind.

L. D. Institute of Indology  
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**Dalsukh Malvania**  
**Director**

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## IN THE VESTIBULES OF KARMA

I. "The sage Jābali turned round and looked at me," said the parrot Vaiśampāyana skilled in the *Śāstras*, "with an effort to recognise something that he had known before spoke gently thus 'this one too is reaping the fruits of his own misconduct.'" The *Kādambarī* is a story of actions and their fruits in the successive lives of living beings. *Yaśodharacarita* presents a story of Yaśodhara and his mother Candramati who suffered the effects of their misconduct in a series of births. The sage Sudatta said Yaśodhara and his mother had to undergo countless suffering in successive births for having sacrificed a cock made of flour paste. Similar stories abound in earlier Jaina romances like *Samarāiccakahā*. In the Buddhist literature we get narratives of this type. It is reported that the Buddha described the previous life forms of men closely connected with him. The Buddha, as the Bodhisattva, passed through numerous previous births, as a lion, and Sumedha. The Pali canon relates an account of a Brahmin, who was able to assess by seeing only the skull of a being, where his previous possessor was reborn.<sup>1</sup> Apart from the interest in these accounts from the point of view of romance and literature, they present a deep-rooted concept of man, his actions and his destiny. The concept of Karma and rebirth have been woven in the very texture of Indian thought and society.

It appears that such prophecies of Karma and consequent rebirths were pronounced by intuition. It is not only in India we have such experiences, but there are evidences to show that the beliefs in future births existed in other people like the Greeks and the Jews.

The belief in life after death has been present in varying forms in the writings of Khalil Gibran. The early stories indicate a belief in the doctrine of reincarnation that seems more than a literary device. In the *Nymph of the Valley* there is a story of two lovers who meet again after two thousand years in the ruins of the Astarte.<sup>2</sup> But later, Gibran joined the Neoplatonists in their belief in the return of the individual soul to God.

Karma and rebirth are the basic concepts which cannot be considered in isolation. The two concepts present a chain of causation, perhaps two sides of the same coin. The two have been woven in the texture of Indian belief. The stories concerning Karma and rebirth in literature and mythology present the foundation of Indian thought and society. "The common feature of all the religious systems of India is the dogma of retribution, causality of the

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1. W. Geiger : *Sāmyutta Nikāya* Part I. p. 289

2. *A tear and smile* : Introduction by Robert Hilager.

deed (*Karma*) and conditioned by this, the beginningless chain of existences following one another.’<sup>3</sup>

Life in this planet is inexplicable in many ways. Happiness and misery are facts of life. Fleeting moments of joy are interspersed by moments of pain. In his Sermon at Banaras the Buddha said to his disciples that the first noble truth is the tyranny of pain. “Birth is painful, decay is painful, disease is painful, death is painful, union with the unpleasant is painful, painful is the separation from the pleasant” “What think, ye disciples whether is more, the water which is in the four great oceans or the tears which have flown from you and have been shed by you while you strayed and wandered on this long pilgrimage<sup>4</sup>. Kant while refuting the optimism of Leibniz, said “Would any man of sound understanding who has lived long enough and has meditated on the worth of human existence care to go again through life’s poor play...?”<sup>5</sup> Schopenhauer was exasperated with the false optimism of the modern philosophers, as man is essentially a creature of pain. Life is but a pendulum swinging between pain and pleasure, desire and boredom. Happiness is negative state and only positive state is pain. In such a scheme of things there is no place for hope. But there were others who saw that the world is a pleasure garden. And man is the central figure in the drama of life. With Robert Browning they said that “God is in heaven and all is right with the world.” These are the alternating emphases on life and its vicissitudes.

Happiness and misery are distributed in equal ways, some are happy and some miserable. All seek the pleasant things of life, but only some get them while others eat the bitter fruits. Very often we find good men suffer while evil men prosper in this life. King Hariscandra suffered untold misery for his truthfulness. *The book of Job* present the life of Job which is at once noble and piognantly miserble. In modern society incorruptible men suffer immensely and the dishonest prosper. This kind of personal and social inequalities have been a perennial problem of provident and social injustice.

Attempts have been made to find suitable philosophical solutions to this problem. In the garden of Edan Eve ate the fruit of knowledge that was man’s first disobedience ‘and the fruit of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste brought death into this world and all our woe’.<sup>6</sup>

3. Glasenapp : *Immortality and Salvation in Indian Religion* : Trans. E. F. J. Payne (Sushila Gupta 1964) Author’s Preface.

4. Oldenberg : *Buddha*, pp. 216-17.

5. Kant : *Failure of every philosophical attempts in Theodicy* : Article,

6. Milton (John) : *Paradise Lost* I

Fatalists have tried to explain away the problem by referring to fate. The moving finger having writ moves on and not a word can be changed of it.

“And that inverted Bowl we called the sky,  
Lift not thy hand to it for help – for It  
Rolls as impotently on as Thou or I”

“Yes, the first Morning of Creation wrote  
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.”<sup>7</sup>

There are philosophers who have made both physical and moral evil, from the highest point of view, nonexistent. The Universe is perfect and everything is good in so far as it exists, as Augustine put it. Spinoza identified reality with perfection. Regarded sub specie eternitatis everything is good. To Hegel also evil is unreal existing from partial point of view.

But all such theories of evil considering it as unreal cannot satisfy the craving minds of the individuals who do suffer and suffer unequally. “Pain is a terrible reality to him who experiences it, and the higher point of view of philosophic wisdom is untrue to facts if it ignores the experienced reality of pain.”<sup>8</sup> There were others who blinked at the misery of life and its inequalities in the quietistic optimism, as in the attitude of Robert Browning. Attempts were also made to relieve God of the responsibilities for evil by the Dualistic theory of making good and evil independent co-eternal realities. Philosophic justification of evil has come from another side. Evil is flavour to the sauce and

“Our sincerest laughter,  
With some pain is wrought”

And “Mere enjoyment is not our adequate end of creative purpose, nor is God (if there be a God) to be thought of as a kind of Santa clause whose one business is to make his creatives happy”.<sup>9</sup> “Do you not see”, asked Keats, “how necessary a world of pain and trouble is to school an intelligence and to make a soul?” To the question why one man has to suffer for another’s wrong doing, “we can only say that this seems to enhance morality, for it tends to bind men together in the bonds of social solidarity and helps them to realise that the life of all is involved in the life of each.”<sup>10</sup> Christianity has set the symbol of vicarious suffering. But the problem of

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7. *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam L II L III.

8. Miall Edward : *Philosophy of Religion* (Progressive Publication, 1953), pp. 245.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*



moral evil associated with physical evil has been a mystery and attempts to solve this mystery have not all been satisfactory. Why should the Good suffer and evil prosper. We do not know.

The theories of accident and Necessity (*Niyativāda*) have failed to satisfy the enquiring minds. The advancement of empirical knowledge in the field of sciences has given command over nature but has not pointed to any solution of the problem. We may have to say with Omar Khayyam :

“Myself when young did eagerly frequent Doctor and Saint, and heard great Argument About it and about but ever more came by the same door as in I went.”

If we survey the ancient Indian thought, the doctrine of Karma has been suggested as a possible solution to this problem and it is intimately connected with the doctrine of the reincarnation of soul. It is, therefore, necessary to study the problem of unequal distribution of misery and happiness in this life in the light of this theory and to see whether we can justify the ways of man to man and of God to man.

There are evidences to show that belief in future birth existed in other people like the Greek and the Jewish People.

Karma and rebirth are the two concepts which cannot be considered by themselves in isolation. The two are causally connected. They present the foundation of Indian thought and Society. “The common basis of all the religious systems of India is the dogma of retribution, casuality of the deed (*Karma*) and conditioned by this the beginningless chain of existence following one another.”<sup>11</sup> “The notion of retribution governs all the great metaphysical systems in India so much, that Indian authors see in it the common fundamental assumption of every religious world view in general. For all the great Indian systems Karma is foundational principle operating in the universe and is the driving force that keeps every individual existence permanently at work. The Indian systems of Philosophy could explain the mystery of the inequality of existence and all that is enigmatic in existence by the concept of Karma.

“Oh Gautama, just as a sprout has a seed for its *hetu*, as there is a *hetu* for happiness and misery; since it is a *Kārya*. That *hetu* is the Karma.”<sup>12</sup> “Misery comes in unequal ways; this difference cannot be without any *hetu* which is not seen. This very unseen *hetu* is Karma.”<sup>13</sup>

In the *Mahābhārata* there is emphasis on the force of Karma. The *Upaniṣads* have envisaged a theory that all creatures are bound by Karma and

11. Glasenapp : *Immortality and Salvation in Indian Religions*. p. 25.

12. *Viśeṣāvaśyakabhāṣya : Gaṇadharavāda* 1611-12 and commentary.

13. *Ibid.*

are released by wisdom.<sup>14</sup> Some times Karma of the fore-fathers affects even their descendents.<sup>15</sup>

The doctrine of Karma is one of the most significant tenets of Indian thought. It has profoundly influenced the life and thought of the people in India.<sup>16</sup> It is the basal pre-supposition of Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. "One finds an unanswerable truth in the theory of Karma, – not necessarily in the form the ancients gave to it, but in the idea at its centre, – which at once strikes the mind and commands the assent of the understanding. Nor does the austerer reason, distrustful of first impressions and critical of plausible solutions, find after the severest scrutiny that the more superficial understanding, the porter at the gateways of our mentality, has been deceived into admitting a tinsel guest, a false claimant into our mansion of knowledge. There is a solidity at once of philosophic and of practical truth supporting the idea, a bed-rock of the deepest universal undeniable verities against which the human mind must always come up in its fathomings of the fathomless ; in this way indeed does the world deal with us, there is a law here which does so make itself felt and against which all our egoistic ignorance and self-will and violence dashes up in the end, as the old Greek poet said of the haughty isolation and prosperous pride of man, against the very foundation of the throne of Zeus, the marble feet of Themis, the adamantine bust of Ananke. There is the secret of an eternal factor, the base of the unchanging action of the just and truthful gods, *devānām dhruvavratam*, in the self-sufficient and impartial law of Karma."<sup>17</sup>

As man sows, so does he reap. Our actions have their effects. These effects cannot be destroyed. They have to be experienced and exhausted. If we cannot exhaust the effect of our actions in this life, we have to complete the cycle of births and deaths to earn the fruits of all that we have done. No man inherits the good or evil of another man. The doctrine of Karma is thus closely associated with the reincarnation of soul. Every evil deed must be expiated and every good deed must be rewarded. If it is not possible to reap the fruits in one single empirical existence, it must be experienced on earth in a fresh incarnation. Plato has made a reference to this theory in the *Laws* perhaps under the influence of Orphic mysticism, and refers to the tradition which is firmly believed by many, and has been received from those who are learned in the mysteries.<sup>18</sup> In Indian thought, the doctrine of Karma has been developed on philosophical and scientific

14. "Karmaṇā badhyate jantūṃ vidyayā tu pramucyate."

15. *Śānti Parva*, 240

16. Cave (Sedney) : *Living Religions of the East*. p. 31

17. Aurobindo : *The Problem of Rebirth*, (Pondicherry, 1952), p. 84.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 85

bases. "This truth of Karma has been always recognised in the East in one form or else in another; but to the Buddhists belongs the credit of having given to it the clearest and fullest universal enunciation and the most insistent importance. In the West, too, the idea has constantly recurred, but in external, in fragmentary glimpses, as the recognition of a pragmatic truth of experience, and most as an ordered ethical law or fatality set over against the self-will and strength of man."<sup>19</sup> The Jainas have developed the doctrine of Karma on a scientific basis.

Karma etymologically means whatever is done, any activity. It got associated with the after-effects of action, both physical and mental. Every *jīva* (living being) is constantly active, expressing the activity in the three-fold functions of body, speech and mind. It leaves behind traces of after-effects in the physical and psychic forms. Every action, word or thought produces, besides its visible, invisible and transcendent effects. It produces under certain conditions potential energies which forge the physical effects in the form of reward or punishment. As in the case of a bond which continues to operate until, but loses its validity on, the repayment of the capital; so does the invisible effect of an action remain in potential form after the visible effect has disappeared. Actions performed in this life would be the causes.<sup>20</sup> And the present life is the result of actions performed in previous lives. So is the chain of life connected in the series of actions and their effects realised. The Karma doctrine involves the idea of eternal metempsychosis.

Karl Potter in his *Presuppositions of Indian Philosophies*<sup>21</sup> has tried to interpret Karma as a form of habit. Human being faces challenges from many sides which have to be met by birth, social action and by the application of scientific techniques in order to be free from the bondage in life. But the more subtle challenges lie underneath the surface, and arise from habits themselves, which continue after the conditions that engender them have been removed, and which engender new habits which in turn must be removed somehow. This round of habits breeding habits is a part of what is called in Sanskrit *Samsāra*, the wheel of birth, which is governed by Karma, the habits themselves. Karma is described in the Jaina Philosophy as a kind of dirt which accretes to the otherwise pure *jīva* by virtue of one's actions. In the *Bhagavadgītā* the dirt is described as of three kind : "one may think of these as types of habits."<sup>22</sup> I have not been able to

19. Ibid p. 85

20. Glasenapp (Von H.) : *The Doctrine of Karma in Jaina Philosophy*. (German Edition, 1942) Preface.

21. *Presuppositions of Indian Philosophies*. (Prentice Hall, 1963).

22. Ibid.

understand how Potter interprets Karma as a type of habit. Psychologists tell us that habit is a learned activity that has become almost automatic, and habit has the same relation to learning as the secondary automatic reaction has to the reflexes. The function of habit is to simplify the movements required to achieve a given result, to make the actions more accurate and to diminish fatigue, because we have a structure weak enough to yield to an influence but strong enough not to yield at once. Karma is least to be considered as habit in this sense. I cannot understand Potter's interpretation. I can only say one must be steeped in the Indian tradition in order to understand the nature and significance of Karma.

C. J. Jung, while distinguishing, Personal and the Collective Unconscious, hints at the possibility of comparing the archetypes of the Collective Unconscious to the Karma in Indian thought. The Collective Unconscious stands for the objective psyche. The personal layer ends at the earliest memories of infancy, but the collective layer comprises the pre-infantile period that is the residue of ancestral life. The force of Karma works implicitly and determines the nature and development of personality. The Karma aspect is essential to the deeper understanding of the nature of an archetype.<sup>23</sup> Although it is possible to say that Karma has essentially a reference to individual differences and hence a personal acquisition, yet each individual has a common heritage which he shares with the community and which shapes his being. The archetypes refer to the common heritage. To this extent they refer to the Karma aspect. However, Jung was primarily concerned with interpretation of dreams and fantasies in presenting his theory of the Collective Unconscious. 'Had he developed the archetypes of the collective unconscious, he would have reached the doctrine of Karma, the store-house of the physical and psychical effects of the past.'<sup>24</sup>

Fundamentally, "the meaning of Karma is that all existence is the working of a universal Energy, a process and an action and a building of things by that action, – an unbuilding too, but as a step to farther building, – that all is a continuous chain in which every one link is bound indissolubly to the past infinity of numberless links, and the whole governed by fixed relations, by a fixed association of cause and effect, present action the result of past action as future action will be the result of present action, all cause a working of energy and all effect too a working of energy". The moral significance is that all our existence is a putting out of an energy which is in us and by which we are made and as is the nature of the energy which is put forth as cause, so shall be that of the energy

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23. Jung (C. J.) : *Essays in Analytical Psychology* (Personal and Collective or Transcendental Unconscious) p. 76. Footnote.

24. Radhakrishnan (S.) : *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I. (1941). pp. 109–110.

which returns as effect, that this is the universal law and nothing in the world can, being of and in our world, escape from its governing incidence. That is the philosophical reality of the theory of Karma, and that too is the way of seeing which has been developed by physical science.<sup>25</sup>

II. It is difficult to say when and where the concept of Karma originated in India. Some traced the origin of Karma in the principle of *Rta*. *Rta* is the cosmic principle. It prevades the whole world, and gods and men must obey it. It is the anticipation of the law of Karma. The concept of *Rta* must have been originally suggested by the regularity of the movement of the sun and the moon and the uniformity in the phenomenal world. The vedic *Rsis* think that *Rta* exists before the manifestation of all phenomena. "The *Maruts* come from the seat of the *Rta*." *Viṣṇu* is the embryo of the *Rta*, and heaven and earth are what they are by reason of *Rta*. It is difficult to say that Karma must have originated from *Rta*. The doctrine of Karma does not appear in the old hymns of the *Rgveda*. The vedic seers were mainly interested in the good of this life; and when death came they went the way of their fathers to the world where *Yama*, the first to die, ruled. The doctrine must have developed against a number of other doctrines about creation. Some regarded time as the dominant factor of creation. Others believe in nature (*Svabhāva*) as the prominent factor. There were other theories as well. Some, like the Jainas, rejected these views and said that even time and *Svabhāva* are determined by Karma.<sup>26</sup>

The concept of Karma must have existed atleast a thousand years, before the beginning of the Christian era and has since become the basis and centre of religions.<sup>27</sup> It is probable that Karma and Rebirth must have been pre-Aryan doctrines which were important in the *Śramaṇa* culture and later assimilated in the Aryan thought by the time the *Upaniṣads* were clearly formulated.

The Indian view of Karma was doubtless of non-Aryan provenance and it was a kind of natural law.<sup>28</sup>

The doctrine of Karma for the first time appears in the *Upaniṣad* and was considered a secret doctrine conveyed only to the initiates.<sup>29</sup> It is possible that the concept of Karma was taken over from the pre-Aryan inhabitants of India, as it has been established that a high culture existed in the

25. Sri Aurobindo : *The Problem of Rebirth*, pp. 85-86.

26. Tatia (N) : *Studies in Jaina Philosophy* (1951) p. 220.

27. Glassenapp (Von H.) : *The Dhctrine of Karma in Jaina Philosophy*. Pregace to the German Edn.

28. Ninian Smart : *Doctrine & Argument in Indian Philosophy* (Allen & Unmin 1964) p. 163.

29. *Br. Upaniṣad* 3. 2. 13

Indus Valley before the invasion of the Aryan conquerors. "Therefore a hypothesis could be advanced that the Indo-Aryans arrived at their doctrine of metempsychosis in a manner similar to that of the Celtic Druids who also appear to have taken it over as a sacred doctrine from the pre-Aryan people."<sup>30</sup> Karma was closely associated with the doctrine of reincarnation of soul. With the gradual emphasis of asceticism under the influence of Śramaṇa culture, came the awareness of one's responsibility, here and hereafter. Karma was linked up with the doctrine of reincarnation of soul.

However, Karma doctrine has been widely accepted in the ancient Indian thought except by the *Cārvāka*. Karma theory has been expressed in a variety of ways from the most extreme realism which regards Karma as a complexity of material particles infecting the soul to the most extreme idealism, where it is a species of newly produced invisible force, in its highest unreal. In the *Sanyāsa Upaniṣad* we are told that *jīvas* are bound by Karma.<sup>31</sup> A man becomes good by good deeds and bad by bad deeds.<sup>32</sup> And while we thus live we fetter ourselves with the effects of our deeds. In the *Mahābhārata* the emphasis is on the force of Karma. Of the three kinds of Karma, *Prārabdha*, *Sañcita* and *Āgāmi*, mentioned in the *Bhagavadgītā*, *Āgāmi* and *Sañcita* can be overcome. Karma theory was gradually being developed in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and other Upaniṣads. It has received prominence in the *Mahābhārata*. However fast man proceeds, the Karma of the past life always follows. It is there when he sleeps, when he gets up and when he walks about. He has to experience the fruits of the Karma of the actions.<sup>33</sup> Karma is accreted due to *vāsanā* and *vāsanā* is created and intensified due to the force of Karma; and there is thus the beginningless cycle of causation.<sup>34</sup> Karma as the after-effect of action has been intimately linked up with the Karma as action, as the effects of action have been primarily referred to the actions of the individuals. Manu has divided the actions of men into bodily (*kāyika*), verbal (*vācika*) and mental (*mānasika*) as, for instance, murder and threat are *kāyika*, speaking untruth is *vācika* and desiring wealth of another is *mānasika*.<sup>35</sup> Karma as act has also been differentiated as *sāttvika* (right), *rājasa* (charged with emotions) and *tāmasa* (ignorant). But regarding the effects of action Karma gets *sañcita*, *prārabdha* and *āgāmi* distinctions. The distinction between *sañcita* (accumulated), *prārabdha* (operating) and *āgāmi* (in future) is also important. *Sañcita* has to be

30. Glasenapp (Von H.) : *Immortality and Salvation in Indian Religions* (Sushil Gupta, 1961) p. 22.

31. *Sanyāsa Upaniṣad*, ii. 18.

32. *Br. Upaniṣad*, iii. 2, 13.

33. *Śānti Parva*, 181.

34. *Ibid.* 211.

35. *Manusmṛti*, 12.5.7.

exhausted and it cannot be experienced at once as some portion of it may bear bad and some good effects. For instance, some may produce effect in the 'svarga' and some in the 'naraka' and therefore they have to be experienced at different times ; but all that Karma has to be exhausted. That part of the *Sañcita Karma* which begins to operate is called '*Prārabdha Karma*'. The *Vedānta sūtra* mentions the distinction between *prārabdha* and *anārabdha kārya*. The Karma which has started operating and which an individual has brought with him out of *Sañcita* needs to be exhausted. The *anārabdha Karma* can be destroyed by *jñāna*. However, one who has attained *jñāna* has also to await till the *prārabdha Karma* that he brought with him at the time of birth gets completely exhausted. But if he forcibly decides to give up his life before the *prārabdha Karma* is exhausted he has to be reborn to experience the fruits of the remaining karma.<sup>36</sup>

In Buddhism there is no substance as soul. What transmigrates is not a person but his Karma.<sup>37</sup> When the series of mental states which constitutes the self resulting from a chain of acts ends, there would still be some acts and their effects which continue and the *vijñāna* projects into the future due to the force of the effects of Karma. The Buddhists distinguish acts accompanied by *āśrava* (impure acts) from pure acts which are not accompanied by *āśrava*. *Samsāra* is the effect of Karma. Our present happiness and misery are the fruits of what we have done in the past. Operation of Karma can be considered as a principle of moral life, as a force limiting and particularising personality and as a principle of conservation of energy in the physical world. Buddhism also accepts the principle that inequalities in life are due to the accretion and operation of Karma in individuals. In the *Milinda Pañhā* "venerable Nāgasena", asked the king, "why are men not all alike, but some short-lived and some long, some sickly and some healthy, some weak and some strong, some poor and some rich, some base and some noble, some stupid and some clever ... ?"

"Why, your majesty", replied the Elder, "are not all plants alike, but some astringent, some salty, some pungent, some sour, and some sweet ... ?"

"I suppose, your Reverence, Because they come from different seeds."

"And so it is with men ! They are not alike because of different Karmas. As the Lord said 'Beings each have their own Karma. They are born through karma, they become members of tribes and families through Karma, each is ruled by Karma, it is Karma that divides them into high and low.' "

"Very good, your Reverence !"<sup>38</sup>

36. *Vedānta Sūtra*. 4.1, 13-15.

37. *Abhidhamma Kośa Bhāṣya*. iii. 24.

38. *Milinda Pañhā* (Trenckner), p. 65.

In Buddhism Karma has an extensive function as it determines not only his individual qualities, the circumstances of his life and fate, but also creates an external world to be experienced by the being in question.<sup>39</sup> According to *Sarvāstivādins*, the sun, the mountains and the rivers are only contents of my consciousness determined by Karma. Not only the fate of all earthly communities but those of an entire world system are determined by the Karma of all the apparent individuals who were born in it.<sup>40</sup> The fruits of retribution of acts include not only the sensation but also everything that determines sensation. Three kinds of acts produce agreeable (*sukha-vedanīya*), disagreeable (*duḥkha*) and indifferent sensations. Similarly, some acts produce immediate effects because their retribution cannot be interrupted by an act allowing the fruit in another existence as, for instance, matricide, patricide and murder of an *arhat* etc. In other cases the retribution may be arrested by an acquisition of spiritual stage called *kṣānti* (patience), *anāgāmi* (quality of a saint) and arhatship. An existence is projected or caused by Karma and human existence cannot be projected except by good Karma. The fruits of Karma may be of general kind as for instance towards the end of a cosmic period (*antarakalpa*) plants are crushed by rains and stones and they bear little fruits. The creation of Karm is the result of Karma.

The idea of the pollution of the soul due to karma has been largely allegorical in other religious philosophies in India, while the Jainas 'have adopted it in the real sense of the word' and have worked out into an original system.<sup>41</sup> The Jaina conception of Karma must have been completely developed after a thousand years of Mahāvira's *nirvāṇa*. The *Sihānāṅga*, *Uttarādhyāyanasūtra* and the *Bhagavatsūtra* contain general outline of the doctrine and the details have been worked out in the *Karmagrantha*, *Pañcasaṅgraha* and the *Karmaprakṛti*. In working out the details, there have been two schools of thought i) *Āgamika* and ii) *Karmagranthika*.

Jainism is, in a sense, dualistic. The universe is constituted of the two fundamental categories : *Jīva* (living) and *ajīva* (non-living); soul (*jīva*) has been described from the noumenal and the phenomenal points of view. From the pure and ultimate point of view, *jīva* is pure and perfect. It is characterised by *upayoga*, the hormic energy. It is simple and without parts. It is immaterial and formless.<sup>42</sup> It is characterised by *cetanā*. It is pure consciousness. From the phenomenal point of view *jīva* is described as possessing four *prāṇas*. It is the lord (*prabhu*), limited to his body

39. Yamakami Sogen : *Systems of Buddhist Philosophy*. (1912), pp. 50-66.

40. Glasenapp. *Immortality and Salvation in Indian Religion*, p. 29.

41. Glasenapp (Von H.) : *The Doctrine of Karma in Jaina Philosophy*, p. 15.

42. *Dravyasaṅgraha*, 2.



(*dehamātra*), still incorporeal, and it is ordinarily found with Karma.<sup>43</sup> The *jīva* comes in contact with the external world, *ajīva*. The *jīva* is active, and the activity is expressed in the threefold forms—the bodily, in speech and mental. This is called *yoga*. *Yoga* brings its after-effects in the form of Karmic particles, which veil the pure nature of the soul. The souls are contaminated by the Karma which is a foreign element, and are involved in the wheel of *samsāra*. This contamination is beginningless, though it has an end. It is difficult to say how the souls got involved in the wheel of *samsāra*. Caught in the wheel of *Samsāra* the soul forgets its real nature and the efforts to search for the truth are obscured by the passions. The inherent capacity of the soul for self-realisation is also obstructed by the veil of Karma.<sup>44</sup> It is subjected to the forces of Karma which express themselves first through feelings and emotions, and secondly, in the chains of very subtle kinds of matter invisible to the eye and the instruments of science. It is then embodied and is affected by the environment, physical and social and spiritual. We, thus, get various types of soul existence.

Karma, according to the Jainas, is material in nature. It is matter in a subtle form and it is a substantive force. It is constituted of finer particles of matter. The kind of matter fit to manifest Karma fills the universe. It has the special property of developing the effects of merit and demerit. By its activity due to the contact with the physical world, the soul becomes penetrated with the particles of Karmic body (*Karma śarīra*) which is constantly attached to the soul till it succeeds to be free from it. 'Nowhere has the physical nature of Karma been asserted with such stress as in Jainism.'<sup>45</sup> A moral fact produces a psycho-physical quality, a real and not merely a symbolic mark, affecting the soul in its physical nature. This point of view has been worked out in detail in the form of mathematical calculations, in the *Karmagrantha*.

The Jaina tradition distinguishes two aspects: i) the physical aspect *dravya-karma* and ii) the psychic aspect (*bhāva-karma*). The physical aspect comprises the particles of Karma (*Karma-pudgala*) accruing into the soul and polluting it. The psychic aspect is primarily the mental states and events arising out of the activity of mind, body and speech. They are like the mental traces long after the conscious states experienced vanish. The physical and the psychic Karma are mutually related to each other as cause and effect.<sup>46</sup> The distinction between the physical and the psychic

43. *Tattvārtha-sūtra*, 6.1.

44. *Ibid.*

45. Glasenapp (Von, H.) : *The Doctrine of Karma in Jaina Philosophy*. Foreword by Zimmerman.

46. *Aṣṭasahasrī* (N. S. Press, Bombay, 1915), p. 51

aspects of Karma is psychologically significant, as it presents the interaction of the bodily and the mental due to the incessant activity of the soul.

This bondage of the soul to Karman is of four types, according to nature (*prakṛti*), duration (*sthiti*), intensity (*anubhāga* or *rasa*) and quantity (*pradeśa*).<sup>47</sup>

Even as a pudding (*modaka*) having ingredients used for curing gastric trouble cures the ailment, as does the pudding having ingredients removing biliousness or phlegm, so also the Karmic particles which have become *Jñānāvaraṇīya* Karma veils knowledge, *darśanāvaraṇīya* veils *darśana*. Similarly the effect of one *modaka* is restricted to one day and another for two days so the duration of Karma working for long time like Thirty Sāgaropamas or short time of forty-eight minutes. In the case of varied intensity, as the pill measuring a *prasti* or two, so have the Karma particles under the influences of passions (*Kaṣāyas*) due to *Yoga* (bodily, speech and mental activity) the soul attracts Karmic matter (*Karma pudgala*) which is then associated with the soul. As a lamp with its wick draws in the oil and converts it into the flame which is its body, so does the soul attract, due to attachment etc. the material aggregates and transforms them into Karmic matter.<sup>48</sup>

Karma can be distinguished into eight types: 1) *Jñānāvaraṇīya*, that which obscures right knowledge; 2) *darśanāvaraṇīya*, that which obscures right intuition, 3) *vedanīya*, arousing affective states like feelings and emotions; 4) *mohanīya*, that which deludes right faith; 5) *āyu-karma*, determining the age of the individual; 6) *nāma karma*, which produces various circumstances collectively making up an individual existence like the body and other special qualities of individuality; 7) *gotra karman*, which determines the family, social standing, etc. of the individual; and 8) *antarāyakarma* which obstructs the inborn energy of the soul and prevents the doing of good actions.

Each kind of Karma has its limits in time within which it must exhaust itself. The accumulated Karma brings a transcendental hue or halo to the soul which is called *leśyā*. There are six *Leśyās*. These *Leśyās* have predominantly a moral resultant.

Karma is a substantive force. It has the property of developing the effects of merit and demerit. The Karmic particles build up a special body which is called *Karma-śarīra* which does not leave the soul till its emancipation. Karma has its psychic effects also. *Bhāva-Karma* is immediate to the *Jīva*, while *Dravya-karma* belongs to the body. Five classes of Karmic conditions are mentioned. On account of the rise (*udaya*), suppre-

47. *Karma grantha*, 3.2.

48. *Tattvārtha Sūtra Bhāṣya Tīkā* (pt. I).

ssion (*upaśama*), annihilation (*kṣaya*), suppression-and-annihilation, (*kṣayo-paśama*) and psychological effect (*pariṇāma*), the soul has five conditions of thought and existence.<sup>49</sup> In the usual course of things, Karma takes effect and produces results. The soul is said to be in *audayika* state. Karma may be prevented from its operation for sometime. In this state it is still present, like fire covered by ashes. The soul is in the *aupaśamika* state. When Karma is annihilated, it is in a *Kṣāyika* state. The fourth state is the mixed state. The last, unconditioned, state leads to *mokṣa*.

The distinction between the types of karma is based on the types of *mūlaprakṛti* and a number of *uttaraprakṛti*. They in turn get into smaller divisions. Of these we have eight *mūla prakṛtis* and 148 *uttara-prakṛtis*. On the basis of the five categories of knowledge, there are five types of *jñānavaraṇīya karma*. The first four produce greater or less degree of obscuration. But the last one destroys omniscience altogether. There are nine types of *darśanāvāraṇīya karma*. The first four : (1) *caḥṣu* (2) *acaḥṣu*, (3) *avadhi* and (4) *kevala* obscure intuition. The effects of the remaining intuition obscuring karma are felt in (1) sleep (*nidrā*), deep sleep (*nidrā-nidrā*), (3) sleep while standing (*pracaḥā*), (4) sleep while walking (expressing bodily action) (*styā-nagrddhi*). This is analogous to somnambulism. They produce psycho-physical conditions which exclude all possibility of perception. The *vedanīya karma* has two types : (1) causing pleasant feeling (*sātāvedanīya*) and (2) unpleasant feeling (*asātāvedanīya*). In gods and men *sātāvedanīya* is predominant. *Mohanīya karma* has two groups (1) those deluding the right intuition, and there are three of them (i) *mithyātva vedanīya*, (ii) *saṃyaktva vedanīya*, (iii) *miśravedanīya*. The second group *cāritra-vedanīya* has two sub-groups (i) *kaṣāya vedanīya* and (ii) *nokaṣāya vedanīya*. There are sixteen *kaṣāyavedanīya* based on the four passions and four degrees of intensity of each passion. The second group has nine types based on six quasi passions (*nokaṣāya*) like laughter etc. and three sexes. The *Āyu Karma* has four subtypes which determine the life span of an individual in hell, plant and animal life, human life and celestial world.

The *Nāma Karma* has a large number of subtypes according to the various forms of embodied existence, with reference to *gati*, *jāti* and *śarīra*. *Gotra Karma* determines the status of an individual as of high and low. *Antarāya-Karma* is of the following types :

- (1) that which obstructs the inclination of giving gifts
- (2) that which prevents the enjoyment of things
- (3) that which lasts only for the period of enjoyment
- (4) that which prevents the enjoyment of things that lasts for some time and
- (5) that which prevents the free expression of energy.

49. *Pañcāstikāyasāra*. 62.

Of the eight main types of Karma, the four *jñānāvaraṇīya*, *darśanāvaraṇīya*, *mohanīya* and *antarāya* are *ghāti Karma*, as they obscure the capacity of knowledge and intuition, delude the soul into wrong ways and obstruct its inherent energy. Some of them are completely obscuring (*sarvaghāti*) and others are partially obscuring (*deśaghāti*). But even in this the soul still retains an element of right knowledge and intuition, as a very dark and dense cloud cannot completely cover the lustre of the sun or the moon. In that case it would mean the conversion of spirit into matter.<sup>50</sup> The infinitesimal part of the pure and perfect knowledge ever remains, as a rule, uncovered in any form of existence of the soul.<sup>51</sup> For example, Karma which covers *Kevalajñāna* is regarded as *sarva-ghāti* while other subtypes of *Jñānāvaraṇīya Karma* are considered as *deśa-ghāti*. Same is the case with Karma covering *Kevala-darśana* and that which covers other types of *darśana*. The predilection for untruth (*mithyātva*) completely obscures the desire for truth. Still the desire and capacity for knowing the truth about worldly things remains unobscured. The analogy of the cloud is useful here also.<sup>52</sup> The soul, thus, cannot lose all its characteristics even if it is infected by *sarva-ghāti Karma*; otherwise it will be matter. *Deśa-ghāti Karma* obscures knowledge partially. It also obstructs in the same way intuition and energy. For instance, even the least developed organism has the minimum necessary energy for the process of metabolism and movement of individuals into different births due to *antarāya Karma*.

The *aghāti Karma* (non-obscuring) consists of all the sub-types of (1) *vedanīya*, (2) *nāma* (3) *gotra* and (4) *āyu Karma*. They do not obscure any fundamental quality of the soul. They only appear like *ghāti karma* when experienced along with them.<sup>53</sup>

Karma has also been classified into (1) auspicious (*Śubha*) and inauspicious (*Aśubha*) types. Those which lead to enjoyment of pleasure are auspicious and those which lead to suffering are inauspicious. However, perfect state is to be realised when all activities, auspicious or inauspicious, are stopped. Thereby both types of Karma are not accreted to the soul. Such activities lead to influx of *Karmāśrava* by which Karma matter flows into the soul.<sup>54</sup>

The Buddhists have classified Karma on the basis of different principles. There are four types of Karma on the basis of the functions they

50. *Karma Grantha*. 2.

51. *Nandī Sūtra*. 2.

52. *Ibid*.

53. *Ibid*.

54. *Tattvārtha Sūtra*. VI. 1-2.

perform. (i) Karma which conditions birth after death, (ii) that which sustains other Karma but does not itself cause rebirth, (iii) Karma which obstructs and weakens other Karma and (iv) Karma which obstructs and overpowers other weak Karma. On the basis of the priority of fruition we get four types : (i) serious Karma like killing the mother, (ii) that which is just before death, (iii) Karma which is repeatedly done and (iv) Karma which is of a light kind. According to the time of fruition, we get (i) Karma which gives its effect in this life, (ii) that which gives effect in the next life, (iii) Karma giving effect in some later life and (iv) that which is ineffective. On the basis of the plane of the life of fruition there are (i) inauspicious Karma producing misery, (ii) auspicious Karma producing better life of desire (*kāmāvacara bhūmi*), (iii) moral Karma which produces its effects in the plane of form (*rūpāvacara*) and (iv) that which produces Karma in the formless plane. But Buddhism maintains that involuntary actions whether of body, speech and mind, do not constitute Karma and therefore cannot bring about the results accruing to Karma. It only means that unwilled actions do not modify character. Vasubandhu says that an act is karmically effective to the full extent which has been willed and carried out and which is approved after completion. If, for instance, the carrying out of an action is omitted or the completed action is regretted, then the karmic effect is thereby lessened. In Buddhism the motive of the action is also important for determining the extent of creation of Karma of an individual.

We shall now briefly analyse the classification of Karma as mentioned by the Yoga School. The traces of action (*Karmāśaya*) fructify into enjoyment and sufferings and these are the merits and demerits. The passions of (i) lust, (ii) greed, (iii) delusion and (iv) anger produce the traces. On the basis of the nature of fruition of Karma, Yoga has classified Karma determining the nature of the next life as (i) various kinds of birth like human, subhuman and divine (ii) different spans of life and (iii) various enjoyments and suffering.<sup>55</sup> These can be compared to the *nāma, āyu* and *vedanīya Karma* of the Jainas. These karma fructify either in this life or in the life to come hereafter. Yoga also gives a four-fold distinction of karma based on the consideration of the nature of the activity that produces it.<sup>56</sup> The cruel activities are under the grip of passions and they give rise to the dark Karma. There are also mixed activities which give rise to dark and white Karma. Similarly, white karma traces are generated by moral activities, and the colourless karmic traces are produced by activities which are neither motivated by selfish nor by wordly desires. Only the ascetics can express such activity. The colourless karmic activity leads to emancipation. The

55. *Yoga Darśana*. II.

56. *Ibid.*

Yoga classification of karma traces on the basis of the colour of the action of the individual souls can be compared to the Jaina conception of the influx of Karma (*Karmāśrava*) into the soul and consequent colouration of the soul.

III. It is difficult to give logical proofs for the principle of Karma as producing the effects for the cycle of birth and death. Discursive and rational argument cannot be put forward for the proofs of Karma and its effects. The inequality in the status of individuals is an evidence to show that there are some reasons which must have produced these inequalities.

In the absence of the belief in the Karma operating in the individuals as a consequence of good or bad actions, it is difficult to explain the variety of living beings and their varying states in this empirical world. Ideas of fate and necessity cannot explain the predominant inequality in the status of individuals.<sup>57</sup>

The doctrine of Karma is a self-evident principle which cannot be proved nor need it be proved. It is a postulate which no philosopher has found it necessary to prove.

For all the great Indian systems Karma is just the all-ruling principle operating in the whole universe, the driving force that keeps every individual existence permanently at work. Even the theistic systems have never ventured to dispute the force of Karma that operates with iron necessity. God is not able to rule arbitrarily without the law of Karma; on the contrary, Karma is the guiding force to which he must conform for the creation and the governance of the world.<sup>58</sup>

The real proof of the truth of Karma theory is to be found in the words of the revealed scriptures or in the utterances of the great enlightened ones. These revelations and utterances have been handed down for centuries to posterity. In them they seek the really unshakeable foundation of their faith, just as Christian theologians derive the unassailable certainty of the immortality of the soul not from rational proofs, but from the revelations.<sup>59</sup>

The logical justification for the doctrine of Karma, the Jainas say, is not possible from the ultimate point (*niścaya-naya*). It is the expression of the highest knowledge and experience of the seers. We must accept it as authority. Similarly when the ascetic, named Kāladevala, saw the newborn Siddhārtha Gautama he was at once delighted and sad, delighted because

57. *Sāṅkhya Sūtra*. V, 20; VI, 41; *Karma Grantha* I.

58. Glasenapp : *Immortality and Salvation in Indian Religions*. p. 34.

59. *Ibid.*

he saw the vision of Siddhārtha as one to be the Buddha, and sad because he saw that he would not live to see that glorious day. This need not be taken as mere fable. It has a great significance in presenting the experience of a seer. And, "Oh Agnibhuti, Karma is *pratyakṣa* to me, the omniscient being, just as your doubt is *pratyakṣa* to me."<sup>60</sup>

IV. The problem is how to escape from the bonds of Karma. In ancient India philosophers referred to it in various ways. The Mīmāṃsā school has found out a way for obtaining the release from the bonds of Karma by giving instructions for performing certain types of acts. Acts are divided into three types: (1) *Nitya* (daily acts), like Sandhyā (2) *Naimittika* (occasional) like performance of rituals and worships on special occasions. Both these kinds have to be performed. (3) *Kāmya* are actions motivated by desires and impulses. Then there are acts which are to be prohibited *niṣiddha* as they are motivated by desires and impulses. By performing the *kāmya* actions one has to take a series of births according to the effects of Karma accrued and has to experience the effects in these births. These also should not be performed as they bring the influx of Karma. One has to balance the effects of Karma by performing some actions like *Nitya* and *Naimittika* and avoiding *Kāmya* and *Niṣiddha* actions. The *prārabdha* karma is exhausted by it being experienced in this life. When suffering in this world, in heaven and hell are exhausted, the *Ātman* reaches the state of release. This is the *karma mukti*, and *naiṣkarmya siddhi*. But the Vedāntins do not think that by *naiṣkarmya* one succeeds in reaching the goal as *Naiṣkarmya* does not result from abstinence of actions nor does one obtain release by giving up actions.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, *sañcita* Karma cannot be exhausted in this way because of the effects of two contrary *sañcita* Karma like heavenly happiness and suffering in hell, and it is not possible to experience both at the same time. Sometimes meritorious actions previously performed by a man wait for fruition until he has escaped from the pain of this worldly life. Therefore, the Vedāntins say that by the Mīmāṃsā way the release is not possible, nor is it possible to give up action altogether as no one can even for a single moment escape *karma* (action) in the world altogether.<sup>62</sup> The only way to escape from the wheel of life is by *jñāna*, knowledge in the sense of the realisation of the identity of the self and the absolute. In this sense *karmanā vidyate jantuḥ, vidyayā tu pramucyate* is to be understood. All Karma is reduced to ashes in the fire of knowledge.<sup>63</sup> As the seed which has been burnt does not take root, so the Karma which has been destroyed by *jñāna*

60. *Vīṣeṣāvaśyaka Bhāṣya, Gaṇadharaṇḍa*, 1611-1612,

61. *Bhagavadgītā*, 3.4.

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Ibid.*

does not fructify.<sup>64</sup> One who has acquired knowledge is not defiled by Karma as the lotus leaf does not hold water.<sup>65</sup> The Absolutist philosophy does preclude the possibility of detailed instructions of how to realise this state of release on the basis of the attainment of *jñāna*. Some of the paths to be pursued would be *yoga* of Patañjali, meditation on the absolute and self, *bhakti* (devotion) and renunciation of the fruits of efforts.

The impact of the Karma theory was so profound in Indian thought that detailed and casuistical attempts were made to calculate the fruits of Karma experienced by individuals in the cycle of births. In the *Manusmṛiti* we get the description of the fruits of Karma one experiences due to various activities that he performs. For example, one who steals gold will be afflicted in the next life with poor nails. He who takes alcohol will have black teeth. He who kills a Brahmin will suffer from consumption. One who is unchaste with the wife of his teacher will have skin disease.<sup>66</sup> One who steals the property of a good man or Brāhmin descends into the hot hell of *pāṣāṇakuṇḍa* for as many years as there are hairs on his body, he is then reborn three times as a tortoise and so on.<sup>67</sup> And for good actions : he who digs a pond or improves an old one reaches the heaven of the gods. He who gives food obtains good memory and other mental gifts in the next life. The story of Yeśodhara and Amṛtamati is a narrative of the long series of effects of Karma in their chain of existences. The Buddha narrates the successive life story of a man who was greedy and was reborn as an elephant.<sup>68</sup>

Such statements cannot be interpreted literally. They can be understood in the sense that a definite deed has a tendency to mature and fructify in a definite Karmic effect. This tendency is strongly modified more or less by the effects of other actions. The Indian doctrine of Karma is not merely, like the doctrine of retribution in western religions, a theory of rewards and punishments which we have to expect in the future for our deeds in this existence, but it will show the causes why we are in our present life precisely as we are in our present life and why we have the fate that we are experiencing.<sup>69</sup> Schopenhauer said that the moral meaning of metempsychosis in all Indian religions is not merely that in a subsequent rebirths we have to atone for every wrong we commit, but also that we must regard every wrong befalling us as thoroughly deserved through our misdeeds in a

64. *Mahābhārata Vanaparva*, 199-206.

65. *Chān. Upaniṣad*. 4.14.3.

66. *Manusmṛiti*. XI. 49 and *Yājñavalkya smṛiti*. III. 209.

67. *Devībhāgavata Purāna*. IX. ch. 33.

68. *Ānguttara Nikāya*. 10. M 177.

69. Glasenapp : *Immortality and Salvation in Indian Religion*, p. 30.



former existence.<sup>70</sup> This gives the double character of Indian doctrine of Karma as presenting retribution and also explanation for the present state of existence of an individual.

The analysis of Karma and the involvement of *jīva* in the wheel of *samsāra* due to the impact of Karma on it raises a fundamental question as to how the soul which is immaterial and simple is affected by the karmic particles which are material in nature. Some think such a contact between contradictory entities is difficult to accept. But Indian philosophers have discussed the problem of relation of the spiritual and the non-spiritual from different points of view. The relation of the spirit and the non-spirit is responsible for worldly existence. Apart from the gross body, there is the subtle body (*sūkṣma śarīra*) which links the spiritual. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and the Mīmāṃsā regard the unseen potency (*adṛṣṭa*) as a quality of the soul and is responsible for the formation of gross body with the help of the mind (*manas*). According to Sāṃkhya-Yoga *linga śarīra* is the subtle body and it is formed due to the perversion or the affliction (*kleśa*) of the principle of *buddhi* which is an evolute of the *prakṛti*. With the Sāṃkhya-Yoga *puruṣa* is immutable and it undergoes no change and the *prakṛti* and its evolutes are changing. The subtle body of the Jaina is a karmic body. It has a number of potencies. The nature of karmic body is determined by this integrated existence of the soul which is at any moment of existence is an integration of these potencies. Due to its relation with karma the soul gets passions (*kaṣāyas*). This relation is beginningless. And the question why the pure soul should come to be invested with the impurity of matter is one of fact as ultimate as its own existence. We find that the soul is not free and perfect which the demands of logic makes us accept as the indubitable presupposition. As the soul is immortal and timeless, so also is matter. "It is not profitable to question the possibility of a fact. It is there."<sup>71</sup>

According to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika the conditions of bondage like *pāpa* and *puṇya* inhere in the soul as qualities and in the absence of the bondage the soul becomes free. The Sāṃkhya-Yoga believes that the world process and their conditions belong to *prakṛti*. The conscious principle, *puruṣa* does not belong to it although it is involved in the world process. The Vedāntin distinguishes the spiritual from the material. But this distinction is empirical and karma belongs to the world of illusion and is not something belonging to the spirit. But the Jainas do not accept the quality of distinction between Spirit and Matter. The Jaina presents the relation of identity and difference between the spiritual soul and matter. They become somehow identical in the state of worldly existence. The material (*mūrta*) can affect

70. *Parerga* II, para 188.

71. Tatia N. : *Studies in Jaina Philosophy*. (Banaras) p. 223.

the spiritual (*amūrta*). The existence in this world is a concrete association of the spiritual and the material, as consciousness which is non-material is affected by intoxicating drugs which are material. In the state of worldly existence, the soul, in common with karmic matter, gets material form (*mūrtatva*) which is regarded as only a characteristic of material form.<sup>72</sup> Jainas distinguish between material karma (*dravya karma*) and psychic aspect (*bhāva karma*). *Dravya karma* and its psychic aspect are mutually related as cause and effect, each of other.<sup>73</sup> The Jainas believe in the concrete identity of the soul and the karmic matter in the state of bondage. The karmic matter mixes with the soul in much the same way as milk mixes with water or fire with iron. In the stage of bondage the soul gets a kind of susceptibility to establish relation with the non-soul and this susceptibility is a state of the soul in conjunction with matter. The influx of karma (*āśrava*) and the bondage (*bandha*) into the soul are due to the inherent activity (*yoga*) and passion (*kaṣāya*). The intensity (*anubhāga*) and the duration (*sthiti*) of the bondage of the soul with karmic matter depends on the passions. In the case of *aśubha karma* the stronger the passion the longer and the more intense are the duration and the fruition of karma. But the intensity of fruition of *śubha karma* varies inversely as the strength of the passion.<sup>74</sup> The Jainas have given a fabulous mathematical calculation of the duration and the intensity of karma ranging from thirty *sāgaropama koṭikoṭi* years of the maximum for *antarāya karma*, seventy for deluding (*mohanīya*) karma and thirty for *āyu* and *nāma karma*. The minimum duration is 48 minutes. The intensity of karma depends on the depth of the pleasurable and painful experience. In the case of *aśubha karma* the depth of suffering varies directly with the intensity of the function of karma and the gradation of intensity is of four degrees ; (1) *eka sthānika*, (2) *dvi sthānika*, (3) *tristhānika* and (4) *catuḥsthānika*. The first intensity group consists of those intensity classes (*rasa spardhaka*) whose groups have atoms of less intensity than in those of the second group. Similarly less intensity will get the second as compared to the third group and so on.<sup>75</sup> The stronger of the passions (*anantānubandhi*) leads to bondage of the fourth degree group. The second type of passions (*apratyākhyānāvaraṇa*) belongs to the second intensity. *Pratyākhyānāvaraṇa* has the third intensity and *saṃjvalana* belongs to the first group of only seventeen types of *aśubha karma* as : (1) 5 *antarāya karma*, (2) first four *jñānāvaraṇīya karma*, (3) first three *darśanāvaraṇīya karma*, (4) karma that arouses urge for male sexes, (5) and four types of karma giving

72. *Dharma Saṃgraha Gāthā*, 626.

73. *Aṣṭasahasrī*, p. 51.

74. *Karma Grantha*. 2.

75. I bid.

rise to fourth type of *saṃjvalana kaṣāya*.<sup>76</sup> In the case of *śubha karma* the bondage is reverse. The *anantānubandhi kaṣāya* leads to the second degree of bondage of *śubha karma*, as there is no bondage of the first.<sup>77</sup> The Jains have worked out the analysis of the bondage of intensity (*anubhāga-bandha*) of karma.

The influx of karmic matter into the soul is incessant due to the activities (*yoga*) of the soul. The bondage of the soul with reference to the volume of karmic matter and the space of the soul occupied by it is called *pradeśa bandha*. The volume of karmic matter entering the soul varies directly as the measure of the activity of the soul. The function of *yoga* is two-fold, (1) *pradeśa bandha* and (2) *prakṛti bandha*, which determine the nature and type of bondage like *jñānāvaraṇīya* etc. But the nature of the activity is determined by the types and intensity of *kaṣāya*. However, although *mithyatva* (perversity), *avirati* (non-renunciation) and *kaṣāya* (passion) are absent, the *yoga* alone produces *pradeśa* (space) occupied by the karma particles around the soul. *Prakṛti bandha* of the *vedanīya* in some spiritual stage gives subsidence (*upaśama*) of karma.

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76-77. Ibid.

## KARMA—ITS OPERATION AND AN APPRAISAL

I. We have so far given a brief analysis of the functions of .*yoga* and *kaṣāya* in determining the intensity and the type of karmic bondage of the soul. It is not relevant for us to go into details about the problem.

The karmic matter undergoes different processes due to its quantitative aspect. The Karma atoms may be found together divided into categories called *karma-vargaṇās*. The Karma atoms bound together are *skandhas* (aggregates). *Jīva* assimilates Karmic matter within its own *pradeśas* as fire seeks inflammable material which is lying within its reach. Every part of the soul is filled with Karma particles, which, if necessary conditions are fulfilled, adhere to the *Jīva* as dust to the body besmeared with oil. The *Jīva* seizes a Karma particle with all its part, because an exceedingly close connection exists between all the *pardeśas* of a *Jīva*, as with links of a chain.

The karmic particles absorbed by the *Jīva* develop into eight species of Karma, as food consumed at a meal changes itself into blood and other ingredients of the body. The *Karmagrantha* gives the detailed analysis of the assimilation of Karma particles into the *Jīva* in respect of the *pradeśa*, *sthiti*, etc.

Karma pursues its course inexorably. The work is rewarded whether it is good or bad. There is no annihilation of Karma<sup>1</sup>. Man becomes pure or impure by his own acts.<sup>2</sup> Yet there is the possibility of removing the effects of karma. It can increase or decrease in intensity or can be prematurely realised. As a damp cloth when it is spread out dries quickly than when it is rolled, the effect of Karma can be increased or decreased.<sup>3</sup> The man who is initiated can cause his Karma rapidly used up. Effects of Karma can be neutralised by such methods as meditation, penance and confession.

It is also suggested that Karma of one can be transferred to others, when a man 'shakes off' Karma, he can let his friends have the good Karma and his enemies bad Karma. According to Manu there accrues to the king a 6th of the transcendent merit of his subjects when he protects them properly. He gets a 6th of their transcendent guilt when he reigns very badly.<sup>4</sup> It is also stated that merit of a man acquired in a

1. *Mahābhārata*. XII. 292.

2. *Dhammapada*, 165.

3. *Yoga sūtra Bhaṣya* 115.22

4. *Manusmṛti*. VIII. 304

hundred existences, who has borne false evidence is put down to the person wronged.<sup>5</sup> *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* relates the story of King Vipascit who presents his good works to the dwellers of hell so that they are released from their punishment. In Buddhism also we find similar ideas. *Milinda Panhā* recognises theory of 'Pattidāna' the transfer of good to others. But Buddhism does not recognise such transfer of guilt, as the field with sea water cannot be fertilised.

The karmic matter undergoes different processes due to the various conditions of activity and these processes have been classified into eight types :

(1) *Bandhana* is the karmic process responsible for bondage. The Karma particles float into the soul and they are assimilated into different types of Karma. This process of bondage is without beginning, but it has an end in the emancipation.

(2) *Samkramaṇa* (transformation). It is the transformation of one type of Karma into another in respect of (i) nature, (ii) duration, (iii) intensity and (iv) strength of karmic matter. For e.g., *asātā vedanīya Karma* can be transformed into the *sātāvedanīya Karma*. Similarly a person having right faith (*samyakdṛṣṭi*) transforms the *mithyātva Karma* into *samyagmithyātva* and *samyaktva*.<sup>6</sup> But any Karma cannot be transformed into any other Karma. Mutual transformation is not possible in the case of *darśanamohanīya* and *cāritramohanīya Karma* nor between any two of the four subtypes of *āyu Karma*, similarly with any two among the main types of Karma. Transformation is possible between the subtypes of a particular type of Karma except in the cases mentioned above. A person having wrong belief (*mithyātva*) cannot easily transform the *mithyātva* into the mixed or *samyaktva* as it requires great energy. A person of right belief is pure and it is not easy for him to fall back into the Karmic state of wrong belief.

(3) *Udvartanā* (increased realisation) and (4) *Apavartanā* (decreased realisation) are concerned with the transformation of *sthiti* (duration) and *anubhāga* (intensity of fruition) of Karma. The Jainas have worked out a complicated scheme of transformation of *sthiti* and *anubhāga* of Karma. The most important *apavartana* is that of *āyu Karma*. The increased realisation of *āyu Karma* is not however possible with all beings, with celestial and infernal beings and with human beings in their last existence, with *Cakravarti* and *Tīrthankaras*.

(5) *Udīṛṇa* is the premature realisation of Karma. Karma does not immediately bear fruit as soon as it is bound. It rises after this period of non-production (*abādḥā kāla*). And it continues to operate till it fructifies fully.

5. *Yājñavalkya Smṛhitā*, II. 77

6. *Karma Prakṛti*.

But it is not possible to attract the karmic particle much earlier to the time of their *udaya* and hasten fructification.

(6) We now come to subsidence of karmic matter (*upaśama*). It is the process by which the rise, premature fruition and other processes are operating. The soul gets a glimpse of reality when *mohaniya Karma* is held up. Then it gets the inherent love of truth. The subsidence of Karma will be only temporary because in the end it has to exhaust itself completely, before it reaches the final goal. Then there is the combined process of subsidence and destruction (*kṣayo paśama*). In this process some portion of Karma is destroyed and some portion is held in abeyance.

(7) *Nidhatti* is a process by which Karma is made incapable of all process except *udvartana* and *apavartana*, increased and decreased realisation. Under certain conditions the Karma particles are so intimately glued to the soul that it becomes impossible to affect them in any way except by increased or decreased realisation.

(8) In the *Nikācanā* even these processes are impossible. In this case the duration, intensity and strength of Karma are determined by the very time of bondage of Karma.<sup>7</sup>

Yeśovijaya compares these processes with some concepts of Karma in the Patañjali Yoga. The five afflictions of nescience, egohood, attachment, repulsion and the will to live are the particular states of rises (*udaya*) of *mohaniya Karma*. *Prasupta* state of Karma can be compared to *abādhā kāla* and *tanu* state is compared to the state of subsidence of Karma. Yoga recognised a state of Karma in which some traces may perish before fruition or they may merge into a more powerful Karma. They may remain ineffective forever being overpowered by the more powerful Karma. This may be compared to the Jaina view of *Samkramaṇa*. The Jainas have worked out an elaborate and scientific analysis in fabulous mathematical details of the processes of the operation and fruition of Karma.<sup>8</sup>

Having given these astounding elaborations, the Jaina seers have said “*alam vistareṇa*”.

To seek freedom from the miseries of this life, to seek deliverance we have to free ourselves from the Karma that has already been accumulated and to see that no new Karma is added. The soul gets bound by the constant flow of Karma. This is called *Bandha*. Mental states, like passion, attachment and aversion, which prepare the ground for the binding of the soul by Karma are called psychic bondage (*bhāvabandhana*); and the actual binding by the particles of Karma is called *dravya-bandha*. When passions overcome us, the particles get glued to our souls and bind them just as a

7. *Karma Prakṛti, Bandhana Karaṇa*.

8. Tatia : *Studies in Jaina Philosophy*. p. 260,

heated iron ball when immersed in water, absorbs water. But the first steps to the realization of the self is to see that all channels through which Karma has been flowing have been stopped so that no additional Karma can accumulate. This is *samvara*. There are two kinds of *samvara*: *Bhāva-samvara* which is concerned with mental life, and *dravya-samvara* which refers to the stopping of inflow of Karmic particles. This is possible by self-control and freedom from attachment. The practice of vows (*vrata*), carefulness (*samiti*), self-control (*gupti*), observance of ten kinds of *dharma*, reflection (*anuprekṣā*) and victory over the various obstacles like hunger and thirst and passion, will stop the inflow of Karma and protect us from the impurities of fresh Karma. Here, right conduct (*cāritra*) is of help.

The next important task is to remove the Karma that has already accumulated. The destruction of Karma is called *nirjarā*. *Nirjarā* is of two types : *bhāva-nirjarā* and *dravya-nirjarā*. The Karma may exhaust itself in its natural course when the fruits of Karma are completely exhausted. This is called *saviṭṭaka* or *akāma nirjarā*, where no efforts would be required on one's part. The remaining Karma has to be removed by means of penance. This is *aviṭṭaka-nirjarā*. The soul is like a mirror which looks dim when the dust of Karma is deposited on its surface. When the Karma is removed by *Nirjarā*, the soul shines in its pure and transcendent form. It then attains the goal of *Mokṣa*. The *Ghāti Karma* is first removed. Still, the *Aghāti Karma* like *āyu*, *nāma*, *gotra* and *vedaniya* have to disappear. Last of all is the final *ayogi* state of *Kevala*.

The influx of Karma affects the soul and brings bondage. The soul's activity (*yoga*) is due to its inherent energy (*vīrya*). The infinite energy of the soul gets imperfect expression by which Karma accumulates and affects the soul ; and this imperfect expression of energy is responsible for the various processes of the karmic matter.

Karmic matter undergoes various processes due to the different types of activity. The *Pañcasaṅgraha* describes eight processes of expression of energy of Karma in its limited form. These processes lead to corresponding karmic processes. The soul activates karmic matter at every moment of its worldly existence and assimilates it with different types of Karma which express themselves in due course and bring the disabilities and defilement of the soul.

The influx of Karma (*Āsrava*) into the soul and the consequent bondage involve certain process like (i) transformation (*saṁkramaṇa*) of one type of Karma into that of another, (ii) endurance of Karma for a certain time (*sattā*), (iii) endurance without producing the effect (*abādha*) and (iv) coming into effect (*udaya*). Transformation is a process by which the soul transforms the nature, duration, intensity and extensity of Karma into those of another.<sup>9</sup>

9. *Karma Prakṛti : Bandhanakaraṇa*.

This transformation is generally restricted to the change of one sub-type of Karma to another sub-type of the same kind as we mentioned earlier. For instance, in the *Vedanīya Karma*, soul can transform the Karma producing pain (*asātā vedanīya*) into that producing pleasure (*sātāvedanīya*). In the *Jñānāvaraṇīya Karma* it can transform *cakṣu-darśana* into *acakṣu-darśana*. A person having right intuition (*samyag darśana*) can either transform the Karma leading to perversity (*mithyātva*) to that leading to partially right and wrong intuition (*samyagmithyātva*).<sup>10</sup> But we are told any Karma cannot be transformed into any other. One cannot transform Karma obscuring intuitive experience (*darśana moha*) with the Karma obstructing conduct (*cāritra-moha*) into that of any Karma (determining life duration).

The explanation is scientifically plausible and logically acceptable. We find that electrical energy can be transformed into heat or light energy. Transformation of one Karma into another requires energy and this energy is determined by the degree of the purity of the soul. A person having perversity of attitude (*mithyātva*) cannot convert, cannot change the *mithyātva-karma* into the mixed or *samyaktva*, because the person with wrong belief is not pure and not capable of such transformation.

Transformation of Karma may also effect increase (*udvartanā*), decrease (*apavartanā*), duration (*sthiti*) and intensity of the function (*anubhāga*) of Karma.<sup>11</sup> The Jainas have worked out a scientific and detailed analysis of these processes with a view to explaining the process of the operation of Karma.

Karma may be made to express its effect prematurely. By this process the souls attract back the karmic particles which are to fructify later. Karma is made to realize its effect prematurely. Through gradual destruction of Karma, the soul reaches the state of perfection wherein all the Karmas are removed the soul gets perfect expression. It is possible that one who is free from energy-obstructing Karma may still continue to act in this world. The enlightened one is perfect. He may continue to work for the welfare of all creatures. But his is a purely detached activity and therefore free from any contamination leading to the colouration of the soul (*leśyā*).

II. The influx of Karma affects the soul in various forms and produces certain types 'aura' or colouration about it. This colouration is the *Leśyā*. But this colouration does not affect the soul in its pure nature. The colour of the reflection does not belong to the soul. When the soul becomes free from karmic matter and reaches the Siddhahood, it becomes free from this foreign element of colouration.

10. Ibid.

11. *Karmaprakṛti : Bandhanakarāṇa*.



*Leśyā* is of two kinds: *dravya leśyā* and *bhāva leśyā*. *Dravya leśyā* refers to the Karmic material affecting the organism and radiating the colour, which may be called transcendental colouration. Thus, the effect of Karma is two-fold. *Dravya leśyā* is due to the operation of the Karma in matters affecting the nature of the organism. It may probably refer to the colour of the body. We are told that the denizens of hell are black in colour. Celestial beings get different colours on the basis of the impact of different Karma. So is the case with human beings. This distinction may be referred to the racial colours and the innumerable distinctions in the individual shades of colour. *Bhāva leśyā* refers to the psychic conditions affecting the individual in creating an aura round the organism. The psychic conditions create reflexes, and they, in turn, may give rise, through some form of radiation, to some kinds of colouration round the organism. This may not be ordinarily visible to the eye, but only to persons disciplined in Yoga<sup>12</sup>

Further distinctions are made in *leśyā*. Six types of primary colours are suggested. Three of them refer to evil minded persons. The six *leśyās* are :- (1) black (*Kṛṣṇa*) (2) blue, (*nīla*), (3) dove-grey (*Kāpota*), (4) yellow (*pīta*), (5) pink (*Padma*) (6) white (*Śukla*). For instance a man who is wicked and cruel gets the black *leśyā*. A man who is affected by anger and envy and who loves pleasure gets the blue *leśyā*. One who is disciplined develops the red *leśyā*. One who has subdued the passions has yellow. One who is engrossed in meditation of the 'dharma' and truth has the white *leśyā*. But the fully liberated souls have no *leśyā* at all<sup>13</sup>. The ethical significance of this doctrine has been emphasized in this distinction. The *leśyās* are treated as an index of temperament of character. *Leśyās* have a moral bearing<sup>14</sup>. The Jainas give the example of six travellers in the forest. They see a tree full of fruits. They want the fruits of that tree. But their way of securing them widely differ. The man with a black *leśyā* intends to uproot the tree; that with a blue, to cut the trunk; that with a grey, to cut the branches; that with a yellow, to take the twigs only; the man with the pink *leśyā* intends to pluck the fruits, while the one who has a pure white *leśyā* is content to take whatever fruits have fallen on the ground.<sup>15</sup>

There are degree of expression of *leśyā* in terms of time and intensity. We are told in the case of black *leśyā* the duration varies from half a *mahūrta* to thirty-three *sāgaropama*. The effect of the blue *leśyā* varies from half a *muhūrta* to ten *sāgaropama* plus one *palyopama* and part of *asamkhyeya*. So is the variation in the duration of other *leśyās*.

12. *Gommaṣasāra* : *Jīva Kāṇḍa* XV, also *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*, XXXIV.

13. *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra* : Lect. XXXIV. SBE Vol. II. Footnote.

14. Radhakrishnan (S) : *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I. p. 320. Footnote.

15. *Gommaṣasāra* : *Jīvakāṇḍa*, Ch. XV-V, 507-509.

Colour and sense qualities are associated with Karmic matter flowing into the soul. Karma is a subtle type of matter, and soul is associated with it from beginningless time. Karma matter produces a form of subtle body known as the '*Karma śarīrā*'.<sup>16</sup> We have seen that the immediate impact of Karma throws a reflection on the soul, as a coloured flower does on a crystal. The colour does not form part of the crystal; so *leśyā* is not part of the soul. It may also be noted that the liberated soul is free from karmic matter and also from any form of *leśyā*.

Thus, the conception of *leśyā* is closely associated with the Karma theory.

In Buddhism too, Karma is classified according to colours: (1) Black, (2) White, (3) Black-and-White, and (4) not-black-and-not-white.<sup>17</sup> Similar classification was adopted in the Yoga school. We have referred to it earlier. But these systems do not accept the material nature of Karma. Therefore, Dasgupta suggests that the idea of the black and white Karma in the Yoga philosophy was probably suggested by the Jaina view.<sup>18</sup>

It is possible to interpret the *leśyā* theory in terms of modern psychology, especially of parapsychology. The *Bhāva leśyā* has a psychological significance. It is an aura created round the soul due to psychic effects and yoga. It is dependent on the activity of the mind. The six primary colours are effect of the karmic influx arising out of mental states and events. Every psychosis brings some after-effects which are both physical and psychic. It is possible to show, by proper analysis and investigation, that such psychic phenomena exist and are detectable. The effects of psychic states are transformed, through some form of radiation into the 'aura' of colour spreading round the organism, like the halo surrounding a prophet. We have heard that the gods and the prophets, like Jesus and the Buddha, had a halo round them. The Jainas have said that the enlightened ones still living in this world get a white halo around them. Such aura, or colouration may not be visible to the eye, nor discernible by the ordinary instruments of science. But men disciplined in the yoga and those who have developed an extra-sensory capacity can see it. We may perhaps find some methods pertinent to parapsychology by which we may discover the possibility and existence of such phenomena. It would, therefore, be a problem for the parapsychologists' research.

We may also point out that some have suggested a resemblance between *leśyā* doctrine and the theosophical view of the transcendental colours in the individual<sup>19</sup>. We may refer to the theosophical writings of Mrs. Besant.<sup>20</sup>

16. *Pravacanasāra* I. 55-56. II. 40.

17. *Digha Nikāya* III. 20.

18. Dasgupta : *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I. p. 74.

19. Jaini (J. L.) *Outlines of Jainism*. p. 45.

20. *Thought forms by Mrs. Besant & C. W. Leadbeater* 1905

The Jainas say that the soul is immaterial, consciousness and its states are also immaterial and colourless. Colour is in matter; and matter certainly acts and reacts on the soul by the inflow and bondage (*bandha*) of the Karmic matter due to passions and modification in the mental states.

III. The soul has the inherent capacity for self-realisation. But self-realisation is a long process. In the course of its eternal wanderings in various forms of existence, the soul at some time gets an indistinct vision and feels an impulse to realise it. The soul has to go through the various stages of spiritual development. These stages are called *guṇasthāna*, and they are linked up with stages of subsidence and destruction of the karmic veil. These are fourteen stages of spiritual development. The first stage is characterised by the presence of *mithyādr̥ṣṭi* (perversity of attitude). We accept wrong belief and are under the false impression that what we believe is right. This is caused by the operation of *mithyātvā-karman*. However, we are not entirely bereft of a vision, though indistinct, of the right. Still, due to perversity of attitude we do not relish the truth, just as a man suffering from fever has no taste for sugarcane.<sup>21</sup>

The next stage is called *sāsvādanasamyagdr̥ṣṭi*. It is a halting and transitory stage in which one may get the vision of truth but is likely to fall back on falsehood due to the excitement of passions. In the third stage, of *samyag-mithyādr̥ṣṭi* we have a mixed attitude of right and wrong belief. There is neither a desire to have true belief nor a desire to remain in ignorance. It is like mixing curds and treacle.<sup>22</sup>

Next comes the stage of right attitude, *samyagdr̥ṣṭi*. One gets a glimpse of the truth. Yet one has not the spiritual strength to strive for the attainment of it. In this stage we have attained knowledge, but we lack moral effort, as we have not yet developed self-control. From the next stage onwards there is gradual expression of self-control. We may compare these four stages to the state of the persons in Plato's parable of the cave. The prisoners in the cave would see their own shadows and the shadows of other men and of animals. And they would mistake the shadow for realities. This is the stage of *mithyātvā*. If one were to be released, the glare of the light would distress him; and he would persist in maintaining the superior truth of the shadows. This is the stage of *sāsvādāna*. But once he gets accustomed to the change, he will be able to see things, and gaze upon the light of the moon and the stars and the spangled heavens. And once he gets the clear vision, he will realize the folly of his fellow prisoners and pity them.<sup>23</sup>

21. *Gommaṣasāra-Jīvakāṇḍa*, 17.

22. *Ibid.* p. 22.

23. Plato : *The Republic* VIII.

*Deśavīratasamyagdṛṣṭi* is the next higher stage of spiritual development, in which we get partial efforts for self-control in addition to the possession of the knowledge of truth. There is a partial destruction of karmic matter which produces passions.<sup>24</sup> Full practice of virtues would not be possible because there is the possibility of the influence of passions.

In the next stage, the moral effort takes a more definite shape, although it is not always successful. A person has a more or less steady glimpse of the truth ; and he tries to develop self-control. But even here, the moral life and the spiritual struggle are not fully successful, owing to moral and spiritual inertia. This inertia is called *pramāda*. And *pramāda* is overcome in the seventh stage of *apramatta-sāmyata*. Efforts to reach moral excellence take definite shape. The operation of Karma preventing perfect conduct is very feeble ; and minor passions are also subdued. The process of *adhaḥpravṛtti-karma*, by which the soul on a lower level can rise higher, operates in this stage.<sup>25</sup>

The eighth stage is called *apūrvakaraṇa*. It leads to greater and more definite self-control. The self attains special purification and is capable of reducing the intensity and duration of Karma. The *Gommaṭasāra* gives a detailed description of the process of *apūrvakaraṇa* operating in this stage. One is affected only by the mild affective states. It is possible to develop a stoic attitude. In the stage of development called *anivṛtti-bādara-samparāya*, it is possible to overcome even the milder emotional disturbance with greater confidence and ease. Some times slight emotional afflictions are, here, possible. In the tenth stage of *Sūkṣmasamparāya*, only greed disturbs us, and that too slightly. Except for this disturbance, one is passionless and calm. This subtle greed can be interpreted as the subconscious attachment to the body even in souls which have achieved great spiritual advancement.<sup>26</sup> But one is free from even the slightest passions in the eleventh *Guṇasthāna*, of *upaśāntamoha*, still the afflictions are not altogether eliminated. They are only suppressed through the pressure of moral effort. We are mostly free from the baneful influence of the Karma, except the deluding Karma (*mohāntya-Karma*). This state is called *chadmastha*. It is also called *vītarāga*, as one is able to remain calm and undisturbed through the suppression of Karma. In the next stage, of *kṣāṇa-moha* there is annihilation of *Ghāti-Karma* and not mere suppression. And when all the passions and the four types of *ghāti karma* are destroyed one reaches the thirteenth stage of spiritual development, called *sayoga-Kevalī*. One is free from the bondage of *ghāti Karma*, yet is not free from activity and bodily existence as the *Aghāti Karma*, *āyukarma* etc.

24. *Gommaṭasāra-Jīvakāṇḍa*, 30 and commentary.

25. *Ibid.* 48, 49.

26. Tatia (N). : *Studies in Jaina Philosophy*, p. 27.

are still to be exhausted. In this stage, we find omniscient beings like *Tīrthaṅkaras*, *Gaṇadhara*s and the *Sāmānya Kevalins*. They attain enlightenment, but still live in this world preaching the truth that they have seen.

This stage can be compared to the stage of *Jīvanmukta*. The *Vedāntasāra* describes this stage as that of the enlightened and liberated men who are yet alive. Though they may appear to be active in this world, they are inactive, like the man who assists a magician in a magic show yet they know that all that is shown is illusory.<sup>27</sup> Zimmer compares the attitude of the Kevalins in this stage of the function of a lamp lighting the phenomenal expersonality solely for the maintenance of the body, not for the pursuit of any gratification of sense of any goal.<sup>28</sup>

The final stage of self-realization is the stage of absolute perfection. All empirical adjuncts, like the bodily functions, are removed. The soul enters the third stage of *Śukladhyāna*. This state lasts only for the period of time required to pronounce five short syllables.<sup>29</sup> At the end of this period the soul attains perfect and disembodied liberation. It is described as the state of *Parabrahma* or *Nirāṅjana*. It is not possible to give, as Radhakrishnan says, a positive description of the liberated soul.<sup>30</sup> It is a state of freedom from action and desire, a state of utter and absolute quiescence. Zimmer shows that, in this state, the individuality, the marks, the formal personal features are distilled away like drops of rain that descend from the clear sky, tasteless and emasculate.<sup>31</sup>

IV. Karma theory has been found by some to be an inadequate explanation for the prevalent inequalities in life. It is suggested that the theory suffers from serious defects.

(1) Karma leads to the damping of the spirit and men suffer the ills of life with helpless equanimity of attitude simply because they get the awareness that it is beyond their power to change the course of their life as it is determined by Karma. Karma leads to fatalism. It does not give any incentive to social service. The general apathy of an Indian towards the natural, social and political evils is mentioned as an example of the impact of Karma on our life. The famous temple of Somanātha was destroyed; and there was no visible resistance because the common man in India was overpowered by the belief that everything that happens is the result of Karma.

But this is more an over-statement of a fact, if not a mis-statement.

27. *Vedāntasāra*, 219.

28. Zimmer (H.) : *Philosophies of India*. (Ed. Campbell), p. 446.

29. *Dhyānaśataka*, 82.

30. Radhakrishnan (S.) : *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I. p. 233.

31. Zimmer (H.) : *Philosophy of India*. p. 260.

It is not true to say that the Karma theory does not give any incentive to social service. The *Upaniṣads* enjoin social service and sacrifice, although on the highest level one has to transcend social morality. The five vows to be observed by an ascetic and the layman (*śrāvaka*) imply the recognition of dignity and equality of life. Schweitzer maintains that the attitude in the ancient Indian thought was that of world and life-negation. Still the problem of deliverance in the Jaina and the Buddhist thought is not raised beyond ethics. In fact, it was the supreme ethic. The deliverance from reincarnation is possible through the purity of conduct, 'and the soul cleanses itself from the besmirching it has suffered and altogether frees itself from it. What is new then, in Jainism is the importance attained by ethics.<sup>32</sup> An event full of significance for the thought of India.<sup>33</sup> And Karma is not a mechanical principle, but a spiritual necessity. It is the counterpart in the moral world of the physical law of uniformity.<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately the theory of Karma became confused with fatality in India when man himself grew feeble and was disinclined to do his work.<sup>35</sup> Still the importance of Karma as after-effects of our action and determining the course of life cannot be easily underestimated. Karma has to be looked at as a principle involving explanation of action and reaction. Fatalistic theory of life was presented by Makkhali Gośāla, a contemporary of Mahāvīra. He considered himself a rival of Mahāvīra. He said that happiness and misery are measured to one as it were in bushels. The duration of life and the transmigration of souls have their fixed forms. No human effort can change them. Mahāvīra and the Buddha opposed Gośāla most vigorously.

2. The theory of Karma explaining the inequality of human life and behaviour as fruits of Karma has been interpreted as determinism and fatalism. It is, therefore, necessary to study the problem of determinism and human freedom and to justify the ways of God to man and of man to man.

Determinism is a general philosophical theory which asserts that all events are caused. Everything that happens is determined by preceding conditions. (i) The development of physical sciences in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries inspired the philosophers to deterministic theories. All events are determined by preceding conditions. Neither moral consideration nor the will of God determines human actions, but like other events they are determined by eternal and immutable laws of Nature. (ii) With the advancement of psychology in specialised directions like Psycho-analysis and Psychiatry, the determinists have gained added strength. All events

32. Schweitzer : *Indian Thought and its Development*, pp. 82-83.

33. Radhakrishnan (S.) : *Hindu View of Life*, p. 73.

34. Radhakrishnan : *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I., p. 224.

35. Radhakrishnan : *Hindu View of Life*, p. 76.

including voluntary acts are caused. Psychiatrists speak of specific unconscious fears, defences and hostilities. The Psycho-analyst traces all human actions, including the willed ones, to the repressions and sex drive. They trace the origin in the dungheap of the Unconscious. And consequently man is not free and is not morally responsible. The issue of Freedom is not philosophical but an empirical fact. This is hard determinism. (iii) The Socratic dictum that virtue is knowledge and vice is ignorance has been the foundation of moral determinism. Seeking the good is determined by the knowledge of the good. If one knows the good one seeks it. If one seeks something else it can be because he is pursuing the apparent, and he does not really know what is good. Plato thought similar reasonings apply to any choice whatever. This ethical intellectualism so central to Platonism is deterministic by implication.

The determinists have constantly felt uncomfortable in the face of the problem of reconciling the determinism and moral freedom. The consistent determinists do not shrink from such words as fatality, bondage of the will, necessity and the like. William James called them 'hard determinists'. Robert Owen, Schopenhauer and Freud were hard determinists. But some determinists do not find any contradiction between determinism and human freedom. Neo-Hegelians, Hobbes, Hume and Mill hold this view. Freedom consists in the choice of actions which are free from constraint. Such actions are not uncaused, as every action is not uncaused. But the difference lies in the kind of causes that are present. On such occasions human beings act in a certain way because of their own unimpeded efforts, because they have chosen to act in these ways. Thus, Determinism is compatible with Freedom in this sense, and hence, compatible with moral responsibility.

The problem of Determinism and Freewill has been shelved in the museum of Philosophy in recent times by the linguistic approach to the problems of analysis of peripheral issues. Wittgenstein's criticism that Philosophers do not know what it means to call something action has created problems in this field. Philosophers have been unable to analyse the distinction that some bodily actions are considered actions and others are not. As long as ignorance prevails, it is contended, that there is little point in discussion whether men's actions are free. Gilbert Ryle, in his *The Concept of Mind* has maintained that volitions are fabrications of philosophy, corresponding to nothing that has existed. The concepts of desire, motive and choice have been similarly subjected to criticism. This is the philosophical sea-saw of Determinism and Freedom. Karma works as the inexorable law of causation, in its essentially mechanical way. The theory in its entirety cannot escape the charge of determinism. In this there is no human freedom, nor is the choice possible for man. And men are to gods, like flies to wanton boys. The Universe is all a chequerboard of nights and days.

Where destiny with men as pieces plays  
 Hither and thither moves, and mates and slays;  
 And one by one in the closet lays.

But determinism is here interpreted in a narrow sense as a mechanical operation of Karma to produce its effects, as does law of gravitation.

The question, now, is whether Karma theory implies determinism. We have seen that determinism emphasises that events are caused. An event is so connected with some preceding event that unless the latter has occurred the former would not have occurred. The principle of causality operates in life. This has been accepted by the Karma theory also. Our actions are determined by the Karma theory also. Our actions are determined by the Karma that accumulates due to the previous actions. The after-effects of action in the form of Karma have to be experienced and exhausted. In this sense, it is deterministic. But the choice of action is with us. In this connection we may mention the distinction drawn by some regarding the levels of judgement of action. On unreflective level a person's action is distinguished on the basis of the fact whether it is due to impact of emotions or imbalance of mind or that it has been acted in accordance of unimpeded rational desire. Yet considered from the plane of reflection, each rational desire is rooted and determined by the total character and personality of man; and the total character is formed by the total life and the environmental factors. In this sense, the individual is free. The individual's ability to be free is not impaired by the fact that his being is determined by Karma. And moral choice, like thought and act, moves on different causal levels. It achieves freedom just as they do, only when it is determined by its own appropriate necessity. We are determined by the past and we can determine the future. For the bondage we have so far suffered and for the kindly light of awareness of the power of self-realisation, we can say to God, with Omer Khayyam, 'forgiveness give and take.'

3. It is also said that the Karma theory is inconsistent with individual freedom of the will. It does not guarantee true freedom to the individual which is essential to his moral progress.<sup>36</sup> And in the background of caste system, the boon of individual inequality becomes a curse; 'if Karma had not to work with caste, a *varṇāśrama-dharma*, a wrong idea of the self and transmigration, we might reconcile Karma with freedom. The charge of 'determinism' from the point of view of higher morality holds good.<sup>37</sup> Older Buddhism and Jainism were much concerned to defend self-regulative character of Karma; salvation was essentially through self-reliance; and there was fear of the antinomian tendencies of the notion of reliance of other (e. g.

36. Paul (C. S.) : *The Suffering God* (1932), p. 60.

37. *Ibid.* p, 60.



the Lord).<sup>38</sup> The answer to the charge of fatalism was that by our own efforts we can annihilate the existing Karma and neutralise its effects.

But it is difficult to determine the nature of this objection. We are told that from the point of view of higher morality Karma theory cannot escape the charge of determinism. Yet, the objection is determined by and based on the individual's status in a particular caste. It is more a sting against caste system than a criticism of Karma theory. The objector appears to confuse the essential from the accidental. It is a fallacy of Ignoratio Elenchi. Caste system is a sociological problem, and it is not essential for understanding the nature and operation of Karma. In fact determinism is, here, interpreted in a narrow sense as a mechanical operation of Karma to produce its effects, as does the law of gravitation.<sup>39</sup> The present condition and nature of an individual is determined by the past Karma, yet the individual is free to act in such a way as to mould his own future by reducing or destroying the existing Karma. The present is determined, but 'the future is only conditioned.'<sup>40</sup>

In general, the principle of Karma reckons with the material in the context in which each individual is born,<sup>41</sup> 'But the spiritual element in man allows him freedom within the limits of his own nature.'<sup>42</sup> There is room for the lowliest of men even of animals to rise higher and purify their selves. Attempts were made to reconcile the law of Karma with freedom of man. Karma is compared to a fire which we can, by our own effort, fan into a flame or modify it.

Human effort can modify Karma. Such a saving of the soul is possible by one's own efforts. Grace of God has no place in Jaina ethics. Self-effort in the direction of purification of the soul is the one way towards perfection. A thief, for instance, undermines his own character and being every time he commits theft. No amount of prayer and worship will erase the effect that has been accumulated, although it may create a mental atmosphere for eliminating such future possibilities.

Shri Aurobindo says "It has to be recognised knowledge and ignorance are not absolute contraries, and liberty and the compulsion of Karma are not unbridgeable opposites. It is demanded of a man a choice between the right and the wrong way, between the will to an impermanent existence and the will to an absolute spiritual being. As such there is something in

38. Smart Ninian : *Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy*, p. 164.

39. *Ibid.* p. 164.

40. Radhakrishnan (S) : *Hindu View of Life*, p. 75.

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.*

the individual being which has some real freedom of will, some power of choice.

“The world of matter seems to know nothing about freedom; everything there appears as if written in syllabic laws on tablets of stone. We can think of no presence of soul in natural things.” But matter is not all. On the plane of mind there appears consciousness of possibilities and of choice. And from this arises the idea of a free and infinite Will, a Will of illimitable potentialities. Therefore absolute freedom of a Spirit and Power is not determined by Karma, but it determines Karma. On this basis we may understand the relation between Karma and freedom. ‘The soul of man is the power of the self-existence which manifests the universe and it is not the creature and slave of mechanical Nature. Mind, life and body and its functions are subject to the action of Karma. Man in himself, the real man is free; rather Karma is his instrument. He is using it always from life to life for the shaping of a limited individual, which may be one day a divine and cosmic personality. There is the individual power of the spirit and we have only to see why here I am at all under the dominion of Karma. I appear to be bound by the law of an outward and imposed energy only because there is a separation between my outward nature and my inmost spiritual self, and I do not live in that outwardness with my whole being, but with a shape turn and mental formation of myself which I call my ego. There is still the feeling of relative freedom, and this freedom and power are influences from the soul.

“But the real freedom comes from the personality to the person. The first stage of this is passive liberty, liberty of assent, but the assent is to the will of the Spirit. There is the higher state of consciousness in the supramental range. In that stage, the soul is one with the Supreme in its essence of consciousness and expressive act. There “Karma itself becomes rhythm of freedom and birth a strain of immortality.”<sup>43</sup>

4. It has been objected that the Karma theory connects actions and its consequences in a rather mechanical way. In its mechanical aspect, it mistakes the means for the end. In this, it is presumed that repentance is the end and paying the due penalty is only a means. It is said that Karma theory over-emphasises the retributive aspect of punishment.

But, here again, we find a confusion between ends and means. Repentance has its place in life, but it is not the end to be achieved. Repentance does purify the mind and has the effect of a catharsis. This would be a means for the future development of an individual. Even as a means it is

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43. Sri Aurobindo : *The Problem of Rebirth* (Pondicherry, 1952). Ch. IX *Karma and Freedom*.

not all. The Jaina theory of Karma emphasises that by individual efforts at moral and spiritual development we can reduce the intensity of Karma, suppress its effects or even annihilate. We have seen that one can, by suitable efforts, transform the energy of one form of Karma into that of another"<sup>44</sup> as we can transform electrical energy into that of heat and light. Repentance is not to be taken as the final end. It only creates an atmosphere for moral efforts towards self-realisation. It is at best a powerful psychological means which would help us in the attainment of spiritual perfection. If repentance were sufficient to lead to purification, the after-effects of past action cannot be accounted for, nor can they be explained away, as that would be contrary to the laws of physical and moral nature.

5. Karma doctrine implies that sin is a finite offence that can be made good by private temporary punishment. It presupposes that we can make good our sin which is entirely beyond our power.

It is also said that the dominant impression that one gets of the Karma doctrine is that the individual is in the grip of power, which, heedless of his own wishes, is working out a burden of an immemorial past.<sup>45</sup>

Pringle-Pattison shows that the whole emphasis of the Karma theory is on retribution. There is nothing redemptive in its operation, and the process becomes an endless one, leading to no goal of ultimate release. He quotes Deussen and says that expiation involves further action which in turn involves expiation, and thus the process is endless. The clock work of requital, in running down, always winds itself up again, and so in perpetuity.<sup>46</sup> Accumulation of merit may ease a future life, but it would not suffice to effect a release from the wheel of life. Even when a new world follows after the deluge in the cycle of worlds, it does not start with a clean balancesheet, as the operation of will proceeds from the point where it was suspended.<sup>47</sup> Karma only perpetuates the curse of existence.<sup>48</sup> So, the Karma doctrine 'seems open to the criticism to which the vindictive theory of punishment has been subjected in modern times.'<sup>49</sup> To conceive this universe as primarily a place for doling out punishment is to degrade it to the level of a glorified police-court.<sup>50</sup> The dominant note in the objection is that to make good our sin is beyond our power and the emphasis on the retribution element in the doctrine of Karma makes this world frightful

44. *Karma Grantha*, II.

45. Sigfrid Estborn : *The Christian Doctrine of Salvation* (1958), p. 68.

46. Pringle Pattison (A Seth) : *The Idea of Immortality* (1922) p. 115.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

and miserable, 'as a glorified police court'. But this is far from truth. It is not beyond our power, as we said earlier, to improve our states of existence. The Jainas have shown that self-effort can shape the future. The present is with us and the future is in our hands.

Retributive theory is a more consistent theory of action and reaction and not merely of punishment, than Reformative theory. Man gets what he merits to get; and to withhold it would be injustice to him, unless he makes his own efforts to modify the effects of his actions. Reformative theory may be full of noble and soft sentiments, it may be comforting to be told that by the grace of God, we would be better. But that destroys the individuality and dignity of an individual and he would become a tool in the hands of a Higher Power or his agent in this world. We refuse to be treated as things. Moreover, it is good to tell men, though it is unpleasant to do so, that they are alone responsible for their present state. To put the responsibility on the individual is hard truth. And Radhakrishnan says that Karma is not so much a principle of retribution as one of continuity.<sup>51</sup>

6. Some have said that the doctrine of Karma leads to unbridled individualism. It fails to see that we all belong to a community, that there is what is called 'joint Karma' corporate sin or guilt. It allows the fortunate ones to boast of their 'self-merited happiness.'<sup>52</sup> Explanation for the inequality is referred to the 'vicarious suffering'. The ethical justice is to be found in the crucifixion of Christ; and the Cross is a symbol of taking over the sufferings of men upon oneself so as to lighten the sufferings of men.

But according to the Jainas, as also in other Indian thought, except in the Cārvāka, self-realisation is to be attained through a moral effect which is essentially social in its content. We have seen that the Indian ethics is essentially social in its significance. Mokṣa is to be attained through the practice of goodness, charity, compassion and humility, although the Mokṣa is attained by one who practises the virtues and three-fold noble path. It is therefore, more accurate to say that Karma theory awakens a man to his responsibilities to himself and to others, and does not make him isolated and self-centred.

We may also add that Karma does not imply a hedonistic outlook in life. Reward for pleasure is not a life of pleasure nor is the punishment for sin, pain. The theory is not to be confused with hedonistic or a judicial theory of rewards and punishments.<sup>53</sup> Pleasure and pain are determinants

51. Radhakrishnan (S.) : *Idealist View of Life*, (1961), p. 218.

52. Sigfrid Estborn : *The Christian Doctrine of Salvation* (1958), p. 70.

53. Radhakrishnan (S.) : *Idealist View of Life*, p. 219.

of animal experience, but for human life the end to be attained is nothing short of perfection. His efforts are to be directed to the attainment of this highest end. The universe is, in the words of Tennyson, 'a vale of soul-making' and not a pleasure garden.

7 (a). Objections have been raised against the theory of Karma on the basis of the theistic conception of God and the dispensation of justice by him. It is said that if God as a creator is omnipotent, must be partial and cruel as he makes some people suffer and some enjoy pleasures in this life. Śāṅkara in his commentary to *Brahmasūtra* replies that God cannot be considered as partial and cruel because he acts with reference to Karma of every individuals. If he were to act without taking into consideration the Karma, he would be thought of as being partial and cruel. But God should be looked upon as the rain. The rain is the common cause for the growth of rice and wheat etc. Similarly, regarding the inequalities among men in their status and enjoyment, the specific Karma of each individual is the cause. We get a similar argument in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (3.2.13) which states that a man becomes meritorious by his good actions and sinful by his bad actions.

(b) It is objected that prior to creation there was no Karma, so how can it lead to differentiation? But it has been stated that the *samsāra* is *anādi* (beginningless). Like the seed and the sprout the cycle of life and action goes on. Just as in the case of a seed with its potentialities for becoming a tree, there is the need of rain, so also has God to depend on the Karma for determining the status of an individual in this life.

Rāmānuja shows that the inequality of creation depends on the Karma of a particular individual. He quotes references from *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* mentioned above and *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*.

(c) It has also been objected that prior to the creation there were no beings at all. So there can be no Karma, then how can we account for the inequality? But it is stated that the individual souls and their deeds form the eternal stream. Prior to the creation souls abide in subtle condition. Nimbārka adds that Karma done by the beings in the earlier creation have, again, their antecedents. Similarly, Vallabhācārya follows the same line of argument. All the *jīvas* merge into the Brahman along with their *Karma* in minute form and when creation starts they are born with their Karma.

Our happiness and suffering in this life are determined by our actions in the earlier life and those of that life are determined by the actions of still earlier life. So the chain goes on endlessly. However, it is beyond the power of individual mind to know how a particular soul started living. In this sense *Karma* is called *anādi*.

It is however significant to note that the sprout comes into existence due to the seed and the same sprout develops the seeds for the future sprouts. Similarly the Karma of an action leads to further Karma and it leads to further actions. But if the seed is roasted the sprout will not grow from it. Similarly if Karma is annihilated through *tapas*, *bhakti* or through *ātma dhyāna* the soul becomes pure and reaches the highest perfection.

Shri Aurobindo states that we have not been able to see the philosophical reality of Karma, for two errors : first, it is the strenuous paradoxical attempt to explain the supraphysical things by a physical formula and a darkening second error of setting 'behind the universal rule of Law and as its cause and efficient the quite opposite idea of the cosmic reign of Chance.

In the theory of Karma, there is first assurance that in the mental and the moral world, as in the physical universe, there is no chaos, fortuitous rule of chance of mere probability, but an ordered Energy at work which assures its will by law and fixed relations and steady succession and the links of ascertainable cause and effectuality. To be assured that there is an all-pervading mental law and an all-pervading moral law, is a great gain a supporting foundation. That in the mental and moral, as in the physical world, what I sow in the proper soil, I shall assuredly reap, is a guarantee of divine government, of equilibrium, of cosmos; it not only grounds life upon an adamant underbase of law, but by removing anarchy opens the way to a greater liberty. 'Karma theory teaches us that the soul enters this life, not as a fresh creation, but after a long course of previous existences on this earth and elsewhere, in which it acquired its present inhering peculiarities and that it is on the way to future transformations which the soul is now shaping. It claims that infancy brings to earth, not a blank scroll for the beginning of an earthly record, nor a mere cohesion of atomic forces into a brief personality soon to disclose again into the elements but that is inscribed with ancestral histories some like the present scene and most of them unlike it and stretching back into the remotest past. The current phase of life will also be stored away in the secret vaults of memory for its unconscious effect upon ensuing lives.'

Karma is what we have done, and we have to enjoy the karmic results. Therefore it follows that the future is only the past. It should therefore be possible to predict the future. The astrologer feels, by means of his art, the unexpended Karma and tries to read it. Planets therefore simply indicate the results of previous Karma and hence there is nothing like fate or destiny in its absolute sense controlling the spiritual self. The ego accumulates a fund of individual character which remains as the permanent thread stringing together the separate lives. The soul is therefore an eternal water globule, which sprang in the beginningless past from mother ocean

and is destined after an unreckonable course of meanderings in cloud and rain, snow and steam, spring and river, mud and vapour, to at last return with the garnered experience of all lonely existences into the central heart of all.

That we have forgotten the causes producing the persent sequences of pleasures and pains, talents and defects, successes and failures is no disproof of them, and does not disturb the justice of the scheme. For temporary oblivion is the anodyne by which the kindly physician is bringing us through the darker wards of sorrow into perfect health.

The law of Karma provides a graded sanction or reason for right living. It proves that men are in essence one, and that any deed which hurts one's neighbourhood or the common weal is an injury to oneself. Above all, it reveals a plane of consciousness where right becomes the inmost law of being and a man does right not because it pays nor because it avoids self-injury, but because, beyond all argument, he must. Karma destroys the cause of envy and jealousy and the consequent ill-will. It removes impatience. It largely removes the fear of death for where there is the inner conviction of rebirth and by the law of affinity reunion with those one loves, there is nothing to worry.

The belief in the theory of Karma and reincarnation scattered through the philosophic writings of India reproduce the scientific theories of the involution and evolution of elements.

According to Shri Aurobindo Karma is a Universal energy working in all existence, a process, an action and a building of things by that action—an unbuilding too but as a step to further building—it is continuous change—that is the Philosophical reality of the theory of Karma, and that too is the way of seeing which has been developed by physical science but its seeing has been handicapped in the progress to the full largeness of its own truth by two persistent errors, as mentioned earlier, first, the straneous paradoxical attempt to explain supraphysical things by a physical formula, and a darkening second error of setting behind the Universal rule of Law and the quite opposite idea of the Cosmic reign of Chance.

Shri Aurobindo present the four pillars of the theory of Karma. (1) There is an all-pervading mental law and an all-pervading moral Law and in these fields, as in the Physical, what we sow we reap. That gives the guarantee of the divine Government, an equilibrium and a cosmos. But if this energy were all I may only be a creation of an imperative force and my acts will be determined. That would resolve everything into predestination of Karma.

(2) Here comes the second step of the Theory of Karma. 'It is the Idea which creates all relation and all is the expression and expansion of the Idea.

Then I can by the will, the Energy of the Idea in me, develop the form of what I am and arrive at the harmony of some greater idea than is expressed in my present mould and balance.' I can aspire to a nobler expansion. Still the idea is a thing in itself without any base but its own spontaneous power.

(3) But 'I am soul developing and persisting in the Paths of Universal Energy and that in myself is the seed of all creation. What I have become I have made myself by sou's past idea and action, its inner and outer Karma ; what I will be, I can make myself by the present and future idea of action.'

(4) Finally there is this supreme liberating step that both Idea and its Karma may have their origin in the free spirit and by arriving at myself by experience and self finding, I can exalt my state beyond all bondage of Karma to spiritual freedom. These are the four pillars of the complete theory of Karma.<sup>54</sup>

Therefore, the Karma theory is an explanation of the moral justice in the Universe. It is the conception of an all-controlling law of natural retribution which links together the successive earth lives of each individual soul. It 'satisfied my sense of justice and threw light on the problem of unmerited suffering.'<sup>55</sup> For the modern European, Karma theory 'is not the mechanical idea of an identical soul substance passing from body to body, but the mystical idea of suffering with and for others', and that forms the real attraction of the doctrine. And perhaps that may be the true explanation of its ascendancy in the East as well.<sup>56</sup>

Judged by the historic standards, the Karma theory did much to raise man's status and to wean him from coaxing gods through sacrifice and prayer. It insisted on individual expiation, and emphasised the moral continuity of life here and hereafter.<sup>57</sup>

Karma is in fact a striking answer to the 'fathomless injustice to the nature of things' and it appeals 'to the overpowering sense of the necessity of justice.' The conception of an all controlling 'law of natural retribution which links together the successive earth lives of each individual soul, both satisfied my sense of justice and threw light on the problem of seemingly unmerited suffering.'<sup>58</sup>

54. Sri Aurobindo : *The Problem of Rebirth*. (Pondicherry, 1952), p. 115.

55. Pringle-Pattison (A Seth) : *The Idea of Immortality*. p. 122.

56. Paul (C. S.) : *The Suffering God* (1929) : p. 67.

57. Holmes (Edmond) : *The Quest of an Ideal*, p. 98, as quoted in the *Idea of Immortality* by Pringle Pattison, p. 120.

58. Warren (H. C.) : *Buddhism in Translations* (1922) p. 48.



Having discussed the arguments and counter-arguments of the logical justification of the doctrine of Karma, we may say that, from the real point of view *niscaya-naya* logical justification of the doctrine is not possible nor necessary. It is the experience of the seers. And ‘Oh, Agnibhuti, Karma is *pratyakṣa* to me, the omniscient being, just as your doubt is *pratyakṣa* to me.’<sup>59</sup>

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59. *Vīṣeṣāvāśyaka Bhāṣya, Gaṇadharavāda*, 1611–1613.

## REBIRTH - A PHILOSOPHICAL STUDY

### I

Karma and transmigration of soul are closely linked principles. They are the basal presuppositions of Indian thought, Indian philosophers have not tried to prove them as they have taken them as postulates of their philosophies and objects of intuitive experience. Transmigration of soul is a corollary of the principle of Karma. If Karma is to be exhausted, a series of births have to be taken, as it is not possible to exhaust all the accumulated Karma in one single life. The prophets, like the Buddha, had to take successive lives for exhausting the Karma accumulated in the past, after getting a glimpse of enlightenment about the highest truth. The first *tīrthāṅkara* Ṛṣabha had to go through ten lives to become a *tīrthāṅkara* after the enlightenment. Vardhamāna Mahāvīra, the twenty-fourth *tīrthāṅkara* went through thirty-six lives after getting a glimpse of truth, to attain the state of *tīrthāṅkara*. At the time of Ṛṣabha, Mahāvīra was Marici who was preaching Kapila-Siddhānta. Ṛṣabha had predicted that Marici would be the twenty-fourth *tīrthāṅkara*. These principles of Karma and rebirth are universal principles accepted by all, although the advancement of knowledge in the empirical sciences has given rise to fashionable agnosticism in respect of these principles. Yet there is something very impressive in the unanimity with which man, from the beginning of his planetary existence, has refused to see in death the end of his being and activities. In a still remoter past, the cave-men of the Paleolithic age, laid their dead reverently to rest with the same belief as a further life. Explorations in France, recently made, have brought to light a number of instances of ceremonial internment, exhibiting the excavated grave, the carefully disposed skeleton with offerings of food and implements laid beside the body for use in the life beyond.

Justification for the principle cannot be established on purely logical ground. But the belief is widespread from the primitive times and has also been held in the philosophical world in the West, with the Orphics and the Pythagorean, and in ancient Indian religious thought. Apart from prevalence of the belief in the primitive races of the world, the modern minds have been trying to find out justification in the fields of extrasensory perception and parapsychological phenomena. The Universality of this widespread belief points to the fact that there must be some truth implied in it. Indian seers have mentioned it as an act of faith and as an intuitive knowledge of the enlightened men.

It is therefore necessary to investigate this article of faith of the trans-migrations of souls from the historical and the psychological points of view. It is necessary to survey the field of investigation and thought that have covered centuries of philosophical and religious thinking.

## II

In primitive times man began with vague awareness of the life beyond. He was vaguely aware that some life persists even after death. In the tribal religion we find traces of ghost worship and totemism which have their roots in animistic conceptions. James Frazer says that there is a necessary connection with the forms of worship and the belief in immortality. Among savage races, a life after death is not a matter of speculation and conjecture, hope and fear; it is a practical certainty which the individual as little dreams of doubting as he doubts the reality of his conscious existence. He assumes that man continues to live even after death. He finds that during sleep he is not aware of himself, yet after he gets up he finds himself in the same body. Similarly in dreams he finds himself moving about in different places. After he wakes up again he is in the same body. Therefore, he concludes that he is enclosed in the body and is different from the body. There is the beginning of the distinction of man's soul from the body. Frazer says that the primitive man assumes without inquiry that there is a life after death, and acts upon it without hesitation, as if it were one of the ascertained truths within the limits of human experience. Many savage tribes believe that death is an unnatural thing and it comes only by unnatural incidents like accidents. Even after death the person continues to live and inhabit the body. There have been customs of keeping necessary equipment and food for the person even after his burial. We find this in the Egyptian mummies. The ghost theory of the origin of religion also points out that the individual survives death and continues to inhabit the body and nearby places even after death. Some Meanderal skeletons have been found deposited in graves and equipped with materials useful for the dead in the other world. On the basis of these burial practices we may say that Meanderal man must have had a belief in an after-life.<sup>1</sup>

Yet the primitive man is not able to conceive the immaterial and purely spiritual being. Soul is vaguely considered as an ethereal image of the body and has the power of flashing about quickly from place to place. As to the nature of after-life and its locality we can hardly expect to be able to reduce savage beliefs to a coherent system. There is a general belief that in the interval between death and the burial the spirit hovers about in the

1. Mischa Titiev : *Introduction to Anthropology* (New York, 1961), p. 118.

neighbourhood of the body. The unburied dead are supposed to be condemned to wander for ever, aimless and miserable. But some rites seem to imply the belief that soul inhabits the grave or lingers in its vicinity. The aborigines of Australia imagine that the spirits of the dead continue to haunt their native land, specially in some important places like a pond of cool water or a solitary tree. These are the crude beginnings of the concept of the immaterial nature of soul and survival of soul after death. However, belief in a further life is not a belief in immortality in the strict philosophical sense although we are approaching towards it. And as yet conception of the retribution involved in the judgement of souls and their wanderings is not formed. These can be said to be only theories of continuance of the soul and not rebirth on the basis of retribution. The idea of retribution would bring a new element in the scheme of the wanderings of soul. This would bring the conceptions of rebirth and transmigration. The theories of retribution and the consequent idea of rebirth and transmigration are based on deeper experiences than the theories of continuance. In this there is question of moral order. We find this element in later religious thought as in the case of the popular beliefs of the Hebrews and the Greeks.

In ancient Egyptian religious practices there are three different ideas which refer to the changes in the personality : (1) the union with a God (2) transmigration of soul into an animal for a life-time, (3) the voluntary metamorphosis of the person into another for his own benefit.<sup>2</sup> The belief in transmigration among the ancient Egyptian does not seem to be quite pronounced, because there is no reference to it in the Egyptian texts. Two scenes have been supposed to indicate it; these are judgment scenes. But the belief in metamorphosis was general as a magic process. The earliest Egyptian tale turns on a wax model being transformed into a living crocodile. *The Book of the Dead* has a series of magic practices to giving power to the dead person to get transformed into whatever form he pleases. The Egyptian mummies point out to the evidence that there is a widespread belief in the continuance of life after death.

Among the Hebrews Sheol was the gloomy abode of the dead. It is a land of darkness and of shadow of death without any order. Jehovah was the national God. His dominion was limited to the world of the living and his jurisdiction did not extend to Sheol. With the compactness of national life of the Hebrews, the relation between Jehovah and the worshipper became more personal. Nowhere do we find in the *Old Testament* a clear and definite doctrine of immortality. We only get scattered anticipations in the *Psalms* and a few others. However, among the Jewish mystics we get reference to the problem of the transmigration of the soul. In the Jewish tradition Zohar gives

2. *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 12, p. 431,

countenance to some theory of transmigration of souls. It is necessary upon Neshaman to climb back again to the Oversoul and be united with it; and in order to effect this end, it must previously have reached the summit of purity and perfection. Therefore its sojourn within the confines of one body may be inadequate to enable it to reach this high and exacting condition. It must experience other bodies, and it must repeat the experience till such a time as it shall have elevated and refined itself. Zohar contains some such theory although for the fuller treatment one has to look to the Kabbalistic writers who built upon the Zohar.

To the minds of the Kabbalists, transmigration is a necessity on the grounds of their particular theology, and it is a vindication of Divine justice to mankind. It settles the harassing query which all ages have raised: Why has God permitted the wicked to flourish while the righteous man is allowed to reap nothing but sorrow and failure? The only way for reconciling the fact of child-suffering with the belief in a good God, is by saying that pain is a retribution to the soul for sins committed in some of its previous states. The Jewish literature on this subject of transmigration is an exceedingly rich one.<sup>3</sup>

The Greek Hade closely resembles the Hebrew Sheol. It is also the common abode of the departed without regard to moral distinctions. According to the old traditional religion of the Greeks, the common men have to go to the gloomy realms of Hades and the few heroes and heroines, personally related to the gods such as Achilles, are sent bodily to the Island of the Blest in the Western sea. Soul is here considered still as the ghostly double of the living man. The idea of the Hades is not very conducive to the belief in after-life. After-life is not very attractive. Achilles says "Nay, speak not comfortably to me of death, O great Odysseus. Rather would I live on the ground as a hireling of another, with a landless man who had no great livelihood, than bear sway among all the dead that are departed."<sup>4</sup> Yet the desire to live somehow after death persisted and the old belief of continuance of life after death and the primitive practices continued to be predominant.

With the Orphic religion comes the idea of the essential dignity of soul along with the concept of sin. Body is the prison-house of soul and true life of the soul will be realised only when it is finally delivered from body. It is not easy to escape the cycle of births and deaths to which soul is condemned by its impurity. Soul has to be purified before it attains the highest goal of deliverance. The Golden tablets found in the tombs in the southern part of Italy and in Crete give careful instructions of the

3. Abelson (J.) *Jewish Mysticism* (Bell & Sons, London, 1913), p. 163.

4. *Odysseus*. XI 488.

departed regarding the route the soul has to follow in the underworld. "On your left, you will find a stream, and near it is a white poplar. Go not near the stream, but you will find another, cool waters flowing from the lake of memory, and by it are guards. Say to them, "I am a child of the earth and of starry Heaven, but my place is of Heaven only."<sup>5</sup>

The influence of the Orphic idea of destiny of the soul is to be found in the poems of Pindar in the first half of the 5th century B. C. and in the verses of the philosophers like Empedocles. "Immediately after death the law-less spirits suffer punishment." "And the sins committed in this realm of Zeus are judged by one who passeth sentence stern and inevitable; while upon the good the sun shines ever more through equal nights and equal days, and they receive the boon of a life of enlightened toil, not vexing the soil with the strength of their hands, no, nor the waters of the sea, to gain a scanty livelihood, but in the presence of the honoured gods, all who were wont to rejoice in keeping their oaths share a life that knoweth no tears, while others endure labours that none can look upon". When the life immediately following the present is thus conceived as an intermediate state of reward and punishment, it is clear that we have gone beyond the primitive theories of mere continuance. Orphic mysticism influenced Pythagoras and his disciples. There is a far closer agreement between Pythagoreanism and the Indian doctrine, not merely in their general features, but even in certain details, such as vegetarianism. The formulae which summarize the whole creed of the "Circle and the wheel" of births are likewise the same in both. It is almost impossible for us to refer this identity to mere chance. The Indian doctrine of metempsychosis is older than the Buddhists, and it is not too much to assume that the curious Greek who was the contemporary of the Buddha, and it may have been of Zarathustra too, would have acquired a more or less exact knowledge of the religious speculation of the East, in that age of intellectual fermentation, through the medium of Persia.<sup>6</sup> Plato was also influenced by this doctrine as is evident from his dialogues like *the Meno*, *the Phaeudo* and *the Republic*. Pre-existence of the soul and the doctrine of transmigration or reincarnation were also fundamental tenets of the religious brotherhood founded by Pythagoras in the south of Italy at the end of the sixth century, and were associated there also with the pursuit of purity by a variety of ascetic practices and ceremonial observances.<sup>7</sup> It is difficult to determine the extent of the interaction of other currents of thought on the Orphic and the Pythagorean doctrines in this respect. We have just seen

5. Pringle Pattison (A. S.) : *The Idea of Immortality* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1922), p. 27

6. Compare Theodore : *Greek Thinkers* vol I. (John Murray, London. 1920), pp. 127

7. Pringle-Pattison : *Idea of Immortality*, p. 33 Footnote,

that Comperz thinks that Pythagorean thought must have been influenced by the doctrine of reincarnation prevalent in India at the time of and before the Buddha. But some others would say it is possible that both these thoughts must have originated simultaneously. The doctrine of transmigration and rebirth is so prominent in Plato's scheme of thought that we find it presented in some of his dialogues like *the Phaedo*, *the Meno* and *the Republic* in various forms. He gives arguments for pre-existence and the continuity of life. He sometimes speaks in mythical language also, as in *the Republic*. In Plato's dialogues we get a systematic picture of the nature of soul and its destiny. Socrates was primarily concerned with the care of the soul. "I spend my whole time in going about persuading you all to give your best and chiefest care to the perfection of your souls, and not till you have done that, to that of your bodies or your wealth."<sup>8</sup> Crito asked Socrates how they should bury him. "As you please" said Socrates; "only you must catch me first and not let me escape you." "My friends, I cannot convince Crito that I am the Socrates who has been conversing with you and arranging his arguments in order. He thinks that I am the body which he will presently see a corpse, and he asks how he is to bury me." And "Of the things which a man has, next to the gods, his soul is the most divine and most truly his own . . . and in our opinion he ought to honour her as second only to the gods". Therefore when we are dead, the bodies of the dead are rightly said to be our shades or images; for the true and immortal being of each one of us, which is called the soul goes on her way to other gods, that before them she may give an account.<sup>9</sup> Belief in the divinity of soul and its immortality is a primary conviction in the Dialogues of Plato. *The Phaedrus* gives the most brilliant account of pre-existence of soul and its heavenly origin. "The soul is immortal because it is simple and eternal. It belongs to the world of pure ideas and forms—because of their rational nature—the souls all pass into the human form. Their second incarnation depends on the kind of life they have led in their first earthly period of probation, and each subsequent incarnation is similarly determined by the use made of the preceding life. In the *Timaeus* Plato represents the soul and body as everywhere united; throughout the created universe. He speaks of the human soul as implanted in bodies by necessity.<sup>10</sup>

Plato gives an imaginative picture of the states of the soul on the basis of the work that has been done previously. Those who appear to be incurable from the enormity of their sins are hurled down to Tartarus,

8. *The Apology*.

9. *The Laws*, 959.

10. *Timaeus*, 42.

whence they never come forth again. Those 'who have sufficiently purified themselves with philosophy' are set free from the body altogether and ascend to the heavenly sphere from whence they came. But this is hardly to be accomplished in a single life. The soul of a philosopher or the soul of a lover who is not without philosophy may attain deliverance at the end of 3,000 years, if thrice in succession they have chosen lives aright; but, for the majority, a cycle of 10,000 years must be completed before; by the repeated experience of good and evil, they learn eventually to choose the good.<sup>11</sup>

According to Plato soul is perfect and is associated with the world of ideas. It is immortal and indestructible. However, Plato says that souls are immortal and indistrictible in time. They are not eternal in the sense in which that is true of the Ideas.<sup>12</sup> Yet by feeding on proper food, the soul may, appropriate the absolute content and make the true and the beautiful its habitual element and become the partaker of Eternity.

Plato gives arguments for establishing the immortality of soul. He says that the soul partakes of the eternal because it is rational in nature. By its rational nature it has kinship with ideas and as such it has eternity imbedded in it. As a concrete existence it is grounded in time. But as an immaterial substance it partakes of the eternity.<sup>13</sup>

(2) Plato speaks of the three parts of the soul. The rational part is the highest. Next comes the noble irrational part which is constituted of sentiments, and the lowest in level is the ignoble irrational part which comprises of impulses and passions. The rational part is the real soul and it is immortal. The divine principle is located in the head. The nobler part of the moral soul is endowed with courage and is settled round the heart so that it might be within the hearing of reason. The baser part of the mortal soul which desires meat and drinks and all things where of it has need owing to the nature of the body is below the midriff. There the desires are bound like a wild animal which was chained up with man and must be reared with him. In the *Republic* Plato speaks of the combination of man, the lion and the many-headed monster, combined in the external semblance of the man. This gives the threefold division of man.<sup>14</sup> The rational soul alone will survive the death of the body. Aristotle drew similar conclusion in his doctrine of Active Reason.

Plato says that everything which has an opposite is generated only from its opposite. A sleeping man awakes, and a waking man goes to

11. *The Phaedrus*, p. 248-49.

12. *The Laws*, p. 904

13. *The Phaedo*, p. 79.

14. *The Republic*, p. 588



sleep; the two states alternate. Similarly as life and death are opposites, they are generated one from the other; what dies must have been alive, and what is alive must have been dead. The souls of the dead must exist somewhere, whence they return again into life.<sup>15</sup>

(4) Again Plato argues that soul is indestructible because nothing can be destroyed except by its own proper and specific evil. The eyes for example are liable to the evil ophthalmia, the body could suffer and timber rot. The specific evil of the soul is wickedness. Therefore if the soul is destructible it must die of wickedness. But wickedness cannot kill the soul and nothing else can destroy it.<sup>16</sup>

(5) Plato gives a further argument for the priority and eternity of the soul because it is self-moved. It is the cause of all movements in the universe. The argument centred round the principle of self-movement. Other things in motion get their motion due to some external impact while his soul is self-moved. Therefore it is eternal.

(6) In the *Meno* Socrates is represented as eliciting a geometrical theorem from a slave boy by a series of appropriate questions. The soul must have always possessed this knowledge and the boy is only recollecting it. If the truth of all things always existed in the soul, then the soul is immortal. This argument is based on the theory of the recollection.<sup>17</sup>

In the *Phaedo*, the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* the argument for pre-existence is presented in a poetic form. The soul uses sight 'the noblest of the senses'. It goes back from earthly beauties to the heavenly beauties and finally Beauty in itself — the idea of the beauty.

We see two objects to be equal. Yet they only approximate to the idea of equality which is perfect equality. We must, therefore, have had knowledge of equality before we first saw equal things and perceived that they all strive towards perfect equality and this falls short of it.<sup>18</sup> Such knowledge must have been received by us before we were born.

(7) The soul is indestructible because it is simple and has no parts. Plato argues about the immortality of soul on the basis of its simplicity and its unity. We find these arguments in the *Republic* and in the *Symposium*.

(8) Finally Plato gives mythic picture of the state of soul after death. In the *Republic*, we have the myth of Er. Plato gives a beautiful description of journey of the soul after death into strange lands and its choice of life to

15. *The Phaedo*, p. 70-71.

16. *The Republic*, p. 608.

17. *The Meno*, p. 85-86.

18. *The Phaedo*, p. 75.

come. "I shall tell you a story not of Alcinous, but of valiant man, Er, son of Armenius, of the race of Pamphelia. Once upon a time he fell in battle. On the tenth day they took the dead who were now stinking but his body was found fresh." On the twentieth day Er came to life as he was lying on the pyre and he told them what he had seen yonder. His soul journeyed along with great company until they arrived at a certain ghostly place where there were two openings in the earth side by side, and opposite them and above two openings in the heaven. In the middle sat judges. These, when they had given their judgement, ordered the just to take the road to the right which led upward through heaven, first binding tablets on them in front signifying their judgements. The unjust were ordered to take the road to the left, which led downward. They also had tablets bound on their backs. They encamped in the Meadow. Each company passed seven days in the Meadow. On the eighth day they had to rise up and go their way. They arrived at a place where lots were shown. 'Let him whose lot falls first have first choice of a life to which he shall be bound by necessity.' Different patterns of life were laid on the ground and among them were lives of famous men, of unknown men and also of women.

"And when all the souls had chosen their lives they went into Lachasis in the order of their choosing. And she gave each the angel he had chosen to be a guard throughout his life and to accomplish his choice. The angel first led the soul towards clotho passing it under her hand and under the sweep of the whirling spindle, so ratifying the fate which the man had chosen in his turn. He touched the spindle, and then led the soul on to where Atropos was spinning, so that the threads might be made unalterable. Thence the man went without turning under the throne of Necessity, and after coming out on the other side he waited for others pass through. At last they encamped by the river of Forgetfulness whose water no pitcher may hold. All had to drink a certain measure of this water. Then they went to sleep. And at once they were carried up from thence along different ways to their birth, shooting like stars."

After Plato's attempts to establish pre-existence and immortality of the soul, it persisted down to the later classical thinkers, Plotinus and Neo-Platonists. In the Hebrews, there are traces of it in Philo and it was definitely adopted in the Kabbala. The Sufi writers accept it. Jesus's disciples tell him of the rumours that he is John the Baptist or Elijah or Jeremiah. Julius Caesar finds the belief in rebirth among the ancestors of the British, for in his History of the Gallic Wars he writes that the Druids 'inculcate this as one of their leading tenets.' In the Middle Ages the tradition was continued by the numerous sects known as Cathari. At the Renaissance Bruno upheld it. In the seventeenth century Helmont adopted it. Swedenborg

stated it in a modified form. Hume and Schopenhauer mentioned it with respect and among contemporary philosophers there are some who are inclined to accept it for want of inadequate evidence and proof. In general the Western philosophers did not pursue the problem seriously. The Christian theologians talked of immortality in the sense of continuance of soul after death and not in the sense of rebirth and transmigration. Some sections of modern Philosophy were influenced by the sudden encroachment of science in other fields of enquiry and discredited the belief in immortality and survival of the life after death because consciousness and mental states, they say, are only products of the brain function. They are epiphenomena. The question of survival of the soul after the destruction of the body does not arise.

### III

In the modern western philosophy, Dr. Mc-Taggart leans on the problem of immortality of the soul involving pre-existence and continuance of soul after the destruction of the body. The present attitude of most Western thinkers, he says, to the doctrine of pre-existence is curious. Of the many who regard our life after death of our bodies as certain or probable, scarcely one regards our life before the birth of those bodies as a possibility which deserves discussion. Yet it was taught by the Buddha and by Plato, and it is usually associated with the belief in immortality in the far East. In modern Western thought the great support of the belief in immortality has been the Christian religion, and a form of belief which was never supported by the religion was not likely to be considered of any importance. And, for some reason, Christians have almost unanimously rejected those theories which placed pre-existence by the side of immortality.<sup>19</sup> Dr. McTaggart accepts both pre-existence and recurrent earthly embodiment of the spirit. He believes that any evidence that proves immortality will also prove pre-existence. The most effective way of proving that the doctrine of pre-existence is bound up with the doctrine of immortality would be to prove directly that the nature of man was such that it involved a life both before and after the present life.<sup>20</sup> Dr. McTaggart points out that the usual ethical arguments to prove immortality are not adequate to explain the belief in pre-existence. He says that modern demonstration of immortality has largely been ethical in character and not purely metaphysical "and this explains why it has often been held in modern times that immortality was proved, although pre-existence has almost always been disbelieved on the basis of purely metaphysical arguments." Dr. McTaggart says that any demonstration of immortality

19. McTaggart (J. M.): *Some Dogmas of Religion*. (Edward Arnold, 1930), pp. 112-113.

20. *Ibid.*

is likely to show that each of us exists through all time – past and future – whether time is held finite or infinite. Every individual self is an eternally self-subsistent spirit, timeless in experience. Self expression of the individual self in and through time process should assume the form of a vastly long chain of repeated births. He takes his stand on metaphysical ground and says that it is capable of yielding apriori certainty. Self is a substance existing in its own right and the universe consists of a society of such eternally self-subsistent selves. As substances, selves have neither beginning nor end of life and therefore each of us exists through all times, past and future.<sup>21</sup> As we have no memory of any previous existence, we must assume a plurality of lives linked together by successive deaths and rebirths. Dr. McTaggart presents the doctrine of plurality of lives – of future and past lives. He says that the consequences of the truth of pre-existence and plurality of lives would be that the existence of a person before and after the present would be divided into many lives each bound by birth and death.

Dr. McTaggart mentions and answers a few objections against the doctrine of pre-existence and plurality of lives on the basis of metaphysical and psychological considerations. We may here state a few of his considerations.

1. Man's progress has been in the direction of attaining perfection gradually as it is difficult to believe that full perfection will be attained in one single life. And if our existence immediately after the present life is imperfect and a state of improvement and advance, this life would be followed by others like it, each separated by its predecessors and successors by death and rebirth.

2. There are many features of our present life which can be explained more satisfactorily by the theory of pre-existence than by any other.

(a) Two persons are often drawn to each other by a force equal to that which is generated in other cases by years of mutual understanding. Similarly love at first sight and deeper attachments of individuals seen only for some time are examples which can be explained by the theory of pre-existence.<sup>22</sup>

(b) As a man grows up certain tendencies and qualities make themselves manifest in him. These are innate as they cannot be entirely due to environment. Some men have innate powers of judging men, some others have calm and serene virtues. Attempts are made to explain the presence of such innate qualities by heredity. But such innate dispositions may often occur in cases where nothing of the sort can be traced among ancestors.

21. McTaggart (J. M.) : *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 115.

22. *Ibid.* p. 124.

Therefore explanation of these facts by pre-existence is better and more satisfactory.<sup>23</sup>

3. It is said that the theory of rebirth is inconsistent with the principle of heredity. The parents are reflected in the child both in physical and psychological traits. It is unnecessary to assume that it comes from another life due to its own traces acquired in the past. But this difficulty will hold good for every theory. It is simpler to hold that the self seeking for rebirth obtains embodiment in the frame offering the necessary conditions. The physical body derived from the parents according to the laws of heredity is appropriated by the conscious self. If this theory is not acceptable, much less is the other view which holds that a sort of supernatural essence is thrust into the bodily context at the appropriate moment. . . . . The soul draws around it the forces necessary for its proper embodiment. It is therefore natural that the child should be like the parents.<sup>24</sup>

If the creation of the whole nature is to be credited to the physical birth, then the body, life and soul of the individual are only a continuation of the body, life and soul of his ancestry, and there is no room anywhere for soul's rebirth.

Heredity cannot explain the psychic force other than the ancestral continuity. Heredity has shown that there is no soul, no psychic force which forms its material according to its pre-dispositions.

4. Another consideration is from memory. Here we may raise a question as (i) from the fact of loss of memory and (ii) desirability of the loss of memory.

(i) We have no memory of the past life and there seems to be no reason to expect that we shall remember our present life during subsequent lives. Now an existence that is cut off into separate lives, in none of which memory extends to previous life, may be thought to be of no practical value. We might as well be mortal, it has been said, as be immortal without a memory beyond the present life. It is sometimes asserted that rebirth without memory of the previous existence would not be immortality at all. Without memory of the present life, the life would not be mine at all. Rebirth of a person without a memory of the previous life would be equal to annihilation of that person.

But McTaggart points out that the self is not a thing in itself whose nature is independent of its qualities. Self is a substance with attributes,

23. McTaggart : *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 124.

24. Radhakrishnan (S.) : *An Idealist View of Life*. p. 235.

and it has no nature except to express itself in its attributes. If the character of the new self, under certain circumstances were exactly similar to my character under the same circumstances, its attributes would be exactly similar to my attributes. Then the substance also would be the same, and I should not be annihilated at all. But if there were a new self, then the new self would not be of exactly similar character to what I should have been under the same circumstances, and therefore the creation of a new self would not be exactly equivalent to my rebirth. Thus exact similarity of attributes is always sufficient to prove personal identity, not because it would be sufficient if the substance were different but because it proves that the substance is the same.<sup>25</sup>

5. Another objection has been raised by some. Even if supposing that in spite of the loss of memory, the same person continues in the successive life what is the value of such immortality and survival for such a person ?

But McTaggart maintains that loss of memory need not render immortality valueless if it would not have been valueless without the loss of memory. If this life has value without memory beyond itself, why should not future lives have value without memory beyond themselves ? And desire for immortality has importance because future will be, we believe and hope, a great improvement for the present.

6. It is also objected that if the chief ground for belief in the successive lives after death is for the progressive improvement of the person, then loss of memory would destroy all the achievement of the previous life.

It is doubtless that boundless items of our experience lapse from conscious memory and survive only as dispositions and tendencies. But although much may persist in the unconscious some continuity of consciousness and memory is involved in the ordinary personality : Pringle-Pattison points out that McTaggart's position is paradoxical and misleading when he asserts that 'in spite of loss of memory it is the same person who lives in the successive lives'. He quotes from Leibniz and states that it is not useful to have immortality without memory. "Granting that the soul is a substance and that no substance perishes, the soul then will not be lost, as, indeed, nothing is lost in nature . . . But this immortality without recollection is ethically quite useless... What good, sir, would it do you to become King of China, as a condition that you forget what you have been ? Would it not be the same as if God, at the moment he destroyed you, were to create a king in China ?" Only an illusion of imagination permits us to speak

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25. McTaggart : *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 129

of immortality where there is no memory to maintain the identity of self.”<sup>26</sup>

But memory is useful in preserving our experiences and wisdom. It is also useful for promoting virtue and strengthening the love of the present on the basis of the past. However, the past could help the present in these aspects without the aid of memory and the absence of memory need not destroy the chance of improvement spreading over many lives.<sup>27</sup>

(i) Loss of memory is a blessing in disguise. It would have been a painful tragedy to have carried the burden of past lives and their memories, depressing and pleasant. In that case life would have been a burden. Very often to forget is a boon, perhaps it is in our nature that for smooth working of life and for the preservation and promotion of values of life it is necessary that we forget a large portion of our own experiences even in the present life. Freud, in his *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, has discussed the various motivations of forgetting. Forgetting is a defence mechanism in some cases. Unpleasant experiences are forgotten or else they would be an unbearable burden on the mind and would distort the personality traits. He gives copious instances of how in everyday life people forget unpleasant experiences. Therefore if forgetting is useful in everyday life, it is much more useful in the case of transition from one life to the other. As Radhakrishnan puts it “If we did not lose memory it might turn out a positive nuisance. Our relations with our fellowmen are sufficiently complex without adding to them reminiscences of past lives.”

(ii) If the theory of rebirth is wellgrounded otherwise, the question of lapse of memory does not touch it. Memory may be necessary for a retributive theory of the universe, but not for moral continuity. Death may destroy memory of our deeds but not their effects on us. Loss of memory does not obliterate everything. Every experience leaves behind some traces which become the foundation of personality development. Such dispositions and memory traces become the spring-board for the development of personality. What we are today is largely due to the dispositions and traces that we have acquired. The nature of each individual is moulded by the experiences of the past. Every state is conditioned by the prior and leads on to another.

(iii) Moreover the purpose of memory is to enable us to be wiser by experience, and virtuous by effort. The facts we learn may be forgotten but the cultivated mind will remain. All our experiences consolidate themselves in forming our personality and that is what is important. Therefore

26. Pringle-Pattison : *The Idea of Immortality*, p. 126.

27. McTaggart : *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 132.

the objection on the basis of the loss of memory cannot be seriously maintained.<sup>28</sup>

It is possible to say that the loss of memory at the end of every life may imply to some extent a loss and breach of continuity. In losing memory, it is said, we lose that in which we have found great balance.

But we only lose comparatively worthless forms which the lapse of years would change to a positive evil. And as we come to understand life better we shall shrink from such a loss less and less. The value of immortality would not be lessened much, if at all, by pre-existence.

(iv) And then it is not always possible to say that the memory is fully destroyed at death and a person will not remember anything of his past life in the next birth. There is an ancient tradition in Indian thought which states that one can remember one's past lives by means of (a) constant study of scriptures, (b) by purification by austerity and (c) by the love of all creation.<sup>29</sup> In the *Meno* Socrates is reported to have elicited a geometrical theorem from a Negro boy although he had not studied geometry at all. Modern Psychical Research has been working on this problem. The investigations have shown that the phenomenon of mediumship leads us to suppose that everything is not destroyed after death. The spirit that has lost bodily existence can present itself and its experiences through a medium.

C.D. Broad's analysis of mediumship shows the stream of inter-connected events which constitute the mental history of a certain person is continued after the death of his body and communicates through a medium. "There is no doubt at all that the best phenomena of trance mediumship involve paranormal cognition of high order. The only question is whether this, combined with alternations of personality and extra-ordinary but not paranormal powers of dramatization will not suffice to account for the phenomena which *prima facie* suggests so strongly that some persons survive the deaths ..."<sup>30</sup> C.D. Broad has developed a compound theory of mind. The mind emerges into existence when the body and the psychic factor suitably combine, just as water is formed by the combination of hydrogen and oxygen. He maintains that on the death of the body the psychic factor continues to exist and seems capable of being united with other suitably developed organisms. It carries modifications due to experiences that happened to the person who is dead. In mediumship phenomena the psychic factor of a dead person is temporarily united with the body of the entranced

28. Radhakrishnan (S.) : *An Idealist View of Life* (Unwin, 1961), p. 238

29. *Manusmṛti* iv. 148

30. Broad (C. D.) : *Religion, Philosophy and Psychical Research* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), p. 25



ced medium. But Dr. Broad's conception of the persistence of the psychic factor does not explain the idea of rebirth.

7. Apart from the investigations of the modern psychical research and its implications on the problem of rebirth, we have evidence to show that in some cases there is no loss of memory of the past life. We have instances to show where a person remembers the incidents of his past life at least during the early years of his succeeding life. For example, Sadguru Keshavadasji reported to me two cases of the revival of memory of the past life.

(1) Dr. Gastone, an Italian Dentist used to dream that he was a priest in India. He could fully visualise the procedure of worship in the temple in India. When he came to India recently he remembered his past in a temple at Kanchipuram. He claims to say that he was a priest in his past life.

(ii) Sadguru Keshavsdasji says "while I was delivering a discourse at New York Indian Consulate on Indian Philosophy, a Negro gentleman got up and began reciting "*Lalitā Sahasranāma*" and he said that he was born in India in his past Life."<sup>31</sup>

There is a famous case of reincarnation of Shanti Devi recently investigated in Delhi. Kumari Shanti Devi is a Lecturer in Hindu Philosophy at Delhi. In her young age she suddenly became depressed and began to say that she belonged to Mathura and her husband was a merchant at Mathura. She gave the name of her husband as Kedar Nath Chaubey. A Committee of experts was appointed to study the case, and, strangely enough, the details of the narration of the girl came out to be true. For instance, she had told that she had kept some money hidden underground in a certain room of her house at Mathura, and that came out to be true. She was taken to Mathura and she could recognise every corner of the place that she lived and moved. She recognised with affection her husband and her son in the past life.<sup>32</sup> I had the privilege of meeting this lady at Lucknow during a seminar on parapsychological phenomena and I was convinced of the reports given by her.

Dr. H.N. Banerjee has been doing some work in this direction and his results have been useful.

8. The sages in Ancient India were reported to be capable of describing the previous births of others. The Buddha enumerated the previous life forms of persons closely connected with him. He was also in a position

31. A personal discussion with Sadguru Keshavadasji, Dāsāsrama, Bangalore

32. Kumari Shanti Devi : *A Case of Re-incarnation*, (Adarsha Sudharak Subha, Delhi, 1953.)

to say where deceased persons had found their rebirth. Even the different arts of fortune telling have been put to the service of ascertaining past or future courses of life. The Pali Canon relates of a Brahman Vangisa who from the skull placed before him was able to ascertain where its previous possessor was reborn. It is also said that from the horoscope of a person it is possible to determine the past and the future incarnation of a person.<sup>33</sup>

Dr. McTaggart concludes "pre-existence, indeed, as we have seen, renders more probably a plurality of future lives. And the prospect of a great number of lives—perhaps an infinite number, though this is not a necessary part of the theory — gives us the prospect of many dangers, many conflicts, many griefs, in a indefinitely long future. Death is not a heaven of rest. It is a starting point for fresh labours. But if the trials are great, so is the recompense. We miss much here by our own folly, much by unfavourable circumstances. Above all we miss much, because so many good things are incompatible. We cannot spend our youth both in the study and in the saddle. We cannot gain the benefit both of unbroken health and bodily weakness, both of riches and of poverty, both of comradeship and of isolation, both of defiance and obedience." But though way is long, and perhaps endless it can be no more wearisome than a single life. For with death we leave behind us memory, and old age, and fatigue. "And surely death acquires a new and deeper significance when we regard it no longer as a single and unexplained break in an unending life, but as part of the continually recurring rhythm of progress — as inevitable, as natural, and as benevolent as sleep. We have only left youth behind us, as at noon we have left the sunrise. They will both come back, and they do not grow old."<sup>34</sup> As Radhakrishnan says, if we do not admit pre-existence we must say that the soul is created at birth of the body. Such a view makes all education and experience superfluous.<sup>35</sup>

McTaggart's position has been criticised by some. Pringle-Pattison says — Every reader will feel the sustained beauty of the words; the illusion lies in the recurrent 'we' and 'us'. Otherwise the idea of supplementing and enlarging our limited earthly experience is a natural and attractive one. But it is a prospect equally open to the ordinary believer in personal immortality; and in his case the enrichment of the personality would be real, whereas on Dr. McTaggart's theory, the varied experiences remain distributed among a number of different individuals. . . . Again it is good to rejoice that 'the sunrise with its glories old' will gladden young eyes and hearts ages

33. Glasenapp : *Immortality and Salvation in Indian Religion*, p. 33.

34. McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 138-39.

35. Radhakrishnan (S.), *An Idealist View of Life*, Unwin, 1961, p. 230.

after our own eyes have closed in death, but it is an illusion to think that it is we who shall look through their eyes or feel the beat of their hearts.<sup>36</sup>

Pringle-Pattison says that McTaggart's metaphysical argument seems to rest entirely on his definition of the self, and "the definition I am bound to say seems to be no better than a dogma".<sup>37</sup> Dr. McTaggart's use of the term substance (though he tries to safeguard himself) carries us back to the discredited soul substance which we have so fully criticised.<sup>38</sup> Dr. McTaggart's supposition that self is a metaphysical substrate in which personal identity lies is not an adequate explanation for the continuity of successive lives, as continuity is never realised owing to the absence of memory.

Pringle-Pattison senses a difficulty in accepting the theory of reincarnation on the assumption of determinate number of souls. Plato said 'The souls that exist' 'must be always the same.' They cannot become fewer, nor yet can they become more numerous.<sup>39</sup> 'In the *Timaeus* he says their number is equal to the number of the stars,<sup>40</sup> "for McTaggart also the selves are 'fundamental differentiations' of the Absolute, determinate in nature and number. 'It is the nature of the Absolute to be manifested in precisely those differentiations in which it is manifested.'"<sup>41</sup> "Bradley pointed out that there is one sense in which the immortality of souls seems impossible. We must remember that the universe is incapable of increase. And to suppose a constant supply of new souls, none of which ever perished, would clearly land us in the end in an insoluble difficulty."<sup>42</sup>

According to Pringle-Pattison the difficulty arises due to the wrong conception of substance which is based on physical analogy. It has been said by a woman critic that Reincarnation makes childhood, which appears beautiful and holy, a gigantic lie. She says it is hard to conceive how any mother can look into the dawning intelligence of her child's eyes, and be satisfied to believe that in innumerable past lives that same soul has gone through experience savage and civilized, has probably been in turn harlot or rake, victim or tyrant, wife or warrior, layman or priest, and perhaps all these a hundred times.<sup>43</sup>

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36. Pringle-Pattison (A. S.) : *Idea of Immortality*, p. 127.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

39. *The Republic*, p. 611.

40. *The Timaeus*, p. 41

41. Pringle-Pattison (A. S.) : *Idea of Immortality*, p. 127.

42. *Appearance and Reality*, p. 502.

43. Pringle Pattison, *Idea of Immortality*, p. 129.

Again unless we are possessed by the idea that the number of souls pouring in from this world to the next world would seem to require a proportionate drain, for else the country might be overstocked, we need not be driven to the theory of reincarnation to obviate this lamentable result. Such Malthusian anxieties about the overpopulation in the spiritual world would appear to be ludicrous.<sup>44</sup>

Apparently profound criticism indeed ! But this criticism has been based on the wrong foundations. Western thinkers have been particular about justifying the belief in human immortality without accepting pre-existence or future life. We find only a few philosophers like Dr. McTaggart who have accepted immortality with pre-existence and a succession of lives. There is here a shifting of emphasis in the concept of substance and attributes.

Dr. Martineau studies the problem in light of the psychological and metaphysical analysis of death and presents a case for immortality, without however, accepting pre-existence or future life. In its physical aspect death presents simply a case of transformation of energy; the organic compounds of oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen and carbon losing their precarious equation and resolving themselves into more stable inorganic combinations themselves destroyed hereafter, to be partially taken up into new living form. But we should mix in it any element answering to thought; affections and volitions. They are the concomitant of the living man. These mental energies continue to exist as the law of conservation of energy. In the physical phenomena of death there is nothing to prejudice the question of life beyond. They amount to only vanishing of the evidence of life and leave it there.

But even if all life were drawn from an eternal given stock, the same and its continuity would belong to the whole and it would not imply unbroken identity between that which was quenched and the succeeding elements. The lion in which, according to Plato's myth the soul of Ajax was reborn, would not remember his defeat about the armour of Achilles; or the swan, tenanted by Orpheus, look back upon his visit to the shades, and the joy and despair of the won and lost Eurydice. The plain of Lethe that had to be crossed, and the waters of its river 'Careless' that had to be tasted before the second birth, effectually served the unity between life and life. "And we must acknowledge the justice of Lucretius' criticism."<sup>45</sup> On similar ground Fiske merely presents the belief in the Immortality of the soul 'not in the sense' in which I accept the demonstrable truth of

44. Ibid.

45. Dr. Martineau, ., *Study of Religion*, Vol. 2. Clarendon Press, 1926, p. 320

science, but as supreme act of faith in the reasonableness of God's work.<sup>46</sup>

Through the vaticinations of intellect and conscience, Dr. Martineau comes nearer the cross-roads suggesting belief in future life without specifically accepting the doctrine of rebirth. He is shy of accepting the beliefs of continuity and rebirth as he has been careful 'not to appeal to the widespread hope and belief of a future life, which has prevailed in the world; for it is hardly warrantable to argue from the mere prevalence of a belief to its truth, unless it can be classed with the primary assumptions that are the conditions of all inference – a position which cannot be claimed by the doctrine now under consideration.'<sup>47</sup>

However the conditions of a responsible existence involves two stages– (i) a probationary turn and (ii) a retributory sequel: 'but it may be said, there is no need to separate these and assign them to different lives: both may be provided for within the present experience of the agent's own personality.'<sup>48</sup> And it is maintained that retributive aspect of future life has an educative influence for persons in the earlier and cruder stages of moral culture. To them it represents, under hedonistic symbols, a spiritual consummation which will fulfil the promises by transcending them. The hopes and fears of future retribution are needed to play upon the conscience only in its rudimentary period.<sup>49</sup> Dr. Martineau concludes "From this survey of the great lines of human experience two inferences seem to force themselves upon us: (1) that *everywhere*, – in our conscience, in our physical nature, in the sentiments of associated men — there are indelible marks of a morally constituted world, moving towards righteous ends: (2) That *nowhere* within us or out of us, do we find the fulfilment of this idea, but only the incipient and often baffled tentatives for realizing it by partial approximation. This is what we should expect to see, from the first station of an unfinished system; and it irresistibly suggests a justifying and perfect sequel. The vaticinations of our moral nature are thus in harmony with those of intellectual and spiritual; distinctly reporting to us, that we stand in Divine relations which indefinitely transcend the limits of our earthly years.'<sup>50</sup>

Dr. Martineau and other Western philosophers like Phleader, stop at the crossroad to immortality and are shy to accept the logical implications of retribution and the progress of the individual to intellectual and moral

46. Fiske, *Destiny of man* as quoted by Martineau.

47. Dr. Martineau, *Study of Religion*, p. 359

48. *Ibid.*, p. 361.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 362.

50. *Ibid.* p. 362.

perfection. They are steeped in the Christian tradition and they do not wish to take a step further lest they overstep the limits of their tradition. I wish Dr. Martineau and other western philosophers had studied the problem by taking a synoptic view and comparative picture with reference to the discussions in the ancient Indian thought.

However, some modern psychologists like Dr. McDougall have given thought to this problem and they are in sympathy with the concept of continuance of life and rebirth. In his *Body and Mind* Dr. McDougall says "I am in sympathy with the religious attitude towards life; and I should welcome the establishment of sure empirical foundations of the belief that human personality is not wholly destroyed by death. For, as we said above, I judge that this belief can only be kept alive if a proof of it, or at least a presumption in favour of it, can be furnished by the methods of empirical science. .... For every vigorous nation seems to have possessed these beliefs and the loss of it has accompanied the decay of national vigour in many instances."

"Apart from any hope of reward or fear of punishment after death, the belief must have, it seems to me, a moralising influence upon our thought and conduct that we can ill afford to dispense with it. The admirable stoic attitude of a Marcus Aurelius or a Huxley may suffice for those who rise to it in the moral environment created by civilization based upon a belief in a future life and upon other positive religious beliefs; but I gravely doubt whether whole nation could rise to the level of austere morality or even maintain a decent working standard of conduct, after losing those beliefs. A proof that our life does not end with death even though we know nothing of the nature of life beyond the grave, would justify the belief that we have our share in a larger scheme of things than the universe described by physical science." Again "I should prefer myself of confident anticipation of total extinction at death to belief that I must venture anew upon a life of whose nature and condition we have no knowledge, I desire, on impersonal grounds, to see the world-old belief in a future life established on a scientific foundation."<sup>51</sup> Yet Dr. McDougall seems to be hesitant accepting continuity of life in the next series as he wants to find a scientific evidence for such a belief.

#### IV

Western philosophers have looked at this problem of rebirth only from the empirical point of view. They wanted to test this principle on the basis of rational considerations. They did not want to go beyond the limits of discursive reasoning. Moreover, they considered this problem in isola-

51. McDougall (W.) : *Body and Mind* Bacon Press, Boston, 1961, Preface.

tion from the principle of retribution and Karma. Such isolated study will not lead to the proper understanding of the problem of rebirth. The two principles are intimately linked up with each other and transmigration implies the retribution and Karma. Again this phenomenon has to be looked at from the higher point of view of the insight of the seers and the testimony of those who have known this problem by intuition and higher knowledge. Their words have to be considered with respect.

The Indian philosophers, on the other hand, have always looked at this problem of rebirth in relation to the Karma and the principle of moral retribution. Indian thought had been careful and had the philosophical acumen not to separate the two principles of Karma and rebirth. In order to understand rebirth we have to take a synoptic picture of moral retribution and its effect on the self.

The notion of retribution governs all the great metaphysical systems of India and it is the common fundamental assumption of the philosophical and religious view in general. The Indian *Weltansaug* is woven in the matrix of the two fundamental assumptions. All the systems of Indian thought, except Cārvāka have accepted Karma and retribution. The association of the idea of immortality with the moral retribution has been a self-evident principle in almost all the systems of Indian thought.

However, in the *Rgveda* it is mentioned that evil doers are cast into the bottomless darkness and the pious to heaven.<sup>52</sup> In the *Brāhmaṇas* the reward of heaven has been mentioned but not particularly for moral action. Emphasis is given more on ritual and worship. For instance, the man who performs horse sacrifice (*aśvamedha*) is valued more than the man who lives a moral life. It has been described that even the correct procedure of burial of the dead is important for the attainment of heaven. But at the time of *Upaniṣads* there was a gradual emphasis on moral action and not so much on the ritualistic practices for the sake of getting pleasures in heaven.

The doctrine of Karma and its implication in rebirth, as we mentioned earlier, is common to most of the systems of Indian thought. It is difficult to trace the origin and development of this doctrine. There is no mention of this doctrine in the older Vedic literature. Later in the *Upaniṣads* it was formulated as a secret doctrine conveyed only to the initiates.<sup>53</sup> "The view frequently advocated, that it was taken over from the pre-Aryan inhabitants of India has, therefore, much in its favour, the more so as recent investigation has established that a high culture already existed in the Indus valley

52. *Rgveda*, 1, 164, 30,

53. *Bṛahadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 3, 2, 13.

before the invasion of the Aryan conquerors. Therefore, the hypothesis could be advanced that the Indo-Aryans arrived at their doctrine of metempsychosis in a manner similar to that of the Celtic Druids.....”<sup>54</sup>

The Karma with its principle of moral retribution has been worked out by Indian philosophers in calculable details. For instance, *Manusmṛiti* describes the rewards an individual gets in the next birth for the deeds that he does in this world. As we have described earlier, one who steals gold will get poor nails, one who drinks alcohol will have black teeth. One who kills a Brahmin will suffer from consumption. One who is unchaste with the wife of a teacher will have skin disease.<sup>55</sup> In the Buddhist Texts we get similar descriptions. A man who is greedy and cruel will be reborn as an elephant. One who is charitable and who gives food and drink to the Brahmins and monks, will get abundance in his next life. In the *Devī Bhāgavata Purāna* it is stated that one who commits murder for money and other needs, first comes to Majjakuṇḍa hell. He stays for a hundred thousand years. He then becomes a fish seven times in successive existences, seven times a mosquito, three times a hog, seven times a cock, and so on. If one steals the property of a Brahmin he goes to the hell Pāsanakuṇḍa. He is then reborn three times as a tortoise. In the next three existences he becomes a leper, and so on. Such statements need not be taken literally. They suggest the foundations of the principle of Karma and retribution which nobody can avoid. The graphic picture of the suffering mentioned here are meant as a deterrent to the common man who is not able to grasp the philosophical implication of the fundamental assumption of Karma and retribution. It was reported that the Buddha foretold the rebirths of other persons who were associated with him. The Buddhist tradition gives a number of births which the Buddha had to go through before the attainment of the Buddhahood. The Jaina *Tirthankaras* were able to describe the consequences of the actions of an individual in his successive births. Religious stories of the Jainas give interesting description of the transmigration of the souls in a chain of lives due to their actions. The long catalogues of good and evil deeds which definite existences have as a consequence, therefore, rightly show that a simple and abstract teaching is sufficient only for a few, that it is capable of satisfying the feeling of the masses only when it gives concrete details and is trimmed with fanciful combinations.<sup>56</sup> And such statements have to be understood in the sense that a definite deed has a tendency to mature a definite Karma, but this tendency is also modified by the effects of other deeds.

54. Glasenapp : *Immortality and Salvation In Indian Religion*, p. 27.

55. *Manusmṛiti*, Book XI.

56. Glasenapp : *Immortality and Salvation in Indian Religion*, p. 30.



The individual soul has to go through the various forms of existence according to the nature and intensity of Karma accumulated by him. In Indian thought four forms of existence have been accepted viz. (1) divine (*deva*), (2) human (*manuṣya*), (3) animal (*tiryak*) and (4) the residents of hell (*nāraka*). The Buddhists have recognised the fifth form of existence called '*pretagati*'. Spirits wandering on earth seeking for some form of existence and those belonging to the kingdom of Yama are to be found in this form of existence. Some Buddhists recognised the sixth form of existence called *asura gati* (demons). Life in hell is painful, while living in heaven is pleasurable. However for the attainment of the highest state of purification one has to be reborn as human being, even when he has secured a place in heaven. The Jainas have said that attainment of *mokṣa* is possible only through the human life. Existence of the human being is considered as a blessing. Man is a rational being and it is only man who can reason out the consequences of his own action. Western philosophers have also recognised this essential nature of man. The *Bhāgavata Pūrāṇa* describes the human life as a gateway to liberation. In the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* it is stated that of the 84,00,000 different types of beings, knowledge of truth is attained by the human being. But it is difficult for lower forms of life to be reborn as a human being unless they have accumulated the auspicious Karma. Buddhists and the Jainas have developed detailed theories of the '*gatis*' through which an individual soul has to go according to the nature of Karma earned by him. In all the varied presentations of the lives of the different '*gatis*' one has to go through there is always the foundational principle of Karma with retribution operating. In this also we find a fine blending of philosophy and mythology with a view to making all types of men understand and accept this phenomenon of transmigration.

There is also a widespread belief that thoughts of a dying person in his final moment are important for rebirth as they are able to alter the intensity of Karma during the life time. It is stated that a man is reborn in the existence about which he thought intensely at the time of death.<sup>57</sup> It is said that Bharata was reborn as a gazelle because he had taken care of a small orphan gazelle.<sup>58</sup> The guilty Brahmin Ajāmila called his son Nārāyaṇa at the time of his death and repented for his action; and consequently he went to heaven. The relatives and friends of the dying person offer music, incense and flowers to the Buddha so that he will secure a good rebirth. The Buddhist tantrism developed an elaborate ritual and offering for the dead and the '*preta*' for the sake of better life for them.

The question of the transition of the soul from its old body to new existence in the rebirth has been discussed by the Indian thinkers. Very

57. *Bhagavadgīta*. VIII. 5.

58. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. V. 8.

often metaphorical language has been used. As a caterpillar crawls from one leaf to another, and as goldsmith melts the gold of an ornament and prepares a new ornament, so does a soul, create a new body in the new birth.<sup>59</sup> The soul creates its new body out of its existing element just as the potter shapes his vessels from the existing clay.<sup>60</sup> As we change an old garment and put on a new one, so does a soul change the old body to a new one in the next birth. The Jainas explain the process of transmigration on the basis of the five bodies. At death, the soul surrounded only by fiery (*taijasa*) and Karma body, sets out in a few minutes, still in the form it has in the last existence, to the abode of a new birth. Having reached there, it assimilates matter and the structure of the new body. According to the Buddhists of the aggregates which form the self, the psychophysical component of the individual are destroyed. Only the *viññāna* remains. *Viññāna* is projected with all its dispositions, formed due to the Karma, in the next form. It forms the genesis of a new individual and the dispositions in the form of Karmic process *samskāra* produced by *avidyā* (ignorance) are fixed in *viññāna*. The new formed acts produce Karma and become the cause of another birth. The Jainas and some Buddhists believe that new births directly follow death. Sarvāstivādins assume an intermediate existence between deaths and births due to Karma. The intermediate being is gifted with the higher faculty of vision and the capacity for penetrating space without resistance. It becomes a nucleus for a new birth. Vasubandhu says that the intermediate being has the size of a five or six year old child and the form of being in which it will be later reborn. The idea of intermediate being and the idea of the soul furnished with a suitable body are analogous, but with a difference that intermediate being is newly created only for the span between death and birth. The theosophists have described the passage of the soul from birth to existence on the basis of the five shells of the self.

In Indian thought there has been a harmonious blending, as we mentioned earlier, of the philosophical conception of soul, the psychological process of disintegration and reintegration in the concept of subtle bodies and the mythological ideas in the form of description of the journey of the soul after death, in order to give a coherent picture of the transmigration into various forms of existence which would appeal to the common men also. For instance, regarding the journey of the soul to new life three types of ideas have been presented. (1) the idea of *prāta*, (2) of the judgement of the dead associated with the function and field of Yama and (3) the idea of the ascension of the soul to heaven. It is believed that the spirits of the dead reside for sometime round about their old abode. Gifts are offered to pacify

59. *Bṛahadāranyaka Upaniṣad*. 4, 4, 3.

60. *Yājñavalkya Smṛiti*. III. 146.

them and for their sustenance. They sometimes make their presence felt through a medium when they are not satisfied or when they want to convey something specific to their living and their relatives. Modern Psychical Reserch has vouchsafed for this phenomenon after carrying careful investigation in this direction.

All the souls must go to the judgement seat, where God Yama with the help of Citragupta passes judgement. The good are brought to Yama by the messengers of God in stately chariots and sent to heaven. The wicked have to wander for a long time in the terrible places and have to cross the river Vaitaraṇī. Then they are hurled into hell. The theory of the way of the Gods (*devayāna*) and the way of the father (*pitryāna*) has always existed alongside of the idea of judgement by Yama. This doctrine was first mentioned in the *Upaniṣads* and since remained a dogma with some of the Absolutist philosophers. The moon is considered to be the heavenly abode and souls destined for rebirth enjoy rewards of their good action on the moon for sometime and then descend to earth. We have given a description of the journey of the soul after death as described in the Myth of Er in the *Republic*.

Thus we find that in the ancient Indian thought, the philosophical conception of soul, death, and rebirth have been combined with popular mythological narratives with a view to presenting an acceptable picture even to the common man. The secret doctrine 'only to the initiates' mentioned in the *Upaniṣads* presented an appealing way to the common man and that was admirably done in the Indian thought and literature.

Theosophists have made metaphysical and psychological approaches to the problem of rebirth. "It is only the knowledge of the constant rebirths of one and the same individuality through the life cycle; the assurance that the same MONADS— among whom are many Dhyān-Chohans, or the "Gods" themselves— have to pass through the "Circle of Necessity", rewarded or punished by such rebirth for the suffering endured for crimes committed in the former life."<sup>61</sup> Closely connected with Karma is a law of rebirth or of the re-incarnation of the same spiritual individuality in a long almost interminable series of personalities. "The latter are like the various costumes and characters played by the same actor, with each of which that actor identifies himself and is identified by the public, for the space of a few hours."<sup>62</sup> Theosophists explain the phenomenon of rebirth on the basis of the idea of seven-fold nature of man. The seven factors constitute the nature of personality :

61. Blavatsky & Judge, *Reincarnation*, U. L. T. Pamphlet, No. 12, p. 2.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

(1) Physical body (*Rūpa*) composed of matter in its grossest and most tangible form.

(2) Life principle (*prāṇa*) – a form of force, indestructible.

(3) Astral body (*Liṅga Śarīra*) – the *Double* or phantom body, composed of highly etherealised matter which is electrical and magnetic in its essence.

(4) Passions and desires (*Kāma rūpa*) – It is the centre of animal man.

(5) Mind (*Manas*) — the intelligence which is the higher human mind, whose light or radiation links the Spiritual being to the moral man during life. It is the dual principle in its function.

(6) Spiritual Soul (*Buddhi*) – the vehicle of pure universal spirit.

(7) Spirit (*Ātmā*) – the universally diffused “divine principle”.

*Manas* reincarnates and carries the results and values of all the different lives on earth. It uses the human brain to reason from premises to conclusion. Intellect is the lower aspect of man and intuition is the higher aspect. The Lower mind retains all impressions of a life-time and it is involved in the brain with memory and sensation. When man dies lower three principles (1) body (2) *prāṇa* (3) *liṅga śarīra* leave him. The remaining principles – *kāma*, *manas*, *buddhi* and *Ātmā* – find themselves in an intermediate state called ‘*kāma loka*’. It is there that the astrals of all beings await second death or further dissolution of the elements. The natural separation of the principles brought about by death would be in three parts (i) the visible body with all its elements is left to further disintegration on the earth plane.

(ii) The *kāma rūpa*, made up of the astral body and the passions and desires, begins to disintegrate on the astral plane.

(iii) The real man (the triad of *Ātma-Buddhi-Manas*) begins a period of assimilation of the experiences of the life last lived – in a purely subjective state analogous to dreaming.<sup>63</sup>

The soul may be detained in the *kāma loka* if the desires are unfulfilled. The principles will be soon separated if the man is pure. The higher principles then will go to the subjective state of *Devachan* which is a state of personal happiness in the real being. This will remain entirely on the plane of mind and soul. The state of *Devachan* would be proportionate to the unexhausted psychic impulses originating in earlier life. Those who were greatly attracted to material gains are drawn back to rebirth here.

63. *States after Death*, (Theosophy Co., California, U. S. A.), p. 14.

Such persons will remain for a long time in the stupified state in the *Devachan* and then they are reborn on this earth. According to the nature of the intensity of impulses which varies with individuals some men may remain in the *Devachan* state for one, ten or a number of years in accordance with the force of the impulses generated in life and 'the time required for the average person to exhaust psychic energies and impulses generated in life is from 1000 to 15000 years, and as the masses of persons return from *Devachan* in that cycle, it must follow that the Roman, the old Aryan and other ages will be seen again and can to a great extent be plainly traced. Only when the force of the soul's aspirations and higher desires has been exhausted can the Ego be again attracted to the earth, drawn by the pulling or magnetic force of the thirst for life inherent in all beings and fixed in the depths of their essential nature."<sup>64</sup> This is the picture, the theosophists have given, of the journey of the soul and reincarnation.

Sri Aurobindo rails at the attempt of religious philosophers to justify the belief in the theory of rebirth on traditional moral grounds. It may be comforting to believe that good men will be rewarded and the wicked will suffer in the next life. The ideas of after-life and rebirth as fields of punishment and reward were needed at a lower stage of development. But after a certain stage, the theory ceases to be really effective.

The true foundation of rebirth is to be found in the evolution of the soul, or rather its efflorescence out of the veil of Matter and its gradual self-finding. Buddhism contained this truth. Hinduism knew it of old, but afterwards missed the right balance of its expression. 'Now we are again able to restate the ancient truth in a new language and this is already being done by certain schools of thought, though, still the old incrustations tend to tack themselves on the deeper wisdom.'<sup>65</sup> Sri Aurobindo explains his concepts of cosmic and individual evolution. The individual plays an important role in evolution. "The immense importance of the individual being which increases as he rises in the scale, is the most remarkable and significant fact of a universe which started without consciousness and without individuality in an undifferentiated Nescience. This importance can only be justified if the Self as individual is no less real than the Self as cosmic Being or Spirit and both are powers of the eternal."<sup>66</sup> From this, Sri Aurobindo concludes that rebirth is a necessity, and an outcome of the root nature of our existence. The individual is a product of plunge into self-oblivion by which the sense of identity with the universe is lost and a consciousness of a

64. Ibid, p. 15.

65. Sri Aurobindo : *Problem of Rebirth*, Pondicherry, 1952, p. 12.

66. Sri Aurobindo : *The Life Divine*, Vol. II. Pt. II p 704.

separate existence comes to him. As a result the body is formed and consciousness of a separate ego and through it the individual self can develop itself and maintain its relation with the Cosmic spirit. Through it only the individual can receive its unity with God and get rid of its separateness and ego consciousness. But this truth cannot be an isolated phenomena. It must be followed by rebirth and that by another rebirth and so on. This succession of births will stop with the emergence of the Supermind. There the isolation of the individual soul with the Spirit comes to an end.

According to Shri Aurobindo's Philosophy of Integralism, Immortality can be considered in three aspects (i) the psychic (ii) the spiritual and (iii) the material. The spirit in its transcendental aspect is *Brahman*, in the universal aspect is *Īvara* and in the individual aspect is the *jīvātma*. The spirit in all these aspects is immortal in the sense of non-temporal. This is the spiritual immortality, as it does not connote persistence in time, but a sort of ineffable timeless being. There is also something in man which survives death and carries him along the road of gradual spiritual development. This element is called a psychic being which is the highest representative of the *jīvātman* in man. The persistence of the psychic being through birth and death is called psychic immortality. The eternity of the spirit assumes the forms of immortal existence ensuing through a long succession of births. The empirical self steadily advances through the succession of births towards the timeless perception that belongs to the transcendental spirit. Shri Aurobindo points out, that it is a psychic being that survives the death of the body and then goes to the psychic plane for a thorough rearrangement of the past experiences and the final determination of the next birth. "It is the psychic being that descends into the evolution of the empirical self, evolves with it, sustains and secretly guides from within the physical, vital and mental elements of its nature and serves as the central representative within the evolving empirical self of the transcendental individual Self. As the spark of the Divine in the evolving creature, the psychic being secretly guides the individual through the long succession of births towards the realisation of the transcendental Self as an eternal portion of the Divine Being and as a centre of the working of the Divine śakti."<sup>67</sup>

During my discussion with Padmashree Dr. Bendre, the eminent Kan-nada poet, on the problem of Rebirth, Dr. Bendre suggested that the term rebirth is not appropriate. It is better to use 'new incarnation,' as the old self is not born in its old form. It is in the process of evolution towards the Transcendental Spirit. It would not be correct to look at the problem of rebirth as a process of doling out punishments and rewards, as an act

67. Shri Aurobindo, *The Problem of Rebirth* : Significance of Rebirth.

of moral prevalence. That would be looking at it in a narrow sense. It transcends moral implications and expresses the process of evolution from mind to spirit. Rebirth, in this sense, is not merely a cycle of recurrence, 'a hesitating fluctuation' within a few set types, but it is a soul experience, a progress towards higher realisation. And rebirth tells us that what we are is a soul performing constantly the miracle of self-embodiment.<sup>68</sup> "What we are is a soul of the transcendent Spirit and Self unfolding itself in the Cosmos in an evolutionary embodiment of which the physical side is only a pedestal of form corresponding in its evolution to the ascending degrees of the spirit, but the spiritual growth is the real sense and motive. What is behind us is the past terms of the spiritual evolution, the upward gradations of the spirit already climbed, by which through constant rebirth we have developed what we are, and are still developing this present middle human term of the ascension."<sup>69</sup>

"The soul needs no proof of its rebirth any more than it needs proof of its immortality. For there comes a time when it is consciously immortal, aware of itself in its eternal and immutable essence. Once that realisation is accomplished, all intellectual questionings for and against the immortality of the soul fall away like a vain clamour of ignorance around the self-evident and ever-present truth."<sup>70</sup>

We have so far surveyed the whole field of investigation of the problems of Karma and Rebirth. We have found that the Western approach to the problem was mainly on the basis of empirical investigations and from discursive reasoning. It has, therefore, become fashionable in the philosophical world to discredit the belief in Karma and Rebirth. The principle of verifiability has become an attractive criterion of truth. To the modern mind the principles of Karma and Rebirth have never been proved by the methods of modern science and to the satisfaction of the new critical mind brought up in a scientific culture. But neither has it been disproved. "Modern science knows nothing about before-life and an after-life for the human soul, knows nothing indeed about a soul at all, nor can know; its province stops with the flesh and brain and nerve, the embryo and its formation and its development. Neither has modern criticism any apparatus by which the truth and untruth of rebirth can be established."<sup>71</sup>

But reason cannot go beyond the limits of discursive thinking. As Bergson said, thinking cuts reality into pieces and cannot grasp the inner essence

68. Shri Aurobindo : *The Problem of Rebirth*, p. 45.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

71. *Ibid.*

of Reality. It only presents a partial and fragmentary picture of Reality. It is, therefore, through intuition and the experiences of the seers that the trans-empirical truths have been grasped and realised. And the law of Karma and rebirth is as ancient as civilization itself. We may accept them as the fruit of ancient psychological experience.

The doctrine of Karma and the consequent principle of Rebirth are expressions of the highest knowledge and experience of the seers. Its logical justification is neither possible nor necessary. The ascetic Kaladevala's prediction of young Siddhartha Gautama that he would be the Buddha need not be taken as a mere story. It has a great significance in presenting the experience of the seer. The story is told of Pythagoras demonstrating with a man who was beating a dog, because in the howling of the animal he recognised the voice of a departed friend. Broad says that speculative philosophy should take into consideration the religious and mystical experience of mankind.<sup>72</sup> It is they who are in constant touch with the innermost depth of life and to them we are to look for guidance. Such 'enlightened ones' or 'sages' are the firsthand exponents of philosophy.<sup>73</sup>

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72. *Contemporary British Philosophy* : (Ed. by Muirhead H, 1924). Critical and Speculative Philosophy.

73. McTaggart : *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 129.



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