

LAW OF KARMA

AS PERCEIVED BY:

**Mahatma Gandhi • Aurobindo
wami Vivekanand • Radhakrishnan**



NIRMALA JHA

About The Book

This book is an attempt to analyse the view of some eminent contemporary Indian thinkers with regard to the Law of Karma, which has been accepted as one of the dominating factor not only in the development of ancient Indian Philosophy, but also the contemporary Indian thought. Shri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan are the main representatives of contemporary Indian thought.

Shri Aurobindo believes that a man reapes what he sows but novelty lies in his thought that this law is not the only determining factor of the universe. For him, soul is spiritual and as such it itself determines its own evolution. The Law of Karma is only one of the processes that is used for the purpose.

Mahatma Gandhi, unlike other thinkers, believes not only in its moral aspect but also in its metaphysical aspect. For him man is the maker of his own destiny and such realisation creates a sense of responsibility in him.

According to Swami Vivekananda actions produce tendencies or sanskaras which determine our future nature, Freedom, which is the real nature of man, means self-determination. Everyman creates his future by his own deeds.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan says that the Law of Karma acts as a link between the past, present and future life of a man. The present life is an outcome of his past life and the future life will be in accordance with the present life. But a man is free to act in his present life, which creates his future life. Hence man is the maker of his own destiny.

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(AS PERCEIVED BY)

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PREFACE

The ocean of Indian philosophy and wisdom has always fascinated me and the temptation to delve deep into it has always been difficult to resist. But the ocean, doubtless is too vast to be fathomed. So I chose to start my exploratory work from the "Law of Karma", a doctrine considered to be the foundation-stone of the entire ancient Indian philosophical outlook. For the purpose of research, I selected the thoughts of Sri Aurobindo, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Radhakrishnan, who have influenced a great deal the contemporary life and history of our country. To know them, we have also to know their link with the past heritage and culture and their outlook with regard to the basic tenets of Indian philosophy.

In my humble endeavour, I have been greatly helped by my teachers. I cannot forget the help Prof. Aniruddha Jha, D. Litt., the Head of the Department of Philosophy, Patna University, rendered to me from time to time in fulfilling my assignment. I will be failing in my duty if I do not express my deep sense of gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Ashok Kumar Verma, D. Litt., University Professor of Philosophy, Patna University, without whose guidance the work would not have seen the light of the day. I have no word to express my gratefulness to Dr. Shatrughna Jha, Lecturer in Philosophy, Patna University, who readily helped me as and when, I encountered any difficulty during my research. I am deeply indebted to my husband, Shri S.N. Jha, who was a source of inspiration for me throughout my research work. I must also thank my colleagues specially Dr. S.S. Sharma, Dr. Shashi Bhushan Prasad Sinha, Dr. Reba Chaudhary, Dr. Mrityunjaya Narayan Singh, Dr. Sachindra Kumar Singh and Prof. Ashok Kumar Verma, in the Department of Philosophy, L.S. College, Muzaffarpur, Bihar University, whose encouragement and

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Muzaffarpur (Bihar)
February 7, 1985

DR. NIRMALA JHA

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	(iii)
<i>Introduction</i>	(vii)
1 Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo	1—35
2 Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda	36—62
3 Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi	63—86
4 Philosophy of Dr. Radhakrishnan	87—123
5 Conclusion	124—137
<i>Bibliography</i>	138—152
<i>Index</i>	153—156

INTRODUCTION

The entire ancient Indian philosophical thought, right from the Vedas to the modern Vedanta of Sankara, has 'the Law of Karma' as its basic foundation. If this presupposition is negated or is shown to have no logical or scientific basis for its acceptance, all Indian philosophical systems become redundant. The Law of Karma is not only the foundation of India's philosophy but also guides all social actions of the people of this country. Indian religion has a moral base and morality is related to practice. The Indian moral ideals have evolved from the Vedic traditions and the Law of Karma is one of the central principles on which Vedic philosophy rests. This being so, the Law of Karma has greatly influenced the life and actions of the people of this country in the past.

With the establishment of British Raj, there were three types of Indian reactions to the British influence. There were a few orthodox Pandits who scoffed at everything British or foreign. Some thought foreign alone to be of ever-lasting value. Then there were some moderates, who tried to blend the good in the foreign as well as in the ancient Indian culture and religion. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, etc. are the thinkers of the last category. Here an attempt has been made to find out how far these thinkers have been influenced by the Indian philosophical ideas and its basic doctrine, 'the Law of Karma'.

The present study focuses attention on the ideas of some of the eminent modern Indian thinkers such as Mahatma Gandhi, Aurobindo, Vivekananda and Radhakrishnan regarding the Law of Karma. The work has been divided into five chapters. Chapters 1 to 4 deal with the Law of Karma, as perceived by Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan respectively and the concluding Chapter 5 contains valuable conclusions on this doctrine and analyses the impact of the traditional views on the contemporary thinkers.

Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo

Introduction

Born on the 15th August 1872 in West Bengal, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh got his early education in the Loretto Convent School of Darjeeling, and was sent to England at an early age of 8. In the beginning, he studied under the guidance of an able teacher in England. In 1885, he was sent to St. Paul's School in London, where he studied some classical languages like Greek and Latin. In 1893 he came to India and joined the Baroda State service. There he found sufficient time to study the ancient Indian Philosophy. He lived in Baroda for about ten years, after which he devoted himself to political work. In 1908 he was arrested and it is said that during his imprisonment he realised that he was destined to pursue a different course of life. A kind of spiritual change brought him to the ways of a Yogi. In April 1910, he shifted to Pondicherry, and stayed there till he breathed his last in 1950. He founded an Ashram at Pondicherry so as to put into practice his spiritual ideas. After a few years, one of his eminent disciples, Mira Richard, took upon herself the task of management of the Ashram and in course of time she became literally and figuratively 'the Mother' of the Ashram.

The Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo was influenced by Western Philosophy and literature, which he had studied at an early

age. He was well acquainted with some Greek Philosophers like Plato and Aristotle. At the same time, Hegel, Whitehead and the Vitalist Bargson also seemed to have influenced the mental make-up of Sri Aurobindo. He had also studied the ancient Indian Philosophy, particularly Advaita Vedānta and Yoga. But, he relied chiefly on his own vision, contemplation and reason.

It is difficult to give an exact philosophical description of this vision. Broadly speaking, his Philosophy can be termed Idealistic, as it conceives reality as spiritual and lays down an ideal for mankind towards which all our efforts have to be directed. In the words of Haridas Chaudhary, "The Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo may aptly be described as integral non-dualism, or integral idealism, or just integralism".¹ It is called 'integral' because it both accepts and sublimates the opposition between the higher and the lower nature. The opposition between the two is transcended as a result of the operation of a super-conscious creative force, the Mother.

Meaning and Nature of the Law of Karma

Law of Karma is one of the most important tenets of Indian Philosophy. The concept of Karma is common to almost every traditional as well as contemporary Indian philosophical and religious system. The word 'Karma' is derived from Kṛ. dhatu of Sanskrit which means to do something. "Karma is not a mechanical principle but a spiritual necessity. Every act, every thought is weighed in the invisible but universal balance scales of justice. The day of judgement is not in some remote future but here and now and none can escape it."² Moreover, "All actions, good or bad, produce their proper consequences in the life of the individual who acts, provided they are performed with a desire for the fruits thereof."³

The philosophical outlook of the Modern Indian thinkers also have ultimately their base in the Law of Karma. But they are at variance with the use of the concept. Sri Aurobindo, one of the important contemporary Indian thinkers, uses this concept in a sense different from the ancient thinkers.

It is generally believed that 'what we sow, so we reap'. If we perform good actions, we are happy and if we perform bad actions, we are unhappy. In other words, pleasure is the reward of virtue and pain is the punishment for vice. Philosophically, the Law of Karma is extended not only to the present human life but also to the life after death. There are three kinds of Karma : (a) *Prārabdha* Karma : this type of Karma is related with our past life. In the present life, we get the results of our actions, done in the past life. In other words, the result of such actions has begun; (b) *San̄chīt* Karma : this type of Karma is also related with past life but the difference is that the result of it has not yet begun. That is to say, the effects are stored. These may affect us either in this life or in the future life; (c) *San̄chīyamān* Karma : this type of action is purely related with our present life, which will bear fruit in our future life. So we get the result of our own actions. We ourselves are the creator of our future.

Sri Aurobindo does not confine his view to the popular notion of the Law of Karma. The idea of petty rewards and punishments alone does not explain the rationale of the Law. According to Sri Aurobindo, not only the actions but even the thoughts and feelings have their corresponding results. Even the heredity and environment of a person are determined by the present and past actions of man. And, there is continuity between different births too. On the whole, it is the Doctrine of Karma, which is operative in life.

Fundamentally, the meaning of the Law of Karma is that all is a continuous chain in which every link is necessarily bound to the past numberless links. In other words, there is a fixed causal association of cause and effect. Present action is the result of past action and in the same way future actions will be the result of the present actions. In the words of Sri Aurobindo : "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 great Greek poet said of the haughty isolation and prosperous pride of man...there is the secret of an eternal factor, the base of the unchanging action of the just and truthful Gods, in the self-sufficient and impartial Law of Karma."⁴ *Devānāṁ dhruvāṇi bratāṇi*,

Law of Karma does not connect the present with the past alone. It is a universal law. Nothing in the world can escape from its governing power. Human being is the product of an energy, which is in us and we are made of it. As the cause is, so is the effect.

The Law of Karma does not only mean that our good actions bring good results and evil brings evil. It is not an adequate key to our ethical hedonistic rule that moral good brings happiness and moral evil brings sorrow and misfortune. It is equally true both for physical and mental actions. As fire burns the hands, so the good action rewards and bad action punishes. As Karma is the universal truth of being, it must be equally true of the mental and moral worlds of our actions also. "The moral energy of our action determines similarly the nature and effect of the moral consequence, but subject, though to this element the rigid moralists do not give sufficient consideration, to the same incidence of past, present and future surrounding circumstances. That this is true of the physical energy, needs no saying, nor any demonstration."⁵

According to Sri Aurobindo, "It is mainly his actions that construct his fate; they are the chief or most forceful determinants of his being and his future. This is the whole Law of Karma."⁶

The Law of Karma is not the mechanistic law of cause and effect. There is difference between the two. The mechanical theory of cause and effect works according to the law of its structure and fixed principle. But there is no question of fixed rule with regard to the law of Karma. Again, we cannot demand a moral equality or a mind or a supra-physical mediator in the field of causation whereas in the field of the Law of Karma there is the role of the agent who distributes the fruit of action. In an action there is a thing done and a doer and an active consequence. These three factors are the joints or locks of the law of Karma. "The idea of the Law of the world as primarily a dispenser of rewards and punishments is cognate to the idea of the supreme being as a judge, father and school-

master who is continually rewarding with lollipops his good boys and continually canning his naughty urchins.”⁷

Moreover, there is no place for chance. It is only a word by which we can cover our ignorance. Physical sciences also presuppose the law of causation according to which everything is determined by fixed causal relation. Sciences can predict earthquakes and cyclones but cannot explain our moral and spiritual becoming. This cannot be explained by the mechanical law of causation. “To know the law of my moral spiritual being is at first and last more imperative for me than to learn the ways of steam and electricity, for without these outward advantages, I can grow in my inner manhood, but not without some notion of moral and spiritual law.”⁸

But there is indeed an element of luck or fate which brings good or evil effects. We often see a virtuous man suffering from evil and the wicked triumphs and gives this the name of luck. But it is difficult to accept this simple solution that good luck is a return of forgotten past deeds and bad luck is a return of past sin or crimes. It is not reasonable to suppose that a man who was a saint in his previous life has taken a wrong turn and has become wicked. But a total change of this kind is possible though it is not frequent. Difficulties of such types arise in this context. “The logic of the correlation is not so strong as it claims to be; the idea of retribution of Karma as a compensation for the injustice of life and Nature is a feeble basis for the theory, for it puts forward a shallow and superficial human feeling and standard as the sense of the cosmic law and is based on an unsound reasoning, there must be some other and stronger foundation for the Law of Karma.”⁹

So, there is not only a law and process, not only a machinery in the Law of Karma, but there is a spirit, a mind behind it. It has been held by many that the explanation of the world does not necessitate the existence of any Being or Will behind the cosmos. But Sri Aurobindo does not accept this view. If there is no conscious Being or Will behind the cosmos, there would be no law and order here. Moreover, there could not be evolution of the Soul and so there would be no rebirth and hence no field

for the Law of Karma. It is spirit that fundamentally determines the evolution of the soul. Law of Karma is also one of the processes which helps soul's evolution. It is in this sense viz., the soul evolves, that the soul is greater than the Law. If there is no conscious spirit behind, the world would be chaotic. It would be entirely mechanical in its character. But this spirit is free. "It is not that the spirit within is an automation in the hands of Karma, a slave in this life of its past actions; the truth must be less rigid and more plastic. If a certain amount of results of past Karma is formulated in the present life, it must be with the consent of the psychic being which presides over the new formation of its earth experience and assents not merely to an outward compulsory process but to a secret will or guidance. That secret will is not mechanical but spiritual; the guidance comes from an intelligence which may use mechanical process but is not their subject. Self-expression and experience are what the soul seeks by its birth into the body; whatever is necessary for the self-expression and experience of this life."¹⁰ There are, therefore, two factors in the law of Karma, viz., (a) Karma is an instrument; and (b) there is a secret consciousness and will working through mind, life and body as the doer.

Sri Aurobindo takes the Law of Karma in his own way. For him, the law does not indicate the mechanical and natural law of causation. In all natural, physical or mental events, things are related and they have their impact on our experience. In the same way, pleasure and pain, good and evil, happiness and misery are also for experience. From a particular point of view, an evil is evil but, broadly speaking, there is no evil at all. The same evil varies for the same person in different context of time and also in the same time for different men. Hence it is meant for the growth of the individual being. And for this purpose of growth, there is rebirth also. "Happiness and success bringing happiness are, no doubt, a legitimate demand of humanity; it is an attempt of life and matter to catch a pale reflection or gross image of felicity; but a superficial happiness and material success, however, desirable to our vital nature, are not the main object of our existence. If that

had been the intention, life would have been otherwise arranged in the cosmic ordinance of things. All the secret of the circumstances of rebirth enters around the one capital need of the soul, the need of growth, the need of experience, that governs the line of its evolution and all the rest is accessory.”¹¹

Here we have the clue to the higher Law of Karma, which is concerned with ethical value. Right action done for its own sake is truly ethical and enables the soul in its evolution. But the action done from any fear or from the point of view of any material gain may be practical but is not least ethical. We can well understand that moral good produces good and moral evil creates evil. The habit of love increases our power of love, which purifies our heart and opens it to the universal good. On the contrary, hatred corrupts a man and fills him with poison.

Here, one may raise a question: What then is the relation between good and evil or what is the necessary connection between good and evil? Though love is joy itself, sometimes love suffers. Hatred is itself troubled and self-affecting, but sometimes, it delights. Love is born of universal delight and triumph, while the hatred, troubled as it is in its nature, leads to suffering. So, Right, the Rta of Vedic rishis, is the highest law of the highest truth.

The Law of Karma is not only the determinant of future life. If it is just that the virtuous man should be rewarded with success and happiness and the wicked man punished with downfall and pain at some time, in some life, either on earth or in heaven or in hell, it is also just that the strong man should have the reward of his cultivated strength. The intellectual man should have the prize of his cultivated skill, the will that labours in whatever field the fruit of its effort and its works. “But it does not work rightly, you say, not morally and not according to the ethical law. But, what is right working in this connection of will and action and consequence? I may be religious and honest, but if I have the swift flame of intellect, the understanding, the brain...the truth is there are several orders of energy and their separate characteristic working must be seen, before their relations can be rightly discovered in the harmonies of Nature. A complex web is what we have to unravel.

When we have seen the parts in the whole, the elements and their affinities in the mass, then only can we know the lines of Karma."¹²

The ethical soul accepts pains and sufferings and difficulties not as a punishment for its sins but as an opportunity for the growth of the soul. The rewards and success are also regarded as the same. "The ethical vitalistic explanation of the world and its meaning and measures has for such a soul, for man at this height of his evolution no significance. He has travelled beyond the jurisdiction of the powers of the middle air, the head of his spirit's endeavour is lifted above the dull and dull-gray-white belt that is their empire."¹³

Now, we may conclude that there are four presuppositions of the Law of Karma. First, that this world is not all chaos. Law and order pervades the universe. Just as there is no chance in the physical world, there is no chance or chaos in the mental and moral world as well. There is an ordered Energy at work which assumes its will by law and fixed relation. Thus, the assumption is that there is an all-pervading moral and mental law. This leads us to the conclusion that what I sow, so I reap. It is a guarantee of a divine Government.

Secondly, it is the Idea which creates all relations. All is the expression and expansion of the Idea, "Sarvāṇi Vijñāna—Vijrimbhitāni." Then we can by the will, the energy of the Idea in us, develop the form of what we are and arrive at the harmony of some greater idea than is expressed in our present mould and balance. We can then aspire for a nobler expansion.

Thirdly, our souls are in the process of growth. What we have become is the result of our own past idea and actions. What we will be, is determined by our present ideas and actions. "I am a soul developing and persisting in the paths of the universal energy and that in myself is the seed of all my creation."¹⁴ And lastly, both the idea and its Karma may have their origin in the free spirit. Moreover, by knowing the real nature of the soul, we can transcend all our miseries of Karma and arrive at the spiritual freedom. There are the four pillars of the complete theory of the Karma. They are also the four truths of the dealings of self with Nature.

"The relation between man's necessity and man's freedom,

between his earthly human nature at whirl in the machinery of mind, life and body and the master soul the Godhead, the real Man behind whose consent supports or whose bidding governs its motions.”¹⁵

Freedom of Will and the Law of Karma

The nature of the Law of Karma is inextricably woven with the concept of freedom. Is man free? To quote Kant : “Thou oughtest, therefore, thou canst.”¹⁶ If we ought to do what is right, we are free to do it. Oughtness implies freedom. Man is free to do right or wrong and that is why he is responsible for his actions. Opposed to this doctrine which runs parallel to free-will is Determinism. Determinism lays down that all our actions are determined by some antecedent events, natural or super-natural. Man is not free. His actions are determined either by heredity or circumstances or by some agency natural or super-natural. Sometimes he is under compulsion to do certain actions, though he does not want to do them in the heart of his hearts. So, according to Libertarianism, predictions are not possible whereas, according to Determinism, with a force of knowledge of the preceding events one would always be able to predict what an agent will do on a particular occasion.

But freedom of will does not mean the state of chaos. It means self-determinism. It holds that the self has such a mysterious power as can choose between the two or more alternatives. The self chooses in order to realise its own good. It is neither Determinism nor Indeterminism but self-determinism. We are most bound when we are most free.

Here we may quote Kant, “If man is not merely a phenomenon but also a noumenon, then he may be free as noumenon (in accordance with the thesis) without ceasing to be mechanically determined in his role as temporal phenomenon (as the anti-thesis asserts).”¹⁷

In the realm of appearance, there is in man a faculty which can be called empirical force—the faculty of choice. It is free to the extent as the highest faculty of the mind which is the part of the nature. But there reason controls it. It is different

from the animal will, which is exercised without this control. "Choice can thus be considered within the one world of nature, to be both free and necessitated."¹⁸

Such freedom is not capable of freeing man from all his yesterdays, because it finally leaves man as a part of nature. But freedom of choice consists of the capacity of choosing between lawful and unlawful. Here man regards himself as phenomenon, but as noumenon he is legitimately free from the objects of choice. "In this respect he is free, but he has no choice."¹⁹

The moral law requires man to act from a rational principle and not from an inclination of the sensuous world. It is, therefore, implied that man is capable of actions free from any inclination but determined only by reason. Thus man's existence as a free being and his existence in a completely determined temporal order are jointly guaranteed without any interference.

Thus, we see that freedom which presupposes its cause in the field of experience, is not so determining that it excludes causality of our will. "A causality which, independently of those natural causes, can produce something that is determined in the time-order in accordance with empirical laws and which can therefore begin a series of events entirely of itself."²⁰

Now, we must watch how Aurobindo reconciles the Law of Karma with freedom. According to him, the Law of Karma maintains that the consequence is followed by previous acts or cause. Good and evil seem to be as opposite powers, and we are apt to see the world in its moral aspect. "As a struggle and tug of war and between these eternal opposites, God and Devil, Deva and Asura, Ahuramazada, Angrya and Mainyu."²¹

Our will is full of power. Even Nature works through our will. Our will can create also, that is to say it can produce a totally new thing out of the stuff. But critics point out that though our present will can create future consequences, it is not a free new-will. First, our present actions or present Karmas are the result of already formed shape. Secondly, our will is an instrument in the hands of something greater than ourselves. That is to say, our soul or self is not our own

creation but it is itself the creator of its own Karma. So, are we justified in our claim of an actual freedom? The ancient nihilistic thinker Buddhist, or the modern materialists deny the existence of free and infinite soul. There is no soul, but only a stream of forms, ideas and sensations. Buddhists give an analogy to explain the above principle: As chariot as the combination of planks, poles, wheels and axles, the soul in the same way is only the combination of will, volition etc. According to this theory, freedom takes place only when these components dissolve into one. Then there is complete void. The cessation from will or volition brings the state of freedom. In this physical world of mechanical existence, there can be no freedom from Karma. But the possibility of liberation is still there because that which exists by combinations and bondage to its combinations, can be liberated from itself by dissolution. The motive power which keeps Karma in motion is desire and attachment to its works. And, only by the conviction of impermanence and the cessation of desire, there can come about an extinction of the continuity of the idea in the successions of time.

According to Aurobindo, it is mind, life, body and their functions, which are helpless apparatus and gear of the machinery. These things are subjects to the Karma. But the real man within is not its subject. The individual being uses Karma as his instrument from life to life, which may be one day divine and cosmic personality. But the eternal spirit or self enjoys absolute freedom. "Na Karma lipyate nare."

For Sri Aurobindo, one may attain freedom by cessation of all actions, will etc. but it cannot be a complete freedom. Man cannot enjoy double freedom, because as man he is an individual being. That is why he is subjected to the Law of Karma. To be free, he must get rid of individuality and Karma. Only then, he can attain complete freedom. That is the state of unconditional infinite.

The whole doctrine of Karma proceeds on the line of human freedom. This introduction of freedom insists the belief within the man. It introduces the sign of development. It does not encourage the attitude of passivity. When a man suffers from misfortune, he gets consolation from the freedom

of will. Suffering is mentioned as the result of man's own action. Man is free to perform good and bad actions. That is why he is responsible for his own fortune. If we suffer from misfortunes and imperfections, it would be consoling to believe that these are punishments of our own acts in the past. One does not think about indifferent nature over which we have no control. "The world, I think on this hypothesis would at least seem juster than it does on the positivist view, and that in itself would be a great gain."²

The doctrine of Karma admits that man is the result of his past actions and will be of his present actions, but it prescribes no compulsion for him to do any work. He may do, whatever he likes. This very freedom of will endures him to be happy or unhappy. If we see a pious man suffering from evil here, how can we believe that he has done any wrong? Very often, a noble man suffers and a wicked enjoys. What is the cause of this? Here we have a justification for freedom of will. We can maintain that such is the result of his past actions which he was free to perform. Secondly, it is freedom of will, which saves God from the responsibility for our suffering. God, as a just observer, only observes our actions and either punishes or rewards us accordingly. So, Karma, may be regarded both as a mechanism as well as a product of conscious free-will. There must, therefore, be two elements: Karma as an instrument, but also the secret consciousness and will. "Fate, whether purely mechanical or created by ourselves a chain of our own manufacture, is only one factor of existence. Being and its consciousness and its will are a still more important factor."³ It is the demand of the soul to use the energies of Nature and reflex of her energies on the soul that must determine the steps of our progress in our births. The progress may be in a given direction or in a perpetual cycle.

Freedom is somewhere in our being and action, and we have only to see how it is limited in our outward nature. Why are we here at all under the dominion of Karma? We appear to be bound by the law of an imposed energy because there is separation between our outward nature and inmost spiritual self. We do not live in that outwardness with our whole being, but

we live with a shape and mental formation of ourselves, which we call our ego or our personality.

Aurobindo points out that we must have to note that even in mind and even in its phenomenon of a conscious will, Karma is the first law and there cannot be for us a complete freedom. There is no such thing as a mental will which is absolutely free. The reason therefor is that mind is a part of the action and also of the outward Ignorance, but does not possess its full light and power. It can be conceived of self and spirit and infinity and reflect them. "An ignorance cannot be permitted to have, even if in its nature it could have, free mastery."²⁴

When we get away from the mind into the life of the spirit, from personality to the person, from Nature to the lord of Nature, a real freedom may be attained. The first liberty is a passive power. It is of the nature of the ascent. It is an observing and essential liberty in which the active part of the being is an instrument of the supreme spirit and its universal action. But the ascent is to the will of the spirit and not to the mechanical force of Nature. And the freedom of the spirit's light and purity are thrown on the mind. And then evolves the clear detached ascent to the divine working.

For Aurobindo, to have freedom of power, one must not only get back from mind, but must stand in his thought and will even, above the levels of morality. Spiritual consciousness is in our supra-mental ranges. When the soul is one with the supreme and with the universal, not only in essence of consciousness and spiritual truth of being, when it enjoys an initiating and relating truth of spiritual will and knowledge and the soul's overflowing delight in God and existence, when it is admitted to the spirit's fullness ascent to self and its creative liberty, its strain of an eternal joy in self-existence and self-manifestation, Karma itself becomes a rhythm of freedom and birth a strain of immortality.

"*Sambhutvā amṛtaṁ asnute*",

"by birth he enjoys immortality."²⁵

Immortality of Soul and the Law of Karma

The Law of Karma is closely connected with the concept of

freedom. But freedom refers to an immortal soul. In view of the Indian Philosophical systems, soul has been regarded as immortal. As it is immortal, there is no question of its destruction. It enjoys the fruits of its own deeds. In order to reap what has been sown, the soul must survive the body after its annihilation. So, the Law of Karma presupposes immortality of soul.

To quote Dr. McTaggart, "All is not lost with the loss of memory and what is of value may be preserved as well as transcended."²⁶ The self in its true nature can neither come into being nor pass away. It is eternally identical though this identity does not mean the memory of its existence. Since the soul is an ultimate differentiation of the Absolute, must always have existed, and yet we have no memory of such existence. Immortality means survival of the soul after death. The proof generally produced in support of immortality is that the soul, thought it resides in the body, is a simple, immaterial substance. There is no question of beginning and end with regard to it. It has no past at all. It is regarded as simple, indivisible atom. So, the substance which has no parts, has no question of destruction. Hence, the soul is immortal.

According to Prof. Royce, "Immortality rests on an intrinsic and necessary relation of the finite self to the Absolute."²⁷

Royce regards the self of man not as dictum but as ideal. On the other hand, he holds the essential feature of finite self, as expressing the absolute. Since the intrinsic meaning is not attained in time-experience, so the self must find its consummation in a larger individuality. The self is thus distinguished from the Absolute. It is partial in a sense, for it must be supplemented by other selves ; but it is infinite in its kind. Here a difficulty may arise, does the self which is necessarily inherent in the Absolute and guarantees its immortality, come into existence at any time ? Royce makes it clear by saying that finite self should be regarded simply as an expression of the Absolute. It is not a self-conscious centre of feeling and will which distinguishes itself from the Absolute. Plato distinguishes between rational and irrational. He further

refers the rational soul to the world of ideas and irrational soul to the world of sensations. Former is simple and indivisible. Now, destruction means the abolition of its parts. But the rational soul is partless. Therefore, it is immortal and indestructible. The irrational soul or the soul of sensation is mortal because it is related to the human instinct. This is mere instinct and is not rational. He connects the immortality of the soul with the theory of ideas, which is based on the doctrine of recollection and transmigration. According to the former, rational knowledge is the recollection of what was experienced by the soul in its disembodied state before birth. On the other hand, according to the doctrine of transmigration which we find in the Pythagorean doctrine, the soul is pre-existent as well as immortal. Its natural home is the world of Ideas. If a man has lived a good life, he returns to its natural home after death. Those who do evil, suffer after death and are again reborn in the body of some being lower than himself. "A man may become a woman. Men may, even if their lives have been utterly sensual, pass into the bodies of animals."²⁸

The problem of immortality has engaged the Indian mind from the early Vedic period. To quote R̥g Vedā, "Do not Agni, burn up or consume him (the deceased); do not dissolve his skin, or his body."²⁹

In almost all the orthodox systems of Indian philosophy, the soul in its real aspect has been regarded as immortal. But due to ignorance, individual being identifies himself with the jivātman which performs different types of actions. The result is that it has to take birth again and again. But in reality it is free. Sāṅkhya holds that the real self is only seer. It is beyond sin and suffering. It is regarded as sakshisvarup. That is why the soul is not affected by pleasure or pain. It has been for ever and will be for ever. There is no question of its destruction. So, the soul is immortal. In Advaita Vedānta, the immortality of soul is proved because soul has been identified with the Absolute Brahman. 'Tattvamasi'—is the maxim of Advaita Vedānta. In the heterodox Indian system, the Cārvāka do not regard any entity like soul, so

there is no question of immortality of the soul. For him, death is the end of life.

Although Buddha remained silent as to the basic metaphysical questions like God and immortality, he believes in future life. For him, the past life is connected with the present life and present with the future life in the same way in which one candle enflames the other. Jainas also regard the soul as immortal.

For Radhakrishnan, immortality is of two types : personal immortality and conditional immortality. In the former, the person is supposed to be preserved for eternity. While in the latter, immortality is not an inherent possession of every human soul. It is attributed only to those who realize in themselves the nature of higher values. "Immortality is not our natural birthright, a thing to which we are entitled but a prize to be won."²⁰

Pringle-Pattison also maintains : "A true self comes into being as the result of continuous effort and the same effort is needed to hold it together and ensure its maintenance, for the danger of disintegration is always present."²¹

Christian religion believes in universal immortality. For him, God's patience is not exhausted in a single life. If every soul is precious to God, universal salvation is certainty. If some souls are lost, God's omnipotence becomes problematic. Moreover, it is the belief of all religions that the wheel of birth moves inexorably. As the output of actions are preserved, life is also preserved and continued for the consumption of previous results. The way of nature is continuity. If the general plan of nature is not to be violated, the human selves must continue after death. "They carry on past threads, weave out something in the present and prepare for the future".²²

As the soul does not die, it enjoys the fruits of its actions accordingly. Gita also proves the soul's immortality by saying :

"Ajo nityaḥ śāśvato' yain purāno
na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre."²³

Aurobindo's views regarding immortality is in line with the Indian tradition but his explanation differs from that of others. He points out that immortality of the soul may be viewed under three aspects viz., Psychic Immortality, Spiritual Immortality and Material Immortality. Firstly, there is something in man which survives death, and carries him from birth to birth. This very death-defying element in man is called *Psychic Being* by him. It is the highest representative in man. The persistence of psychic being in time through birth and rebirth is called psychic immortality. Christian thought rejects the notion of pre-existence of the soul but it believes in post-existence. Plato believes in pre-existence but he constructs this pre-existence in terms of some sort of celestial existence. In European Philosophy, there are a few thinkers like Dr. McTaggart, who believe both in the pre-existence and post-existence of the soul. McTaggart maintains that every individual soul is an eternal self-subsistent spirit, which is timeless also. "Individual self's self-expression in and through the time process, which is a phenomenon, should assume the form of a vastly long chain of repeated births occupying the whole of time".³⁴ That is to say, the timelessness of spirit, when it is perceived in terms of time, is bound to assume the form of immortal existence through a long succession of births. The empirical self slowly advances through this succession of births towards the all-embracing timeless perception that belongs to the transcendental self.

Aurobindo also points out that being, as the spark of Divine, guides the individual through a long succession of births towards the realization of the transcendental self. This may be called the centre of Divine Shakti. So, immortality in the sense of continuation of existence throughout time factor belongs to the psychic being. This is what may be called psychic immortality.

Sri Aurobindo's explanation of the psychic being is similar to some extent with the view of Dr. C.D. Broad. Dr. Broad maintains that after death, the psychic factor continues to exist which is capable of being united with other suitable organism. It carries modifications due to experiences. "What happens after death is not the survival of the person or the

mind, but only the persistence of the psychic factor which is a constituent, a less than mental constituent, of the compound mental entity.”³⁵ The psychic factor is said to persist even after the death of the body, but Dr. Broad is silent over the question, whether it also existed before births, and if so, what was its mode of pre-existence ?

Aurobindo here holds that it is possible even for our life and mind, vital and mental personalities, so much developed in the course of evolution that the psychic being does not need to dissolve them and form new personalities for the sake of further progress. The central point is that our life, mind and even body is the result of gradual progress through birth and rebirth.

As to the spiritual immortality, Aurobindo points out that the spirit in all its different aspects as transcendence, universality and individuality—as Brahman, Ishwara and Jīvātman—is immortal. The spirit in the sense of being non-temporal, is immortal. This is what may be called Spiritual Immortality. All forms of immortality must essentially flow from the essential nature of the spirit. The psychic being persists through the succession of births, because it is the representative of spirit. When an individual's spiritual evolution reaches its consummation, the psychic being gets united with the Individual self, which is without birth and without death. It is unaffected by evolution also. We can have immortality of our lower nature on the physical plane only to the extent that we allow the spirit to impart its divinity to the lower members of our being. Therefore, everything depends on the intrinsic nature of the spirit in which immortality is inherent.

But Aurobindo is aware of the difficulties inherent in this view. Is there really any immortal spirit that may be said to determine all the component factors of our phenomenal existence? Aurobindo points out that such problems arise only with regard to the analytic reason.

As to the material immortality, Aurobindo is of the view that it means the full manifestation of the spirit in material conditions. Manifestation here refers to incarnation, “The vital and mental are turned into perfect images of the spirit under the transforming touch of the Supermind.”³⁶

By immortality, we generally mean the immortality of the spirit in man. According to Integral Idealism, man's individual self is transcendent in character. It presides over its protracted evolution through cycles of birth and rebirth. This timeless existence of the Individual self has been described as spiritual immortality. Further, we have maintained that in the inmost centre of a man's embodied existence, there is a psychic being, which is the highest representative of the Individual Soul. The soul evolves with the evolving individual and carries him through a long succession of births and rebirths. This succession is towards the final fruition of the individual self. But the final goal of terrestrial evolution is material immortality.

For Aurobindo, this is, however, an ideal. But this ideal is not impossible, because the physical, the mental and the vital are only the lower manifestation of the constitutive principles of the supreme spirit. To many this notion of material immortality may appear ridiculous, but the puzzle is solved, only when there is the evolution of man into Superman. "The empirical proof of all ideals lies indeed in their effective realisation."⁸⁷

Now, Aurobindo points out that psychic being takes birth again and again in order to get spiritual immortality. But in this cycle of birth and rebirth, one has to consume one's own previous actions. It is not possible to consume all the effects of all actions in one life. Aurobindo is of the view that no rule is imposed on a man from outside, whether in the name of a supposed mechanical or impersonal law. When the inner being revealed, evolved, then we get the true, the inner and the intuitive law. An act of justice, truth, love, compassion, purity, sacrifice becomes then the faultless expression of the soul. Nothing is impossible for a man. "Materially you are nothing, spiritually you are everything. It is only the Indian who can believe everything, dare everything, sacrifice everything."⁸⁸

The immortality of the soul can be justified by referring it to the Law of Karma on the basis of rebirth. And the soul needs no proof of its rebirth any more than it needs proof of its

immortality. At a particular time, it is consciously immortal and becomes aware of its essence. Only then all questioning in favour of and against the immortality of the soul falls down. In the same way, at moment the soul becomes aware of itself in its eternal and mutable moment and only then it becomes aware of the fact as to how our presents are constituted on the basis of the past ages before. A real freedom comes when we get away from the mind into the life of the spirit, from personality to the spirit, from personality to the person, from Nature to the lord of Nature.

Even if the soul is something created, it must be by a larger law of growth and not by some divine code of primitive and barbaric justice. This idea of Karma is a construction of the smaller part of the human vital mind.

Immortality of soul is closely linked with the Law of Karma. The question arises whether it exhausts the consequences of all our actions in present life. If the answer is in the affirmative, it does not seem logical. In our practical life we often find a righteous man suffering and a wicked enjoying. If life is confined to the present only, no saint should suffer, but this is not so. Hence, we have to suppose that there is a continuity between one life and the other. Death is not the end of everything done in this life. We have to consume the fruits of our action in our future life also. As we see continuity in different lives, so there is something immortal behind it as continuity presupposes something immortal. It follows that our present life is the result of our past life and the future life will be the outcome of our present life. And it is possible only when something remains in us even after the death of our body, because the same soul has to consume the result of its own actions. That is why the same soul remains in different lives. Hence, we can conclude that immortality of soul is the pre-supposition of the Law of Karma.

Rebirth and the Law of Karma

Close on the heels of the concept of Immortality follows the concept of rebirth. If the soul is immortal, is it reborn? To

reap the consequences of the actions of the present life, it is necessary to postulate some sort of existence even after death. After death, the body perishes but something must remain. That entity which remains even after death is called soul by the thinkers. Naturally one may ask, rebirth of what? Obviously, as the body perishes at the time of death, the soul which is immortal, evolves after death of the body. Hence, in rebirth, the soul is the same because the same soul has to reap the fruits of its own actions, but the body is different. It gets the body according to its actions performed in previous life. So, Immortality of Soul and Rebirth, are the two main assumptions of the Law of Karma.

In the hymns of the Rg Veda, we have the conception of Rta as a moral law. "It is the universal essence of things. It is the Satya or the truth of things. Disorder or Anti Rta is falsehood, the opposite of truth."³⁹

According to this law, the good are those, who follow the path of Rta. Rebirth is related to this moral law. Good men will be born in good and affluent families. The Vedic Aryans do not appear to have special doctrine of life after death. They were convinced that death was not the end of life. After night the day comes and after death, the life comes. So the germs of belief in the concept of rebirth can be traced in the Rg Veda itself.

In Buddhistic Philosophy also, we have the reference of the concept of rebirth. Though the conception of a soul as a permanent substance has been denied by the Buddhists, they believe in rebirth. For Buddha, the life is an unbroken series of states. The continuity of life depends on its causal connection. As from one flame another may be lighted, in the same way one life is connected with the other on a causal basis. Rebirth is therefore not transmigration, i.e., the migration of the same soul into another body.

Pythagoreans themselves were influenced by Vedāntism. They believed in an entity which existed even after death, which they saw in the form of number. Plato afterwards took it as Idea.

According to Herodotus, the Egyptians also taught it. But some scholars now point out that in Greece it was taught by

Pythagoras and Plato. In the system of Pythagoras, "The individual soul is an emanation of the one and assumes several bodies successively till it has been purified and is ready for liberation; then it returns to the Divine source from whom it originally emanated."⁴⁰

Horace refers to it in his 'Odes' :

Nor does the spirit dies but new life
repeats. In other forms and only
changes seats.

* * *

My name and lineage I remembered
Well, And how is fight by
Sparta's king I fell.⁴¹

Instead of going into it, we should first have a psychological insight into this belief. After a psychological analysis, we find that there are five important factors which cause men to believe in it.

Firstly, psychologically we are not only afraid of death but also cling to our personality. Human being wants the survival of his personality life after life. This makes him believe that he will be born again and again.

Second and third factors are hedonistic and moral. It is declared by some of the religious teachers that when a man dies, his soul leaves his body and goes to the heaven or hell. When it is reborn it is rewarded or punished. One may raise a question here, "If a man has to suffer in this life for the sins committed in the prior life, what happened during his first birth on this earth when his soul had no Karma at all?"

This difficulty has been solved by the great thinkers by saying that the soul was never without Karma. Before its first birth, there was another birth and before that still another. And thus the universe has been regarded without beginning or end.

Fourthly, the intuition of the soul tells us that all is not over at death. Dissolution of the body does not necessarily imply that everything is annihilated at death. This intuition always establishes a life after death.

Lastly, we have to establish it on the basis of metaphysical as well as spiritual ground. Human mind is always busy in the questions like, what happens to a man when he dies? Does the destruction of the body imply the extinction of entire personality? Does the soul survive after death? etc. etc. All the ancient systems of Indian Philosophy have tried to answer these questions by admitting the reality of rebirth. The usual interpretation is that the soul has a separate existence, which exists even after the destruction of the body itself.

Sri Aurobindo rejects the old religious idea of the Law of Karma as determining rebirth. His doctrine is based on certain postulates. Firstly, "that which has no end must necessarily have had no beginning."⁴² If the soul is not immortal, the law of transmigration is broken. Moreover, an immortal soul cannot be the product of mortal matter though by its descent into the matter, it may transfer some of its spiritual qualities to it. Secondly, every stage in development presupposes a past. Hence, the personality of the soul presupposes a previous birth for its development. Thirdly, if personality is a result of the mental, vital or physical heredity, then the soul must be a detached something. Now, while real and immortal, the soul should also be eternal. Rebirth presupposes a static as well as dynamic soul, or else, it is meaningless. Thus rebirth is a necessary corollary in the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo.

For Sri Aurobindo, evolution is not only spiritual but also individual. Though the original creative power is neither matter, nor life, nor mind, it is obviously some consciousness. It must be a power of spirit. When life first evolves in Matter, it is bound to death; so also when mind first evolves, it is matter-bound and life-bound. This also shows that neither Mind, nor Matter, nor Life, is the original creative Energy. Therefore, we must seek for something higher than these, in some deeper Reality.

But it does not mean that individual is a mere auxiliary product of the play of consciousness in the body. He is the medium through which the spirit discloses its being. Behind all the changes of our personality, there is a person, a real

spiritual individual, a true Puruṣa. The recognition of this great truth is another original feature of Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy. "The immense importance of the individual being", he says, "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."⁴³

The individual Puruṣa, in working out his cosmic relations, has to assume a body. This assumption of body is called birth. It is only through this that we have progressive development of our being towards unity. Birth, therefore, is an essential condition of the manifestation of Puruṣa on the Physical plane. But this birth cannot be imagined without a past which was preparatory to it or a future for its fulfilment. Birth, therefore, of an individual soul in a body must be continued in other births and must have been preceded by other births. The progressive evolution of the spirit in the cosmos has its counterpart in the progressive evolution of the individual soul through different births. If rebirth were not a fact, then the evolution of the self or soul also ceases to be a fact.

Aurobindo points out, "Rebirth is necessary as birth itself; for without it, birth would be an initial step without a sequel, the starting of a journey without its further step and arrival. It is rebirth that gives to the birth of an incomplete being in a body its promise of completeness and its spiritual significance."⁴⁴

Moreover, it is evident that in one life we can not exhaust all the powers and values of that life. We can only carry out a past thread, weave out something in the present, and prepare infinitely more for the future. Due to this reason also, we have to accept the notion of rebirth.

"It is certain that while we are here, rebirth or karma even while it runs on its own lines, is intimately one with the same lines in the universal existence. But my self-knowledge and self-finding too do not abolish my oneness with other life and other beings. This idea of universality, of oneness not only

with God or eternal self in me, but with all humanity and other beings, is growing to be the most prominent strain in our minds and it has to be taken more largely into account in any future ideas or computation of the significance of rebirth and karma."⁴⁵

The soul needs no proof of its rebirth any more than it needs proof of its immortality. Time comes when it is consciously immortal and is also aware of its eternal and immutable essence. Once that realization is accomplished, all intellectual quests, for and against the immortality of the soul fall away. So, there also comes a time when self or soul becomes aware of itself. It is then aware of the ages behind that constituted the past moments. How it was prepared to the interrupted past becomes the known fact. When this state is gained, nothing is left to be known.

Hence birth and death are not sheer accidents. Human life is not a mere chance-product. It is a term in a graded series, through which the secret spirit in the universe develops his purpose gradually. The individual has two aspects, a spiritual person and a soul of personality. As the spiritual impersonal person, he is one with Sacchidananda, while as the soul of personality, his own evolution must follow the law of cosmic evolution. The soul is not a by-product of body, life or mind. Hence it can pass to the stages higher or lower to them. It may adopt different bodies according to its various manifestations. "The soul is not bound by the formula of mental humanity; it did not begin with that and will not end with it; it had a prehuman past, it has a superhuman future."⁴⁶ The individual soul develops from form to form till it reaches man. The transition from lower to higher from animal to man is too decisive to reverse. Thus the natural law is the recurrence of birth in new human forms. When we express a spiritual significance to cosmic evolution, not limited to our own place but a part of a larger universal totality, rebirth becomes an absolute necessity.

Rebirth refers to the old world also. Since our world is not the only world, the soul does not enter the body immediately after death. For Sri Aurobindo, if the experiences of the soul are complex, there must be an internal relation between

birth and birth. Birth and death are links in the process of evolution. After death, the soul may stay in some intermediary plane or in some imaginary constructions. It may also pass through physical, vital and mental world. But it stays there temporarily. "It does not, however, always remain on earth, but alternates between earth and other worlds; celestial and infernal, where it exhausts its accumulated store of merit or demerit due to the enactment of sin or virtue and then returns to the earth and to some kind of terrestrial body, sometimes human, sometimes animal, sometimes even vegetable."⁴⁷

The new birth and its fortune are determined automatically by soul's actions. If the sum-total of past actions was good, the birth takes place in the higher form and the life becomes successful and fortunate. If the sum-total of past actions is bad, the birth takes place in the lower form and the life becomes unsuccessful and unfortunate. If our past actions were mixed, then our life becomes a mixture of happiness and suffering and of good luck and misfortune. Here we can quote an old story as told by Sri Aurobindo: There was a rich man who had violently deprived another of his substance. The victim is born as the son of the oppressor and in the delirium of a fatal illness reveals that he has obliged his old tyrant and present father to spend on him and so lose the monetary equivalent of the property, robbed minus a certain sum, but that sum must be paid now, otherwise—the debt is absolved and as the last pice is expended, the reborn soul departs, for its sole object in taking birth is satisfied, accounts squared and the spirit of Karma content."⁴⁸ This is the ethical side of rebirth.

Rebirth is meaningless without Karma, and Karma has no meaning without rebirth. If we believe that the soul is repeatedly reborn in the body, we must also believe that there is a link between the life that preceded and the life that follows. Past acts have its effects in the present and future will be the result of the present and this is the spiritual essence of the Law of Karma. To deny it would be a chaotic condition.

The necessity of rebirth becomes obvious if we look at it outwardly. The energy and process which constitute the most

intimate secret of the existence, is the uniqueness of the individual. This uniqueness is everywhere but appears as a subordinate factor only in the lower ranges of existence. It becomes more and more prominent as we rise higher and enlarge our mind. "I enter into birth, not in a separate being, but in the life of the whole. I am born physically by a generation which is a carrying on of its unbroken history; the body, the life, physical mentality of all past being therefore undergo the law of heredity; the present, says the Upanishad, recreates himself by energy in his seed and is reborn in the child. But as soon as I begin to develop, a new, an independent and overbearing factor came in, which is not my parents, nor my ancestry, nor past mankind, but I, my own self. And this is the really important, growing, central factor."⁴⁹

For Aurobindo, man is a persistent being who pursues his evolution within the persistent, being of the world. Man is created by his own past Karma which shapes his heredity, his environment, his affinity, his opportunities and obstacles, which is not arbitrarily predestined. It is on this basis that we build our further Karma. This process is woven in with the universal evolution and all its lines are included in the web of being. This is what rebirth means in the history of our manifested selves and of universal being.

The close association between Karma and rebirth is not a mere accident. It is perfectly intelligible union of two related truths, which are needed for each other's completeness. These two cannot exist separately. These two are the soul side and nature side of one and the same cosmic sequence. Rebirth has no moral significance if it is not an instrumentality for the sequences of the soul's continuous experience.

Rebirth is a necessity of the manifestation of Puruṣa on the physical plane. But it is not an accident of a soul into body without any preparing past to it or any fulfilling hereafter. In a world of evolution and inevolution, not of physical form only, but of conscious being through life and mind to spirit. Such an isolated assumption of life in the human body could not be the rule of the individual soul's existence. It would be quite meaningless. Such a rule would make it an effect without cause, and a cause without effect. It would be a fragmen-

tary present without a past or a future. The life of the individual must have the same rule.

The arguments usually adduced by supporters and opponents, are often insufficient. One argument, for instance, is that we have no memory of our past lives and therefore, there were no past lives. But this argument is psychological. Besides, it ignores the very nature of our memory, which normal man can apply. We do not even remember much of our present. Our memory is good for what is near, it becomes faint as its objects recede into the distance. "Do we remember even the mere fact, the simple state of being an infant on the mother's breast? And yet the state of infancy was, on any but a Buddhist theory, part of the same life and belonged to the same individual,—the very one who cannot remember it just as he cannot remember his past life. Yet we demand that this physical memory, this memory of the brute brain of man which cannot remember our infancy and has lost so much of our later years, shall yet recall that which was before infancy, before birth, before itself was formed. And if it cannot, we are to cry, 'Disproved your reincarnation theory'."⁵⁰ Thus, we see that the theory of rebirth and memory are closely related. It is not necessary to remember everything of our past lives.

The old idea of rebirth always stresses on its partial side. It has been kept aloof from the Law of Karma which results in individualism. It seems that rebirth and Karma are one's own single affair which is not the case. It refers to a universal relation with the whole, which is misleading. It is true that while we are here, our rebirth or Karma runs on its own individual line. But, at the same time, it is similarly true that our self finding does not abolish our oneness with another life. This individualism is the part of the glory of spiritual perfection. "This idea of universality of oneness not only with God, or the eternal Self in me, but with all humanity and other beings, is growing to be the most prominent strain in our minds and it has to be taken more largely into account in any future idea or computation of the significance of rebirth and karma."⁵¹

Thus we conclude that human birth is achieved in long succession of rebirth. It has passed through forms, i.e., from

lower to higher upon the earth. This is the physical basis. Here a question may be raised, whether human form once attained in this course of rebirth, still continues? In other words, the soul once arrived at humanity, can go back to the animal life? For Sri Aurobindo, it is possible only for the human soul to exist. The conversion is not as decisive as from matter to life.

The Law of Karma and rebirth is intimately related to one another. One is incomplete without the other. As the fruits of our accumulated actions are provided in the other life, rebirth is necessary. In this sense also, rebirth is the field for the Law of Karma. By means of man's own moral efforts and good actions, he can wipe out his evil tendencies and can become brighter and nobler in his subsequent lives. Man is the maker of his own life. But often we see certain noble men going down like a stone into the sea of miseries while the wicked ones are flourishing like a green tree. And it is only at this very point, one is compelled to think about one's destiny.

Human Destiny and the Law of Karma

So far we have seen that a human being finds himself to be a miserable creature in the hands of his destiny. The word 'destiny' has been interpreted variously. Sometimes it is used as a synonym of fate and sometimes destination. If it is used as luck or fate i.e., in the sense of determined from before, then in this connection there are two kinds of view: (a) Determinism and (b) Libertarianism.

According to Determinism, there is no control of man over anything. Man acts according to predetermined mode of action. Man has to perform his actions according to predetermined factors. There is no place of freedom for man. On the other hand, 'Libertarianism' refers to freedom to man. According to this theory man possesses freedom of will and he enjoys it also. Man acts according to his own will. There is no any compulsion or restriction for him. He acts as he likes. There is choice for him. He chooses one of the various alternatives and

acts accordingly. This very choice provides freedom or liberty to him. Man is not predetermined. He is free to do what he likes. There is no luck or fate. Man is the architect of his own destiny. If not, the Law of Karma would be useless. While Determinism stresses on man's fate, Libertarianism stresses on his freedom of will. Hence these two are opposed to each other. There are so many instances of man's determining factors. In *Gītā* also Shri Krishna tells Arjuna to fight :

“mā karmaphalahetur bhūr
mā te saṅgo’ stv akarmaṇi.”⁵²

Success or failure does not depend on individual but on other factors as well. Man should not regard himself as the maker of his success or failure. He is only an agent or a mediator. Giordano Bruno says : “I have fought that is much, victory is in the hands of fate.”

But Sri Aurobindo has his own way of thinking. According to him, man is the architect of his own fate. To quote him, “All this is perfectly rational and unexceptionable so far as it goes and the Law of Karma may be accepted as a fact.”⁵³ For him, man's nature and circumstances are the result of his own inner and outer activities. He is what he has made himself. The past man was the father of the present man and the present man will be the father of the future. Each (being) profits what he does and suffers what he does. This is the chain of action which is interlinked with our destiny also.

It is thus evident that man's past and present Karma must determine his future birth. All that he was and did in the past must be the creator of all that he is now. And all that he is doing now in the present must be the creator of what he will be in the future. We may say on the basis that the nature of energy must be the nature of results i.e., the good must bring good results, the evil must bring evil results. Secondly, the master word of Karma is justice and therefore good deeds must bear the fruit of happiness and good fortune, whereas evil deeds must bear the fruits of sorrow, misery and ill-fortune.

Here, a question may be raised as to why actions alone, good or bad, should have its results. The answer is that good or evil thoughts, feelings and actions have their corresponding results, but action is the greater part of life. One is not held responsible for his feelings but he is held responsible for action. It is mainly his actions that construct his fate. Actions are the chief or most forceful determinants of his being and his future.

For Aurobindo, there is no reason to accuse nature of injustice because it works accordingly. Human beings are either happy or unhappy on account of their accumulated actions. Nobody is responsible for his good or bad fortune. "He reaps, what he sows."

But, as stated earlier, we quite often see some people getting reward without efforts while some are not getting it inspite of their best efforts. So, we are compelled to think that there is indeed in our life an element of luck or fortune. It is difficult to accept the simple solution for a forgotten virtuous action in a past life and bad luck a return for a sin or crime. When we see a righteous person suffering here, it is difficult to believe that he was a sinner in his past life. Nor can a wicked person be believed that he was a saint in his previous life, that is why he is enjoying. That a total change of this kind between life and life is possible on the mechanical theory of rewards and punishments does not seem sufficient. This simple logic of co-relation is not so strong as it claims to be. The idea of retribution of Karma as a compensation for the injustice of life and Nature is a feeble basis. As it is based on unsound logic, there must be some stronger foundation.

Aurobindo is aware of this difficulty and says that a truly ethical being does not need a system of reward and punishment to follow the path of good and shun the path of sin. Nor can good fortune or evil fortune be taken as if they existed merely as incentives. It is for experience, for growth of the individual being that the soul enters into rebirth. Joy and pain, fortune and misfortune are the parts of that experience, means of that growth. To quote him, "All the secret of the circumstances of rebirth centres around the one capital need of

the soul, the need of growth, the need of experience ; that governs the line of its evolution and all the rest is accessory.'⁵⁴

He also explains here the notion of the free-will. He introduce free-will by saying that man is free to choose between alternatives. If he chooses the right path, he enjoys otherwise he suffers. That is why he says that man himself is the architect of his own fate, Nothing should be blamed for his good or misfortune.

Fate, whether purely mechanical or created by ourselves, is only one factor of existence Being and its consciousness and its will are still more important. In Indian astrology which considers all life circumstances to be Karma, it has been stated that everything is predetermined. But there is still some provision for human effort.

All these point out that destiny is not simple but complex. Actions belong to physical parts of us, but behind this there is free life or power which has another energy and can create another destiny. When we become spiritual beings, that change can cancel or wholly remodel the graph of our physical fate. Karma or at least any mechanical law of Karma then cannot be accepted as the sole determinant of circumstances.

Conclusion

Thus, we can say that Sri Aurobindo's account of Rebirth and Karma is not merely an old wine in a new bottle. It contains some original ideas also. He asserts that Rebirth is an aspect of the general process of evolution and ascent. We have already seen that evolution has reached the level of mental and is waiting for its next leap into the level of the Supramental. The human individual is an embodiment of the level that evolution has reached so far. Naturally, birth is a vehicle through which the process of evolution can be pushed ahead. He says, "It is conceivable that the Eternal may have actually chosen to manifest or rather to conceal himself in the body ; he may have willed to become or to appear as an individual passing from birth to death and from death to new

life in a cycle of persistent and recurrent human and animal existence.'⁵⁵

He also admits that he is, what he has made himself. The past man is the father of the man that new is, the present man is the father of the man that will be. This is the Law or chain of Karma. But he is not prepared to give the same importance to the Law of Karma which Indian tradition normally gives to it. He realises the limitation of the Law of Karma. It is where his originality lies. He feels that this law cannot be the absolute determinant of the working of the cosmos, unless the entire process is conceived as absolutely mechanical. But, if our fundamental truth of being is spiritual and not mechanical, it must be *ourselves*—that would determine its own evolution. And the Law of Karma can only be one of the processes that it uses for the purpose.

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2

Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda

Introduction

Swami Vivekananda was born on the 12th January 1863 in a well-to-do family of Calcutta. His early life was not very eventful but his education, in a sense, was all-round. He studied literature and music and learnt horse-riding, swimming and wrestling. He had a good study of Indian scriptures as well as of Western thought. His initial mental framework was that of a rationalist.

In 1881, his meeting with Swami Ramakrishna proved a turning point in his life. In the beginning, he was sceptical about the teachings of Swami Ramakrishna, but later he surrendered and accepted Swami Ramakrishna as his guide and master. After the death of Ramakrishna in 1886, he undertook an extensive tour of India and came to know that in spite of its rich spiritual heritage and very strong cultural history, India was unable to root out its poverty and social evils. He strongly felt the need to bring about a social revolution, which required a very strong spiritual leadership.

At that very time he came to know that the parliament of religions was going to meet at Chicago. He went there and participated in it. And that very parliament of religions enabled Vivekananda to assume the spiritual leadership of the

Indian people. After returning from Chicago, he founded the Ramakrishna Ashram at Belur, near Calcutta, and started the work of social reform and service with a very great vigour. In 1899, he undertook a second journey to the West and breathed his last on the 4th of July 1902, leaving behind an institution and a host of disciples to carry on the good work he had started.

The philosophy of Swami Vivekananda arises from the awareness of the social, religious and economic conditions of the Indian masses. One thing which he realised was that the social evils were due to the superstitions prevalent in the society of that time. Consequently, he started his work from this very point i.e., to awaken the people from deep slumber.

Ancient Indian philosophy, especially of Vedanta had the deepest impact upon his thought. But he always emphasised the need of re-interpreting Vedanta in accordance with the needs of time. That is why he has been called a neo-Vedantist.

In a certain sense, he was influenced by Buddhism also. The idea of mass-liberation that Vivekananda emphasises, has a striking resemblance with the Buddhist ideal of Bodhisattva. He was also influenced by Christianity from which he took up the ideal of service and love. Under the influence of Brahmo-Samaj, his strong feeling against the orthodox Hindu superstitions developed. The personality of Dayanand Saraswati has also influenced him greatly. His emphasis on the indeterminate nature of reality and practical insistence of fearlessness had left a deep mark on Vivekananda also. Then, there was Gītā, in which its emphasis on 'selfless work', was a source of constant inspiration to Vivekananda.

But the profoundest influence, in the light of which every other influence was remodelled and reshaped, was that of his master, Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa. In fact, the life of Vivekananda would be entirely different, had he not come under the influence of Ramakrishna. Swami Nikhilananda, speaking about this, says, "It was his Master who had taught him the divinity of the soul, the non-duality of God-head, the unity of existence and one more great thing—that is the

universality or harmony of all different religions.”¹

Now, under this influence and background, we may take up his view about the Law of Karma.

Meaning of the Law of Karma

The word ‘Karma’ is derived from the Sanskrit word *Kr*, that is, to do. All actions are Karma in this sense. Technically, this word also means the effects of actions. Metaphysically, it means the effects of which our past actions were the causes. Now, what we ordinarily mean by ‘Law’ may be described as the second name for principle. In other words, the principle which determines the criteria of Karma, is called the Law of Karma.

The philosophy of Swami Vivekananda has been greatly influenced by Vedānta Philosophy. Hence, Śāṅkara, in his *Advaita Vedānta* divides Karma into many classes such as (a) Nitya Karma, (b) Kāmya Karma and (c) Nisidha Karma. Actions, which do not bind a man and which are performed only in the sense of duty, are called Nitya Karma, Vedānta insists on Nitya Karma. Actions, which are performed with the expectation of some fruits are called Kāmya Karma. These are selfish actions. Hence, these actions are concerned with our future life. Prohibited actions are called Nisidha Karma. As these actions produce its tendencies, these are associated with our future life.

According to the ancient Indian Philosophy, nothing is destroyed ultimately. Kapil also mentions the same thing in his “*Sāṅkhya Tattva Kaumudī*”. Things are changed into manifold forms only. Fire is changed into ashes. At the same time, non-existent cannot become existent. That is to say, something cannot come out of nothing. To quote from *Bhagavad Gīta* :

nā sato vidyate bhāvo
nā bhāvo vidyate satah.²

Likewise, human being’s past Karmas are also not destroyed. Nor do they spring up from a void. Actions are accumulated in some form or other. The fruits of some of

these actions are consumed in the present life, while some are stored for the future life.

Western thinker, Dr. McTaggart also explains this principle but in a different way. To quote him, "All is not lost with the loss of memory, and what is of value may be preserved as well as transcended."³

Swami Vivekananda was more practical than an idealist. He considers human being as the manifested form of the Infinite. According to him, if we take the character of a man, it is really the aggregate of tendencies, the sum total of the activities of mind. Miseries and happiness both are equal factors in the formation of character of a man. Even good and evil have equal share in moulding the total character of a man. Sometimes miseries play more important part in the human life. "Misery is a greater teacher than happiness."⁴

All the actions that we see in the world, all the movements in human society, are simply the display of human thought. Likewise, the will has its own manifestation on the human character. The man of strong character can produce so many valuable actions. Gigantic souls are received by persistent work through ages. Such a gigantic will as that of Lord Buddha or Jesus Christ, could not be attained in one life. Millions and millions of carpenters like Joseph had gone, millions and millions are still living. Millions and millions of petty kings like Buddha's father had been in this world. If this is the case of only hereditary transmission, we cannot bridge the gulf between the carpenter and his son. It cannot be solved by the mere doctrine of heredity. In the view of Swamiji : "The gigantic will which Buddha and Jesus threw over the world, whence did it come ? Whence came this accumulation of power ? It must have been there through ages and ages, continually growing bigger and bigger, until it burst on society in a Buddha or, a Jesus, ever rolling down to the present day."⁵

According to Vivekananda, all these are determined by Karma. No one can get anything unless he earns it, for instance : a man may struggle all his life to become rich. He may cheat thousands in this process. But at last he finds that he does not deserve to become rich and so his life

becomes a hell. A fool may purchase all the books in the world, and he can keep them very carefully. But he can read only those books, which he deserves. And this deserving is produced by Karmas.

Our Karmas determine what we deserve and what we can deserve. We are responsible for what we are. Moreover, what we wish to be, we have the power to make ourselves. If our present life is the result of our past deeds, it certainly follows that our future can be produced by our present actions. For illustration : X produces Y and Y produces Z and so on. So, we can assert that Z is produced by X.

Swami Vivekananda explains this very point in a very beautiful way : Every wave that rises in the mind, when it subsides, does not die out entirely. It leaves a mark and a future possibility of wave coming out again. Every thought leaves such an impression on the mind i.e., what we are just here at this moment is the result of sum total of all the impressions of our past lives. This really is meant by character. Man's character is the sum total of these very impressions. For him, character is the real man. He further says, if good impressions are dominative, a man's character is good, if bad dominates, he may become a man of bad character.

Elaborating the above spiritual principle, Swami Vivekananda points out that everything that happens must have a why; i.e., it must have been preceded by something else which acted as the cause. This very precedence and succession are what we call the law of causation. For instance, a stone falls and immediately we think why? This question arises possibly on the supposition that nothing happens in the universe without a cause. It means that everything in the universe is in turn a cause and an effect. In other words, nothing in the universe is independent. Interdependence in the form of cause and effect is the law of whole universe.

Once Swami Vivekananda, at Bay city on 21st March 1894, while delivering a lecture, pointed out that a group of Philosophers did not believe in the creation. To quote him, "A creation implied making something out of nothing. That was impossible. God and Creation were two lines without end, without beginning, without parallel. They think all punishment

is but reaction. If we put our hands in the fire, it is burnt. That is the reaction of the action. The future condition of life is determined by present condition.”⁶

Swami Vivekananda has been greatly influenced by the Philosophy of Bhagavadgīta also. In the context of Karma, Swamiji is of the view that one who accepts the doctrine of reincarnation, must also believe in the Law of Karma, since one is the complementary of the other. Man by his sāt̥tvic, rājasic and tāmsic constitution has to be coloured by the accumulated experiences through which he has passed in all his previous lives. This is the sum total of the great Hindu Law of Karma.

To quote from Gīta : “Be not be deceived, God is not mocked : for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”⁷

The linked series of causes and effects are never broken. Actions are nothing but effects flowing from preceding causes. And each effect in its turn becomes a cause of a subsequent effect. The principle of cause and effect lies in the very root of action. Hence Gīta does not believe in the principle that God administrates according to his own will as some scriptures present Him. That is why the Law of Karma is organic to man’s nature.

The fixed arithmetic of the universe, which meeteth good for good and evil for evil, Measure for measure, unto deeds, words, thoughts; watchful, aware, implacable, unmoved; Making all future fruits of all the pasts.⁸

To this way of looking at the Law of Karma as a strict and rigid principle, there seems an obvious objection i.e., the law of heredity. Biologically, man is dependent on his inborn factors to some extent. To make the law of heredity work in conjunction with the Law of Karma, it has been argued that the disincarnated soul is drawn by its individual Karma to take birth in a particular family, caste, race etc., which is just reward for its past deeds.

The Law of Karma does not recognise “chance” or “accident”, good or ill luck in the human affairs. But man

seems to be held in the iron grip of an unavoidable destiny. Muslim concept of *Kismet* may here be introduced. It has been taken as only a logical and philosophical doctrine. But there is a great difference between the Hindu Law of Karma and the Islamic doctrine of *Kismet*. The Law of Karma proclaims that as our present destiny is the result of our past deeds, so our future destiny can be moulded by our present acts, will and determination. The Islamic doctrine of *Kismet* does not believe in the possibility of our prior existence. Our present destiny, according to it, is entirely moulded by a Supreme arbitrary authority. This supreme authority has been regarded as just, fair and divine. The incarnated ego has no choice or voice.

Rationale

We find in this life that we can shape and form our future. Today we fix the fate of tomorrow. Quite logically this reasoning can be pushed backward too. If our own deeds shape our own destiny in the future, why not apply the same rule to the past? "If in an infinite chain, a certain number of links are alternately repeated, then, if one of these groups of links be explained, we can explain the whole chain..."⁹ If it is true that everything must have a cause, it must also be true that what we are now, is the effect of the whole of our past. Just as miseries are the result of evil actions, so can we say that much of the existing miseries in the world are the effect of the past wickedness of man. Therefore, according to Swami Vivekananda, man alone is responsible for his own destiny. God must not be blamed.

Another thing, the explanation of inequalities of this world is one of the most reasonable points which should be considered. Suppose, a child is born with every circumstances of his becoming good and useful member of the human society. At the same time and in the same city, another child is born but he has circumstances which are against his becoming good. We always see such cases. Why is it so? What is the cause?

Here on this earth, we often observe a wicked man enjoying every happiness of life, but a pious man always suffering. What is the cause of such inequality? There is no other way to reconcile the inequalities and horrors of this world than placing the whole burden upon the legitimate cause i.e., our own independent Karma. For an elaborate discussion, we will have to consider the views of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika thinkers. For them, our experiences cannot be annihilated. Our actions, though apparently seem to be disappear, remain still unperceived, and reappear again in their effects as tendencies. Even little babies came with certain tendencies.

Now, if a tendency is the result of our repeated actions, the tendencies with which we are born must also be explained on the same ground. If it is true that we are born with certain tendencies, it follows that their causes were in the past. That is to say, we must have been on the same mental level which we call the human plan, before this present life.

Life after Death

There is a dispute about the existence of life after death. Some declare that the man dies for ever and others insist that he is still living. Human mind is full of confusions. There are two positions. One is to believe with the nihilist that all is nothing, that we can never know about the future, the past, or even the present. Then, there is the other position—to seek for a real explanation of the world. But Swami Vivekananda holds a different view that man cannot become a nihilist practically. It is only theoretical. To quote him : “I have never seen a man who could really become a nihilist for one minute. It is very easy to talk.”¹⁰

Swami Vivekananda points out that man does not die for ever. The body changes but there is still something behind this body which remains for ever. The ancient scriptures also believe in a substance, having the form of this physical body, which remains even after this body falls. Later on, we find a higher idea coming—it must be the result of the combination of particles which require something else behind to move it. That something was called the soul, the Atman.

All religions admit that apart from the body which perishes, there is something which does not change like the body. But, according to some of the later religions, although there is a part of us which never dies, it has a beginning. But anything that has a beginning must necessarily have an end. This objection has been very ably solved. The word 'beginning' simply means the beginning of the cycle. It never means the beginning of the cosmos. Nobody can imagine a time of beginning. To quote Bhagavadgīta :

Never did I not exist, nor you, nor will any of
us hereafter cease to be. Your body will meet
the death, but your soul never.¹¹

Regarding the nature of the soul, most of the philosophers admit that Atman, whatever it be, has neither form, nor shape. And that which has neither form nor shape, must be omnipresent. It is beyond time, space and causation. Now, if it is beyond space and time, it must be infinite and the infinite cannot be two. If the soul is infinite, it must be only one in number. The doctrine of the manyness of soul which has been propounded by our ancient thinkers such as Jainas and Sāṅkhya is not without objection. They admit that the soul is infinite in nature and, at the same time, they take it as many, which is illogical. According to Jain Philosophy, souls are many in number, which has innumerable qualities, of which we can know only some qualities. On the basis of above explanation, they establish their Pluralism or Anekānt-vāda as well as Syādvāda, which are known as the metaphysical and epistemological ground of Jainas respectively. Sāṅkhya Philosophy also believes in the plurality of the selves. It explains this principle on the basis of the birth and death. Moreover, due to difference in human nature, they regard pluralism of the selves.

Janmamarankarṇānāṁ Pratīnyamātyugpatprvteśch
Puruṣa Vahutvaṁ Sidhmaṁ Traiguṇyaviparyayāchhaiva.¹²

But the inconsistency is that on the one hand, they believe in the plurality of selves, but on the other, they regard it as

infinite and real, which is contradiction in saying as infinite cannot be many.

But, Vivekananda is of the view that the Real Man is one, infinite, and Omnipresent Spirit. And the apparent man is only the limitation of that Real Man. This apparent man is limited by Space, time and causation. But the Real Man or Soul in other words is beyond any limitation. It is free and infinite. Therefore, there is no question of birth and death. Birth and death are applicable only to the apparent man which has been under the iron grip of space and time. So long as he is ignorant of his real nature, he has to move under the cycle of birth and death. Body and mind are continually changing like rivers whose waters are in a constant state of flux, yet presenting the appearance of unbroken streams. It is the mind which is happy at one moment and unhappy at the other moment. The soul is free from all this. It is absurd to say that the soul is changeable. Our reality, therefore, consists in the universal and not in the limited.

Here it may be asked that if we accept the universal, it means that we would lose our individuality. Swami Vivekananda is aware of this possibility. That is why he affirms that if anybody loses his one hand or one eye, would he lose his individuality? Further, he gives an instance by saying that a body has no moustache at the time of the birth. When he grows to be a man, he has a moustache and beard. His individuality would be lost, if it were in the body. In the views of Swamiji, in fact we are not individuals. We are struggling towards individuality, and that is the infinite, that is the real nature of man. To quote him :

He alone lives whose life in the whole universe,
and the more we concentrate our lives on limited
things, the faster we go toward death.¹³

After long searches here and there, in temples and in churches, we come back to our soul and we find that for whom we have been seeking all over the world, for whom we have been weeping and praying in the temples, is nearest of the near. It is our own self.

Assert it, manifest it. Not to become pure, you are pure already. You are not to be perfect, you are that already Nature is like that screen which is hiding the reality beyond.¹⁴

As Vivekananda has been greatly influenced by Advait Philosophy, he is of the view that there are neither two nor three, it is all one. That one under the veil of Maya is seen as many, just as a rope is seen as a snake. It is that very rope which is seen in the form of a snake. These two are not separate. Man cannot see these two things at the same time. When we see the snake, we do not perceive the rope and when we see the rope, the snake vanishes. When we see illusion, we cannot see reality. We are all born monist. We cannot help it. We always perceive the one.

Heaven and hell, birth and death, are all hallucinations. In fact, nobody is ever born or dies. There is neither heaven, nor hell in this world. These are all the creation of prejudiced mind. For instance, if a child is always told the stories of ghosts and he goes in the street in the evening. There is a little stump of a tree in the street. The child sees it as a ghost, with hands stretched out, ready to grab him. Now, suppose, a man comes from the corner of the street, wanting to meet his beloved. He sees that stump of tree as a girl. A police man coming from the street corner sees the stump of tree as a thief. And a thief sees it as a policeman. Now, it is the same stump of tree that was seen in various ways. The stump is the reality and the visions of the stump are the projections of the different minds. In the same way, there is one Being, this Self. When a man is ignorant, he thinks about the heaven and hell, birth and death etc.

Swami Vivekananda narrates a story about the potentiality of the soul :

A lioness in search of prey came upon a flock of sheep and as she jumped at one of them, she gave birth to a cub and died on the spot. The young lion was brought up in the flock, ate grass and bleated like a sheep. Moreover, it never knew that it was a lion. One day a lion came and was astonished to see a huge lion eating grass and bleating like a sheep. At his sight, the flock fled away. Now, the lion was searching an

opportunity and one day he found the lion-sheep asleep. He woke him up and said, "You are a lion". The other said, "No" and began to bleat like a sheep. Then the stranger lion took him to see his image in the water and showed him that both of them looked the same. Then the stranger lion began to roar and asked him to do the same. The lion-sheep tried his best and was soon roaring. And he was a sheep no longer.

As such, every one of us has such potentiality but we are ignorant of that. In his words, "My friends, I would like to tell you all that you are as mighty as lions."¹⁵

We may now discuss the immortality of the soul. Projected from Brahman, it passes through all sorts of vegetables, animal forms and at last it is in man and man is the nearest approach to Brahman. Man, according to Swami Vivekananda, is the greatest being in the universe.

Angels or Gods whatever you may call them, have
all to become man, if they want to become perfect.¹⁶

There is neither "I" nor "you", it is all one. It is either all "I" or all "you". This idea of duality is false and this world, as we know it, is the result of this false knowledge. There is therefore, one soul, eternally pure, eternally perfect, unchangeable and unchanged. All these various changes in this universe are the appearances in that one self.

There goes a story about the infinity of the soul thus : In a certain school a number of children were being examined. The examiner had foolishly put all sorts of difficult questions to the little children. Among others, there was one question, "Why does not the earth fall ?" His intention was to bring home the idea of gravitation. Most of the children did not even understand the question, and so they answered wrongly. But a bright little girl answered it with another question, "Where shall it fall ?" The examiner's question was nonsense.

So, there is no coming and going in the universe. The very question of birth and death is nonsensical. The idea is only relative.

This whole is a book before the soul, chapter after chapter is being read and turned over, and every now and then, a scene opens. A fresh one comes but the soul is ever the same—eternal. It is nature that is changing, not the soul of man ¹⁷

According to a story in the great epic, the Mahābhārata, Yudhishtira, when asked by Dharma to state the most wonderful thing in the world, replied that it was the persistent belief of mankind in their own deathlessness in spite of their witnessing death everywhere around them almost every moment of their lives.

But the difficulty is : Being a finite being, we cannot think of ourselves other than the body : Our idea of our own permanence includes the idea of ourselves as body also. But the body is obviously impermanent. The question is : where lies this permanence ? It is not the body : neither is it the mind. The body is dying every minute, the mind is changing. The body and mind are the combination of minute particles, which can never reach beyond the changes. But beyond this gross body and finer mind is the Ātman, the soul, the true nature of man. It is perfect and ever-free. It is the Real Man. The free and ever perfect soul is beyond all conditions and is unaffected by birth and death.

Without birth or death, eternal, ever-existing is the soul of man.¹⁸

As such, we must be aware of the fact that the birth and death that we see in our everyday life, is subjected to our physical body. It is our body which enjoys or suffers. As the soul is permanent and infinite, there is no question of its decay. And as it does not decay, there is no question of its birth and death.

To have a thorough knowledge of its physical and spiritual aspect, we should ponder over it deeply.

The Law of Karma and Rebirth

To start with rebirth, we must remember the famous saying of Lord Krishna in the Gītā :

Both you and I have passed through many births ;
you know them not, I know them all.¹⁹

At present, the greater part of the human race believes in it. Hinduism and Buddhism are based on it. Although Buddhism does not believe in anything which is infinite, it believes in its continuity. For them, soul is nothing but combination of Skandhas which is a stream of consciousness.

Man is only a conventional name for a collection of different constituents, the material body (Kāya), the immaterial mind (manas), the formless consciousness (vijñāna), just as a chariot is a collection of wheels, axles, shafts etc.²⁰

The existence of man depends upon this collection and it dissolves when the collection breaks up. Lord Buddha explains the concept of rebirth with the help of the example of a lamp burning throughout the night. The flame of each moment is dependent on its own conditions, yet there is an unbroken succession of the different flames. Again, as from one lamp, another may be lighted though the two are different, they are causally connected. Similarly the last state of this life may cause the beginning of the next life. Rebirth, therefore, is the transmigration of the same soul into another body. In other words, present life is the cause of the future life.

The educated classes among the ancient Egyptians believed in it. The Greek Philosophers made it the cornerstone of their philosophy. According to Plato, the soul must possess an apprehension of ideas prior to its contact with the world of experience. He makes the use of doctrine of reminiscence to prove the pre-existence and also presumably the continued existence of the soul after the death of the body. He accepts rebirth associated with the body and not with the soul as the soul is immortal.

I.H. Fichte, speaking about the immortality of the soul, says : "It is true there is one analogy in nature which might be brought forth in refutation of the continuance. It is the well-known argument that everything that has a beginning in time must also perish at some period of time ; hence, that the claimed past existence of soul necessarily implies its pre-existence."

Schopenhauer, in his book, 'Die Welt als Wille Und Palingenesis', says, "What sleep is for individual, death is for the 'Will'. It would not endure to continue the same actions and sufferings throughout an eternity without true gain, if memory and individuality remained to it. It flings them off, and this is Lethe, and through this sleep of death it reappears filled out with another intellect as a new being; a new day tempts to new shores."

Now, coming to our main issue, Vivekananda, in his Complete Works, Vol. II, explains that the spiritual men, when they die, follow the solar rays and reach what is called the lunar sphere, and through that they reach what is called the sphere of lightning. There they meet with another soul who is already blessed. This soul guides the new comer forward to the sphere of Brahmā. Good men with selfish motives are carried by the results of their good actions, when they die. They are guided by the lunar sphere where they get heavenly pleasure for a long period. After that period is finished, the old Karma is again upon them, and so they again fall back to the earth. Lastly, the wicked men, when they die, become ghosts or demons and live somewhere midway between the lunar sphere and the earth. Some are friendly to mankind. After living there for for some time, they also fall back to the earth and become animals. After living sometimes in animal body, they get released and become men again. And thus they get one more chance for their salvation.

This earth is called *Karma-Bhūmi*, the sphere of Karma. Here alone, man makes his own future by performing good or bad actions. Even the man who does good karmas, also has to exhaust evil karmas of his past lives. In the same way, those who become ghosts remain in that state, though not giving rise to fresh karmas, but suffer the evil results of their past misdeeds.

When that state is over, the states of reward and punishment of good and bad karmas come which are devoid of the force generating fresh karmas. They have only to be enjoyed or suffered. If there is an extraordinary evil karma, it bears fruits very quickly. For example, if a man has done many evil deeds, but has done one good act, the result of that one good

act will appear immediately. But when that result has gone, all evil acts must produce their bad effects also.

The way to Brahmāloka, from where there is no more fall or return, is called the "Devayāna", i.e., the way to God; the way to heaven is known as "pitriyāna", i.e., the way to the father.²¹

Now, we come to the point that rebirth and karma are associated closely. One supplements the other. One cannot be imagined even without the other. Birth is determined by man's pleasure or pain, which is passed on man's past deeds. Thus, the Law of Karma i.e., nothing is wasted, is the elementary basis of the rebirth. The famous verse of Bhagavadgītā also supports the rebirth :

Vāsūṁsi Jirṇāni yathā vihāya
navāni grhṇāti naro' parāṇi
tathā Śatirāṇi Vihāya Jirṇāny
anyāni saṁyāti navāni dehī.²²

But the concept of rebirth is not without objection. The main problem with regard to it is the loss of memory. Nobody remembers the events of his past lives. But this objection has been aptly answered by the argument that how many of us can recall even the past incidents of our present life. We know that an event of the past which has entirely slipped out of our normal consciousness is yet present in some dark recess of our memory and can be brought in delirium or under the influence of some drugs or directly by hypnotism. Therefore, nothing is lost or forgotten. On the contrary, everything is preserved very carefully. Now and then we come across children, who have a strong recollection of their immediate past.

One who accepts the doctrine of rebirth, must necessarily believe in the Law of Karma, since one is complementary to the other. If a human soul undergoes series of rebirth, it is natural to suppose that it is intellectual, emotional and carnal—Sātvika, rājasika and tāmsika, in the language of Bhagavadgītā. Man has been largely made up by the accumulated principles through which he has passed in all his previous lives. And this is the substance of the Law of Karma.

It may be asked that if human nature and character are formed by the Karmas of the men, than, what is the meaning of saying that the soul is free. The question arises : Is not man bound under the iron grip of his Karmas?

Karma and Freedom

According to Vivekananda, the nature of real man is freedom. But, here freedom has not been conceived as a character or a quality belonging to the soul. It constitutes the very essence of the soul. A quality is something different from that to which it belongs, but freedom does not belong to the soul. The soul is freedom.

Vivekananda also believes in the Law of Karma. He, like ancient thinkers, believes that man performs his actions out of ignorance. He, somehow or the other, forgets his own real nature and fails to discriminate between the real and unreal nature. Consequently, he acts under the dominance of wrong and false notions. Such actions, according to Swami Vivekananda, creates tendencies or *Samskāras*, which determine man's future nature. Now, a doubt arises as to how man's determining character and freedom can exist at the same time? If man's entire personality and actions are determined by his own Karma tendencies, then man should be undoubtedly determined. Hence, how can we say that freedom constitutes man's real nature?

Vivekananda is aware of this problem. So, he solves this problem in a number of ways. Firstly, he says that freedom does not mean absence of all kinds of determining factors. In that case freedom would be a state of chaos. Truly speaking, freedom does not mean 'no determination'. It means 'self-determination', which means that a free agent is determined not by anything else but by himself. If karma and freedom are understood in such a way, these two do not remain incompatible with each other. Man's karmas determine his nature but they are his own karmas. His own actions create tendencies that bear fruit for the future.

Secondly, karmas do not contradict man's freedom, because final escape of man rests upon man's own actions again. By his

own good deeds man can win over his ignorance and suffering. That also shows that man is basically free.

As we know, Vivekananda is a Vedāntist. He solves this problem in a Vedāntic way as well, showing that the apparent incompatibility of karma and freedom is only apparent and not real. The soul, in fact, is always free and never remains in bondage. The apparent state of karma is really a delusion created by ignorance. It is merely a *Līlā* or the play of Brahman in which the soul is also involved. When he finally wins over this delusion, he would be amused to find that in fact he was never in bondage.

Now we shall discuss some of the differences between the Law of Karma and Karmamarga.

Law of Karma and Karmayoga

Karmayoga is the knowledge of secret of work. From karmayoga we learn the secret of karma, the method of karma, the organising power of work. A vast mass of energy may be wasted in vain, if we do not know how to utilize it. It makes a science of work. We learn by it how best to utilize all the working of this world. Karma is inevitable, but we should work for the highest purpose.

Law is the method, the manner in which our minds grasp a series of phenomena; it is all in the mind. "Certain phenomena, happening one after another or together, and followed by the conviction of the regularity of their recurrence, thus enabling our minds to grasp the method of the whole series constitute what we call law."²³

According to Karmayoga, the action one has done cannot be destroyed, until it has borne its fruits. No power in nature can stop it from yielding its result. If we do evil action, we must suffer. There is no power in the world to stay it. Similarly, if we do good actions, there is no power in the universe which can stop it from bearing good results. The cause must have its effect; nothing can prevent or restrain this.

As it has been stated before, Swami Vivekananda is greatly influenced by the *Gītā* doctrine of Karma. For him unselfish work should be the motto of life. Knowledge is the goal of

mankind. No knowledge, according to Swami Vivekananda, comes from outside. Newton discovered the principle of gravitation. It was in his own mind, the time came and he found it out. All knowledge that we get, is in the mind. The external world is only the suggestion, the occasion which sets us to study our own mind. All knowledge, therefore, secular or spiritual, is in the human mind. In many cases it is not discovered, but remains covered. Knowledge exists in the mind in the same way in which fire in a piece of flint. We may find in our own selves all our feelings and actions, our tears and smiles, our joys and our sorrows, our weeping and our laughter, our praises and our blames. The result is what we are. All these things taken together are called karma, or work or action. Every physical and mental blow that is given to the soul, by which its own power is discovered, is karma. In this way, we are all working all the time. Talking, breathing, listening etc., all physical and mental doings are karma, and it leaves its marks on us.

There are certain deeds which are the sum total of large number of smaller deeds. For a clear-cut conception, Vivekananda gives here a simile of the waves of sea. To quote him : "If we stand near the seashore and hear the waves dashing against the shingle, we think it is such a great noise, and yet we know that one wave is really composed of millions and millions of minute waves. Each one of these is making a noise and yet we do not catch it. It is only when they become the big aggregate that we hear."²⁴

Similarly, every pulsation of heart is work. Certain kinds of work we hear and become tangible to us. But they are the aggregate of small works. According to Swamiji, if we really want to judge the character of a man, we should not look at his great performances but we should watch the most common doings of that man which are the real characteristics of his life.

For Swami Vivekananda, Karma leaves most tremendous power on the character of a man. Man is, as it were, a centre, and is attracting all the powers of the universe towards him. Such a centre is the real man, the almighty, the Omniscient, and he draws the whole universe towards himself. Good and

bad, miseries and happiness, all are running towards him. And out of them he fashions the mighty stream of tendency which may be called as character and he throws it outwards. As he has the power of drawing in anything, so he has the power of throwing it out.

All the actions that we see in the world, according to Vivekananda, are the display of thought. All the movements in human society, all the works that we have around us, fall in the same category. Everything in the world is simply the manifestation of the will of man; and this will is caused by character and character is formed by Karma. As is karma, so is the manifestation of the will. Therefore, we are responsible for what we are and whatever we wish ourselves to be. We have the power to make ourselves. If what we are now has been the result of our past actions, it certainly follows that whatever we wish to be in the future can be produced by our present actions. That is why it is most necessary to know as to how should we act. And we have already seen that Karmayoga is the science of the secret of action.

Here one may raise a question : "What is the use of learning how to work?" Vivekananda in this respect is of the view that everyone works in same way or the other in this world. But by knowing how to work, one can obtain the greatest results. It teaches man the right path.

Human psychology insists on the fact that man works with various motives. There cannot be work without motive. Some people want name and fame and so work for that purpose. Some people want money and they work for money. Others want to have power and they work for power. In short, Man acts to get some end. In other words, man becomes attached to the works. The sense of attachment develops within him due to which he suffers. All the pains and miseries, poverty and wealth, good and bad, which see on this earth, is not permanent. Our real nature is far beyond misery and happiness, beyond every object of the senses, beyond the imagination. "Miseries come through attachment, not through work."²⁵ As soon as we identify ourselves with work, we feel miserable, but if we do not identify ourselves with it, we do not feel that misery.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan also states in his book *Bhagavadgītā* that it is not possible for us to abstain from action. Nature is always at work and we are deluded if we fancy that its process can be held up. Moreover, he says that cessation from action is not desirable. The binding quality of an action does not lie in its mere performance but in the motive or desire that prompts it.

Swami Vivekananda also accepts the views of Gītā that psychologically, one cannot exist without performing action. So long as we lead embodied lives, we cannot escape from actions. Without work, the life cannot be sustained.

The eye cannot choose but see,
we cannot bid the ear be still,
Our bodies feel where'er they be
Against or with our Will.²⁶

One cannot attain perfection by mere renunciation of action. What is necessary is the renunciation of the fruits of action. Selfish desire or motive must be avoided. Thinking is an act, willing is an act, living is an act and these acts cause many effects. To be free from desires, from the illusion of personal interest is the true non-action and the physical abstention from activity. When it is said that works cease for a man who is liberated, all that is meant is that he has no further personal necessity for works. It does not mean that he flees from action and takes refuge in blissful inaction. He works as God works without any binding necessity. Free from desire and attachment, one with all beings, he acts out of the profoundest depth of his inner being, governed by his immortal divine, highest self.

Yogasthaṃ Kuru Karmaṇi
Sangam tyaktvā dhanam jaya
Siddhyasiddhyoḥ Samo bhūtvā
Samatvaṃ yoga uchyate.²⁷

Just as a dancing girl fixes her attention on the water pot, she bears on her head, even when she is dancing in various poses, so also a truly pious man does not give up his attention to the blissful feet of the supreme Lord even when he attends to his many concerns.

He who has given up attachment to action and its fruits, does nothing though he may ever be engaged in action. He, who acts for the sake of action, all actions of that liberated man melt away. When a man ceases to have any attachment either for the object of senses or for actions and has renounced all thoughts of the world, he is said to have attained yoga.

According to Swami Vivekananda, there are some who are really the salt of the earth and who work for the sake of work. They work just because good will come out of it. If a man does without any selfish desire and never thinks about the results of his action, gets the highest. Nobody should think about the result of the action as the giver of the fruit of action is somebody else.

Karmaṇya evā dhikāras te
mā phaleṣu kadācana
mā Karmaphalahetur bhūr
mā te saṅgo'stv akarmaṇi.²⁸

Vivekananda holds that a man who can work for five days, or even for five minutes, without any selfish motive, has the capacity to become a powerful moral giant. It is hard to do it but is certainly not impossible. In our heart of hearts we know the value of it. As for example, a canon ball flying through the air goes a long distance and falls. Another ball is cut short in its flight by striking against a wall, and the impact generates intense heat. This self-control, according to Swami Vivekananda, tends to produce a mighty will, a character, which makes a man of character viz., Christ, Buddha etc. Foolish man does not know this secret. In Swamiji's view, even a fool may rule the whole world if he works and waits. "Let him wait a few years, restrain that foolish idea of governing and when that idea is fully gone he will be a power in the world."²⁹

He is of the view that even the lowest forms of works are not to be escaped. He who knows no better works for selfish end. Everyone should always try to get towards higher and higher motives. We have the right to work, but not of the fruits. One should not bother one's head to think about the result of the work.

There arises a difficulty in this ideal of karma. Accordingly, intense activity is necessary. We must always work. One can not sustain without actions. What then, becomes of rest? Here is one side of the life struggle—work, in which we are bound up and the other side is that of calmness, retiring and renunciation. Neither of them is that perfect picture. A man who lives in solitude and if he is brought in the contact of the noise and bustle of this world will be crushed. His condition will be the same as that of the fish that lives in the deep sea-water and as soon as it is brought on the surface, it dies. A man who lives in the turmoil of life cannot live at ease if he comes to a quiet place. He may suffer and most probably lose his mind. So, Vivekananda asserts that the ideal man is he who finds silence in the midst of the intense activity. Such a man has controlled himself and thus knows the secret of karma. Such a man goes through the streets of a big city with all its traffic, and his mind remains as calm as if he were in a cave, where not a single sound could reach. And he is working all the time.

The man of this kind works because it is his nature, because he feels that it is good for him to do so. He understands that he cannot feel calmness without performing actions in the world. His position in this world is that of a giver and he never cares for receiving anything in return. And, therefore, he eludes the grasp of misery. To quote Swamiji : "That which is selfish is immoral and that which is unselfish is moral."³⁰

One should not try to run away from this world. Plunging oneself into the world, one may learn the secret of karma. Through proper work done inside, it is possible to come out. Through this machinery itself is the way out.

To quote Swamiji : "A man ought to live in this world like a lotus leaf, which grows in water but is never moistened by water, so a man ought to live in the world—his heart to God and hands to work."³¹

Thus we have seen that karmayoga teaches us the secret of action i.e., how to act? But when the same word is united with the word 'Law' it means a system, an order according to which we must have to enjoy or suffer for our own doings. Basically, these two are the same as Karma is the main issue.

These two i.e., karmayoga and the Law of Karma, are like the two sides of a coin. Karmayoga is the epistemological aspect whereas the Law of Karma is metaphysical aspect. These are closely concerned with our daily life. So, we cannot avoid these two values. We have to accept them directly or indirectly in our daily life. If we take these two properly, we will find that these are most useful for us to overcome our miseries. If we know the art of action, we cannot act foolishly. By knowing this art, one performs one's actions always on higher lines. And by performing good actions, we are not bound to suffer. Thus, we can enjoy the values of life.

Conclusions

Swami Vivekananda has revitalised the Indian thought. He gives Vedanta a new form. According to Vedanta, this world is unreal. Brahman alone is real. The body, life, mind, ego, and the world are all illusions. They do not exist in real sense. Nothing is real except the Absolute. But, in spite of being a Vedantist, Vivekananda does not regard the world as unreal. Theoretically, he accepts Vedantic principles but he stresses more on its practical side. That is why he has been regarded as a neo-Vedantist.

The dynamic and catholic outlook towards all religions was so dominant in the twentieth century Indian Philosophy that Swamiji was also influenced by it. The Gods of different religions are but the forms of the non-dual Absolute. There is no Hindu God, Muslim God or Christian God. The Brahman manifests Himself in different Gods and deities. The Brahman is indeterminate, impersonal, formless, truth-consciousness and bliss. All religious faiths worship the same Absolute in different forms. But the different Gods and deities disappear when one realises the identity with non-dual Absolute.

Humanism is the dominant note in Vivekananda's philosophy and religion. The religion is expressed in terms of service to mankind, universal brotherhood and humanism. The spirit in man is one. It is only the self that exists. Therefore, humanity, as a whole, is bound in unity.

Vivekananda also accepts the Hindu conception of the Law of Karma, which has been followed by rebirth. He is of the opinion that our actions produce tendencies, in accordance with which our future lives are determined. Due to ignorance man fails to discriminate between the real and the unreal, and consequently performs his actions in the light of his false and wrong notions. Such actions create *samskāras* or tendencies which determine one's future life.

He is also aware of the freedom of the self. He says that our present life is the result of our past life and in the same way our future life will be the result of our present performances. But one thing which he repeats again and again to remember is that freedom does not mean absence of all kinds of determining factors. If freedom is without any system, it is chaos. Truly speaking, it means 'self-determination'. That is to say, a free agent is determined not by anything else but by himself. Moreover, man's actions which determine his nature are his own *karmas*. Other's *karmas* do not determine other's nature. And, finally by his own good deeds, man can win over his ignorance and suffering, which shows that man is basically free. If this is understood, freedom and karma no longer remain incompatible with each other.

Swami Vivekananda attaches more importance to practical aspects of life. Hence, it is difficult to reduce the teachings of a social reformer and a religious teacher into the technical frame of academic philosophy. He does not merely try to satisfy the intellectual curiosity of man; he appeals to feelings as well.

The philosophy of Vivekananda is idealistic because he believes that the ultimate reality is essentially spiritual in nature. The ideal that he talks about is a living ideal capable of inspiring and attracting man towards itself. His idealism is monistic. An idealistic philosophy that is monistic becomes abstract and comes to assert that reality has to be indeterminate. The one, he feels, cannot accept any distinctions or qualifications of any kind within it. But, at many places, the reality is given a monotheistic description. Vivekananda is aware of this and says that there is no contradiction between the two. These two are the different attitudes of man. Therefore, he freely keeps on oscillating between Monism and Monotheism.

He believes in the freedom of the soul on the one hand and in the Law of Karma on the other hand. Due to ignorance created by himself, man forgets the nature of his own real self and acts wrongly. Such actions create *samskāras*, which determine his future. Overcoming the contradictions between Karma and freedom, he says that *karmas* do not contradict man's freedom because it is man's own actions which determine his nature. He is fully free to choose, what he likes. So many alternatives are left and man chooses according to his own mentality. And this is the real freedom for Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Vivekananda is sure about the idea that man takes birth after birth according to his past deeds. This cycle of birth and rebirth continues till the man realises its real nature. That is why present man is called the child of the past and future man is the child of the present.

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Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi was born at Porbandar on the 2nd October, 1869. His ancestors were Vaishya by caste and profession, but his father, uncle and grandfather were in service. Although his parents were orthodox Vaishnavas, they were enlightened to make all necessary arrangements for giving modern education to their children. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi grew in a mixed but balanced set-up. He was initiated into religious and moral traditions, and yet his mind was open to the changing needs of the time.

He was not very good at studies in the beginning. Once he made friendship with a person, who tempted him to evils like meat-eating, smoking etc. In 1888, he was sent to England for the study of law. His father was no more. He received his mother's permission for going abroad only after taking a vow not to touch meat, wine or to keep bad company. In England, besides his studies, he also tried to know good things of the West. He returned to India after qualifying as a Bar-at-law. After staying in India for a very brief period, he went to South Africa to work in the case of an Indian merchant there. His bitter experiences of various acts of racial discrimination committed by the white people of that place changed the entire course of his life and action. For the first time, he started his moral experiments of trying to

conquer evil by love there. He started to put into practice his moral and religious ideas too.

With this unique experiences of South African moral and political adventures, he came to India and was determined to make efforts for the independence of India by applying the technique of Satyagraha. He had a firm belief that his method of non-violent Satyagraha, which had succeeded in solving smaller problems of life, could also solve the greater problems like "Political Slavery". The life of Gandhi from 1920 to 1948, when he attained his martyrdom, has almost become a household story.

Gandhi's thought has originality, no doubt, but it carries on it the stamp of a number of influences. One of the earliest influences that provided backbone to Gandhi's thought was that of ancient Hindu tradition. At a very early age he had studied the Gītā and the Rāmāyana. These studies sharpened his moral sense and kindled his religious insight. In England, he got an opportunity to acquaint himself with Christianity also. It is said that when he saw the statue of Christ at St. Peters in Rome, he burst into tears. He had a tremendous respect for the life and personality of Jesus. Thus, he was able to incorporate some of the important sayings of Jesus Christ in his thought. Tolstoy also influenced Gandhiji in numerous ways. Tolstoy's emphasis on the power and dignity of suffering gave Gandhiji an inspiration for developing his own notion of Satyagraha. Besides these, he had also the first-hand knowledge of Zoroastrianism and Islam and also of the works of Ruskin and those of some of the theosophists of the time. All these influences had a deep effect on the mental set-up of Gandhiji. Gandhiji carried on experiments after experiments on moral religious and existential issues both in his inner life and in outward existence. In short, his thought is nothing but a product of the series of experiments that he carried out.

God

Mahatma Gandhi has a deep faith in God. He feels that he may live without air, but not without God. He is of the

opinion that a perfect life is impossible without such faith. Gandhiji is an Idealist. For him, God is the ultimate reality behind the universe. God alone is real and the world is illusion. He alone persists in the midst of changes. It is an undefinable mysterious power and pervades everything. "God is Life, Truth, Light. He is Love. He is Supreme Good."¹

God, according to Gandhiji, transcends description. He is the Law-maker, the Law and the Executor. No human being can arrogate these powers to himself. "If he did, he would be looked upon as an unadulterated dictator. They become only whom we worship as God. This is the reality, a clear understanding."² For him, "God is Life". Goodness conceived as apart from Him, is lifeless. We try to become good, because we want to reach and realize God. He is a living force for Gandhiji. That force resides in, but is not, the body. He who denies the existence of that great force, denies to himself. "Life is like a rudderless ship which, tossed about here and there, perishes without making any headway. This is impossible without the living faith in God."³

On the other hand, negation of God gives rise to a feeling of helplessness and induces people to put their faith in violence. As a matter of fact, a Satyagrahi gets strength from God. The first and the last thing for a non-violent person will be his unshakable faith in God. The only weapon for a Satyagrahi is God, by whatsoever name one may know Him. Without this faith in God, Satyagrahi is devoid of strength before his opponent armed with monstrous weapons. But one who takes God as his only protector, remains unbent before the mightiest earthly power.

In the views of Mahatma Gandhi, there is an indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything. We feel it, though we do not see it. It is this unseen power which makes itself felt and yet defies all proofs for the existence of God. It transcends our senses, as it is unlike those things which are perceived through senses. It is possible to reason about the existence of God to a limited extent. Even in ordinary affairs, we know that people do not know who rules or why and how He rules. And yet they know that there is a power that rules

certainly. It cannot be a blind law, for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings. That Law then which governs all life is God. The Law and the Law-giver are one. We should not deny Law or the Law-giver, because we know so little about It or Him. Just as our denial of the existence of an earthly power will avail us nothing, so our denial of God and His Law does not make any difference with the believer of God. Moreover, just as an acceptance of earthly rules makes the journey of life easier in the same way acceptance of divine authority makes life's journey easier.

Gandhiji believes in a personal God. Though, he at times, speaks like a Śāṅkarite that God has no personality, yet his denial of personality is based on the assumption that personality means the form of a human being.

God is not a person. To affirm that he descends to earth every now and then in the form of a human being is a partial truth which merely signifies that such a person lives near to God.⁴

There are divergent views about the exact meaning of personality among the Western thinkers also. If personality includes self-consciousness plus will, Gandhiji may be said to believe in the personality of God. He holds God as the Omniscient, Omnipotent, Creator and just Governor of the world. Therefore, it will be reasonable to think that Gandhiji was a theist—a Vaiṣṇava rather than an Advaitist. In the course of an article in his paper "Young India", he replies to a friend's question :

I am an Advaitist and yet I can support dvaitism (dualism). The world is changing every moment, and is therefore unreal, it has no permanent existence. But though it is constantly changing, it has a something about it which persists and it is therefore to that extent real. I have therefore no objection to calling it real and unreal, and thus being called an Anekāntavādi or Syādvādi. But my Syādvāda is not the Syādvāda of the learned, it is peculiarly of my own.⁵

God, for Gandhiji, was an all-pervasive Reality, immanent in man and also in the world, which he regarded as His

creation or manifestation. But, unlike an ordinary Pantheist, he believed that God was also transcendent. He is in the world as well as beyond the world. He is not fully expressed by this world. He is in the world in the sense that this world is His creation and he dwells in the heart of every creature of His creation. He is beyond this world in the sense that He is not only the sum total of this physical world. He is much more than this. God cannot be fully expressed by His creation.

In the history of religious philosophy, God has been conceived either as a power struggling against opposite principle, viz., principles responsible for the world's evil, or God has been regarded as the only and all-inclusive reality. In accordance with the first conception, God may be conceived as ultimately capable of overcoming the evils. But it makes God subject to partial limitation by an opposite principle. The religious sentiments require an all-perfect and all-complete object of worship as an unfailing source of help. Nothing but the second conception of God fully satisfies it. Moreover, religious belief is encouraged to posit the idea of an all-inclusive God by the monistic tendency. It tries to explain the diverse phenomena of the world by bringing them under some principles. But the problem is that all-inclusiveness of God includes evil also. Trying to describe this all-inclusive idea of God, Gandhiji is realistic enough to include His aspect of suffering, terror and tyranny.

Gandhiji asserts, "Rāma, Rahmān, Ahurmāzdā, God or Krishna are all attempts on the part of man to name that invincible force which is the greatest of all."⁶

Gandhiji is of the opinion that there is perfection in man but, due to ignorance, he always strives for perfection. In this attempt, he falls in the rivers of impurities. Just as a child, who tries to stand but falls down again and again and at last he learns how to walk, man with all his intelligence is a mere child as compared to the infinite and ageless God. Man can only describe God by his poor language but God defies all descriptions. It is the man who needs this attitude for his mental satisfaction. God is a vast and boundless ocean and man is like the smallest drop of water of that ocean. How

can a man who is like the smallest drop describe him, who is a vast ocean.

In the words of Madame Blavatsky, man who is praying, worships his own glorified self. Only he can pray truly, who has the conviction that God is within him. He who has not this conviction does not need to pray. In the views of Mahatma Gandhi, one needs only to remember God as a force among all the forces. All other forces are material but God is the vital force or spirit which is all pervading, all-embracing and therefore, beyond human reach.

As Gandhiji was a believer in Gītā, he also believes in Personal God. Some natural aspects which are beyond the reach of man compelled Gandhiji to think about a Superman. The conception of such a God, which we may all "divine incarnation" in the language of Gītā, gives spiritual message to mankind. It is an eloquent expression of the law of spiritual world. God is looked upon as the saviour of world. According to Hindu mythology, whenever the forces of vice and wickedness are in the ascendancy, the representatives of the moral order, Indra, Brahma etc. along with Earth, which is said to suffer the most, go to the court of heaven and cry aloud for a world redeemer. The work of redemption is a constant activity, though on occasions it becomes accentuated. The normal self-manifestation of God becomes emphatic when the world order grows disproportionately evil. In the Bhagavadgītā, Krishna himself says :

Paritrāṇāya Sādhūnām
Viṇāśāya ca duṣkṛtām
dharmasamsthāpanārthāya
Sambhavāmi yuge-yuge.⁷

An Avatārā is a descent of God into man, and not an ascent of man into God. Though every conscious being is such a descent, it is only a veiled manifestation. There is a distinction between the divine and the same shrouded in ignorance. The human being is as good as an avatāra, if he crosses the veil of māyā and transcends his imperfections. The creator is not separated from his creatures. He is always

fulfilling himself in the world. Man comes to full consciousness by actualizing his full potency. It becomes immaterial then, whether we say God limits himself in the form of man or man rises to God working through his nature. Yet an avatāra means a God who limits himself for some purpose on the earth, and possesses even in his limited form the fullness of knowledge.

In the opinion of Mahatma Gandhi, no man has ever been able to describe God fully. Man is far from being God so long as he is imperfect. God is invisible, beyond the reach of the human eye. All that we can do, therefore, is to try to understand the words and action of those whom we regard as man of God.

According to Gandhiji, God cannot be realized through reason. God has to be understood through faith. Intellect or reason can lead only to certain extent and no further. Intellectual knowledge is a somewhat, mixture of sense experience and reason, which is unable to get something about supra-sensuous. Our senses have no capacity to reach a perfect God. Reason is unable to go beyond this physical world. But God is beyond this world. Hence Gandhiji is of the view that it is a matter of faith and the experience derived from that faith. One might rely on his own experience. Full faith does not feel the want of experience. Gandhiji does not outline the condition or the nature of such an experience. At times, he does refer to moral sense and to moral experience; but that also is done not to outline the faith. Thus, it is apparent that, according to Gandhiji, God not only transcends senses, but also defies rational proof. God is a matter of inner realisation and faith. He cannot be described, as, He is indescribable. As Kathopanishad says :

naiva vāchā na manasā
prāptuṁ sakyo na cakṣuṣā
astīti bubato anyam
katham tadupalabhyate.⁸

God, according to Gandhiji, defies definition. Even then, if we must, however, define him, we may say that the sum-

total of Karma is God. That which impels man to do the right work—the sum—total of all that lives is God. That which makes man the mere plaything of fate is God. He is the denial of the atheist. But these statements are merely inclusive in their construction, because God is something more than all these descriptions.

God, according to Gandhiji, is the Supreme power, which governs the fate of human beings. Metaphysically speaking, our present life is an outcome of our past life. It is believed that our Karmas create tendencies in accordance with which our bodies and capacities are built. Man's sufferings are due to his own wrong actions done in the past and right actions performed in this life will bear fruits in future. Hence Gandhiji does not accept the existence of luck or fate in the sense of something extraordinary. He says that what an individual now is, is the effect of his action, his habits, thinking, feeling, speaking etc. in the past. Man makes himself through all these diverse activities—external and internal. But Gandhiji says that God is the giver of the fruits of actions. He supervises all these actions impartially and provides the fruits accordingly. And it is in this sense that Gandhiji says that God has such a power to govern human beings.

The existence of God, according to Gandhiji, is denied by two classes of people. The first category of people are those who deny God due to ignorance. For them there is nothing which we may call God. The second category comprises the so-called intellectuals who want proof of his existence. They are not ready to accept the words of prophets and saints. Saints are generally agreed that it is possible to grasp the supernatural principle by enlarging and deepening human consciousness. The conduct and character of those who have felt the presence of God is evidence of the realization of such a higher principle. Even in the field of physical science, there are so many phenomenons viz., theory of relativity propounded by Einstein etc., which are accepted by the intellectuals. Yet the intellectuals do not deny its truth and validity. Reason and faith both have its respective sphere. Faith begins where reason ends. Such faith is not blind but enlightened.

Yet Gandhiji is convinced that God can be known only in the state of inner realization that God's knowledge can only be revealed to an individual in some sincere and sacred inner experience. Even then, Gandhiji at times talks about evidences of God's existence.

Soul and Man

In the history of philosophy, many thinkers have focussed attention on the nature and status of man. Psychologically, Freud and others, for example, try to paint a complete picture of man on the basis of their analysis of unconscious urges and impulses. Some other psychologists seek to reduce man to some original and native impulses, desires and emotions. Then there are thinkers like Hobbes, who seek to determine man in terms of a social self-centred nature of man. According to this conception, man is basically convinced as a selfish individual, who feels the need of making adjustment with others for the sake of his own pleasure. Then there are certain sociologists who try to explain the nature of man entirely in terms of social conditions. According to them, man is a social animal. Apart from society he cannot exist. Therefore, these people emphasise the importance of social factors. Distinguished from all these thinkers, there are some metaphysicians who believe in the common and essential characteristics of man. For example, Aristotle describes man as a rational animal. Again, there are some Humanists and Existentialists who appear to be convinced that the description of man in his class-characters cannot be an exact description of man. They point out that in the case of man, his peculiarities are more important than the common characteristics. Even every individual is more unique in his own way, and as such, possesses certain characteristics that are peculiar to him alone. According to the Existentialists, no description of man can be adequate unless it gives due regard to the peculiarities of man.

But, according to Gandhiji, these pictures of man are superficial and partial because they do not emphasise the basic truth about man. For Gandhiji, these pictures of man

are in fact, pictures of apparent man only. He feels that all such accounts of man are based on partial or superficial analysis of man's external behaviour and conduct. It does not mean that the bodily aspect of man does not have any reality. Gandhiji is aware of the importance of this aspect of man also, but he believes that there is another aspect of man, which is deeper. This deeper aspect of man gives nourishment even to the bodily aspect which is, more or less, neglected by all psychological or sociological theories. This, according to Gandhiji, represents the true nature of man.

Mahatma Gandhi feels that man is a complex of being. The bodily man is the apparent man, his body is natural in so far as it is akin to other objects of nature. The body grows and decays according to the law of Nature. But this aspect of man represents only the physical aspect. Man is not only physical, he has many other characteristics, which are not just physical. He has consciousness, reason, conscience, will, emotion and similar other qualities. He has an aesthetic sense, a feeling, sensibility and an insight into the nature of good and bad. These are not just physical activities. These are all expressions of real man, of the spirit or the soul present in him.

The original capital on which a child starts life is inherited from its ancestors, and the environment does play an important part.⁹

As a matter of fact, Gandhiji's conception of the nature of man is based on his metaphysical conviction. Metaphysically speaking, Gandhiji was a monist. He believes in the reality of one Supreme God. As such, he has to believe that everything in the world is the expression of the one Supreme Man, and therefore, is also an expression of that one. Thus, both the bodily and spiritual aspects of man are expressions of God. Even then, Gandhiji is of the view that the spiritual aspects of man represent man's superior and true nature simply because it is akin to Divine nature. He also believes that initially the bodily and the physical aspects were more predominant and that the spiritual went on becoming more and more prominent

as the evolution's process progressed. According to Gandhiji, evolution is a change from the physical to the spiritual. It aims at the complete realization of spirituality i.e., Divinity. This also shows that in spite of the fact that the bodily aspect of man also has its own importance and value, man's essential nature consists in his spirituality.

Though Gandhiji sometimes calls himself a follower of Advaita, he cannot be strictly regarded as following the Advaita of Sankara for he does not regard the world as mere appearance. By Advaita he seemed to mean monism in general. This word has sometimes been loosely used in the wide sense of monism and he follows that trend.

The individual is an unique centre of the life of God and at the same time God is the one ground of all individuals and binds them together in an inseparable relation. So, on the one hand, Gandhiji says that the individual is the one Supreme consideration but on the other hand, he says with enthusiasm :

I believe in absolute Oneness of God and therefore, also humanity. What though he have many bodies ? We have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction. But they have the same source.¹⁰

Here, we may point out the attitude of Indian thinkers who accept God as the creator but never hold that the souls of individuals are created by God. They assert that the souls of individuals are originate and co-eternal with God. As creator, God only wills into existence the different combinations of material elements. In other words, God only differentiates and integrates the eternally existing matter, for the formation of the particular bodies, an environmental objects for the souls. The souls of human and sub-human beings are, therefore, eternal varieties liable neither to creation, nor to destruction.

Whereas communism stresses the economic aspect of human nature and democracy idealises the liberation concept of man, Gandhiji idealises the spiritual aspect of man. He believes that man is not merely the bundle of flesh and bones but something more and beyond this. Behind all this, there is a spirit, a soul.

...indivisible, eternal, all-pervading and self-conscious. It is a part and parcel of God. In other words, it is Godhead within man. It is this belief of Gandhiji which made him hate the sin, and not the sinner. For Gandhiji, "The individual is the one Supreme consideration."¹¹

In fact, the reality in man is nothing but soul. Gandhiji's belief in Advaita doctrine that there is but one Brahman in all whether it be human or sub-human beings, means that all living beings are bound together inseparably to God. "It makes man the servant of God's creation and not its lord."¹²

It also means that whatever happens to one body, must affect the whole of matter and the whole spirit. This is why Gandhiji believes that if one man gains spirituality, the whole world gains with him and if one man falls, the whole world falls with him to that extent.

The physical man draws the sense here and there. But this aspect of man is unreal. That in regard to which our consciousness never fails is real but that in regard to which our consciousness fails is unreal. According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, the unreal is the body and the real is the soul. We may here quote the verse of Bhagavadgītā as follows :

antavanta ime dehā,
nityasyo' ktaḥ śarīraṇaḥ
anāśīno prameyasya
tasmād yudhyasva bhārata.¹³

The soul is never born, nor does it die at any time. It is unborn, eternal, permanent. It is not slain, but the body is slain.

na jāyate mriyate vā kadācin
nā' yaṁ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ
ajo nityaḥ śāśvato yaṁ purāṇo
na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre.¹⁴

Gandhiji, under the influence of Gītā, believed that eternal soul does not move from place to place but the embodied man moves from one place to another. It needs birth for future. The psychic being is the vijñāna which supports the triple

manifestation of body, life and mind. When the gross physical body falls away, the vital and mental sheaths still remain as the vehicle of the soul. Rebirth is a law of nature. Like corn, a mortal being ripens and like corn again is he born.

When Crito asks, "In what way shall we bury you, Socrates?" Socrates answers, "In any way you like, but first, you must catch Me, the real Me. Be of good cheer, my dear Crito, and say that you are burying my body only, and do with that whatever is usual and what you think best."

In fact, birth and death are only transitions of the self from one body to another like its transition through the states of childhood, youth and old age in the same body. It is the body that is subject to disintegration and destruction, but not the soul. The soul is eternal, immovable, immobile and uncaused. It is beyond the reach of the senses and the mind, and it is above all changes.

Individual soul in its real nature is a conscious and eternal reality which does not really possess any physical or mental quality. As eternal and unchanging, it has no activity or movement in it. So, all actions take place within the material world and the self consider itself to be an agent or doer only when it is deluded by and wrongly identified with the ego.

The soul is different from the ego. All thoughts and feelings, all pleasures and pains, all joys and sorrows really belong to the mind—body. It is the mind and not the soul, which feels pleasure and pain. In short, all moral properties belong to the ego, which is the doer of all acts. What belongs to the essence of soul are thus pure existence, consciousness and bliss. The soul is the transcendental subject of experience whose very essence is eternity, freedom and immortality.

The soul is neither in space nor in time, governed by the law of causality. Only particular things, made up of parts, are in space and time. The self being not a particular physical thing is beyond space and time. Being above space and time, it is not subject to the law of causality. So, it is essentially and eternally free. It is also eternal and immortal, because it is not produced by any cause and cannot be destroyed in any case.

The essence of man, according to Mahatma Gandhi is soul which has its objective value in Upanishads. "The One is real, the wise declares as many." Here also we find a progressive explanation of the self through four stages of (i) the bodily self; (ii) the empirical self; (iii) the transcendental self; and (iv) the absolute self. The soul or self is characterised in such a way : the self is free from sin, from old age, from death and grief, from hunger and thirst, which desires nothing but what it ought to desire and imagines nothing but what it ought to imagine, that it is which we may try to understand. We find a development of the self from the waking, dreaming and sleeping states and is called *trīya*.

Mahatma Gandhi asserts that the individual soul stands self-proved and self-known. One is absolutely certain about the existence of one's own soul and there can be neither doubt, nor denial regarding its existence. Individual self is the mixture of real and unreal, a knot of the existent and non-existent, a coupling of the true and the false. It is a product of the ignorance but its essence is the light of the Absolute. The absolute soul, when identified with the body, is the product of ignorance but the soul as such is pure and absolute.

We use such expressions as "my body", "my senses", etc. This shows that the body and the senses are certain objects which belong to me but are not identical with myself. Further, while body and the senses undergo changes, a man remains the same self throughout. For the same reason, a man's self must be distinguished from his mind, intellect and ego. All these are objects for the self and, therefore, not identical with it. The mind, ego and intellect of a man cease to function in the states of deep sleep, swoon and ecstasy, but even then his self abides as a conscious reality. Nor can the self be regarded as an aggregate of conscious states or a stream of consciousness. A flowing stream is not conscious of itself. It is the same or appears to be the same only for the same observer of its flow from beginning to the end. All these views lead Gandhi to believe that the real self of man is a permanent, self-conscious being or an unchanging immutable spirit.

The real self of man is revealed in the *turiya* state of consciousness. It is a state of deep concentration which is

attainable through yoga. In this state, the body and the senses, the mind and the intellect cease to function. So, there is no consciousness of any object, including eternal mental states. Still, it is not a state of unconsciousness. One who attains the state of *tūriya*, does not die. In this state, one continues to exist to be conscious, although one has not existed as a particular individual and is not conscious of any particular object. As free from conflicts of ordinary objects and interests of life, it is also a state of permanent peace or bliss. It is a state in which the self abides in its own essence as pure consciousness. As compared with these, all the physical, psychical and even moral characteristics, are external and accidental to the self.

Gandhiji points out that the physical world, with man has its beginning in the absolute. How the absolute translated itself into the universe we do not know, we cannot know, but it is a beginningless process. Physical man, as a part of the world, finds himself subject to this apparently endless process, but his position in the world is unique. He observes, thinks, reflects and finds himself captive, and struggles against the captivity. His reflection tells him that he is the subject of an objective world. This subjectivity is not only of his inside nature, viz., composed of his body, senses, intellect etc. but also of the objective world that surrounds him. With both these changes, there is an abiding something in him which certainly does not change. And if it does not change, in spite of ceaseless change, how can it perish. The world of change and the world of morality give him limitations of an eternality and immortality. There is a sacred thing in him which makes the finite, imperfect mortal in him to hanker after the Infinite, Perfect and Immortal. To quote Mahatma Gandhi : "Bound up as he is with the world of sense, he has fleeting glimpses of this oneness with the universal self, but those glimpses are few and far between. Unless he can completely isolate himself from all that differentiates and separates, he cannot abide in this unity."¹⁵

As already pointed out, Gandhiji was a follower of Advaita philosophy. Now, Gandhiji says that even Sankara and his followers do not believe in the ultimate reality of separate

human souls. They affirm strongly that so long as we are ignorant of our real self, we cannot remove our individuality which does exist for all practical purposes. We have to remove these, our ignorances, beliefs and habits only by recognising, utilising and employing our individualities. The body, family, society and state have all to be organised and utilized for the redemption of the individual from the fetters of ignorant ideas and habits and for the realization of his perfect unity with Brahman.

We may point out Buddhism in this context which does not accept any substance; neither God nor human souls but still believes in the fact of personality created by ignorance and its many effects. In the same way, Shankarites also believe that it is not by ignoring personality but by its correct understanding and reformation of feeling and will through action, that one can realize the supra-personal state of Nirvāṇa. For instance, we may take Lord Buddha himself whose active life for the redemption of suffering fellow-beings shows his compassion for all individuals.

But the teachings of Buddha and Śāṅkara were misunderstood and misapplied. The negative elements of their doctrines came to shadow the positive and constructive elements. Similar things happened also in Christianity whose the world denying ascetic practices prevailed over the positive doctrines at times. Here, we may quote Prof. D.M. Dutta : "There is no doctrine in the world which is too good to be corrupted."¹⁸

Gandhiji utilized the new positive ideas of Modern India by assimilating them in thought, living them in his life and giving them political and social shapes. This entire experience gave birth to his philosophy of man and life that finally raised the people from slavery. His notion of the presence of God in man amounts to a belief that man has free will, reason, conscience, and love. Man is the architect of his own destiny. If he chooses to use his reason correctly and guides his life by the voice of conscience and lives with his fellow beings with love in his heart, he can realise God and bring heaven on this earth.

Mahatma Gandhi believes that every individual is unique because of his peculiar physical and mental inheritance. What

an individual now is, is the effect of his action, his habits of thinking, feeling, speaking and acting etc. Man makes himself through all these diverse activities. They appear to be so insignificant separately, but, taken together, they create powerful forces that shapes his health, character and his entire destiny. But a man must thoroughly understand his peculiar nature and try to perfect it. He can degrade himself by ignoring truth, neglecting conscience and pandering to the animal passions. And in this state man can turn himself into a brute. But a man can also raise himself towards perfectness if he follows the path of righteousness by loving his fellow-beings. Gandhiji has firm belief in the fact that the Divine powers within us are infinite. By the experience of his life, Gandhi asserts that :

Raise yourself by yourself, do not depress yourself. You are your friend, you are your foe.¹⁷

Further more :

The brute by nature known no self-restraint.
Man is man because he is capable of, and only in
so far as he exercises self-restraint.¹⁸

Consequently, Gandhiji believes that God, as love and reason is working through man to raise himself. He also believes that God has given freedom to man to play the game of life independently. But he trusts that man would learn to improve himself even by his failures, making them the pillars of success. So Gandhiji speaks in a balanced tone :

If we believe that mankind has steadily progressed towards ahimsā (i.e. love), it follows that it has to progress towards it still further : Nothing in this world is static, everything is kinetic. If there is no progression, than there is inevitable retrogression. No one can remain without the eternal cycle, unless it be God himself.¹⁹

As a believer in the theory of evolution, Gandhiji is conscious of man's animal origin, and so, he does not subscribe

to the Wordsworthian view that the child comes from heaven. He affirms that :

We were perhaps all originally brutes. I am prepared to believe that we have become men by a slow process of evolution from the brute.²⁰

Again, man may choose either of the two courses : the upward or the downward. But as he has brute in him, he will more easily choose the downward course. Everyone of us is a mixture of good and evil. But the difference between the cultured and the brute lies only in degree. Even the men of God are not without fault. They are men of God not because they are faultless, but because they know their faults, and are ever ready to correct themselves. The glory is that the man is not mere brute. He is above all, the soul, and so has goodness in himself. According to Gandhiji :

There is no contradiction between God and man, as well as in the lower order of creation. Soul transcends time and space and unifies all apparently separate existence.²¹

Life, according to Gandhiji, is an inspiration and its mission is to strive for self-realization. This is the ideal of life which he prescribes for all. The soul is one in all and is, therefore, the same for all. The aim of human life is nothing different from that of Hindu seers. But unlike most of them, Gandhiji says that it can be attained even in the midst of family. He says :

A cave dweller can build castle in the air whereas a dweller in a palace like Janaka has no castles to build. A Janaka though living in the midst of pomp and circumstances may have peace that passeth understanding.²²

Thus, we can say that Gandhiji believes in the spiritual nature of man. As a result, his concept of equality of man develops. Being the children of God, all men are brothers. All men are born equal for him but one is much stronger or

weaker than other physically or mentally. Therefore, superficially there is no equality between the two but there is a essential equality.

To Gandhiji, there is no antithesis between God and man. The soul is the only reality in man. To quote him :

I believe in absolute oneness of God and therefore also of humanity. What though we have many bodies, we have but one soul.²³

The relation between God and individual soul is that if the individual shatters the chains of egoism and melts into the ocean of humanity, he shares its dignity. On the other hand, if he feels that he is something, he sets up a barrier between God and himself. "...to cease feeling that we are something is to become one with God."²⁴

This belief in the essential spirituality and goodness of every man leads Gandhiji to believe further in the essential unity of mankind. This unity is expressed both in the life of an individual and in social life. The spiritual law is constantly working behind all kinds of activities, individual, social, economic, and political. He clearly admits this spiritual law as the Law of Karma. As there is no question of death for soul, our actions also are not destroyed. It means that every action yields its effects either in this life or in the future.

The Law of Karma

Gandhiji, like the traditional Indian thinkers, believes in the existence of the Law of Karma. His belief is obviously a product of his extreme respect for Hindu beliefs and traditions. This doctrine has both a metaphysical and a moral aspect. Metaphysically, this law explains births and formation of bodies. Accordingly, this life and body are on account of our past Karmas. It is believed that our Karmas create tendencies in accordance with which our subsequent bodies and capacities are built. On the other hand, it is conceived as moral maxim, 'as you sow so you reap'. The ancient Indian thinkers have

suggested that man's sufferings are due to his own wrong actions done in the past.

According to Gandhiji, "Every individual is unique because of his peculiar physical and mental constitution. What an individual now is, is the effect of his own actions, his habits of thinking, feeling, speaking and acting in the past. Man makes himself through all these diverse activities, internal and external. They appear to be insignificant separately, but, taken together, they create the tremendous forces that shape his health, character and his entire destiny."²⁵

But, for Gandhi, the moral significance of the Law of Karma appears to be more significant because it is consistent with his moral convictions. The realisation that one's own karmas determine the future nature and status of an individual creates the further realisation that man himself is the maker of his own destiny. Gandhiji thinks that such a realisation will create a sense of responsibility in man.

Moreover, Gandhi asserts, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked ; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."²⁶

Mahatma Gandhi's belief in the Law of Karma is followed by his firm conviction in rebirth. But, Gandhiji's view differs to some extent with regard to rebirth than that of Hindu thinkers. In Hinduism, rebirth is, more or less, a metaphysical doctrine for explaining life prior to birth and after death. On the other hand, he gives a moral interpretation to this doctrine by emphasising the pragmatic and ethical value of this belief. He believes that one is able to make adjustment with life by believing this doctrine. It enables man to be loving, kind, moral and benevolent even in the midst of strife. Man comes to think that this world is not the end of everything. Evil and suffering experienced in this life are not final. This belief enables man to face this life with strength. As for the doctrine of rebirth, Mahatma Gandhi writes, "I believe in rebirth as much as I believe in the existence of my present body. I, therefore, know that even a little effort is not wasted."²⁷

The doctrine of rebirth ensures that even a little effort in this life is not wasted, because it provides repeated opportu-

nities for the man, who has not been able to fully realize himself in one life, to work again and again for self-development. The Law of Karma is the law of moral continuity. It explains that our future will grow out of our present as our present is the product of our past. This is why Gandhiji declares, "The Law of Karma is inexorable and impossible of evasion. There is thus hardly any need for God to interfere. He laid down the laws as it were retired."²⁸

But the acceptance of the Law of Karma does not imply that our life and activities are completely determined. Such determination paralyzes moral effort and cuts at the root of ethics. It also denies creativeness to the human spirit and deprives man of the privilege of establishing his own Government. There is no anti-thesis between the Law of Karma and the freedom of will. In fact, the doctrine of Karma implies freedom, for it lays down that the man is the architect of his own destiny. Continuity with the past implies creative freedom of the individual. No doubt, our previous karmas limit the range for the exercise of our free will. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "The free-will we enjoy is less than that of a passenger on a crowded deck."²⁹ But the little freedom that we have is real in the sense that we are free to choose how we use that freedom. But though our will is free, "we cannot command results; we can only strive."³⁰

Besides, "Man can change temperament, can control it, but cannot eradicate it. God has not given him so much liberty. If the leopard can change his spots, then only can man modify the peculiarities of his spiritual constitution."³¹

According to him, man can counteract the effect of past mistakes by attaining complete detachment. But in spite of the greatest effort to be detached, no man can altogether undo the effect of his environment or his upbringing. Thus, Gandhiji does not believe in complete freedom which might enable man to sever himself from or transcend nature. Such freedom will mean chaos for Gandhiji.

As Gandhiji was a firm believer in Gītā it will not be irrelevant to trace out the Gītā view in this context. When Gītā asks us to be mere instrument in the hands of God, it is not any outside master that we are asked to obey but the

master who is in us. We have the freedom of surrendering ourselves to the feet of God.

It depends on how one defines free will. If it is a will free of all laws, man has no such will. Plenty of it will turn the cosmos into chaos. We all know about the presence of consciousness within us but even though ignorant of us act such as they do not know. Such is the case with regard to the freedom of will.

Gandhiji's belief in the Law of Karma does not imply that he considers man's life and activities to be completely determined. Freedom of will is considered by Gandhiji as a necessary postulate of morality. The real question is not whether behaviour is free or not for it is obvious that every behaviour being a response to some given stimulus, must be in some sense determined. The question is how it is determined; whether it is determined from within or from without the self? When we say that behaviour is "free", what we really mean is, not that it is undetermined, but that the self acts as a whole, making the action of its own, taking full responsibility.

Such self-determined action is to be contrasted with the action at the instinctive level, where action is determined in a quasireflex manner. In the first type of action, we recognise personal volition; in the other, we see a creature of impulse. Mere mechanical action, performed under the influence of blind impulse or custom, cannot, therefore, be moral. According to Gandhiji, "No action which is not voluntary can be called moral. So long as we act like machines, there is no question of morality. If we want to call an action moral, it should have been done consciously and as a matter of duty."³³

Closely connected with the problem of free will, is the problem of evil. Gandhiji says that the presence of evil cannot be accounted for by any rational method. It is real only from the limited human standpoint. For God, there is nothing good, nothing evil. But one point must here be understood that the relativity of good and evil is not acceptable to him, for its introduction to problems of actual life would lead us morally astray. In his words, "Good and evil are for human purposes, from each other distinct and incompatible, being symbolic of light and darkness. ..."³³

As a matter of fact, evil in itself is unproductive. It is self-destructive. It exists and flourishes through the implication of good that is inherent in it. Science teaches us that a lever cannot move a body unless it has got a resting point outside the body against which it is applied. Similarly, in order to overcome evil, one must stand wholly outside it. Thus, in his view, the purity of means is essential for minimizing evil. But he is conscious of the fact that what is good under certain circumstances can become an evil or a sin under a different condition. He is always aware of the place of evil in the scheme of progress. He points out : "Evolution is always experimental, and all progress is gained through mistakes and their rectification. Besides, the principles of karma and rebirth suggest that through a gradual process man will be able to minimize evil."³⁴

These two doctrines of the Law of Karma and Rebirth are not mere unproved dogmas. These are the laws of life deduced by the Indian seers from spiritual insight and verified experience. These are the laws of governing human growth and moral continuity. Accordingly, our actions leave Samskaras. These are dynamic and casual factors and determine our future not only in this life but also in subsequent lives. According to this law, our future will grow out of the present just as the present is the outcome of our past. However, the doctrine of karma is the only rational explanation of human inequality, at least if we admit a purposive reality behind the universe.

Conclusion

Thus we see that Gandhi has a firm belief in rebirth and karma. This law explains the births and formation of bodies metaphysically. It is considered as the moral maxim 'as you sow, so you reap'. For him man's sufferings are due to his own wrong actions done in the past and that the right and wrong deeds performed in this life will bear fruits in future. And this enables man to make himself free and liberated.

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Philosophy of Dr. Radhakrishnan

Introduction

Born on September 5, 1888, at a small place of Tirutani forty miles of the north-west of Madras, Radhakrishnan spent his early life at Tirutani and Tirupati, the two famous places of pilgrimage. Probably, due to this influence of his early age, he was naturally attracted towards religion. Rather, he admits himself that since then he developed a firm faith in the reality of an unseen world, a faith which was never shaken. He had his college and school education in Christian Missionary institutions. During this period he came to be acquainted with the main teachings of Christianity and also with the critical remarks of the christian missionaries on the Hindu ways of life. That led him to study Hindu scriptures. His early religious orientation was the result of all these influences and impressions.

In 1909, he was appointed a teacher of Philosophy in Madras Presidency College and then his academic activities started. In 1918, he was appointed a Professor of Philosophy in the new University of Mysore. That gave him an opportunity to study Western Philosophy. In 1921, he was appointed to the most important chair of Philosophy in India, the King George V Chair of Mental and Moral Philosophy in the University of Calcutta. He was invited to Oxford in 1926 to deliver lectures on Hindu view of life. Thereafter lecture assignments from

other countries followed one after another. During this period he also founded the Indian Congress with other eminent men of Philosophy in India.

By that time, he had established himself as one of the greatest intellectuals of the country. His vast knowledge of ancient Indian Religion and Philosophy along with his extensive acquaintance with the wisdom of the West, created the image of being the only bridge-builder between the east and the west. He was given the Chair of Oxford University and then he gained an all-round recognition. After that, he passed through various phases of life, taking upon himself the one after the other the responsibilities of a Professor, a Vice-Chancellor, an Ambassador, the Vice-President of India and lastly the highest office of the land, viz., the President of the Indian Union.

Radhakrishnan's fundamental convictions are deeply rooted in Indian traditions. The root notions of his own Philosophy are generally taken from ancient Indian Philosophy—particularly from the Vedāntic tradition, but he has presented these ideas into the models of Western thought. Joad, in his book, describes Radhakrishnan's metaphysical standpoint thus, “.. the function, the unique function which Radhakrishnan fulfils to-day is that of a liaison officer. He seeks to build a bridge between the traditional wisdom of the east and the new knowledge and energy of the west.”¹

His basic philosophical position is of a sort of synthesis of Advaita Vedānta and the philosophy of Absolute Idealism. He takes up the monistic character from Vedānta and combines it with some of the important aspects of Absolute Idealism. Like Vedānta, he believes that the Reality is one, like Absolute Idealism he shows that everything is a necessary aspect of that One. Consequently, one finds it difficult to reduce his philosophy to any of the current metaphysical models. It can be broadly described as a Philosophy of Monistic Idealism. It is monistic because reality is one and it can be idealism because he believes that there is a spiritual ideal towards which the entire world-process is progressing. His Philosophy is nothing but an attempt to illustrate that the ultimate nature of the universe is spiritual, and that unless the spiritual sense is awakened, man's life will remain chaotic. On account of such a tremendous

emphasis on the ultimate spirituality of everything, Radhakrishnan at times appears to be a mystic. But his mysticism is mysticism only to the extent to which idealistic thought of the monistic variety tends towards it.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has the rare qualification of being well-versed in the great traditions of both the east and the west. His early education made him familiar with the knowledge of the east, and his own scholarly adventure acquainted him with the west. Naturally, he combines the two traditions, and is able to evolve a Philosophy of Synthesis.

With regard to the nature of the ultimate reality, Radhakrishnan leans heavily on Vedānta. He synthesises the views of Sankara as well as Rāmānuja. His idealism assimilates Sankara's Absolute and Ramanuja's God in one dynamic conception. Dr. Radhakrishnan writes : "Śankara and Rāmānuja are the two great thinkers of the Vedānta, and the best qualities of each are the defects of the other."² The ultimate reality of Radhakrishnan may be explained fully under the Vedāntic conception.

In fact, Vedānta conceives the ultimate as the Brahman, which is the logical price of the world. According to Vedānta Philosophy, Brahman has not to be proved or established; it has got to be accepted because without presupposing it nothing can even be thought of. More or less in the same Vedāntic fashion, Radhakrishnan also says that the ultimate reality is the Brahman—the Absolute—which is the logical ground of everything real and existent.

Naturalists may raise an objection here that there is no need of posting any supernatural or spiritual principle for the explanation of this universe in view of the fact that everything can be given a naturalistic explanation. Radhakrishnan feels that the naturalistic explanation is based on the presupposition of the reality of time. In his words, "It looks upon the world as a sort of an automatic machine which goes on working in a blind haphazard way. It reduces the temporal world to unconscious forces, makes life, consciousness and value mere by-products. It believes that the world machine needs only to be taken to pieces to be comprehended."³ Therefore, Radhakrishnan asserts that the naturalistic explanation fails to

explain the nature of the ultimate reality. It is valid so far as it seeks to provide an explanation for the orderliness that it discovers in the nature but it forgets that this orderliness of nature is not mechanical.

It is on account of this failure of the naturalistic principle that Radhakrishnan goes deeper in his attempts to conceive the nature of ultimate reality. He is aware that naturalistic explanation is not sufficient and he is also aware that the ultimate must be capable of explaining everything—the universe and even itself. In the material world we do not have any such principle which can account for itself because everything material is explainable in terms of something other. Therefore, the ultimate principle must be outside the material world. That is why Dr. Radhakrishnan feels that the ultimate must be a spiritual principle.

According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, spiritual can be understood in a negative manner. The spiritual may be understood as something different and higher from physical or material. More or less in the Vedāntic way, Radhakrishnan says that it is not possible to give an exact explanation of the ultimate but attempts can be made to understand it as much as possible. Keeping this in mind, we have to seek an explanation in terms of a non-physical principle. Dr. Radhakrishnan calls this non-physical principle sometimes Brahmam and sometimes the Absolute.

Absolute

The Absolute of Dr. Radhakrishnan contains in it the element of both—of the Advaita Vedānta and of the Hegelian tradition. It is the only reality, but it is not arrived at by the process of abstraction to its maximum limit.

If we examine the Absolute of Radhakrishnan, we will find that it is monistic in character. He believes that the ultimate explanation of the universe has to be monistic. Like the Advaita Vedānta, Dr. Radhakrishnan also believes that the Absolute does not admit even internal differentiation (Svagatabheda). The differentiations that appear to be there are only from the point of view of creation. It is true that

everything in a sense is the expression of the Absolute, but these expressions do not in any way affect the monistic character of the Absolute. He says : "The same Absolute reveals itself in all these but differently in each. The ultimate reality sleeps in the stone, breathes in the plants, feels in the animals, and awakens to self-consciousness in man",⁴ and yet the ultimate reality in itself is the one Brahman unaffected by all these manifestations.

Dr. Radhakrishnan's monism has its roots in teleology. In fact, he realized that the world somehow or other expresses a unity within its processes. The processes of the world show that they are not casual processes; they reveal a unity. This unity cannot be explained unless the ultimately real is conceived as one. Plurality tends towards differentiation and diversity. Thus, Radhakrishnan's monism is teleological.

Dr. Radhakrishnan conceives Absolute as "Pure-consciousness" and "pure-freedom" and "infinite possibility". The first two characters have been described in Vedāntic manner whereas the third character has been described in the manner of Hegel's Absolute Idealism. The Absolute is Pure-consciousness because consciousness is the most inefectable and the constantly existing phenomenon. We cannot think of any stage of existence without relating it to consciousness. It is always there. It is an infinite possibility because infinite world could arise from it. This world is the only possibility of it. This world would not be but is due to this possibility. God is also one of the infinite possibilities of the Absolute. God is the Absolute with reference to this possibility, of which he is the source and creator. It is pure freedom because its act of actualising a possibility is not determined by anything, it is a free act. It could have created a world different in every detail from that which is actual. Why does the Absolute project this specific power and remain unknown and mysterious. The Absolute is free to manifest one power and reject others. It may also not express any of its powers. The Absolute could have projected another specific power, than this God out of its freedom. It is itself the sole determiner and its manifestation. If one power is projected and another one is denied, it is due to the freedom of the Absolute. We

cannot explain this mystery. Though the world is an actual manifestation of the Absolute, it is not necessary for it. Creation is a free act. "So far as the Absolute is concerned, the creation of the world makes no difference to it. It cannot add anything to or take away anything from the Absolute . . . we cannot say that the world follows from the nature of the Absolute even as the conclusion of the syllogism follows from the premises, as Spinoza would have us believed. The world would not be but for this possibility in the Absolute."⁵

As a matter of fact, Radhakrishnan feels that the qualities of existence, development, order, purposefulness, etc. that we notice in the world need an ontological foundation, and that can be provided by nothing less than the Absolute. The question arises as to why there is existence. Why is there anything at all? In the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan, "If everything disappeared there would be utter nothingness. If that nothingness was not itself the possibility of being, there could not have been anything at all. The existence of the world are imperfect and impermanent and nothing that is imperfect can subsist of itself or by itself, for in so far as it is imperfect it is not. The Upanishads lead us from the imperfect existence in the world to the Supreme and Absolute Being . . . the existence of the world means the primacy of Being."⁶

This points out that the very existence of the world implies the existence of such being from which this world is derived. It is a pure being which is the basis of everything in this world. Radhakrishnan, at times, calls it the logical 'prius' of the universe.

This Absolute, according to Radhakrishnan, has to be spiritual in nature. Physical principles of the universe are inadequate to explain this multitude universe. They always stop at a particular point. So many things are beyond its reach. Hence, the explaining principle must be such as has the capacity to take us beyond. And such quality can be spiritual only. Hence, we are enforced to think that the Absolute is a Spirit. But it must be pointed out here that this spirit is free. It is free in so far as there is nothing to limit it. There is nothing beyond it. Its freedom is uninterrupted.

The Absolute is timeless. In other words, it is eternal. Time begins with creation. The Newtonian conception of time as a prior framework within which events take place, is given up. Time has no existence apart from events. It is a conceptual construction from the experience of successive events. The world is a totality of events in time. Its evolution and happenings are not illusions. Time is also real for God as God executes designs. But, the world and so also time, are finite, as they have a beginning and an end. If we would give up this belief, we would have to believe that the world is eternal. But the Absolute is eternal not in the temporal sense. It is eternal not in the sense that it is in all moments of time. It is eternal in the sense of being timeless. It transcends time in the sense that time is irrelevant to the Absolute.

The Absolute is described as Infinite. It is infinite because it cannot be finite. The finite is finite because it depends on other thing for its existence. The Absolute being the ultimate reality is the ground of everything. It does not need the support of anything else for its own existence. Therefore, it is infinite. It must be remembered that it has infinite power also. God is one of the infinite powers of the Absolute. The Absolute is God from the cosmic point of view. The Absolute conceived in limitation is God, which appears as Supreme Wisdom, Love and Goodness. The eternal is reduced to the personal and finite reality. Reality, apart from the cosmos, is the Absolute and in relation to the universe is God. When viewed in infinity, indeterminateness, timelessness and transcendence, the reality is conceived to be the Absolute. But with finite personality and relation, the same reality is God. Radhakrishnan says : "We call the supreme the Absolute, when we view it apart from the cosmos, God in relation to the cosmos. The Absolute is the pre-cosmic nature of God, and God is the Absolute from the cosmic point of view."⁷

The Absolute is changeless because it is infinite. Being infinite it is self-existent and hence complete in itself. To change means to become something which implies that the changing things lack something. As the Absolute lacks nothing, it is complete in itself.

The Absolute is the total reality. It is the totality of the infinite deities, Gods or powers. God is the power which creates this universe, sustains it, evolves it and destroys it. Even this world is one of the definite manifestations of the Absolute. God, whom the worshippers worship is not mere appearance of the Absolute.

The Absolute is transcendental reality. It transcends its finite and also its infinite expressions. The category of transcendence and immanence is not really applicable to the Absolute. Immanence commonly implies that one reality is existent in another reality. But as the Absolute is the totality of the reality, there can be no others to it. This world is actualising one of the possibilities of the Absolute. Infinite possibilities of the Absolute cannot be actualised in this world process. Therefore, another power, God will be projected from the Absolute for the realisation of its unrealised possibilities which remains unmanifested in this finite universe.

Radhakrishnan called the Absolute the whole of perfection. Everything else is imperfect. There may be degrees of perfection as Bradley says but Absolute is the wholly perfect reality. There is no question of degree in it. It is due to this reason that Radhakrishnan asserts that the Absolute is beyond all these categories. Though this universe is the expression of the Absolute, we cannot reduce the Absolute to the totality of the nature. Here we may trace that Radhakrishnan's conception of ultimate reality is not pantheistic in character, but it keeps on swinging in between Pantheism and Theism.

Now, one may raise a question; if the Absolute is the only truth, how does the world come into existence? Radhakrishnan says, "The world comes to be in and through the act of self-assertion by the divine self, the assertion being of the form 'I am'. But the moment the 'I' is affirmed, the infinitude of non-being makes its appearance and confronts the 'I'. At this stage we have God and the world facing each other. But the alienation between the two has to be overcome, the not—I has to return to the I. The I in the process of return becomes a Me. And when the created and the creator coincide God lapses into the Absolute."⁸ But, if it is asked, why does

this not 'I' appear when the 'I' is asserted, Dr. Radhakrishnan's answer is that it is *Māyā*, a mystery.

But, all these descriptions of the Absolute are imperfect attempts to understand the nature of the Absolute. As the Absolute is not a tangible object which we can touch or study, what we are to understand must be the world, including ourselves. As the structure of our thought is organic, we have to understand it as an organic whole. Hence, Dr. Radhakrishnan also says that the nature of the Absolute cannot be apprehended fully. He declares : "Pure Being which is the Absolute can only be indicated. It can be alluded to, but not described."⁹

This once again shows the deep influence of Śaṅkara on the Philosophy of Radhakrishnan. But in spite of being influenced by Śaṅkara, he also talks about the principle of God.

God

Over and above the principle of the Absolute, Radhakrishnan also talks about the principle of God. Two principles are conceived as basically one, as different ways of apprehending the same reality. Śaṅkara makes a distinction between *Par-mārthīc Dṛṣṭi* and *Vyavahārika Dṛṣṭi* and the difference between the two is ultimately reduced to these two points of view.

Radhakrishnan also distinguishes between the Absolute and God though he does not reduce their discussion to the transcendental and practical point of view as has been done in *Advaita Vedānta* of Śaṅkara. Radhakrishnan feels that in order to explain this universe it is necessary to think of a principle that would account for the order and purpose of the universe. Like whitehead he also believes that one cannot account for the dynamic and creative character of the universe if the primary being or explaining principle also is not conceived as creative. Hence, he feels the necessity of a principle by which the indeterminateness of creativity can be transmuted into a determinate principle. This shows that the Divine Intelligence—the creative power—has to be conceived as the intermediary between the Absolute Being and the Cosmic Process.

This is the way in which Dr. Radhakrishnan introduces God in his Philosophy. The Supreme has been conceived as revealing itself in two ways—Absolute and *Iśvara*. God is the Absolute in action; God is the creator. The real in relation to itself is the Absolute and the real in relation to the creation is God. Radhakrishnan is of the opinion that man's religious as well as metaphysical aspirations must be satisfied. The Absolute is the object of metaphysical aspiration and God is the object of the religious aspiration.

This shows that, unlike Śaṅkara, Radhakrishnan does not reduce God to unreality by making it a product of *Māyā*. God is real in so far as this universe is real. God is an aspect of the Absolute. The real as infinite possibility is the Absolute, but when we limit the Absolute to its relation with that possibility which has actually been realised in the form of creation, then the Absolute appears as the Creator, as Wisdom, Love and Goodness—as God. Radhakrishnan explains it very clearly : “We call the Supreme the Absolute when we view it apart from the Cosmos, God in relation to the Cosmos. The Absolute is the pre-cosmic nature of God, and God is the Absolute from the cosmic point of view.”¹⁰

We have already seen that the inadequacy of naturalism shows that the world process for its law and creativeness requires a creative power. We have also seen that the rationality of the universe suggests that the creative power is mind or spirit. There is no reason why we should identify it with vital force or life. As Bergson suggests, Descartes's argument is also known in the field of Philosophy as he states that since we do not owe our own existence either originally or from moment to moment to ourselves or other beings like ourselves, there must be a primary and fundamental cause, God. But God is not the cause in the ordinary sense, for that would make Him an event within the series of events. The cause of the world lies in a sense outside itself. God is prior to universe, but not in any temporal sense. He is the logical prius of the world.

From this it follows that the ultimate creative energy of the universe is one and not many. It possesses unity, consciousness

and priority of existence. According to Radhakrishnan, God, as the universal mind working with a conscious design, who is at once the beginning of the world, the author of its order, the principle of its progress and the goal of its evolution, is not the God of religion unless we take into account the fact of religious consciousness. Our moral life tells us that God is not only the goal but the sustainer of our moral effort also. Our spiritual consciousness reveals us that the Supreme is all comprehensive one. There is an affinity between the structure of the world and the mind of a man. Radhakrishnan affirms that in the way of perceiving a rose, as we have to turn our eyes in that direction, for the objects are not subjective. In the same way, to realise the Supreme Spirit, a firm and purified mind is necessary. The reality of spirit is not invalidated simply because it is seen only by those who are pure in heart.

Radhakrishnan is of the view that the conception of God as wisdom, love and goodness is not a mere abstract demand of thought but is the concrete reality, which satisfies the religious demand also. The Hindu conception of God as Brahmā, Viśnu and Śiva illustrates this triple character. Brahmā is the permordial nature of God. God as Viśnu is sacrifice. He is continuously engaged in opposing every tendency in the universe which makes for error, ugliness, evil and cosmic strife. The Ṛg Vedā says : "All that is bare He covers; all that is sick He cures; by His grace the blind man sees and the lame walks."¹¹ He is not so much man seeking God as God seeking man. He goes out into the dangers of the wilderness to lead us out of it. His love is His essential nature. He is for ever saving the world.

The redemptive function of God is an incessant activity. God manifests Himself in striking forms wherever and whenever new adjustments have to be brought about. It becomes emphasised when the moral order is sharply disturbed. In our Hindu mythology, these special revelations are called avatārās. The popular view holds that when darkness prevails, waters deepen and things threaten to collapse into chaos, God Himself becomes personally incarnate in a unique way. But the continuous urge of spiritual life, the immanent law which constitutes the unity of the world, are not consistent with the conception of unique revelation of complete Godhead on the

earth. "The whole movement directed towards the realization of potentialities is a continuous incarnation of God."¹²

The view that God as love will see to it that the plan succeeds, is not to be confused with the doctrine of absolute predestination, which may throw human freedom and paralyse moral effort. After all, it is the fight that gives life its value and not the ultimate result. Even the consummation of the result is contingent on the passion with which human individuals work for the cause. It is with the hope that even the most wilful will respond to the long suffering love of God. When the hold of God on the world becomes precarious, his love, which is constant, manifests itself in a striking way. According to the Christian religion, when the situations become desperate it is said that God once sent a deluge which destroyed almost all mankind. And on another occasion sent his only—begotten Son. It does not mean that the love of God is an accidental quality. Love belongs to the very core of God's being. Complete self-giving is the nature of divine activity.

God is not only truth and love, but also justice. He is the perfection which rejects all evil. God acts according to fixed laws. He does not break his own laws. God does not forgive the criminal, even when he repents, for the moral order is conceived in love and not in hatred. In his view, wrong doings must have its natural consequences. "You shall assuredly never be passed over by God's judgement, not though you make yourself never so small and hide in the bowels of the earth, or exalt yourself to heaven. You must pay the penalty due, either while you are still with us, or after your departure hence, in the house of Hades, or it may be, by removal to some still more disolate region."¹³

"The one God creates as Brahmā, redeems as Viśnu, and judges as Śiva. These three represent the three stages of the plan, the process and the perfection. The source from which all things come, the spring by which they are sustained, and the good into which they enter are one."¹⁴ God loves us, creates us and rules us. Creation, redemption and judgements are different names for the fact of God.

So far as the world is concerned, God is organic with it. It is impossible to detach God from the world. Rāmānujā regards

the relation of God to the world as one of the soul to the body. God is the sustainer of the body as well as its inner guide. Struggle and growth are real in the life of God. Time is essential from the cosmic standpoint. Absolute is beyond the time but God is essentially bound up with the life in time. The process of the world is an emergence under the guidance of God, who is immanent in the process, though the goal is transcendent to it. The process of the world is not a mere unfolding of what is contained in the beginning. The end of the world is not contained in the beginning. Those who have any appreciation of this fact, cannot adopt the view of preformation. Bergson who emphasises the creativity of evolution, seems to think that the whole of evolution of life with its progressive manifestation of structure is latent in life. To quote him, "Life does not proceed by the assimilation and addition of elements, but by dissociation and division."¹⁵ The creative impulse is present from the beginning, but the forms created are due to the cosmic stress. That alone can account for the ordered character of the world of varied tendencies. A God who has arranged everything at the beginning of the world and can change nothing, create nothing new is not a God at all. If the universe is truly creative, God works as a creative genius. There is thus an element of indetermination throughout the process, though it diminishes in degree as the amount of actuality increases.

God, though immanent, is not identical with the world until the very end. Throughout the process there is an unrealized residuum in God, but it vanishes when we reach the end. God, who is organic with it recedes into the background of the Absolute. The beginning and the end are limiting conceptions, and the great interest of the world centres in the intermediate process from the beginning to the end. God is more the saviour and redeemer than creator and judge. As an essentially human phenomenon, religion insists on the "otherness" of God. Worship, love and repentance have no meaning without it.

As a personal being, God is limited by the selves, and cosmos. Though God is Omniscient, Omnipotent and absolutely free, His activity and freedom are limited by the freedom of selves.

God works in an environment. "If God has no environment on which he acts, He cannot be personal. If God is personal, He cannot be the Absolute which has nothing which is not included in it in every possible sense of the world."¹⁶

The dualism between God and the world is found in the beginning. God and matter are complementary aspects of creation. God creates the world out of raw matter. At the beginning, God's ideas and plans remain with him transcendent to the universe, but in the end they are fully expressed in the cosmos. The world manifests God continuously, till God is completely manifested in the world. The creator and the created coincide in the end. As the world reaches its destiny with God's fullest and perfect expression, it ceases to exist. God and world then become one and then takes place the dissolution of the cosmos. But Radhakrishnan points out that God is the cause of the universe not in the ordinary sense. God, as cause of the universe, lies outside it. He is prior to the world. To quote him, "The Spirit of God moves over the waters, the formless matter, the totality of possible existence. Vital impetus and raw matter are, for Bergson, the complementary aspects of creation. We cannot eliminate the dualism between subject and object, between God and the given in the process of the universe."¹⁷ Radhakrishnan is of the view that the change, movement, progress, evolution and spiritualisation of the world take place when it is imperfect. But when the world attains perfection, there will be no evolution, no cosmic process and no spiritualisation. The fully perfect cosmos will then be motionless. Both God and world will have to work and will finally recede into God.

God though immanent is not identical with the world until the very end. Throughout the process there is an unrealised residuum in God but it vanishes when we reach the aim. When the reign is complete the kingdom comes, God who is organic with the world recedes into the background of the Absolute.¹⁸

The world and the Individual selves are imperfect. The divine work is possible only when they are limited and imperfect. If the world and selves were eternally perfect, there would have been no activity at all. The very existence of God depends on their imperfections.

Furthermore, God satisfies the religious sentiments of man. The Absolute is transcendent to the universe. Like Tagore, Radhakrishnan also conceives that we are not interested in the Absolute in its purity but as *Māyāvi*. We are less concerned with the canvas than with the painting done on it. God is the redeemer and the saviour. As a saviour, He purifies and spiritualises the world more and more. God descends on earth in the human form to remove evil. The conception of *Avatāra* in Hindu mythology emphasises the descent of God on earth again and again to purify the cosmos from evil.

To review the conception of Absolute and God in the connection of ultimate reality, we may now point out that God is a personal being. His activity is possible only when He is limited. If He is infinite and limitless, there cannot be environment. On the other hand, the Absolute is infinite, impersonal and pure being. It is without any activity. Again, God having no environment, cannot be personal. If God is personal, He is not Absolute, for the Absolute is infinite and includes all existence. God's existence is possible only in relation to an environment.

God is the creative personality acting on an environment. This world is the field of His action. Though, God is all-powerful, it is limited by the activities of the human individual. The Omnipotence of God has, therefore, limitations. God's existence depends on the creation of the cosmos and its evolution. If there is no universe, there is no God, and if there is no God, there can be no universe. In other words, "The being of the personal God is dependent on creation even as a creation depends on God."¹⁹

Lastly, the cosmos and God exist in the Absolute, God is a reality other than the imperfect souls and the world, though they are derived from Him. The Absolute comprehends all principles, realities, God and the world. It is also beyond all these expressions. The Absolute is infinite reality,

possibility and actuality. Dr. Radhakrishnan observes : "We may distinguish between God as distinct from the lesser spirit who derive their being from him and the Absolute which comprehends all conceivable existence. God, spirits and matter are the Absolute, and not God alone."²⁰

In fact, Dr. Radhakrishnan feels that the qualities of existence, order, development, purposefulness, etc. that we notice in the world, demand an ontological foundation, and that can be provided by nothing less than the Absolute. "Why is there existence? Why is there anything at all? If everything disappeared there would be utter nothingness. If that nothingness did not provide or was not itself the possibility of being, there could not have been anything at all. The existence of the world are imperfect and impermanent and nothing that is imperfect can subsist of itself or by itself, for in so far as it is imperfect it is not. The Upanishads lead us from the imperfect existences in the world to the Supreme and Absolute Being...the existence of the world means the primacy of Being."²¹

With God conceived as the creative principle of the world, it becomes easy for Dr. Radhakrishnan to give spiritualistic account of creation and the world. He is against materialistic or naturalistic explanation of the universe. The materialistic explanations are mechanistic and they took upon the world as a sort of an automatic machine which goes on working in a blind and haphazard way. That is why Dr. Radhakrishnan adopts an idealistic explanation of the world. And here comes the question of the soul.

Individual Self and Real Self

To understand Dr. Radhakrishnan's account of the nature of the soul, it is essential to take note of two things in the very beginning. First, Radhakrishnan tries to remain faithful to the Indian tradition, and as such, he is convinced about the ultimate spirituality of man.

Secondly, he is realistic enough to be impressed by the present-day conditions of man. He is aware of the fact that man, as we find him in the world, is a biological and psycho-

logical individual, who is determined by his instincts, drives and motives.

Hence, we may say that Dr. Radhakrishnan is aware of man's double character i.e., peculiar combination of egoism and self-transcendence, of selfishness and universal love. Therefore, he tries to express his views regarding the nature of the soul in this light.

It would have been convenient for him to reject the biological nature of man. But a modern thinker like Dr. Radhakrishnan cannot afford to be unrealistic. Therefore, he seeks a way out. On the one hand, he accepts the ultimate spirituality of the soul, and on the other, he asserts the reality of man's biological aspect also. He always explains that these two are not incompatible with each other. He maintains that the physical aspect of man also has a reality, but that it does not contradict the spiritual nature of man. And it is in this light that he develops his views on the nature of the soul.

Dr. Radhakrishnan comes to think about this because he has a very deep realisation of the present-day state of man. It is true that man today appears to be much more comfortable—at least outwardly—than his ancestors. Science has brought more comforts and luxury to him. But a little insight will reveal that in the midst of comforts, the present-day man is restless and unhappy. Man appears to have lost the zest for life. He very soon becomes tired of the object of his love. There is no engagement which can give him sustained joy. An awareness of such a kind leads Radhakrishnan to think about the real nature of man.

He comes to think that this is chiefly due to an over-emphasis on the scientific ways of life. Science claims to have known every aspect of man. It claims to have determined the nature and functions of every part of human body. But it does not realize that to know the nature and functions of the physical part of the bodily man is not to know the real man. The real man cannot be reduced to nervous or bodily functions. Man cannot be known by scientific method of analysis. But it does not mean that scientific picture of man is totally false. Only it has to be remembered that picture

of man is of only physical man, which cannot represent man's that aspect which is beyond senses or intellect.

Now, it is clear that, according to Radhakrishnan, there are two aspects of man—one that leads scientists to describe man in his own scientific way, and the other that transcends the capacity of scientific analysis. It is not proper to characterise man as a combination of mind and body. It is better to call these two aspects as the finite and infinite aspects of man. The finite aspects are, by and large, aspects of the bodily, but even the bodily aspects of man give the evidence of the presence of spirituality in them. Dr. Radhakrishnan uses the word "soul" in a very wide sense, so much so that even bodily activities that have a tendency towards self-transcendence are described as soul-activities.

In order to understand the conception of soul, we have to take into account certain facts that are peculiar to man only and on account of which souls are to be distinguished from other aspects of nature. One very significant fact about the activities of man is that unlike other aspects of Nature, man is not wholly determined in terms of his class-characters. If one knows the class-characters of a plant, one can claim to have known it. But in the case of man, that is not so. Class-characters have their own importance, but individual characters are equally important. It is in this sense that man is described as unique. Radhakrishnan, more or less like Tagore, conceives that no account of the nature of the soul can afford to overlook the uniqueness of every individual.

There is the other peculiarity which is present in all kinds of soul activities. Man, unlike other aspects of Nature, has the capacity to reflect and to plan his moves. He cannot act blindly. In other words, man has the capacity to look ahead. This is, what Dr. Radhakrishnan means by the expression 'self-transcendence'. This, according to Radhakrishnan is the very significant aspect of the soul's activity.

The self, according to Radhakrishnan, is an organised whole. It is not a simple, unitary. Just as an atom, life, consciousness and self-consciousness are not simple and unitary, but are organised whole or composite beings. In the words of Radhakrishnan, "The self is a unity of diverse parts

with an enduring structure.”²² But the self as an organised whole has higher unity, functions and organisation. Though the parts of the soul are transient there is persistence of pattern which constitutes the unity of a self.

It is a dynamic principle, ever mobile and changing. It is neither a static concept nor a self-identical entity. As the self is a mind body organic whole, both consciousness and body continuously change. The self is an emergent principle, which comes into being, changes and passes away. But the specific organisation of it endures. The self is unique because its pattern and organisation of elements is one which persists. Though the parts change, come into being and are constantly giving way for new parts, the whole is not destroyed with its parts. To quote Radhakrishnan, “The self has no element which is self-identical throughout. The body is continuously changing. It is a scene of unending waste made good by repair. There is nothing concrete in the individual which is not produced and which will not pass away. The distinctiveness of selfhood, does not lie in its simplicity but in the specific organisation of its contents.”²³

But, according to him, all selves are not alike. There is hierarchy in the selves. The human self has higher, internal and synthetic unity than what the animal self has. Whereas in the lower animals there is instinctive unity, there is self-conscious unity in the human self. The human self has a higher internal synthesis which enables one to use symbols and reflect on experience.

There are three types of functions of human self, viz., appetites, emotional reactions and intellectual ideals. It is the intellectual ideals which organise desires and emotions into permanent unities. In the self, we have a teleological unity, which is the only thing constant in the concrete, busy, active and dynamic self. Though the changes in self ever take place, there are some of its distinguishable characteristics which always remain. In the series of the changes of the self, the unity is preserved in its attainment of that end. As the unity of a single melody is realised in the time, the unity of self is realised in the series of stages, towards the attainment of end.

The self is the most integrated entity. The integration in man is partly conscious and voluntary. Through intelligence man conceives some ideals and organises all his activities. The more a man pursues his ideals, the more integrated and organised he becomes. The soul becomes gradually more and more perfect. The highest degree of unity in an individual is attended, when life is identified with one Supreme purpose. When the body, life, mind and self-consciousness are unified, the self attains a higher degree of perfection.

Now, on the basis of above discussion, we can say that Dr. Radhakrishnan conceives double soul in man, viz., the finite self and the infinite self. The former is a mind body relation whereas the latter is a portion of God. These two are called as Individual Soul and Real Soul also.

Individual Soul

According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, the finite aspects of man are determined by empirical conditions. In other words, the bodily self can be called as representing this aspect of man. It is called finite because its determining factors themselves can be determined in terms of known conditions.

The peculiarity of this aspect is that it always considers the embodied man as a subject living in an environment. All the bodily responses are determined by environment. Dr. Radhakrishnan calls this aspect of soul by different names—the empirical man, the physical man, the natural man, the individual etc.

An analysis of this aspect will point out some of its characteristics. Firstly, many religious philosophies both in the east and the west have emphasized on the complete annihilation of the bodily potentiality. In India, seers of the past emphasized on the illusory character of the physical self. But Dr. Radhakrishnan is not of the similar view. He says that the physical constitutes one aspect of the soul. "The realm of spirit is not cut off from the realm of life. To divide man into outer desire and inner quality is to violate the integrity of human life ... the two orders of reality—the transcendent and the empirical are closely related."²⁴

But Dr. Radhakrishnan explains that finite aspect of man has a reality so long as man remains confined to that extent. But that is not his final nature. Here, one may raise a question by pointing out that if finite aspect of man is ultimately to be transcended, they are not real. But Dr. Radhakrishnan says that finite aspects are real only in the sense in which 'a stage' of any process of development is real. Unless the stages are crossed, the goal cannot be reached. He explains this difficulty by giving an example of mile-post. If we are travelling on a road, we have to cross various mile-posts. But it does not mean that the mile-post crossed before becomes unreal as soon as it is crossed. But it has to be realised that if one decides to stay at a particular mile-post, he cancels his onward march. Thus the mile-post is a stage and not the goal.

Dr. Radhakrishnan tries to prove the reality of finite soul in different ways. First, even in this stage we get unity and order. The bodily aspect also shows unity. It is not that the bodily aspect is chaotic. For example, every organism grows in and through changes and yet it remains identical with itself and shows unity. Had it not been so, the medical sciences would not have succeeded in their attempts to determine the bodily functions. It points out that there are ends beyond the bodily stage.

Secondly, the embodied individual is somehow aware that he is capable of going higher than the bodily stage. He is aware of his limitations, and yet he somehow realises that he can surpass the limitations. Dr. Radhakrishnan says, "Man's awareness of his finiteness and temporality means his consciousness of eternity."²⁵

The Infinite Soul

So far, we have seen that the finite side of man's nature consists of physical and biological nature of the individual. We have also seen that in the aspect man is always aware of a beyond, which impels him to transcend his bodily aspects. Hence, an analysis of this capacity of self will reveal the true nature of the soul. This aspect of man cannot be determined. Therefore, it is higher than that of the empirical.

Radhakrishnan says that this is 'the spirit' in man. The infinite aspect of man, therefore, consists in his spirituality.

The word 'spiritual' stands for something higher than the empirical. Therefore, it transcends 'the subject' and 'the object'. It must be of the nature of self-consciousness. In self-conscious stage, the self is aware of itself. The subject itself is the object of its awareness. Hence, the spiritual must be of the nature of self-consciousness. At least in the case of man, self-consciousness is like a chord which is able to bind and keep together all the direct experiences. Hence, it gives an individual a distinct personality. Therefore, by calling man 'spiritual', Dr. Radhakrishnan means that man is a self-conscious being who is able to unite all his direct experiences in the act of his self-consciousness. This capacity enables man to organise his moves and to bring about a spiritual growth. And this is the true nature of man.

Dr. Radhakrishnan explains this aspect as Divine in man. The natural tendency to attain higher and higher status in man shows that man has the Divine spark within himself. He clearly says, "There is, in the self of man, at the very centre of his being, something deeper than the intellect, which is akin to the Supreme."²³ In fact, all our spiritual activities, aesthetic or moral or religious are expressions of the fact of kinship between man's nature and Divine nature. That is why it can be said that in his infinite aspect man bears the stamp of his Divine origin and is capable of cultivating Divine excellences. He can act of his free choice, and can act in freedom. He can reach great spiritual heights and can have spiritual experiences.

Dr. Radhakrishnan now gives some examples which can be cited in support of presence of the Divine element in man. Such actions as are regarded 'noble' are called spiritual by Radhakrishnan. We undertake pains in order to help others and perform moral duties etc. How can we account for these? Materialistic considerations cannot explain these facts. Only spiritual consciousness can account for these. Again, how can we explain the facts of aesthetic enjoyment, the religious commitment and similar other facts? In listening to the melodious notes of a sweet music, we seem to forget about

everything in this world. For the time being, we being to soar higher in a different world. And this, according to Radhakrishnan, is a clear illustration of spiritual behaviour. Again, in extra-ordinary moments of our life we have flashes of the presence of the Divine element in us. Dr. Radhakrishnan is never tired of referring to the great intuitive experiences of the prophets like Jesus, Buddha, Mohammad and Zoroaster etc. He asserts that these clearly show that we are capable of experiencing the Divine within us. Again, the very longing of man for salvation is itself an evidence of the presence of spiritual element within him. Salvation is the state of freedom, the state of Divinity itself. For Radhakrishnan, one cannot aspire for such a state unless he himself is spiritual. Another very convincing proof of man's Divine nature is the fact that even the most immoral and most wicked of all men can also be reformed. And, it is possible only on account of the presence of Divine element within him.

On the strength of all these evidences, Dr. Radhakrishnan comes to feel that the true nature of man is his ultimate nature, which consists in spirituality and which is, in a sense, akin to Divine nature.

Thus, we see that self is not a passive being. It has Divine consciousness and power. It takes the hold of human personality and governs his thoughts, sentiments and behaviour. Self-realization is the attainment of soul personality. It is to identify the empirical self with his transcendental self. But self-realization is not enough. The self has to be finally identified with God and to realize eternal emancipation. It is to become God. It is to achieve Supreme identity, oneness and unity with God. The self finds unity with God as well as with our empirical self. When the supreme self becomes one with God, it realises final redemption and salvation.

Human Personality

Dr. Radhakrishnan takes human personality as a complex organisation of the body, life, mind and soul which work together in an integrated manner. The personality is not a static concept but a dynamic whole of parts. It evolves, grows and develops in a coordinated and synthetic process.

Man is finite as well as infinite being. Each human personality is a distinct and unique structure. It is a unity of diverse parts having an enduring structure. Some personalities are highly integrated, sublime, purified and refined, and some others show lack of unity and harmony. These are lowly, rough and primitive. The growth of a personality is a matter of degree.

According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, human personality is a segment of the growing unity. It develops in a teleological manner. It is the intellectual ideals which organise human experience, desires, and emotions. Human personality is oriented towards that ideal. Its development has, therefore, teleological unity. There are certain distinguishable characters in human personality, which characterise an individual's uniqueness. The human personalities are uniquely different because its ideals are different. Its structure carries the uniqueness which leaves its marks on its body, life, mind and consciousness. It is the ideals which organise human personalities. So long as a man is identified with an ideal, he has the same personality. When a person undergoes changes, it means that his ideal has undergone change.

The realisation and ascents of a personality are carried from birth to birth. When a self leaves the body, it is accompanied by knowledge, work and experience. A man is not born totally new. The self enters new life with past inheritance and growth. It weaves out the present and prepares for the future. There can be no reversions in rebirth. Human beings cannot regress to animal life, because there is the onward push behind each of us. The cosmic process is not regarded as meaningless, as it leads us to ascent, development and expansion of human life. The emergence of mystic, spiritual and divinised beings is the result of ceaseless purification, transformation and divinisation of an individual from birth to birth.

An individual, according to Dr. Radhakrishnan, ceaselessly exceeds himself for ends, perfection and values. One's identification with values results in the development of his personality. The higher the values, the higher is its ascent possible. Identification with goals, purposes and values

develops his personality and he goes beyond his self-centred isolation.

The human personality remains imperfect so long it is not united with God. God is an 'other' for him. But one who has become identified with God enjoys blessedness, divinity, peace, universality, infinity and omniscience. There is in individual an aspiration for ascent and identity with God. It is at his spiritual height that man experiences God and gets united with him. Man fulfils himself in his vital contact with God and in being transformed into the divine being or superman.

Reality is everywhere complex. It is so even in the atom. The self as real need not be simple. Locke confesses that a simple substance distinct from its manifestations could be a hidden something. 'I know not what is behind', Hume's argument against the theory of self as a being or a substance which in some inexplicable way transcends the totality of its content still hold good. Such a substance is not observable and there is no evidence that it exists. Kant argues that the notion of self-contradictory, is an object of the self and never the self itself. If the soul were of the indestructible atomic character, its existence would be of no value at all. The self has no element which is self-identical throughout. The body is continuously changing. Thoughts and emotions are continuously changing. There is nothing concrete in the individual which is not produced and which will not pass away, nothing from which there is no escape, or change.

The human being is an emergent aspect of the world-process and not a substance different in kind from the process itself. Persistence of pattern constitutes unity of a thing. Though everyone of the constituents of the body is changing, the bodily system as organised totality endures. It is the same with regard to the human self which is a unity of diverse parts with an enduring structure. As many of its elements are transient, the plan of organisation is, however, preserved.

In the history of thought, the individual self has often been conceived on the analogy of a physical thing. It is said to possess an ultimate core of reality which remains unchanged throughout the changes of its qualities or states. It is viewed

as a simple, self-identical, somewhat distinct from its experiences which has attached to it.

It is a teleological unity, which is the only thing constant in the concrete, busy, active, dynamic self. Each soul has its life's star, its main purpose. To quote Upanishad, "Man is altogether formed of his desires."²⁷

What we call a person at any stage is the cross-section of the growing entity. We speak of the person as the same so long as certain determinable characteristics are found for a definite period of time. The organisation of the contents has a specific character which constitutes the individual's uniqueness. As the whole is more than the sum of its parts, it determines the nature of the parts and their functioning. The individual carries his uniqueness even in his thumb prints, as criminals know to their cost.

Therefore, Radhakrishnan asserts that in a true sense personality is a mask. It is the part we play in the drama of life. Each of us looks at the world from a characteristic point of view. The mental data can be systematized in different ways and so long as they are fused into a single whole, we have a single self. The phenomenon of multiple personality points out that for the same period or different periods, we may have different conceptions of our personality due to loss of consciousness or discontinuity. If the experiences are not sufficiently integrated, selfhood becomes loose and is often broken up into a series of relatively unconnected systems of behaviour and we have cases of many selves.

In all personal experiences, we have the duality between the subject experiencing and the object experienced. The subject of experience is said to be distinct from every moment of experience. It is the persistent substratum which makes all knowledge, recognition and retention possible.

Hume reduces the subject to the object and makes the self a bundle of conscious happenings, for he could not find the 'I' among his mental states. There is no explanation as to why the rapidly passing experiences hang together as the experiences of one and the same individual. The laws of association cannot account for this fact. That is why Kant says that the laws of

association mean a self which is more than a mere haphazard bundle of experiences.

William James looks upon the passing thought as the subject of the experience. It gathers up into itself all that have previously occurred and grows by assimilating the new. The thought is the thinker but we cannot understand how one state can absorb another.

James Ward believes that every moment of the experience of a person has three aspects, viz., attention, feeling and presentation. The first two are subjective presentation, the last is the object of experience. The active self is held to be more persistent than the contents which are ever-changing. Ward's subject is too much abstract and is postulated for the purpose of explaining experience.

Ward's view reminds us of Kant's 'I think', which must accompany all experiences. The 'I think' of Kant is often represented as a mere logical form which accompany all objects of consciousness. The relation of such a changeless passive entity, which remains the same for ever, is not easy to conceive. Such a subject has been assumed to account for the synthesis involved in experience. It is said to be the ground of all categories, which makes possible the empirical unity of consciousness.

Dr. Radhakrishnan conceives that subject and object are elements which are distinguishable but not separable in experience, which is one. The distinction between the two comes as a distinction within a whole. If the two were independent of each other, knowledge would become a mystery. We cannot have knowledge out of them, for it is the ultimate fact beyond which we cannot go. The true subject is not an object which we can find in knowledge. It is different from all objects—the body, the senses, the empirical self itself. We cannot make the subject the property of any substance or the effect of any cause, for it is the basis of all such relations. The individual who is aware of himself as limited has direct consciousness of something which limits him and his purposes. The consciousness of limit involves the action of the greater unlimited self in us.

So far we have seen that man is a finite-infinite being. Even in his finite embodied existence his spirituality asserts

itself. Even in the midst of his finite surroundings, he has yearnings of a higher kind. The soul has to pass through various stages of embodied life, but all these stages are only resting places for him. His various births merely provide him with opportunities for directing his energy towards the realisation of the goal of existence—which is the ultimate human destiny.

Ancient Indian Philosophy describes this ultimate goal as Moksha. It is conceived as a state free from sufferings. It is a state in which one is able to realise one's own true nature. Dr. Radhakrishnan also conceives this state more or less in a similar manner, but this conception of the ultimate human destiny bears the stamp of his own metaphysical convictions. It follows naturally from Dr. Radhakrishnan's account of the 'reality', 'world' and 'man'. For him, if reality is ultimately one and if man is man only in creation and if man as man is finite-infinite, then the ultimate human destiny can be nothing else but the realisation of oneness. So long as man is in embodied state, he cannot attain his ultimate destiny. Therefore, the first aspect of his destiny must be freedom from the embodied existence. But that will not put an end to creation. So long as the cosmic process does not come to an end, complete unity will not be established. Therefore, the final aspect of his destiny, according to Dr. Radhakrishnan, must be the realisation of this unity at the end of this cosmic process.

According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, although the finite aspects of man are real, the uniqueness of man consists in his spirituality. Therefore, salvation would mean the realisation of complete spirituality. Radhakrishnan says, "The destiny of the human soul is to realise its Oneness with the Supreme."²⁸ The goal of life is union with God, the realisation of the complete monistic character of reality. This can be described as self-realisation also, because it is the fullest expression of the higher nature of the self.

Though the spiritual union of man with God is the ultimate goal of the universe, one may realise it earlier than others. The ethical life and meditation quickens divinisation of the human personality. With the spiritual birth, there

takes place total conversion of a human personality into the divine personality. The entire human personality reacts to the felt experience of God. It is that divine unity, that experience of Oneness with God, controls his lower nature, viz., body, life, mind and consciousness. Dr. Radhakrishnan observes: "It cleanses all parts of our inward being and brings about a rebirth of the soul, a redemption of loyalties and a remaking of our personalities. Life puts on immortality and the whole being of man becomes intenser."²⁹

But Dr. Radhakrishnan denies the possibility of an individual's salvation prior to cosmic salvation. However enlightened and spiritualised a self may be, it falls short of perfection in an undivine universe. Unless the environment is pure, no human being can ever be pure. A perfect alone can give birth to a perfect individual. The salvation of a human being is possible only when the cosmic salvation takes place. The individual salvation and cosmic salvation occur simultaneously. The pursuit of God realisation may start in an individual but it must end in fellowship. "In a true sense, the ideal individual and the perfect community arise together."³⁰ So long the cosmic process continues, the mystics engage themselves in purification of the sinful and ignorant selves. When all selves obtain communion and oneness with God, when all become prophets and seers, the world realises its destiny.

In trying to give an account of the nature of the soul, Dr. Radhakrishnan leans heavily on the Indian tradition. Hence, concepts like Karma, freedom, rebirth etc. become important in his Philosophy of man also. Let us put an eye on his views briefly, with regard to these concepts.

The Law of Karma

The two features of nature : (i) connection with the past and (ii) creation with the future, are present in the human level also. The connection with the past is denoted by the word 'Karma'. Human life is an organic whole where each successive phase grows out of what has grown before. We are what we are on account of our affinity with the

past. Human growth is an ordered one and its orderliness is governed by the Law of Karma.

Karma literally means action, deed. All acts produce their effects, which are recorded both in the organism and the environment. Their physical effects may be short-lived but their moral effects (Samskara) are worked into the character of the self. Every single thought and deed enter into the chain of causes which makes us what we are. In other words, an action brings effects on the organism. Its effects on the organism are retained as samskaras or tendencies of thought, which form the character of the soul. Good actions, thoughts produce good character, and evil actions result in evil character. Dr. Radhakrishnan says: "Human life is an organic whole where each successive phase grows out of what has gone before. We are what we are on account of our affinity with the past."³¹ The growth of the character of an individual self depends on the Law of Karma. Our life is not at the mercy of blind chance. The Christian Scriptures refer to it. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."³²

The Law of Karma recognises the rule not only in outward nature, but also in the world of mind and morals. We are making our characters and shaping our destinies every moment. "There is no loss of any activity which we commence, nor is there any obstacle to its fulfilment. Even a little good that we may do will protect us against great odds."³³

Karma is not a mechanical principle but a spiritual necessity. It is the embodiment of life and will of God. God is called its supervisor. God is an impartial judge. All acts and thoughts are weighed in the universal balance of justice. The day of judgement is not in some remote future, but here and now and none can escape it. Divine laws cannot be evaded. We have to carry with us the whole of our past deeds.

Dr. Radhakrishnan tells us that there is room for repentance and forgiveness in this scheme. The principle of Karma reckons with the material or the context in which each indivi-

dual is born. It regards the past as determined but, at the same time, it points out that the future is only conditioned. Man is not a mere mechanism of instincts. The Bhagvata tells us to raise self by the self. We can use the material with which we are endowed to promote our ideals.

Thus, our Karmas connect us with the past in so far as we are formed in thought, emotion and will. An individual has a past as well as a future. Man's past deeds stretching back to an indefinite period of time bind him with the physical and vital conditions of the world. That is to say everything in this universe is the effect of the past and at the same time cause of its future changes. The Karma binds us with the past by giving structure to our self and yet man is free in his actions.

Karma, according to Dr. Radhakrishnan, is not so much a principle of retribution as one of continuity. Good produces good and evil produces evil. Love increases our power of love, and hatred our power of hatred. Man is continuously shaping his own future. The Law of Karma should not be confused with the theory of reward and punishment. The reward for virtue is not a life of pleasure, nor is the punishment for sin pain. Pleasure and pain may govern the animal nature of man but not his human nature. Love which is a joy in itself sometimes suffers whereas hatred sometimes stands for satisfaction. Good and evil are not to be confused with material well-being and physical suffering. Pleasure and pain are for the growth of the soul.

The Law of Karma is not inconsistent with freedom. On the other hand, it is implied by it. It tells us that each individual will get the return according to his action. Nature will reply to the insistent call of Spirit. The principle of Karma has, therefore, two aspects : a retrospective aspect and a prospective aspect, i.e., continuity with the past and creative freedom of the self. There is continuity between his desire and purpose and so also he performs such actions.

The problem of human freedom is confused somewhat by the distinction between the self and the will. The will is only the self in its active side and freedom of the will really means the freedom of the self. It is determination by the self. Here,

one may ask : "Do the past karmas determine our character ? Are we not really determined by our past karmas ? Are all our actions merely an effect of the past ones ? Are free actions on our part denied by our past determinations ?" From all these it follows that the Karmas performed in this life will determine our future. Radhakrishnan holds that Karma and freedom are not incompatible with each other because the karmas are karmas performed by the soul. Freedom does not mean absence of any determining factor, it means being determined by nothing else but oneself. Secondly, Radhakrishnan says that man is determined by past karma, but is free to create prospective karma. He introduces here the word "choice" which means that man has many alternatives. It is for him to choose any of these alternatives. There is no pressure or compulsion in the process of such choice. One is free to choose according to his own will. "The cards in the game of life are given to us; we do not select them. They are all traced to our past karmas, but we can call as we please, lead what suit we will, and as we play we gain or lose—and that is freedom."³⁴

Dr. Radhakrishnan says that if our acts were irrelevant to our past, then there would be no moral responsibility. Free acts cannot negate continuity. Freedom is not caprice since we carry our past with us. The range of one's natural freedom of action is limited. No man has universal field of possibilities for himself. When a possibility becomes an actuality, it assumes the character of necessity. The past can never be cancelled, though it may be utilized. Though the self is not free from the bonds of determination, it can subjugate the past to a certain extent and turn it into a new course. Choice is the assertion of freedom over necessity by which it converts. "The human agent is free."³⁵ Free-will is action done by self-determination. When an individual performs an action of his own choice, the act done is a self-determined act. Will is the active side of the self. Freedom of will is the freedom of self. It means determination of an act without any external pressure.

But one may further point out that self-determination is not really freedom. A person may not be under pressure for doing an action externally but he may feel compulsion for doing that

action by his inner nature. If an individual's action is based on his character, it cannot be called a free action. Radhakrishnan is aware of such difficulty and that is why he explains the meaning of the word, self-determination. Self-determination means action done by the whole of the self's nature. If an action is done by habit, viz., drinking of wine, the entire self is not employed in this act. It is only a fragment of self's nature which compels him to drink. There is no self-determination in this act. Only that action is free or self-determined in which "the individual employs his whole nature, searches the different possibilities and selects one which commends itself to his whole self."³⁶

The past is not an obstacle but beneficial to us, if we utilize it. There is order and regularity in the universe, and we are compelled and determined to a great extent. But we have also sufficient freedom. Dr. Radhakrishnan tells us that our life is like the game of cards. The cards are given to us, and so we are determined by them. But the victory depends on how we play. A good player utilises his cards in a good manner but a bad player may have good cards but he may not be able to utilise his cards. In the beginning, the player is more free, he may start from any point but gradually his actions get determined. Similarly, we are determined by our past deeds, character, mode of thinking, sentiments etc. But we are also free to play our parts by making the best of what we have in possession. And so, man is free.

Dr. Radhakrishnan dispels two misconceptions. Firstly, the theory of Karma is not a mere mechanism of reward and punishment. The reward of virtue is not always pleasure nor sin necessarily results in pain. It has been traced out that there is suffering in love and satisfaction in hatred. Hence, it is not necessary that good karmas always result in material well-being and evil in torture.

Secondly, it is also misleading that moral or virtuous actions lead us to success and evil to failure. The misfortune depends on disorder, weaknesses, and many other external factors. Men are like the birds which are trapped in a cage. They break their heads against the iron walls but in vain. Dr. Radhakrishnan says, "Thousands of young men the world over are breaking

their heads in vain against the iron wall of society like trapped birds in a cage. We see in them the essence of all tragedy, something noble breaking down, something sublime falling with a crash."³⁷

Life is a growth and a growth is undetermined in a measure. Though the future is a sequel of the past, we cannot say what it will be. If there is no indetermination, then human consciousness is an unnecessary luxury.

The Law of Karma does not support the doctrine of predestination. The nature is governed by law, which consists of order and harmony. Dr. Radhakrishnan is against the view in which God is the sovereign, who works without law or principle. For him, life is a gracious gift of God, who expresses His sovereignty through law. He says, "such a view of divine sovereignty is unethical. God's love is manifested in and through law."³⁸

The Law of Karma is closely connected with the doctrine of rebirth. It is the cardinal belief of the Orphic religion that the wheel of birth revolves inexorably. Throughout nature, life is preserved. Life is a perpetual going on, never resting, always straining forward for something that has not been but should be. The self of man is not an abstract quality which remains the same all the time. It is a living experience of which duration is an intrinsic characteristic. If everything else in nature arises from something continuous with it and passes into something also continuous with it, the self also is not an exception to the general scheme. In *Kathā Upanishad* it has been traced out, "Life corn the mortal grows; like corn is born again."³⁹

Dr. Radhakrishnan holds that it is an admitted principle of science that if there is some development, we may think about its past. The self enters this life with a certain nature and inheritance. We often watch talents that are inherited, an eye for beauty, a taste for music, which are not common qualities of the species. So, the self must have had some past history.

Rebirths are essential for the realization of the distant goal—salvation. It cannot be realised in a single life. A continuous pursuit from birth to birth can alone make self-realisation possible. Dr. Radhakrishnan, therefore, concludes

that for the attainment of far-off goal of life, rebirth is essential. Man cannot realise the fruits of all his actions in a single life. But it has been told that nothing is to be left. Man has to enjoy the fruits of his present actions also. That is why he has to take birth after birth for the realisation of the fruits of all his actions performed.

For instance, we see that some souls are born with high degree of proficiency or excellence. This inborn perfection can only be explained on the basis of the past. As soul has to actualise its different potencies and is not possible in one span of life, it requires series of births in succession. The imperfection and immaturity of selves points out their continuation from birth to birth, till there is complete realisation of union with God.

Rebirth, according to Dr. Radhakrishnan, is not a meaningless recurrence but it has a purpose and meaning. The self evolves ceaselessly from birth to birth i.e., from the sub-human level to the development of personality and character. The self which is imperfect to-day, moves on perpetually for fulfilment and perfection. So long the self remains imperfect, its evolution is a continuous process. Dr. Radhakrishnan observes, "It has the two features of continuity with the past (Karma) and creative advance into the future (freedom). It is as incomplete as any other organism and so perpetually moves on."⁴⁰

Conclusion

Now, we may conclude that Dr. Radhakrishnan, more or less in the manner of traditional philosophy, emphasises on the spiritual aspect of man. For him, the real nature of soul is freedom. He affirms that freedom is not the quality of the soul but the essence of it. The soul is spiritual and also free. The aesthetic enjoyment, dedication to any religious actions cannot be explained. As these actions are spiritual, these can be only felt. Moreover, there comes some extraordinary moments in the life of every individual when he does feel the flashes of the Divine present in us. Therefore, it can be said that the infinite aspect of the man bears the stamp of his Divine

origin. Man can exercise his free choice and can act in freedom.

Dr. Radhakrishnan stresses on the necessity of Karma also. Man, according to him, is determined by his past but he is free to create his prospective karma also. For this purpose, he emphasises on the choice. There are so many alternatives left for man. It depends on man as to how to use it. This is the real freedom. But he is aware of the fact that man cannot consume all the potentialities in one life. So, he has to take birth after birth till the actualisation of all the actions performed by an individual. Hence rebirth is necessary for the soul's emancipation. That is why he says that the future of the man depends to a very great extent on man himself.

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5

Conclusion

In Retrospect

The Law of Karma, ultimately based upon the doctrine of rebirth, is one of the basic tenets of the Hindu philosophy and religion. It has deeply influenced the lives of orthodox Hindus. As the physical sciences are based upon the law of causation and state that every cause must have its effect and like produces like, the Law of Karma also explains the same principle. It is that unseen law which adjusts each effect to its cause.

The Law of Karma or the Law of merit and demerit, (Karma in the sense of moral law) is neither particularly Hindu or Buddhistic, nor Theosophical. It is a presumption of all oriental philosophies. It was preached by Western religious teachers like St. Paul as well. For the first few centuries of the establishment of Christianity, it remained as one of its cardinal beliefs. The Western religious teachers were of the view that belief in rebirth was a necessity. And with the acceptance of the doctrine of rebirth, the logical corollary that follows is the doctrine of Karma.

The law of causation upon which the entire structure of physical and biological sciences are based, strengthens our belief in the Law of Karma. The birth of a being must be determined by some cause. The cause may be termed as the Karma of that being. The universe cannot be ruled partly by laws and partly by a blind, unreasonable chance. World's

accumulated wisdom is further testimony of the presence of the Law of Karma. And, as it is all-embracing and coeval with the universe ; it can only be grasped from a spiritual point of view. The Law of Karma, therefore, is a law, which dominates all other natural laws, but it is not a blind law. It is living and spiritual.

According to Law of Karma every act or deed must be followed by its consequences which are not merely of a physical character, but also mental and moral character. It produces effects on character, disposition, instincts and tendencies of the doer. The word *saṃskara* is meant for the physical, moral and mental traits with which a person is born. They form part of his personality and are borne by him in his life-time and carried into a future existence.

The consequences of a person's acts not being fully worked out in this life, need a future life for their consumption. The inequalities between human beings, their characters and their happiness or suffering, their good or ill-fortune conflict with our sense of justice and call for an explanation of the moral Government of this universe. They lead us to an inescapable conclusion i.e. to the presence of some law.

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul which justifies the belief in a future existence of the individual, equally justifies the pre-existence of the Law of Karma.

Ancient Indian Schools

From the early days of *Saṃhitā*, we find references to the idea of good deeds done in the past or appearing as the resultant in the present (or sticking to the body) for yielding fruits here-after. The following terms "*Śubhaspatī* (meaning—guardians of good deeds, used for the two *Aśvins*)";¹ "*Dhiyaspatī* (in the same sense, used for *Indra* and *Marut*)";² "*Vicarṣaṇiḥ* (meaning special seer of meritorious and demeritorious deeds used for *Indra*, seer of *Karman*)";³ "*Viśvacaṛṣaṇiḥ* (in the same sense used for *Agni*)";⁴ "*Pitā kuḷasya caṛṣaṇiḥ* (meaning—a guardian and a seer of the deeds done)";⁵ "*Viśvasya karma-nodhartā* (meaning—a supporter of all the deeds, or the deeds of the entire universe, used for *Indra*)";⁶ express these ideas.

References to Sañchita and Prārabdha Karmas are also found in the Saṁhitās. The terms 'Apracyutāni Vratāni' may refer to the exhausted accumulated deeds of the past, that is the Sañchita Karma. Similarly, the Mantra—"Inta pṛccha janimā kavīnāma manodhṛataḥ sukṛtastakṣata dyāni"⁷ (meaning—O Indra ! ask of the births of the divine seers. What led their taking birth and going to the heavens?), refers to the past deeds which led to the births of risis and their going to the heavens. In other words, there is an enquiry into the Prārabdha-karma.

The Gītā also emphasises upon the importance of the Law of Karma. According to it, Jivātman becomes Kartā and Bhoktā due to Avidyā. Hence, the performance of physical or mental activities becomes invariably associated with the jivātman so that the cycle of births and deaths for reaping the fruits of those actions also continues. Thus, when a man performs any action, though it comes to an end just thereafter, yet it produces a sort of impression, called merit or demerit, according to the nature of good or bad deeds.

It is said that when a man is born in this world, his birth may be the result of any one of his numerous acts, or a set of acts, which may have to be fructified through several bodies. In other words, the acts of a man may lead to such experiences, but there may be another act which would lead to the experiences possible only in an equine organism. But, according to Gītā, it must be remembered here that the experiences of both sets could not be exhausted in the course of a single birth. It is, therefore, not possible that the experiences resulted from one's all past acts, accumulated from previous births be exhausted in normal course, in any single birth.

Although there is only one kind of Karma, yet on the basis of the time of its existence and experience it is divided into Sañchita, Sanchiyamāna and Prārabdha. "By Sañchita, we mean that type of karma which remains accumulated and has not begun to yield its results. By Sanchiyamāna, we understand that type of Karma which is being done every day along with the experiencing of the Prārabdha karman and which is to produce an accumulated force for future experi-

ences (bhoga). Prārabdha, on the other hand, means that part of the accumulated karman which has begun to fructify and according to the nature of which the particular organism has come to be assumed.”⁸

In the Vedic Philosophy, the Law of Karma has been recognised in the form of the Doctrine of Rta. Literally, Rta means “the course of things”. It stands for law and justice. Rta denotes the order of the world. Everything that is ordered in the universe has Rta as its principle. It is the law of morality and righteousness. Rta is the law which pervades the whole world, which must be obeyed by all. If, by any chance, its effects are not revealed here on this earth, they must be brought to fruition elsewhere.

Rta furnishes us with the standard of morality. It is the universal essence of things. The good are those who follow the path of Rta. Good persons get the heaven. The destiny of the wicked seems to fall in the darkness of hell. Heaven for the righteous and hell for the wicked is the rule. Reward follows righteousness and punishment misconduct.

After he has completed what he has to do and has become old he departs hence ; departing hence he is once more born, this is the third birth : the first as a child, the second by spiritual education, and the third after death. We meet with the belief in the soul as a moving life principle.⁹

The Upaniṣads conceive this universal law as the law of the conservation of moral energy. According to the Principle of Karma there is nothing uncertain. We reap what we sow. The good seed brings the harvest of good, the evil of evil.

Every action has its effects on our character. We are the results of our own past actions. The attempt to neglect the Law of Karma is as futile as the attempt to neglect our own shadows. “A man becomes good by good deeds and bad by bad deeds.”¹⁰ Again, “Man is a creature of will. According as he believes in this world, so will he be when he is departed.”¹¹ That is why we are asked to will and do the good.

Karma has a cosmic as well as a psychological aspect. Every

deed leaves its impressions on man's character. It is this tendency or *Saṃskārā* that inclines us to repeat the deed we have once done. We cannot escape from the mighty blow of our performed actions. The actions of men are capable of predictions. If rational, they will show certain properties. But it does not mean that the soul is determined. Every living soul is potentially free. Man possesses freedom as the focus of spiritual life. God has not granted him freedom from outside. He possesses freedom because he is rooted in God. The more he realises his true divine nature, the more free he is. And, as a result of this belief, *Upaniṣads* believe in rebirth. It is said in the *Upaniṣad* that "those who have right knowledge and perform their duties are born again and again after death for immortality, while those who do not have such knowledge and neglect their duties are reborn again and again, becoming the prey of God".¹²

But for the *Ārvākās* all the orthodox systems base their views upon the Law of Karma. For them, perception is the only valid source of knowledge. Nothing is real, which is not perceptible. As soul has no existence in the Philosophy of *Ārvākās*, they do not believe in the future life and the Law of Karma. But the *Ārvākā's* views based upon their epistemology have been refuted by the other thinkers.

Their epistemology dismisses necessarily all beliefs in a supernatural or transcendental being and with it also belief in everything that constitutes the subject-matter of religion and Philosophy. It recognises neither a God who controls the universe, nor the conscience which guides man and it does not care for belief in a life after death. It thus draws away man's mind altogether from the thought of a higher life and fixes it upon the world of sense.

The ideal which *Ārvākās* present before us is that of hedonism. It lays emphasis on the individual happiness. But contemporary thinkers always stress on the happiness of all.

The denial of soul is as absurd as to say that "my mother is barren". If there is no soul as a separate entity, then body is the soul, which is contradiction in saying. By rejecting the existence of soul, *Ārvākās* reject the doctrine of rebirth and

Karma which reduces their philosophy to escapism. They do not care even for moral values. As they reject every other source of knowledge other than perception and all moral values of life, 'Agnosticism' and 'Escapicism' are the necessary outcome of the philosophy of Ārvākās.

The Buddhists hold that every one in the universe is subject to the influence of cause and effect. "What is that which sets the phenomenal world into motion in order to come into existence from the unknown and again, to disappear into the unknown to reappear again, as before, without ever stopping the continuity coming and disappearing?"¹³ The only answer to this is that it is due to the saṃskārās, the result of our own day-to-day actions, that the continuity of the saṃsāra is maintained.

This leads us to conclude that all that exists and happens in the phenomenal world is the outcome of our own deeds. So, if our deeds are good, the results are also good and if they are bad, they lead to bad results. Thus it may be said that all our miseries as well as happiness are due to our own Karmas. So, it is certain that the performance of good Karmas alone can put an end to all our miseries and bring to us the highest happiness. In other words, according to Buddha also, a man along with all his characteristics is the product of his own Karmas of the past birth or births and he alone is responsible for his future birth or births.

Karma, according to Jainās, is of material nature. Karma, for them, is a substantial force, matter in a subtle form. It has the property of developing the effects of merit and demerit. The soul, by its dealings with the outer world, becomes associated with the particles of subtle matter. These become karma and build up a special body called karmanāśarīra, which does not leave the soul till its final emancipation. Jainās distinguish between Bhāvakarma and Dravyakarma. Bhāvakarma is related to the jīvās, while dravyakarma belongs to the body. Karma works in such a way that every change which takes place leaves a mark on our character.

According to Jainās, there are five classes of karmic conditions which determine its corresponding bhāva or mental state. In the usual course of things, Karma takes effect and produces

its proper results. By proper effort, Karma may be prevented from taking effect for some time. Though it is neutralised, it is still present, like fire covered by ashes. The soul is then said to be in Aupāsamīka state. When karma is not only prevented from working, but is also annihilated altogether, the soul is in the Kṣāyika state which leads to mokṣa. Then there is a fourth state of the soul, Kṣāyopāsamīka, which partakes of the nature of all the preceding ones. In this condition some karmas are annihilated, some are neutralised and some become active. It is the state of those whom we call good, while the Kṣāyika and Aupāsamīka states belong to holy men.

According to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school, our body has its source in the acts done by the person, and is the basis of pleasure and pain. The body is formed under the influence of the unseen force of destiny and is the result of the persistence of the effect of the previous acts. The birth of a being is not a mere psychological process. Uddyotakara says :

The karma of the parents who have to enjoy the experiences resulting from the birth of the child, as well as the karma of the personality which has to undergo experiences in the world, both these conjointly bring about the birth of the body in the mother's womb.¹⁴

The connection of the soul with the body is called its birth and its separation from it is death. We come into the world not in entire forgetfulness, but with certain memories and habits acquired in the previous state of existence. The existence of our previous and future life which is the main pillar of the Law of Karma, is strengthened by ethical considerations. If we do not assume a past and a future for our souls, then our ethical sense will be violated by loss of merited action (Kṛtāhāni) and gain of unmerited result (akṛtābhyagama). There must be a future where we can experience the fruits of our deeds and a past to account for the differences in our lots in the present. When we exhaust all our deeds, the soul is freed from rebirth and attains emancipation. According to Vātsyāyan, "the fruition of all one's acts comes about in the last birth preceding release."¹⁵

In the philosophy of Sāṃkhyayoga school, the law of Karma is assumed as a valid principle of life. They hold that our life, its character and everything are determined by it. They argue that though we do not remember our past lives, we can infer particulars about them from the tendencies of the present. These tendencies, according to them, will cease to exist on the disappearance of their cause (hetu), motive (phala), substratum (āśraya), and object (ālambana). The root cause is avidyā, though we may have other proximate causes. The motive refers to the purpose with reference to which any conation becomes operative in the present. Chitta is the substratum of the residual potencies, and the object is that which excites the potencies. Sāṃkhya's theory of satkāryavāda also points out the admissibility of the Law of Karma. According to it, the effect subsists in latent form in the cause. They argue for the same reason that the non-existent cannot be made existent. In the same way, our present is an outcome of our past lives and on the same logic, the future will be the result of our present lives.

Mīmāṃsā thinkers attempt to prove the Law of Karma with the help of its doctrine of Apūrva. They say that our acts are enjoyed with a view to their fruits. There is a necessary connection between the act and its result. An act performed today is not bound to produce its results the same day. It may produce its results in the future also. But an act performed today cannot produce its result at some future date unless it produces before exhausting itself to some unseen force. Jaimini terms such unseen force, as Apūrva, i.e., something new, not known before. So, Apūrva is the metaphysical link between work and its result. According to them, man enjoys the fruits of his actions performed in the past life, here in the present by means of Apūrva. In the same way, he will have to enjoy the fruits of actions performed in the present life, with the help of same Apūrva. This is the substance of the Law of Karma.

For śāṅkara individuality is due to Karma, which is a product of avidyā. The world, we live in, is just the return of the works of doer. The individual is a working machinery intended to produce its effects in the form of suffering and

happiness. Moral life is always active and is never exhausted. It takes endless forms, owing to the variety of the demands of the conditions of human life. This process goes on for ever, unless perfect knowledge is gained. Perfect knowledge consumes the seed of karma and makes rebirth impossible. Freedom from the subjection of the Law of Karma is the end of human life. To get rid of Avidyā is to be freed from the Law of Karma.

But it does not however follow that we are determined by our past karmas. In fact, we are free to do our act. God is only the assisting medium, conserving the fruits of his action. God never compels man to do this or that. Even those tendencies with which we are bound can be overcome by the strength of will. Man is not a mere sum total of his impulses. There is the Infinite in him. He possesses freedom within him. He can act according to his own choice. "The history of man is not a puppet show. It is a creative evolution."¹⁶

Contemporary Indian Thinkers

The contemporary Indian thinkers like Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi, Vivekananda and Dr. Radhakrishnan have been greatly influenced by the traditional Indian views. Aurobindo accepts the law of karma both in the metaphysical and moral context. According to him, man's being, nature, circumstances of life etc., are the results of his own inner and outer activities. He is what he has made himself. The past man was the father of the present man and the present man will be the father of the man that will be. Each man reaps what he sows. He also admits the reasonability of the Law of Karma. In other words, good must bring good results and evil must bring evil results.

But the originality of Sri Aurobindo lies in the fact that, according to him, this law cannot be the sole and the absolute determinant of this universe. As the fundamental truth of our being is spiritual, it must be our soul that would determine its own evolution, and the *Law of Karma can only be one of*

the processes that it uses for the purpose. For him, our soul is greater than its karma.

All is not Law and process, there is also Being and consciousness, there is not only a machinery but a spirit is things, not only Nature and law of cosmos but a cosmic spirit, not only a process of mind and life and body but a soul. . . . If it were not so, there could be no rebirth of a soul and no field for a Law of Karma.¹⁷

Mahatma Gandhi also advocates the efficacy of the Law of Karma. His belief is absolutely a product of his extreme respect for Hindu beliefs and tradition. He describes the metaphysical status of man in terms of his karmas. According to him, every individual is unique because of his peculiar physical and mental inheritance. What an individual now is, is the effect of his actions, habits, thinking, feeling and speaking in the past. Man makes himself what he is through his diverse activities. But, for Gandhiji, it is the moral significance of the Law of Karma which appears to be important because it is consistent with his moral beliefs. The realisation that one's own karmas determine the future nature and status of man gives rise to the further realisation that it is man himself who is the architect of his own destiny. Gandhiji says that such realisation helps man to create a sense of responsibility. He will realise the responsibility. He will realise the reality of the Divine latent in him.

Swami Vivekananda is of the view that our actions produce tendencies, in accordance with which our future lives are determined. He affirms that man does his actions out of ignorance. He somehow or other forgets his own real nature and fails to discriminate between the real and unreal. Consequently, he performs the actions in the light of his wrong and false notions. Such actions create saṃskārās or tendencies which determine our future nature.

In spite of the determination stated above, Vivekananda holds that freedom constitutes the real nature of man. Freedom does not mean absence of all kinds of determining factors. Freedom in that case would be the state of chaos. Truly

speaking, freedom does not mean 'no-determination' but 'self-determination'. Man's karmas determine his nature but they are man's own karmas. He says that karma and freedom are only apparent. The soul, in fact, always remains free. It is merely a Lila in which the soul has become involved. When man finally wins over this delusion, he would be amused to find that he was, in fact, never in bondage. He is ever free.

Influenced by ancient philosophic thoughts Radhakrishnan believes that the soul has to pass through various embodied stages and that the tendencies of each stage are determined by the karmas performed in the past. From this it follows that the karmas performed in this life will determine the future life. One may raise a doubt here that the Law of Karma is the determining factor of life, and as such soul's states and tendencies are after all determined. Thus it may be pointed out that the belief in the Law of Karma is not compatible with the idea of freedom. To this, he has the traditional answer. Freedom does not mean absence of determining factors. Freedom means determination by nothing else but oneself. Being determined by one's own karma is nothing but self-determination. There are two aspects of karmas—retrospective, which has a connection with the past, and a progressive aspect, which has its influence in the future. Man is determined by his own past karmas but is free to create prospective karmas. 'Choice is the assertion of freedom over necessity by which it converts necessity to its own use and thus frees itself from it.'

Departure from the Past

Indian Philosophy may be described as meditative. It is the result of a kind of meditation on the suprarational powers of the soul. It is described as spiritual also because it emphasises on the spiritual values. The contemporary Indian thinkers also have to a very great extent adopted the same method. But there is departure at some points from the past. The problem for them is the same but their attitude towards those problems differs.

The ancient Indian Philosophy is based on a tragic sense of life. It believes that life is full of suffering. But the contemporary Indian thinkers consider life as meaningful. They go to the extent of saying that life gets dignity and human significance through pain and suffering. They accept the reality of the world and also of the bodily aspect of man. Unlike the ancient Indian thinkers, who think that a complete control of the body, senses and the mind is essential for spiritual growth, the contemporary thinkers say that these propensities are not to be killed but perfected. The world is considered as the only field for action and the body as 'the temple of the Divine'.

The concept of karma, rebirth, immortality etc. continue to stimulate the contemporary Indian mind. But their attitude in regard to the solution of these problems is different. Whereas the ancient thinkers were, more or less, other-worldly they are this-worldly. They have attempted to apply the metaphysical findings to the historical and social necessity of the time.

Unlike the traditional thinkers, contemporary thinkers like Sri Aurobindo argue that the karma is necessary for the evolution of the soul. Though the life of man is determined by his past actions, the soul is ever free. The soul is mightier than its karma. Freedom and karma are not incompatible. Freedom is interpreted metaphysically and existentially. Hence they conclude that man is potentially free, but there are certain obstacles which he has ignorantly put around himself. They bind him. His nature and destiny both are free. These thinkers go to the extent of asserting that the free individuality of the individual is not destroyed even in the state of realisation.

The emphasis on human life, society, nation and humanity is the special feature of the contemporary Indian thinkers. Their concern with the present human life makes their thought humane and their philosophy humanistic. The ancient thinkers also were, no doubt, concerned with finding out ways of freedom from suffering but their approach was individualistic. They were not as much concerned with our normal civic life, but with a peculiar life of escape. The contemporary thinkers relate Philosophy not with the life of escape but with human life in his social set-up. His work is not over, even after he has perfected himself. He has to live to help others realise

the Truth. Man, according to them, is a part of a wider set-up and cannot perfect himself unless the whole is perfected.

Summing up

The general maxim 'As you sow, so you reap', which formulates the essence of the law of karma, has no evidence in the empirical world. If we try to look into the lives of individuals, the law is operative in its negative form. You do wrong and still you lead a happy life. You are virtuous still your life is full of miseries. Such cases have, no doubt, been attempted to be reconciled with the Law of Karma on the other grounds, specially on the basis of past actions i.e., in the life preceding the present one. But what is the scientific basis for the acceptance of past life? Cases have been reported wherein some persons are believed to be narrating the incidents of past life. But we have not as yet found an instance which has received universal acceptance as the scientific laws. Observation and experiment are the important steps of scientific procedure. It is on the basis of verification that scientific laws are established. Can the law of karma be verified? It cannot be verified empirically. So we have no scientific evidence for the law.

Working Hypothesis

The Analysts would surely brush aside such laws for the simple reason that they are meaningless. Only such terms and statements are meaningful as are verifiable. Whatever connotation we have of the term 'verification', the Law of Karma is not verifiable and so not meaningful. They will, therefore, dismiss it as meaningless.

However, the Law of Karma, remains a very potent hypothesis of the Indian explanation of human life and its functions.

If the concept of rebirth is accepted, the Law of Karma has to be accepted as a fact just as the physical and biological sciences presuppose the laws of uniformity and causation as their ground, so can the law of karma be shown as the ground

of morality. It is a hypothesis which explains most of the intricate phenomena of human life. It is, therefore, scientifically a good working hypothesis.

The other ground on which this law is shown to be based is the law of causation. Every event must have a cause and every cause an effect. Our actions, therefore, must produce an effect which should be equal to the cause. When effects do not appear to be so, there is a ground of our believing in unseen effects which manifest themselves later. This is the Law of Karma. One can very easily doubt about the validity of the law as the ground itself is improved. The law of causation itself is a presumption which has not been proved conclusively.

Moral arguments adduced in support of the Law can at best put in the category of a postulate of morality. It can, at least, be said that the Law of Karma is a fact or morality a misnomer. Not only morality but also the entire structure of Indian Philosophy rests on this presumption. We can conclude, therefore, that the Law of Karma is a necessary presumption of Indian Philosophy.

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Index

A

Absolute Being, 92
Absolute self, 76
Advaita, 73
Advaita doctrine, 74
Advaita Vedānta, 88
Agnosticism, 129
Akṛtabhyagama, 130
Anekāntavādi, 66
Anti R̥ta, 21
Anti-thesis asserts, 9
Appetites, 105
Apracyutāni Vratāni, 126
Aupāsamika states, 130
Aurobindo Ghosh, 1
Avidyā, 126, 132

B

Bergson, 96, 99
Bhagavadgita, 38, 41, 44, 56, 74
Bhagvata, 117
Bhāvakarma, 129
Bodhisattva, 37
Bodily self, 76
Bradley, 94
Brahmā, 97, 98
Brahman, 18
Brahmo-Samaj, 37
Buddha, 57, 78
Buddhists, 11

C

Cārvākās, 128
Christ, 57
Christian, 17
Christian Scriptures, 116
Conscious being, 5
Cosmic Salvation, 115
Comic Process, 95
Cosmic spirit, 133
Cycles of birth and rebirth, 19

D

Descarte, 96
Determinism, 29
Dhiyaspati, 125
Divine Shakti, 17
Divine spark, 108
D.M. Dutta, 78
Doctrine of Karma, 17
Doctrine of rebirth, 120
Dravyakarma, 129
Dr. C.D. Broad, 17
Dr. M.C. Taggart, 14, 17, 39
Dr. Radhakrishnan, 87, 132

E

Egoism, 81
Emotional reactions, 105
Escapicism, 129

F

Finite self, 106
Freedom of Will, 9

G

Game of Cards, 119
Giordan Bruno, 30
Gita, 16, 30, 37, 41, 48, 53, 56,
64, 68, 74, 83, 126
God, 95

H

Haridas Chaudhury, 2
He reaps, what he sows, 31
Herodotus, 21
Horace, 22
Human Destiny, 29
Human Personality, 109
Hume, 111, 112

I

I.H. Fichte, 49
Indian Congress, 88
Individual self, 102
Individual soul, 106
Infinite possibility, 91
Infinite self, 106
Infinite soul, 107
Intellectual ideals, 105
Ishwara, 18
Islam, 64

J

James Ward, 113
Jesus Christ, 64
Jivātman, 18
Joad, 88

K

Kant, 112, 113
Kāmya Karma, 38
Kapil, 38

Karmayoga, 53, 55, 58
Kathopanishad, 69, 120
Krishna, 68
Kṛtāhāni, 130
Kṣāyika, 130
Kṣāyopāsamika, 130

L

Law of nature, 72
Law of Karma, 2
Libertarianism, 29
Locke, 111
Lord of Nature, 20

M

Madam Blavatsky, 68
Mahābhārata, 48
Mahatma Gandhi, 63, 72, 132
Māyā, 96
Mile-post, 107
Mimāṃsā, 131
Mira Richard, 1
Moksha, 114
Monism, 60, 72, 91
Moral giant, 57

N

Na Karma likyate nare, 11
Naturalists, 89
Newtonian, 93
Nirvāṇa, 78
Nisidha Karma, 38
Nitya Karma, 38
Non-violent Satyagraha, 64
Nyaya-vaishēṣika, 43, 130

O

Omnipotent, 99
Omnipresent Spirit, 45
Omniscient, 99
Orphic religion, 120

P

Pantheism, 94
 Parmarthic Dṛiṣṭi, 95
 Philosophy of Cārvākās, 129
 Pita Kulasya Carṣaṇiḥ, 125
 Political Slavery, 64
 Prarabdha, 126, 127
 Prof. Royce, 14
 Pure Being, 95
 Pure-consciousness, 91
 Pure-freedom, 91
 Pythagoreans, 21

R

Racial discrimination, 63
 Radhakrishnan, 16
 Ramakrishna Ashram, 37
 Ramakrishna Paramahansa, 37
 Rāmāyana, 64
 Rāmānuja, 89
 Real self, 102
 Rebirth, 20, 85
 Reincarnation theory, 28
 Rg Vedā, 15, 21
 Rṇa, 127
 Ruskin, 64

S

Sacchidananda, 25
 Sambhutva amṛtani asnute, 13
 Samhita, 125, 126
 Sāṁkhya's theory of satkāryavāda, 131
 Sāṁkhyayoga school, 131
 Sāṁskara, 116, 128
 Saṁchita, 126
 Sanchiyamāna, 3, 126
 Saṁkara, 78, 89, 95
 Sāṁkhya, 15, 38
 Sarvani Vijñāna, 8
 Schopenhauer, 50

Self-centred isolation, 111
 Self-determination, 60
 Self-expression, 6
 Śiva, 98
 Spinoza, 92
 Spiritual immortality, 19
 Sri Aurobindo, 132
 St. Paul, 124
 Subhaspati, 125
 Supreme Lord, 56
 Supreme Power, 70
 Supreme Spirit, 19
 Swami Nikhilanand, 37
 Swami Ramakrishna, 36
 Swami Vivekananda, 36
 Syādvāda, 66

T

Tagore, 101
 Tattvamasī, 15
 Teleology, 91
 Theism, 94
 Transcendental self, 76
 Turiya state of Consciousness, 76

U

Uddiyotakara, 130
 Upanishad, 27, 76, 112, 127, 128

V

Vātsyāyan, 131
 Vedānta, 37, 59, 89
 Vedānta Philosophy, 38
 Vedāntic tradition, 88
 Vedic Aryans, 21
 Vedic period, 15
 Vedic Philosophy, 127
 Veil of Maya, 46
 Vicarṣaṇiḥ, 125
 Vivekananda, 132
 Vyavahārika Dṛiṣṭi, 95

Visvacarṣṇih, 125

Vijrimbhitani, 8

Visnu, 97

W

Western Philosophy, 87

What we sow, so we reap, 3

Will behind the Cosmos, 5

William James, 113

Y

Young India, 66

Z

Zoroastrianism, 64



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