PART ONE
CHAPTER II

KARMA: THE INDIAN SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM

As we stated in the introduction our objective is to consider the problem of evil in its depth and the various solutions offered to it both in the Indian thought and in the West. This we shall do separately. In this chapter we shall consider the Karma Theory which is held to be the Indian solution for the problem of evil. We shall start from the general understanding of Karma.

A. THE GENERAL UNDERSTANDING

The word 'Karma' comes from the Sanskrit root 'Kr.' (karoti) which means doing, acting etc., and hence Karma means action. This concept and even this very word is found in most Asian religious traditions, from ancient Brahmanism to modern Japanese Buddhism. There is hardly a concept more widespread. One could generally say that a common trait of almost all Asian religions is the acceptance of the main intuition underlying Karma. Therefore the meaning of Karma varies from one extreme to the other and one has to ascertain in what sense one uses the term, before proceeding further.¹

In the Indian tradition we can see mainly three operative ideas in which Karma is used.²

1. Karma as ritualistic sacrifice: Here the sacrifice is understood as the truly theandric action by which the human and the divine collaborate to maintain the universe and cause it to reach its goal. This is the original idea; and
this is expressed in the Vedas and Brāhmaṇas. The ritual performances are stressed here by the word 'Karma'.

ii. Karma as Karmamarga: Here good works are stressed as a way to salvation. Actions (good works) are inevitable for the attainment of salvation and they must be performed in the right way and in the right spirit. It is not detachment from action that is required, but detachment in action from its expected fruits. This is the great and sublime message taught by Bhagavadgītā.

iii. Karma as the subtle remains: In this third sense, Karma is that which remains as the subtle structure of temporal reality, once the prima facie elements have faded away or have been transformed, as that which all existing beings have in common and in which they share. The lasting message of the Upanisads lays the accent on this aspect which also underlies all the philosophical schools. It is in this sense, that the theory of Karma is related to the theory of rebirth and, therefore, it is in this sense that we consider Karma in this work.

The doctrine of Karma is one of the most significant tenets of Indian thought and it is closely related to the doctrine of reincarnation. It has profoundly influenced the life and thought of the people in India. It is a basic presupposition of Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. As Shri Aurobindo says

"One finds an unanswerable truth in the theory of Karma, - not necessarily in the form the ancients gave to it - but in the idea at its centre - which at once strikes the mind and commands the assent of the understanding."

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There is a solidity of philosophic and of practical truth supporting the idea, a bed-rock of the deepest universal undeniable verities against which the human mind must always come up in its fathomings of the fathomless. There is the secret of an eternal factor, the base of the unchanging action of the just and truthful gods, 'devāṇam dhruva vṛtāni', in the self-sufficient and impartial law of Karma.

The actions of a living being are regarded as having a special call of causal effect which determines his future spiritual conditions, both in this life and in succeeding ones. These effects are known as the "fruits" of the actions. Good deeds lead to progress toward the liberation and bad ones lead to the regress from this goal. Usually, the caste, status, disease, prosperity and so forth are thought to be the consequence of the past actions, and actions of the previous lives. Thus, Karma is considered as an ethically oriented causal law.\(^\text{10}\)

According as one acts, according as one conducts himself, so does he become. The doer of good actions becomes good and the doer of evil actions becomes evil. One becomes virtuous by virtuous actions, bad by bad actions.\(^\text{11}\)

"Coarse and fine, many number,  
The embodied one chooses forms  
According to his own qualities."\(^\text{12}\)

"As a man sows, so does he reap."\(^\text{13}\)

In brief, all our actions have their effects and these effects cannot be destroyed. They have to be experienced and exhausted. If one cannot exhaust the effects of his actions in this life, he has to complete the cycle of birth and death
to earn the fruits of all that he has done. Thus, the doctrine of Karma is closely associated with the rebirth of the soul. Every evil deed has to be expiated and every good deed must be rewarded. If this is not possible in one life, it must be experienced on earth through another birth. In Indian thought, the doctrine of Karma and rebirth has been developed on philosophical and scientific basis with this idea.

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

Karma, though etymologically means any activity, it slowly got associated with the after effects of action, both physical and mental. Every Jīva has three kinds of activity i.e., physical, verbal and mental corresponding to the deeds, words, and thoughts. These activities have their invisible and transcendent effects (besides the visible ones). They produce certain potential energies which forge the physical effects in the form of reward or punishment. This can be compared to a bond which continues to operate until, and loses its validity on, the repayment of the capital. Actions performed in this life would be the causes for the next life and the present life is the result of the actions performed in the past lives. So is the chain of life connected in the series of actions and their effects realised. Thus Karma doctrine involves the idea of eternal metempsychosis.
Basically, the meaning of Karma is that all existence is the working of a universal energy, a process and an action and a building of things by that action — an unbuilding too, but as a step to further building — that all in a continuous chain in which every one link is bound indissolubly to the past infinity of numberless links, and the whole governed by fixed relations, by a fixed association of cause and effect, the present action as the result of past action, as future action will be the result of present actions, all cause a working of energy and all effect too a working of energy. Morally this signifies that all our existence is a putting out of an energy which is in us and by which we are made and as is the nature of energy which is put forth as cause, so shall be that of the energy which returns as effect, that this is the universal law and nothing in the world can, being of and in our world, escape from its governing incidence. That is the philosophical reality of the theory of Karma, and that is the way of seeing which has been developed by physical science, too.

B. KARMA — IN THE HINDU THOUGHT

When and where this concept of Karma originated cannot be traced exactly. There are various and different opinions on the origin of this theory among the scholars. Some are of the opinion that this theory took its origin as a reaction to the exaggerated Vedic ritualism, since there is no clear reference for this doctrine in the Vedas. Some others, like Swami Iswarananda, hold that even in the Upanisads one cannot find this doctrine as an essential part or fundamental to the purpose of Upanisads, since Brahmavidya is the primary object of the upanisadic teaching. However, these do not rule out the scope for a survey of this theory, since it is considered as a cornerstone of the edifice of Hinduism.
"Some traced the origin of Karma in the principle of Rta. Rta is the cosmic principle. It pervades the whole world, and gods and men must obey it. It is the anticipation of the law of Karma. The concept of Karma must have been originally suggested by the regularity of movement of the sun and the moon and the uniformity of the phenomenal world. The Vedic Rśis think that Rta exists before the manifestation of all phenomena. The Maruts come from the seat of Rta. Viśnu is the embryo of Rta and Heaven and earth are what they are by reason of Rta."\(^{20}\)

Thus Rta is the basic principle for every law and order. This is a common belief of Hindus even today. It is an accepted fact, that Karma existed even thousands of years before the Christian era. Also it is held by many that Karma theory is a pre-Āryan doctrine found in Śramaṇa culture and later assimilated in the upanisadic thought.

**Vedas and Brāhmaṇas**

Though the word 'Karma' appears a number of times in the Rgveda, it was used in relation to sacred action or sacrifice.\(^{21}\) There is no clear text on Karma in support of rebirth. The text traditionally cited in support of rebirth reads thus:

"Go to heaven or earth according to your merit
Or, go to the waters if this is your lot;
Settle down among the plants with your bones."\(^{22}\)

It is significant to note that here the word 'Karma' does not appear, instead 'Dharma' is used.
Atharva Veda too has some passages stressing the importance of Karma, and in one text it seems to correct or complement the Rgvedic vision of a famous hymn which says that the order or energy was the origin of cosmic order and of truth, affirming that this energy was born from Karma.23

The Brāhmanas also developed the importance of sacrifice and stressed the need of performing them properly and thus Karma meant mainly sacrificial acts. However Satapatha Brāhmana says in one place that "a man is born into the world he has made"24 and the idea of a judgement according to one's deeds is commonly found.25

Though there are not many clear texts in the Vedas for Karma relating rebirth, yet one can see its root in the vedic texts which refer to (travelling) souls which can leave bodies and unite again.

"Unite thou with the Fathers and with Yama. With thy good works reward in the highest heaven. To home return, all imperfections leaving Unite with thine own body, full of vigour."26

The last verse clearly points out of a 'mobile soul' which can go out and come back - "returning" with good works. Rg Veda (X.15,14) makes a reference to the rejoining with the body which can move towards heaven:

"They, who consumed by fire or not cremated, Joy in their offering in the midst of heaven. Grant them, O Sovran Lord, the world of spirits And their own body as thy pleasure wills it."27
In Atharva Veda and Brāhmaṇas we can find much more explicit texts on the 'mobile soul doctrine' - A.V.VIII, 10, 19-21 reads thus:

"She (Viraj) ascended; she came to the fathers. The fathers slew her. In a month she came into being again. She ascended; she came to the gods. The gods slew her. In half a month she came into being again. She ascended; she came to men. Men slew her. She came into being again."

In the Brāhmaṇas we find a further development of this theory. Satapatha Brāhmaṇa (I.5,3,14) reads thus:

"Now the spring, assumedly, comes into life again out of winter, for out of one the other is born again: therefore he who knows this is indeed born again in this world."

From the study of the subject in the Vedas and Brāhmaṇa texts we can arrive at three main ideas:

i. The vedic seers had an idea of the soul separate from the body. (Rg.V. X, 14,8; Rg.V. X, 15,14)

ii. This separable soul could travel about from one body to another even to trees and animals. (Rg.V. X, 58)

iii. This mobile soul can be born again in this world. (Sat.Line I, 5,3,14)

Upaniṣads

The Upaniṣads abound in Karma and rebirth doctrine. Right from the Brhadārānyaka Upaniṣad (which is generally
considered as the earliest) one can find a number of texts which explain the ideas of Karma and rebirth (Sāṁsāra), we arrived at, through the study of Vedas and Brāhmaṇas.

"As one acts (Karma) as one behaves so does one become. Acting well something becomes good, acting ill it becomes evil. By meritorious acts, one becomes meritorious, by sinful acts, sinful," thus teaches Brhadāraṇyaka Upanishad.

In another place we read:

"A person consists of loving desire (Kāma) alone; as one desires, so he wills; as one wills so he acts; as one acts so he becomes." Another text of Katha Upanisad clearly explains the cause for the rebirth thus:

"He, however, who has not understanding, Who is mindful and impure, Reaches not the goal But goes on to Sāṁsāra (rebirth)." (Katha Up.II,7)

In the later Upanisads we can see many texts filling this lacuna, cause of rebirth very well. We shall consider briefly two of the oldest accounts on Sāṁsāra and the rationale behind it.

In the Brhadāraṇyaka Upanisad and Čāndogya Upanisad a curious question is raised as a preface to the discussion on Karma and rebirth. In both the Upanisads, a young disciple Śvetaketu, goes to a Ksatriya teacher, Jabali and Jabali asks the youth:
"Do you know how people here, on deceasing, separate in different directions?"
"No" said he.
"Do you know how they come back again to this world?"
"No" said he.
"Do you know why yonder-world is not filled up with the many who continually thus go hence?"
"No" said he.

These questions are not explicitly answered in the Brhadārānyaka Upanisads. Instead, it gives a description of the soul’s journey after the body’s death. The souls who know and truly worship in faith go to the Brahma-world from which they never return. The souls who practise charity, austerity and sacrifice are born again on earth. Those who do not know these two ways are reborn as insects and biting animals. Yonder-world, presumably, never fills up because of the fact of rebirth.31

The Chandogya Upanisad gives a more explicit answer to our strange question of non-filling up of heaven. At the same time it repeats the reasons for rebirth. After a discussion on rebirth as an answer to the question of non-filling the yonder-world we read thus:

"Thereby yonder-world is not filled up."32 After the virtual repetition of the description of the deaths of the ascetics, sacrificers and the ignorants, the Chandogya provides a rationale for the mechanism and determination of rebirth by speaking of conduct, good and bad, as the determinator of how, when and where rebirth shall occur. Thus it provides us with an upanisadic criterion for Samsāra;
for, granted that the mobile soul must move and move into the world, there must be a criterion as to who goes where and why. There is nothing to prevent souls from being models of brahmanic virtue, thereby filling up the wombs of the mothers in some of the few most righteous families in the world community.

The Chandogya Upanisad says:

"... Those who are of pleasant conduct will enter a pleasant womb; ... but those who are of striking conduct here, will enter a striking womb."^3^3

According to this, we find here a name element coming into the theory of Karma as a modification to it. It can be formulated thus:

"The determining conditions under which the mobile soul re-enters the world, are conditions with respect to the conduct of the person in his previous life (Law of Karma)."^3^4

Chandogya Upanisad seems to throw more light on the nature of conduct thus:

"The plunderer of gold, the liquor drinker
The invader of a teacher's bed, the Brāhmaṇa killer
These four sink downward in the scale,
And, fifth, he who consorts with them."^3^5

That this conduct is moral conduct as opposed to intellectual, devotional or priestly sacrificial conduct is borne out in the above verses. From what we have examined, the Upanisads hold that Saṁsāra (Karma and rebirth) is a moral criterion
in virtue of which the direction and end of rebirth can be gauged, described and even predicted. (Though Jñāna and Bhakti elements are there in the Upanisads, they are not displayed in the treatment of Samsāra).

**Bhagavadgītā**

The full and final dimension of the theory of Karma and rebirth can be found in Bhagavadgītā. In Bhagavadgītā, we find a further development of the notion of "Conduct" to include, besides moral conduct, other intellectual (Jñāna) and devotional (Bhakti) paths which lead to the cessation of Samsāra. The mechanism of rebirth is graphically presented in the following words of Kṛṣṇa in Bhagavadgītā:

"As leaving aside worn-out garments, a man takes other new ones, so leaving aside worn-out bodies to other new ones goes the embodied soul."36

With these picturesque words, the doctrine of rebirth is introduced by Kṛṣṇa. From this point on, the Gītā will take at least three attitudes with regard to the determination of particular future embodiments. These attitudes are the three margas presented in the Bhagavadgītā — Jñāna, Bhakti, and Karma margas. All these have an effect on the mechanism of rebirth, determining the souls upwards or downwards. Hence the notion of "conduct" has to be broadened to include the conducts specified by all these margas. According to this, the essential elements of the theory of Samsāra (Karma and rebirth) can be formulated thus:

"The determining conditions under which the mobile soul re-enters the world are conditions
relating to the conduct of the person in his previous life and that conduct can include intellectual, devotional and/or moral elements.\(^{37}\)

In the above account, one can find the origin and the development of the theory of Karma and rebirth, in the Hindu thought. This theory of Samsara can be found in both the Shruti and Smruti literature and all the so-called astika systems are duty bound to accept it as an orthodox truth.\(^{38}\)

As to the liberation from the bonds of Karma, we shall deal with it in the last part of this chapter after seeing the Jaina and Buddhist formulations of the theory of Karma.

(For, the essence of the means suggested for liberation by all systems can be found in "detachment in action", though it may be described differently in different systems.)

C. KARMA - IN THE JAINA THOUGHT

In Jainism we can find a scientific exposition of this doctrine of Karma. It is indeed a very complicated theory including many classifications and detailed analyses. It has existed from pre-Buddhistic times. Many great scholars like H. Glasenapp traces the origin of the Karma theory in Jainism.\(^{39}\) The full and final development of the theory can be found after a thousand years of Mahavira's Nirvana. The general outline of the doctrine can be found in Sthananga, Uttaradhyayana-Sutra and Bhagavati Sutra. The details are found in the Karma-grantha, Pancha Samsraba and Karma prakrti. Coming to the details we can see two lines of thought: (i) The Agamikas (ii) Karmagranthikas

In a certain sense, Jainism can be called a dualistic system. For, according to it, the universe is constituted
of two fundamental categories: living (jīva) and non-living (ajīva). The soul (jīva) has been described from the noumenal and phenomenal points of view. From the pure and ultimate point of view, the soul is pure and perfect. It is characterised by hormic energy (upayoga). It is simple and without parts. And it is immaterial and formless. It is characterised by pure consciousness (cetanā). From the phenomenal point of view, the soul is described as possessing four life forces (prānas).

Since the soul is active and dynamic it comes in contact with the external world through thought, word and deed. This activity of the soul is called yoga and this yoga brings its after effects in the form of karmic particles upon the soul. Thus the soul gets contaminated by the karmic particles, loses its pure nature and gets involved in the wheel of life and death (saṃsāra). This contamination is beginningless, though it has an end. It is difficult to say how and when souls get involved in the saṃsāra. Caught in this wheel of saṃsāra, the soul forgets its real nature, and its efforts to search for the truth is obscured by passions. The inherent capacity of the soul for self-realisation is also obstructed by the veil of Karma. It is subjected to the forces of Karma, which express themselves through feelings and emotions. Later, it is embodied and affected by the environment — physical, social and spiritual. Thus, various types of soul existences come into being.

For Jainas, Karma is material in nature. It is matter in a subtle form and it is a substantive force. It is constituted of fine particles of matter. The kind of matter fit to manifest Karma is everywhere in the universe. It has a special property of developing the effects of merit and demerit. By its activity due to the contact with the physical
world, the soul becomes, penetrated with the particles of karmic body (Karma śarīra) which are constantly attached to the soul until the soul succeeds in freeing itself from the body.\textsuperscript{42}

According to Jainism, moral fact produces a psychophysical quality, a real and not merely a symbolic mark, affecting the soul in its physical nature. This point of view has been worked out in detail in the form of mathematical calculation in the Karma-grantha.

The Jaina tradition has distinguished two aspects of Karma. (i) The physical aspect (Dravyakarma) and (ii) The psychic aspect (Bhāvakarma). The dravya karma comprises the particles of Karma accruing to the soul and polluting it. The psychic aspect is primarily the mental states and events arising out of the activity of mind, body and speech. They are like the mental traces of the actions, since we experience the mnemonic traces long after the experienced conscious states vanish. Physical Karma and psychic Karma are mutually related as cause and effect.\textsuperscript{43} The distinction between the physical and psychic aspects of Karma is psychologically significant, since it presents the interaction of the bodily and the mental due to the continual activity of the soul.

This bondage of the soul to Karma can be of four types according to its nature, (prakṛti), duration (sthiti) intensity (Anubhāga rasa) and quantity (pradesa).\textsuperscript{44}

Karma is generally distinguished in eight types:

1. Jñānāvaranīya Karma - that which obscures right knowledge.
2. Darśanavaranīya Karma - that which obscures right intuition.

3. Vedanīya Karma - that which arouses affective states such as feelings and emotions.

4. Mohanīya Karma - that which deludes right faith.

5. Āyu Karma - that which determines the age of the individual.

6. Nāma Karma - that which produces various circumstances, collectively making up an individual existence, such as the body and other qualities of individuality.

7. Gotra Karma - that which determines the family, social standing etc., of the individual.

8. Antarāya Karma - that which obstructs the inborn energy of the soul and prevents the doing of good actions.

Each kind of Karma has its limits in time within which it must exhaust itself. The accumulated Karma brings a transcendental trace to the soul which is called leśyā. When the soul becomes free from the karmic matter reaching siddha-hood, it becomes free from leśyā too.
There are six kinds of leṣyās: (1) Black (kṛṣṇa) (2) Blue (nīla) (3) Dove grey (kapota) (4) Yellow (pīla) (5) Pink (padma) (6) White (śukla). A man who is wicked and cruel gets black leṣyā. A man who is angry and envious and who loves pleasure gets the blue leṣyā. One who is base and dishonest gets grey. One who is engrossed in the meditation of 'dharma and truth' has the white leṣyā. But the fully liberated souls have no leṣyā at all.

Karma is a substantive force; it has the property of developing the effects of merit and demerit. The karmic particles build up a special body (Karmaśarīra), which does not leave the soul until its final emancipation. Karma has its psychic effects too. Bhūva Karma is immediate to the jīvas while dravya Karma belongs to the body.

The soul has five conditions of thought and existence based on the five classes of karmic conditions:

1. Rise (Udaya)
2. Suppression (Upaśama)
3. Annihilation (Kṣaya)
4. Suppression and annihilation (Kṣayeṣama)
5. Psychological effects (Pariṇāma)

In the usual course of things, Karma takes effects and produces results. The soul then is said to be in the audayika state. Karma may be prevented from its operation for some time. In this state it is still present, like fire covered by ashes. This state of the soul is called aupāśamika state. When the Karma is annihilated, it reaches the Kṣayika state. The fourth state is a mixed state. The last unconditional state leads to 'moksa'.
The distinction between the different types of Karma is based on the different types of mūlaprakṛti and uttaraprakṛti. They in turn get into smaller divisions. Of these we have eight mūlaprakṛtis and 148 uttaraprakṛtis. On the basis of the five categories of knowledge, there are 5 types of Jñānāvaranīya Karma. The first four produce greater or less degree of obscuration. The fifth one destroys the omniscience altogether.

Darśanāvaraniya Karma are of 9 types of which the first four, caksu, acaksu, avadhi and kevala obscure intuition. The effects of the remaining types of Karma obscuring the intuition are felt in nidrā (sleep) nidrā-nidrā (deep sleep) pracala (sleep while standing) styanagraddhi (sleep while walking i.e., expressing bodily actions). This is analogous to somnambulism. They produce psycho-physical conditions, which exclude all possibility of perception.

The Vedāṇīya Karma has two types: (1) Satāvedaniya (causing pleasant feelings) (2) Asatāvedaniya (causing unpleasant feelings). In gods and men satāvedaniya is predominant. The Mohaniya Karma can be of 5 types: (1) Mithyatva vedaniya (2) Samyaktva vedaniya (3) Misra vedaniya, (4) Kasāya vedaniya (5) Nokasya vedaniya. Some of these have still further sub-divisions. The Āyu Karma has four sub-types which determine the life span of an individual in various states.

The Nama Karma has a large number of sub-types according to the various forms of embodied existence, with reference to gati, jāti, and sarīra. The gōtra Karma determines the social status of the individual. The antarāya Karma is of many types.

i. that which obstructs the inclination of giving gifts
ii. that which prevents enjoyment of things

iii. that which lasts only for a period of enjoyment

iv. that which prevents the enjoyment of things that lasts for some time and

v. that which prevents the free expression of energy.

Of these main types of Karma, four are called ghati Karma. They are jñānāvaranīya, dārśanāvaranīya, mohaniya and antarāya. They are so called because they obscure the soul’s capacity for knowledge and intuition and they delude the soul into wrong ways and obstruct its inherent energy. Some of them completely obscure the soul and they are called sarvagāhāti, and some others partially obscure and they are called desagāhāti. But even in this state, the soul has an element of right knowledge and intuition, as a very dark and dense cloud cannot completely cover the lustre of the Sun or the Moon. The soul cannot lose all its characteristics even if it is infected by sarvagāhāti Karma; otherwise it would mean a total conversion of the spirit into matter.

Outside the ghati Karma, the remaining four are called aghāti Karma. They are vedanīya, nāma, gotra and āyu Karmas. They do not obscure any fundamental quality of the soul. But they only appear like ghati Karma.

According to another classification, Karma can be 'śubha' (auspicious) and 'aśubha' (inauspicious). Those which lead to the enjoyment of pleasure are śubha karma and those which lead to pain and suffering are aśubha (inauspicious). However,
to reach the perfect state, one has to stop doing both auspicious and inauspicious activities. Any activity leads to the influx of Karmārava by which Karma matter flows into the soul. Hence by the cessation of activities the flow of Karma also is terminated.52

The aim of life is to seek freedom from the miseries of this world. But the path to liberation is long and endless. For the attainment of liberation, one has to take care of two things: (1) Free oneself from the Karma that has accumulated by the past actions. (2) See that no new Karma is added to the soul. The soul remains bound due to the flow of Karma. The bound state is called bondage (bandha). This bandha can be (1) Bhava bandha (psychic bondage) (2) dravya bandha (material bondage). The mental states, such as passion, attachment, and aversion, which prepare the ground for the bondage of the soul is called bhava karma bandha. The actual bondage by the karmic particles is called dravya-karma bandha.

The first step in the path of self-realisation is the cessation of the flow of Karma. This stoppage of the flow is called saṁvara. This also is generally distinguished in two ways as bhāva saṁvara and dravya saṁvara basing on the mental life and the actual stoppage of the influx of the kārmic particles. This saṁvara is made possible by the self-control and freedom from attachment. The practice of vows, carefulness, self-control, observance of all kinds of dharma, meditation, and removal of the various obstacles such as hunger, thirst and passion ... will stop the flow of Karma and protect the souls from the impurities of fresh Karma. Here samyag carita (right conduct) is indispensable for saṁvara.

Together with the attempt to stop the influx of Karma,
one has to simultaneously also try to destroy, the already accumulated Karma from the soul. This destruction of the Karma is called nirjara and it can be of two types: (1) Dhāva nirjara - the psychic aspect of the destruction, and (2) Dravya nirjara - the real destruction of the karmic particles. Karma can exhaust itself in its natural course when its fruits are completely exhausted. Some kind of Karma can be and has to be removed by means of penance (avipāka-nirjara). The soul is like a mirror which looks dim when the dust of Karma is deposited on its surface. When the Karma is removed, the soul shines in its pure and transcendent form. It then attains the goal of mokṣa.

As we have seen, the soul's bondage is caused by the influx of Karma which is caused by the activity of the soul, which in turn is due to the inherent energy (vīrya). The infinite energy of the soul expresses itself imperfectly, by which energy Karma accumulates and affects the soul, and this imperfect expression of the energy is responsible for the various processes of Karmic matter.

Karmic matter undergoes various process due to the varying types of activity. The pāñca-saṅgraha has a picturesque description of eight processes of the expression of energy in its limited form. These processes lead to corresponding karmic processes. The soul activates karmic matter at every moment of its worldly existence and assimilates it with different types of Karma, which express themselves in due course and bring about the disabilities and defilement of the soul.

The influx of Karma (āgrava) into the soul and the soul's consequent bondage involve processes such as:
1. Sankramana (transformation)
2. Satta (endurance of Karma for a certain time)
3. Abadha (endurance without producing effect)
4. Udaya (coming into effect)

The transformation (sankramana) is a process by which the soul transforms the nature, duration, intensity, and extent of one type of Karma into those of another. This transformation is generally restricted to the change of one sub type of Karma to another sub type of the same kind. For instance, the soul can transform Karma producing pain into Karma producing pleasure, similarly sense perception into intuitive experience without the help of senses. So also a person having right intuition can transform the Karma leading to perversity to one leading to partially right or wrong intuition.53

All Karma cannot be transformed into any Karma. One cannot transform Karma obscuring intuitive experience into Karma obstructing conduct or into Karma determining life duration. This explanation would seem to be scientifically plausible and logically acceptable. By analogy, we know that electrical energy can be converted into heat or light. Transformation of one Karma into another requires energy, and this energy is determined by the degree of the purity of the soul. A person having a perverse attitude cannot convert his perversion producing Karma into the mixed kind, because the person with wrong belief is not pure and is therefore not capable of such transformation, conversely, a person with right belief cannot easily transform his Karma into any of the pure forms.

The transformation of Karma can also affect, the increase, decrease, duration and intensity of the function
of Karma. Karma can be made to express its effect prematurely. By this process, souls attract back the karmic particles which are to fructify later. Karma is made to realise its effect prematurely. The soul reaches the state of perfection through gradual subsidence and destruction of Karma wherein all Karmas are removed and no additional Karma accumulates. The inherent energy of the soul thus achieves perfect expression.

It is possible that the freed or enlightened soul can continue to act in this world, though it has reached the perfect state. He thus continues to work for the welfare of the rest of the creatures. The activity of the soul after the enlightenment will be a purely detached activity and therefore it does not contaminate the soul leading to leśya.

The Journey of the Soul in the Process of Self-Realisation (Gunasthanas)

According to the Jaina philosophy, self-realisation is a long process. It is a very arduous and difficult path. It is a fact of common experience that different individuals have different degrees of power to realise the stage of perfection. The soul has to go through various stages of spiritual ups and downs before the final goal is reached. These stages of spiritual development are called gunasthānas and they are fourteen in number. They are linked up with the stages of subsidence and destruction of the karmic evil. We shall now briefly consider these fourteen gunasthānas which represent the journey of the soul to self-realisation.

1. Mithyātvadrsti is the first or the lowest stage — a stage of false impression and wrong beliefs under the veil
of perversity, caused by the operation of mithyātva-karma. The perversity of wrong beliefs mainly consists in five things:

1. **Ekāntu** (one sided belief).
2. **Viparīta** (perversity of belief) e.g. The animal sacrifices. Here one forgets the equality and dignity of all lives to be respected.
3. **Vinaya** (veneration of false creed).
4. **Saṁśaya** (doubt) - This is the cause for the instability of faith.
5. **Ajñāna** - indiscreet acceptance of any view although it is perverse and wrong.

The soul, thus suffering from the perversity of attitude, cannot relish truth, just as a man suffering from fever cannot taste sugarcane juice. This can give rise to intellectual alienation like false ideologies, in social, political and religious life. Souls who have advanced in the spiritual voyage towards the self-realisation also can fall back to this lowest stage of illusion. But they have a greater chance to get back the lost vision.

2. **Sāsvādana Samyagdrṣṭi**: This second stage is a transitory and an intermediate stage. The soul halts while falling from a higher stage of spiritual development. For instance, a soul which has reached the dawn of enlightenment can be affected by passions and this can cause a fall into a lower stage of perversity. But it is not a fanatical perversity; it is a doubtful stage called 'Sāsvādana'. Such rises and falls of the souls can occur any number of times. However, souls which have experienced what is right and have accepted the right faith for some time, may not remain in this stage for a long time. For, the redemption is imminent.
3. Samyagmārtha: This is a mixed stage of right and wrong beliefs. There is neither a desire to have true beliefs nor a desire to remain in ignorance and false beliefs, like mixing ends and treacles. This is also a transitional stage. Even after getting the right insight, it is possible that one begins to feel that what is right may not be right and he may cling to false ideologies. This is caused by the semi-pure clust of the karmic veil deluding the vision and this lasts generally only for an 'antarmuhurtha', about 48 minutes. After that, it may go either to higher stage or to the lower; it is a stage of confusion and struggle between the evil and good. Jainism tells us that death is not possible in this stage. For, in death there is no energy for struggle and this stage necessarily needs energy for struggle, being a stage of active struggle.

4. Avirata Samyagdron: is a stage of right attitude not accompanied by moral efforts for the attainment of good. That is why this is called avirata samyagdron. Though the soul gets a glimpse of truth, it lacks self-control and spiritual strength to strive to reach the goal. Though this is considered to be a stage of right attitude, the belief in truth is not steady.

Right intuition, right knowledge, and self-control are necessary for spiritual development. Lacking these a soul cannot rise to the next higher stage. Here the soul is helpless to rise above the obstacles due to lack of spiritual strength. Similar is the Bible teaching: "Spirit is willing; but the body is weak."

These four gunāstānas can be roughly compared to the 'parable of the cave' described by Plato. In this parable Plato gives a description of people steeped in ignorance and
perversity. If at all one is given a lift to enable him to rise from this perversity, he may rise for some time, but he may fall back again. These stages have great resemblance with the purificative path of Christian spiritual theology.

5. Deśavirata samyagdrsti: This is a stage of right attitude coupled with partial self-control. Here one tries to practise the right, though still he is vitiated by temptations and vices which are impediments in the struggle for self-realisation. Full practice of virtues would not be possible here. Because, self-control is only partial. However, in this stage one knows the truth and is devoted to the truth, although one may not be able to practise it fully and consistently.

6. Pramatta Samyata: This stage expresses moral activity. Moral effort takes a more definite shape, although efforts are not always successful. The right attitude and knowledge of truth gained in the earlier stages have created a general background for the practice of moral life and the attainment of good. The lack of full self-control and practice of virtues are overcome in the sixth stage. But the struggle is not fully successful due to a moral and spiritual inertia which is called 'pramāda', which causes impurity and partially prevents the perfect observance of vows. Accordingly this is called 'Pramatta Samyata'.

7. Apramatta Samyata: is the seventh stage in which the pramāda (the inertia) is overcome. Here one can find more pronounced self-control possible. Moral life takes a definite shape here and one becomes able to practise all his duties and vows with greater success. One grows in self-control and self-confidence in this stage. Here the vision
of truth is blended with effort for moral life, to attain truth. This apramatta samyata can be of two kinds: (1) Svasthāna apramatta, which is the normal and ordinary stage of the practice of virtues, and (2) Sātiṣaya apramatta, is the extra-ordinary way of practising perfect vows.

In this stage of self-development, the journey has taken a definite direction, although it may not proceed with the directness and speed required for the proper and speedy development of the self. However, the efforts for the moral life have taken the right direction and if performed, will continue towards the final realisation of the self.

8. Apūrva Karana: This is the eighth stage of spiritual development. Here the self attains special purification and it is capable of reducing the intensity and duration of the Karma. But the āyu karma still operates. However, in this stage the soul is affected only by mild passions. One experiences extreme delight in overcoming the strain arising out of the suppression and elimination of the passions that one may have in this stage in a mild form.

9. Anivṛtti-bādara-samparāya: The process of anivṛtti karma operates in this stage. The journey of the soul towards progress continues here though the soul may be affected by gross passions some times. That is why it is called bādara-samparāya. This affliction of the soul by passion is only an occasional possibility and very rare occurrence and they can be easily overcome too. In this stage, one is generally considered as a fairly established spiritual and moral personality, having right attitude and conduct.

10. Sūksma Samparāya: In this stage the soul is free from all passions except subtle greed. Even the disturbance
from greed is very occasional only. Generally one is considered as passionless and undisturbed in this stage. "This subtle greed can be interpreted as the subconscious attachment to the body even in souls which have achieved great spiritual advancement." A well-established and perfect practice of the moral life can be seen in this stage.

11. Upasānta moha: Here the slightest disturbance due to the passion of greed also is overcome. In a word, all the passions are overcome. But these passions are not altogether eliminated; they remain suppressed through the pressure of the effort for moral life. Like the limpid water in the cold season, when the muddy turbulence of the rains goes to the bottom and leaves the upper surface of a pond clear and transparent, so one who has suppressed all passions, remains calm and undisturbed and controls his passions with greater confidence.

12. Kśīna Moha (Kśīna Kasāya): This is the highest stage of the annihilation of Karmas. In the 11th stage we have the highest stage of suppression of Karmas. In this 12th stage the soul is free from all the four types of ghāti Karmas. All the passions disappear altogether.

13. Sayoga kevali: When all the passions and the four types of ghāti Karmas are destroyed, the soul reaches the thirteenth stage i.e., sayoga kevali. However the bondage of activity still remains. It is not free from empirical activity and interest. In other words, it is not free from yoga and hence it is called sayoga. Since it has attained omniscience in the form of perfect knowledge and perfect intuition, it has become kevali and thus it is called sayoga kevali. In this stage one still has the body and its activities and the aghāti Karmas; but there is no influx of
Karma. The souls reached in this stage are called tirthankaras, ganadharas and samanya kevalins. They live in this world just to preach the truth they have seen. This stage can be compared to the 'jñānamukti' of the orthodox system, 'spiritually wedded soul' of the Christian spiritual theology and 'Aikya Sthala' of Viṣṇuṇaism.

14. Ayoga kevali: This is the final stage of absolute perfection without any empirical activity to it. Since there is no yoga (activity) it is called ayoga. The stoppage of activity is reached in 3 steps: The soul stops first all the gross activity of the sense organs, then it controls the speech and finally it stops even the subtle activity of the mind and enters the highest stage of sukla dhyāna. This state lasts for a short time, then at the end of the period the soul attains disembodied liberation. This state of ayoga kevali is also called as the state of Parabrahma or Niranjana.

A thorough understanding of these stages of spiritual development is not possible by instruction and books. It is something to be experienced in the religious life. A Jaina can easily understand the significance of gunasthānas; so too sattathalas for a Viṣṇuṇa; similar is the tripple path (purgative, illuminative and unitive ways for the Christians.)

We have briefly seen the journey of the soul towards self-realisation. These 14 stages are psychologically significant although experimental psychology will not be able to explain the significance of these stages. "We should realise that man is not complete; he is yet to be. In what he is, he is small. He is occupied every moment with what
he can get. But he is hungering for something which is more than what he hopes to get.66

D. KARMA - IN THE BUDDHIST THOUGHT

One of the most illuminating features of the Buddhist philosophy is its deep search into the phenomenon of moral causation. All Indian systems contain an appeal to the "unknown" (adrsti) as a transcendental cause which has to be posited in explaining the origin and the ultimate goal of life.67

On the doctrine of Karma there are two extreme views recorded in the early Buddhism: (1) all that a being experiences in life is due to the sum-total of his past deeds; and (2) all that a being experiences in life is purely a matter of chance. The present day Buddhism wants to avoid both extreme views.68 The doctrine formulated in the Cūḷakammavibhaṅga - Sutta and in the Brhadāranyaka Upanisad is no way much different in its substance. The doctrine as stated in the above Sutta, runs thus:

"The beings have the Karma as their own, they have their heritage from the Karma, the Karma determines their birth, the Karma is their friend and ultimate refuge and it is the Karma that divides them, relegating them either to the inferior or superior state of existence."69

The Devadūta-Sutta bases the whole discourse on Karma on the current popular belief about Yama and his messengers, called devadūtas. It presents Yama as the Lord of the nether world. His business is to judge over the actions of
different sinners, as they are brought to the court by his emissaries. 70

Though the above presentation may be questioned, it is almost an accepted fact that the 'Buddhist approached the problem from purely psychological point of view. 71 A man need not be afraid of the vast accumulation of Karma through a long cycle of birth and rebirth, for all such accumulation can be completely undone by a momentary action of the mind. For the Buddhists too, the Karma is no fatalism at all. It is based on morality and the law of causation, and clearly explains the principle of just reward or punishment. 72

Meaning of Karma - Buddhism has shifted the emphasis from the action to the state of mind. Accordingly Karma has been defined in Buddhism as cetana or volition. 73 Buddha Ghosa defines Karma as 'consciousness of good and bad'. 74 This means that action is no action until the will is manifested in conduct. In Aṅguttara Nikāya, we read Buddha himself declaring 'volition to be action'. 75 Here volition means moral action without qualification. Morally indeterminate action has no moral results. Hence Karma points to the determination of the will. Indeed, our deed, word and thought are due to the influence of the will. A person is not responsible for his action, if it is not intentional. Thus in Buddhism Karma is considered on a rational and practical basis.

The kinds of Karma - In Visuddhi-Magga we can find a number of classifications of Karma. Basing on the results Karma produces, it is of four kinds — (i) Karma which produces result in this life is called ditthadhamaṃ vedeṇīyaṃ;
(ii) Karma which produces result in the next life is named upapaccavedaniya, (iii) Karma which produces result from time to time is known as aparāpariyāyavedaniya; and (iv) past action is called ahosi kamma. Referring to the nature of Karma, it has another set of divisions - (i) janaka - determines the character of rebirth; (ii) upatthambhaka - shows the maintaining action; (iii) upapīlaka - explains the oppressive action or unfavourable ones; (iv) upaghātāga - enumerates the destructive ones.

According to Atthaśālinī, a commentary on Dhammasaṅgani, Karma has another threefold division basing on the origin of Karma - (i) Kayakamma - means bodily actions (ii) Vacikamma - means vocal actions; and (iii) Manokamma - means the mental action. There are some more divisions of Karma. But it is beyond our purpose to go to all the minute classifications.

The operation of Karma

In Visuddhi-magga we read that those who acquire spiritual insight come to know about kammantara and vipākantara. As a consequence produced by Karma, retribution follows from action, which brings rebirth in its train. In this way, the world moves and goes on. All the factors of this diversified sentient organism, such as Karma and linga in the destinies of spirits, men, denizens of purgatories, lower animals and the like, are accomplished by the mind. All the good and bad deeds are accomplished by the mind. The difference in births owes to the difference in the past Karma or deeds. The individual features of every being, the worldly condition of every being, such as gain or loss, fame or disgrace, blame or praise, happiness or misery. By Karma the world moves; by Karma men live; by Karma all are bound up.
The efficacy of good and bad deeds is inseparably bound up with that renewed existence, though Buddhism is essentially a doctrine of non-soul. True, it teaches that no action passes from the past life to the present, nor from the present to the future. But a careful study of the Petavatthu, which contains stories of the departed spirits, helps us to learn the lesson which logically follows from the law of Karma, which is the central idea of the whole Buddhist faith. It is strongly pointed out that the results of Karma cannot be obviated. It is a strong force which must produce its consequence. And this is impressed upon the minds of the followers of any Indian religion.

Buddhism believes that the inhabitants of heavens and hells of this universe are all subject to the inexorable law of Karma. The people are reborn in heaven and enjoy, because of their meritorious deeds. However, this heavenly pleasures are not everlasting according to Buddhism. As soon as the fruits of good deeds are exhausted, the beings have to come down to earth to be buffeted by the waves of Karma, i.e. punya and papa. Misdeeds bring upon man hell and sufferings.

There is a very close relation between citta and Karma. With a distracted mind, no Karma can be performed. Buddhaghosa tells us that there is no action in consequence, and no consequence in action, each of them by itself is void. An action is nothing without consequence. Consequence comes into being on account of action. There is no originator of action, no sufferer of consequences; only phenomena continue. Karma has its own individuality, and its own inheritor. One has to accept the consequence of Karma, whether good or bad. The moral factor which determines the destiny, is the maturity of one's own deed (Karma-vipaka).
Coming to the interpretation of the scriptural passages, the teachers are not unanimous. Some hold that 'result of action' is a term that applies only to mental states, which have been transmitted by action, but does not apply to material things. Similarly, Buddhaghosa points out that some hold that the six sense spheres have arisen through the doing of past actions, and therefore they are results. Others hold that the mind sphere may be such a result, but the rest are only transmitted by action and are not results.\(^2\) Karma under the name of Saṅkhāra is one of the links of dependent origination (paticca-samuppāda).\(^3\)

In the Dīgha Nikāya (II.63) we read that there is descent of consciousness into the womb of the mother preparatory to rebirth. Karma comes only as a connecting link between desire (trṣṇa) and rebirth.\(^4\) Keith points out that a consistent body of evidence proves that even in the early school, there was a recognition of the necessity of finding some means of continuity, if the Karma theory were not to fall into disrepute. In the Milindapañha (pp.40 ff) there are enough texts to support this.

Karma and its efficacy

Edward Conze in his book, Buddhist Scriptures, has beautifully quoted the terrific after-effects of Karma: Better for one to swallow balls of iron red-hot and flaming with fire than to live on alms or to indulge in immoral deeds ... Even a flight in the air cannot free a man after committing evil deeds. No corner of the world can hide a man from his Karma ... Those who cheat, swindle or trick their fellowmen ... they hurl themselves into a gorge, for
people's deed remain with them. People's deeds make a heritage for them; deeds do not vanish without trace.

Refering to the stupid it is written in the Scriptures thus: The fool, while sinning, thinks and hopes, this will never catch up with me. Wait till you are in the other world and there the fate of sinners learn... The fool does evil deeds while unaware of what they lead to. By his own deeds the stupid man is burnt as though burnt up by fire. The fools and unwise behave as though they are their own worst enemies, committing many evil deeds which issue them in better fruits.

What is a well-done-deed? The actions, which make one suffer afterwards, which brings fruits in tears, with weeping, wailing and lament, are not well-done-deeds. The actions, which bring no suffering in its train, of which one can reap fruits in happiness with a joyous heart, are the really well-done-deeds. In pursuit of joy, the wicked laugh in their evil deeds, they will weep with pain and misery at their punishment. An evil deed may not cause an immediate punishment, but it is like a fire smouldering under ashes.

"The iron itself createth the rust
Which slowly is bound to consume it.
The evil-doer by his own deeds
Is led to a life full of suffering."

The above account can be called the Buddhist theory of Karma in a nutshell. It is nothing but an extension of the law of causality to the moral and spiritual sphere. In this connection they distinguish three kinds of causations: (i) Sabhaga hetu is the law of causation among the elements
of dead matter, where the law of homogeneity, between cause and effect reigns; (ii) Upacaya hetu is the causation in the organic world where we have the phenomenon of growth; (iii) Vipāka hetu is the causation in the animate world, where operation of the moral causation is superimposed upon the natural. The elements constituting of the stream of our present life are conditioned, in addition to the natural course of events by the mysterious efficiency of past deeds, if the latter have possessed a moral character of some force or prominence. The indifferent activities of our every day life have no such efficiency. But a prominent deed, whether good or bad, will affect the whole stream and may carry its result either at an early or every remote date. The resulting event (Vipāka phala) is always indifferent in moral sense, because it is a natural outflow of a previous cause, and is supposed not to be produced voluntarily. This moral law is called Karma.

The influence of Karma is not in the Buddhist outlook so overwhelming, controlling the whole universe, as it is in other non-Buddhist systems, as it also becomes, under the name of vasana, in the later idealistic system of Buddhism also. In Abhidhamma it is one of the forces controlling the world-process: it is the chief force so far as it controls its gradual progress towards Final Deliverance. Its operation is subject to the following conditions. Every fact produced by the "maturing influence" (Vipāka) of moral or intellectual antecedents (Karma) necessarily belongs to animate life but is by itself morally indifferent. It is indifferent because it is a natural outcome of antecedents, it always arrives involuntarily and automatically. If something is produced voluntarily, it may become the starting point of a new development. When it has an outspoken strong moral character, whether good or bad, it becomes Karma, and
will have corresponding consequence, which, again, will appear automatically, since they are fully foreshadowed by their antecedent and are not voluntary acts. This explains the definition of Karma, as given by Vasubandhu: Karma is will (cetana) and voluntary actions (cetayitva kāranaṁ). Exactly the same definition is found in the Pali and evidently was current in Buddhism from the beginning. 89

When a new life is produced, its component elements, (dhātus) are present although in an undeveloped condition. The first moment of the new life is conventionally called vijñāna. It constitutes the third member (nidāna) of the ever revolving "wheel of life". Its antecedents are Karma, i.e. instincts sticking to it from the beginning. In the formula of the wheel of life, this number appears under the name of samskāra, i.e., pre-natal forces. Another, more general, antecedent is avidya, the first member of the wheel, representing the defiling influence (kleśa) of ignorance and other vices, the absence of discriminating knowledge (prajñā).

Among the components of the new life, ten components represent matter. They are atomic. The atoms are compound atoms, they contain the usual eight components with addition of particles of sensibility-stuff (rūpa-prasāda) or organic stuff (indriya). The tangibility stuff (kayendriya) pervades the whole body. In some parts of the body, i.e., in the organ of vision, the atoms have a still complicated structure. But not only does matter consist of compound atoms, it consists of momentary appearances of atoms. Indeed, inorganic matter, one moment follows the other, obeying solely the law of uniformity or homogeneous production (sabhagaja). The next moment follows automatically (nisyandā) on the former one. There is neither growth nor decay. This uniform course would represent the Buddhist counterpart of what we might
call eternity of matter. Although, the same matter is also present in the organic body, nevertheless the term "uniform course" (sabhaga-hetu) cannot be applied to it in that condition. It is reserved for those cases where there are no other causes in addition to the uniform sequence of moments constituting inorganic matter. When other process — the process of growth (upacaya) the influence of intellectual and moral causes (vipāka) — are superimposed the uniform course of the existence of matter, when it becomes organic and living, the consecution of its moments received other names (upacaya, vipāka). The pure "uniformity relations" between consecutive moments — the sabhaga-nīyayana-relation obtains only in the realm of inorganic, dead matter. When the atoms of organic matter have assembled, the phenomenon of growth (upacaya) becomes the controlling principle of development, the atoms increase in number.

This process of growth is supported by favourable circumstances: good food (annaviśeṣa) dream (svapna viśeṣa), physical tidiness (samskāra viśeṣa) and careful behaviour (samādhi-viśeṣa). But the growth is not the only factor which controls the development of the living bodies. The influence of what we may call heredity steps in, and is superimposed upon the natural process of growth. This is the influence of moral antecedents. When the organs of the body are being formed, or are developing, this influence conditions their final constitution. The question is then raised, what is the mutual relation of these two different agencies, natural development and heredity?

The answer is that the first process constitutes the "Vanguard" or a rampart, under the protection of which the second vipāka may safely operate. It is not quite easy
to realise what such an answer may exactly mean. At any rate it suggests a more subtle, spiritual, or semi-spiritual character of the second force. Karma is not quite physical (paudgalika) with the Buddhists, as it is with the Jains, but it seems to be semi-physical, since it interferes in the disposition of atoms along with the principle of growth that accumulates them.

Karma and inequality

In explaining the doctrine of Karma in Buddhism, the Buddhists too consider Karma as the cause of inequality in the world and it is considered to be the best solution for the problem of inequality. In the Milindapañha this question of inequality is raised and answered thus:

"What is the reason that men are not all alike, but some long-lived and some short-lived, some healthy and some sickly, some ugly and some weak, some rich and some poor, some of high degree and some of low degree, some wise and some foolish?" asked the King.

"Your majesty, why are not trees all alike, but some sour, some salty, some bitter, some pungent, some sweet, some astringent?" the elder replied thus: "I suppose, because of the difference in seed." "In exactly the same way, it is through the difference in their Karma that men are not all alike ... All beings have Karma as their portion; they are heirs of their Karma; they are sprung from their Karma; their Karma is their kinsmen; their Karma is their refuge; Karma allots beings to meanness or greatness."

In the Buddhist scriptures we can find a clear distinction as fruitful Karma and barren Karma. In the Aṅguttara-Nikāya
there is a picturesque explanation of this. Accordingly when a man's deeds are performed through the conditions of covetousness, hatred and infatuation, these deeds ripen; wherever these deeds ripen there he experiences the fruition of those deeds wherever his personality may be, be in the present life or in the subsequent life.\[93\]

It is like seed that is uninjured, undecayed, unharmed: by wind or heat, and is sound, and advantageously sown in a fertile field on well-prepared soil; if then rain falls in due season, then the seed begins to grow, increase, and develop. In exactly the same way, man's deeds performed in favourable conditions of covetousness, hatred and infatuation grow, increase and develop karmic particles in him. They are the fruitful Karma.\[94\]

Freedom from covetousness, hatred and infatuation helps to produce barren Karma. When a man's deeds are performed without the above vices those deeds are abandoned, uprooted, rooted out of the ground like a tree and become nonexistent and not liable to spring up again in the future. It is like a seed that is uninjured, undecayed, unharmed by wind or heat, and is sound, and is advantageously sown; if someone then burns it with fire and reduces it to soot and then scatter it to the winds, then that seed is abandoned uprooted and pulled out of the ground like a tree. In exactly the same way, man's deed performed with freedom from vices become non-existent and not liable to spring up again in the future.\[95\] These are called barren Karma.

Good and Bad Karma

Besides the above distinction there is another kind of
division for Karma i.e., good Karma and bad Karma. Samyutta-Nikaya has explained this idea with an example of a householder who had to be reborn seven times and then suffer in the hell for a number of years. At the end it exhorts thus:

"Nor grain, nor wealth, nor store or gold and silver, Nor one amongst the women-folk and children, Nor slave, domestic, hired man, Nor any one that eats his bread, Can follow him who leaves this life, But all things must be left behind.

But every deed a man performs, With body, or with voice, or mind, It is this that he can call his own. This with him take as he goes hence. This is what follows after him, And like a shadow never departs.

Let all, then, noble deeds perform A treasure-store for future weal; For merit gained this life within, Will yield a blessing in the next."  

Karma and Rebirth

According to Buddhism Rebirth is not a necessary factor. Milindapanha tells us that some are born into another existence and some others are not born again. What is the criterion of determining rebirth and the cessation of birth? It is this very present life. If this life is a life of corruption and attachment to this world, be sure, one has to be born again and again until he reaches the life of detachment.
"How does rebirth take place without anything transmigrating?" It is like the lighting of a light from another light. Here, there is no question of one lamp passing to another. In exactly the same way the rebirth takes place.\textsuperscript{98}

Again, rebirth can be compared to a boy's learning of a piece of poem from his teacher. Here also we cannot say that the poem has passed over to the boy from the teacher. Similar is the case of rebirth.\textsuperscript{99}

If there is nothing that passes over to the next life, there arises a question, what exactly is it that is reborn into the next life? Milindapanha answers this saying that it is the name and form (Nāmarūpa) that is reborn. Now is it the same name and form (Nāmarūpa) that is born into the next existence? This is answered by a series of illustrations to show that it is not the same name and form (Nāmarūpa).

Suppose a man were to take away another man's mangoes and the owner of the mangoes were to seize him and take him before the court and complain, then the robber justifies himself saying that he has not taken his mangoes. For, the mangoes the owner planted was different from the ones he plucked. And hence he is not liable for punishment. Any man will say that this argument is a simple nonsense and that he has to be punished for the reason that the plucked mangoes are from the first one.\textsuperscript{100}

In exactly the same way, with this name and form (Nāmarūpa) one does a deed and by reason of this deed another name and form (Nāmarūpa) is born into the next existence.

Another illustration goes thus: Suppose a man were to
light fire for warming himself and went off without putting it out. And the fire burnt another man's field. The owner of the field seized the negligent man and presented him before the king. The culprit justified himself saying that he did not set the field on fire. The fire he failed to put out was a different one and he should not be accused! Any man can understand that this argument does not hold good at all. Because, in spite of what he might say, the man would be liable to punishment for the reason that the last fire is derived from the first fire.\(^{101}\)

Similar is the case of rebirth. With this name and form (Nāmarūpa) one does a deed and by reason of this deed another name and form (Nāmarūpa) is born into existence. Therefore one is not freed from one's evil deeds.

There are many more illustrations such as of a 'Village set in fire', 'Snatching of girl given in marriage', 'Milk turning into curd' etc. ... to show that what is reborn is not the same nor different.\(^{102}\)

So far we have been trying to present the Karma theory as viewed by Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. We are not much concerned as to its origin and development. Some may hold that Karma has its roots in Rg Veda, others may hold that it is a pre-Aryan concept. Some Indian thinkers may attribute the origin of Karma theory to Jainism and some others to Buddhism. We do not intend to enter into this controversy or to support any one view. We accept the fact that all systems of Indian thought agree that Karma is operative in life. They disagree only about what it is that transmigrates and about how it takes place. Here also it is often in the working out of the specific details that there occurs the differences. So having accepted as a fact, the operation of
Karina in life, we shall now see a brief account as to how to achieve liberation from the bonds of Karma.

E. THE LIBERATION FROM THE BONDS OF KARMA

In India there was no great difference between Religion and Philosophy. All the religions and all the philosophical systems were mainly concerned with the liberation of the soul from this world of bondage. Our ancient Indian philosophers have suggested various ways.

The Mimamsa school has found out a way for obtaining the release from the bonds of Karma by giving instructions for performing certain types of actions and for avoiding some others. The acts are divided into four types:

1. **Nitya** (daily acts) like Sandhya.
2. **Naimithika** (occasional acts) - ritual performances and worships of special occasions come under this.
3. **Kamya** (desired acts) - Actions motivated by desires and impulses fall under this category.
4. **Nisiddha** - (prohibited acts) - These also are motivated ones by desires.

The Nitya and Naimithika actions have to be performed and Kamya and Nisiddha must be avoided. By performing Kamya and Nisiddha actions, one brings upon himself the influx of Karma and to exhaust this Karma one has to take upon himself a series of births and deaths. In this connection there is a distinction like Prarabdha karma and Sancita karma. The Prarabdha karma can be and has to be exhausted by life experience, by suffering in this world, in heaven and hell. When the Karma is exhausted, the Atman reaches the state of
release. This is called karma mukti or naiskarmya siddhi. Sancita karma is that Karma which cannot be exhausted like Prarabdha karma, because of the effects of two contrary sancita karma like heavenly happiness and suffering in hell, and it is not possible to experience both at the same time.  

The Vedantins do not think that by naiskarmya one succeeds in reaching the goal since naiskarmya does not result from abstinence of actions nor does one obtain release by giving up actions. According to Vedantins, the release is not possible, by the mimamsa way, since no one can even for a single moment escape Karma (action) in the world altogether. The only way to escape from the wheel of life is by Jnana, knowledge in the sense of the realisation of the identity of the self and the Absolute. In this sense 'Karmanā vidyate Jantuh, Vidyaya tu prameyate' — is to be understood. All Karma is reduced to ashes in the fire of knowledge. As the seed which has been burnt does not take root, so the Karma which has been destroyed by Jnana does not fructify. He who has acquired knowledge is not defiled by Karma as the lotus leaf does not hold water. The other paths to be pursued for the release are the yoga of Patanjali, bhakti and the niskama karmayoga of Bhagavadgita.

Due to the profound impact of the Karma theory in Indian thought, one can find a detailed account as how to calculate the fruits of Karma in the cycle of births. In the Manusmrti, we have a clear description on the fruits of Karma. For example, one who steals gold will be afflicted with nails in the next life. He who takes alcohol will have black teeth. He who kills a Brahmin will suffer from consumption. One who is unchaste with the wife of his teacher will have skin disease. One who steals the property of a just man will descend into a hot hell of pāśānakunda for as many
years as there are hairs on his body; then he is reborn as a tortoise. He who digs a pond or improves an old one reaches the heaven of gods. He who gives food will obtain good memory and other mental gifts in the next life.

These descriptions cannot be taken in its literal sense. They only mean that a definite deed has a definite tendency to mature and fructify in a definite karmic effect. This is not the doctrine of retribution of the western religions a theory of rewards and punishments which we have to expect in the future for our deeds of this life. It shows us the cause why we are in our present life in this manner experiencing these unfavourable fate. Schopenhauer said that the moral meaning of metempsychosis in all Indian religions is not merely that in a subsequent rebirth we have to atone for every wrong we commit, but also that we must regard every wrong befalling us as thoroughly deserved through our misdeeds in a former existence. This shows the double character of the Indian doctrine of Karma.

The concept of bondage and liberation necessarily presuppose a relation between the soul and karmic matter. How can there exist a relation between a material entity and a non-material one? Some think it as simply impossible. But the Indian thinkers have discussed this problem of relation of the spiritual with the non-spiritual from different points of view. The relation of the spirit with the non-spirit is responsible for the worldly existence. Apart from the gross body, there is a subtle body (Sūksma Sarīra) which links the spiritual. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and the Mīmāṃsā regard the unseen potency (Adrśta) as a quality of the soul and is responsible for the formation of the gross body with the help of the mind (manas). According to Sāṅkya-yoga, Linga-Sarīra is the subtle body and it is formed by the perversion of
buddhi which is an evolute of prakṛti. With the Sāńkya-Yoga puruṣa is immutable and it undergoes no change. Prakṛti and its evolutes are changing.  

According to the Nyāya-Vaśeṣika the conditions of bondage, like pāpa and punya in here in the soul as qualities, and in the absence of the bondage the soul becomes free. The Sāńkya-Yoga believes that the world process and their conditions belong to Prakṛti. The conscious principle, Puruṣa, does not belong to it although it is involved in the world-process. The Vedantin distinguishes the spiritual from the material. But this distinction is empirical, and Karma belongs to the world of appearance and is not something to the spirit.

The flow of the karmic matter into the soul is continual due to the activities of the soul. The bondage of the soul with reference to the volume of karmic matter and the space of the soul occupied by it is called pradesa bandha. The volume of the karmic matter entering the soul varies directly as the measure of the activity of the soul. The function of yoga is two fold (1) Pradesa bandha and Prakṛti bandha which determine the nature and type of bondage like Jñāṇavāriya etc. But the nature of the activity is determined by the types and intensity of Kaśaya (passion). However, although Mithyatva (perversity), avirati (non-renunciation) and Kaśaya (passion) are absent; the yoga alone produced pradesa (space) occupied by the Karma particles around the soul. Prakṛti bandha of the Vedanta in some spiritual stage gives subsidence (Upāśamana) of Karma and this leads to the liberation of the soul from bondage of Karma.

Liberation according to Gīta

The state of bondage is always characterised by ignorance (Avidya) in all Indian religions. This ignorance is related to
Karma. The state of bondage is considered to be the result of one's past actions. Avidya inspires for Karma and Karma brings about birth and rebirth. The liberation which is called Mukti, Nirvāna, Niranjana etc. in Indian religions, consists in the breaking of the Karma-chain. Though Buddhism and Jainism have their own specific theories to work out salvation, they can be reduced to the great message of Niskāma karma yoga (detachment in action) of Bhagavad Gīta. Gīta has suggested three yogas (mārgas) to bring about the expected liberation. They are Karma yoga, Jñāna yoga and Bhakti yoga. These are the most commonly accepted Indian way to achieve liberation. We shall now try to see, in brief, how each one of these mārgas helps man to reach his goal of realisation.

Karma Yoga (The yoga of work)

This is considered to be the first step in the path of liberation. In Gīta 6,3, we read: "For the silent sage who would climb the ladder of spiritual exercise, the performance of duties constitutes the means." Karma yoga is natural to man and easy to perform. In this, Karma (action) predominates and hence it is called Karma yoga. But mere performance of work is not Karma yoga. It requires a particular disposition of mind.

Action as such is indifferent. It is desire and attachment to the result which causes bondage. Hence the actions should be performed to the one purpose of liberation. Thus actions so performed selflessly becomes salvific and a means of liberation. Action binds through desire, by attaching the self to the result of the action. Action binds when it is done in ignorance of the real self and mistaking the body for the self.
To free the self from the bondage of Karma one has to perform action in a new spirit. He has to reverse the process. If it is action with attachment that causes bondage of the self, it has to strive for its release by performing action with detachment. Thus detached activity becomes the threshold of salvation. Here one has to make a clear distinction i.e. Karma yoga consists in the renunciation in action and not in the renunciation of action. (B.G. 5,11) Of the two states of action and non-action, Gîta recommends action (B.G. 5,2) but with perfect detachment. Such actions bring peace and balance of mind. And this dispassionate actions become salvific and is called Karmayoga for liberation. This is only one aspect of the great yoga of liberation which includes also the aspect of jñâna and Bhakti. We shall deal with them next.

Jñânayoga (The path of knowledge)

Self-renunciation is the special feature of karmayoga. This involves in itself aspects of jñânayoga and bhaktiyoga. The renunciation is made easy when the true self is encountered and action is attributed to God, the real agent of all actions. Karmayoga, preceded by the knowledge of the self-leads to a firm devotion to knowledge known as the steady wisdom and this brings about the vision of the self as yoga. (Gitabhâsya, 2,53) The path of salvation begins with the knowledge of the self and this leads to self-realisation. This type of vision i.e. jñânayoga requires great concentration of the mind and self-discipline. Therefore karmayoga is prescribed to the beginners and jñânayoga, to the advanced in the knowledge of self, though they are not completely different or independent. They are closely intertwined and are subordinate to Bhakti which alone can bring man to complete felicity through a blissful union with God.
Bhaktiyoga (The path of devotion)

We have seen that karmayoga and jnānayoga have important roles to play in working out spiritual freedom or liberation. In order to gain a perfect vision of the self, the yogin has to transcend the gunas (constituents) of the material nature. Gita presents bhakti as the direct means for conquering these gunas.

Bhakti is the uninterrupted fixation of one's mind on God. This is the higher knowledge taught by the Upanisads. One who has to know Brahman must have the direct knowledge springing from meditation. The knowledge through devout meditation and prayer, and the consequent service to Him is the essence of Bhaktiyoga. This brings about absolute dependence on, and utter faith in the Lord. To such devotee the Lord says: "... Take refuge in Me alone; I will liberate thee from all sins." (B.G. 18,66) The Lord Himself liberates His devotees from the ocean of birth and death (B.G. 12,7). A Bhakta becomes capable of seeing the Lord in every thing and everything in the Lord.

Having seen the theory of Karma according to the different religions of India and the commonly accepted means i.e. detachment in action (though this may be explained differently), we shall now proceed to the next chapter on 'Rebirth'.
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