Conception of Sin

Desires are of various nature as can be seen from our day to day life. Of these some are for the enjoyment of the pleasures of the world and for the possessions of good things of this world whereas others are for moral perfection and spiritual progress. The Hindus also truly realised that spiritual perfection and freedom from the shackles of birth and death is the ultimate end of our life - the goal which we are all striving for. Kathopanisad classifies all the desires under 'preya' (pleasant ones that aim at pleasures), and 'sreya' (that lead to the ultimate good). The story of Naciketa emphasises that the latter should be preferred to the former. The criterion of a true seeker is that he never falls a prey to the allurements of 'preya'. For a Hindu, spiritual perfection consists in a conscious realisation of identity with the whole in all its aspects. The realisation of the Supreme Reality of which the universe is a manifestation is the sumum bonum of life to the Hindu. Duties and other interests of life are subordinated to it and considered as valid and valuable only in so far as they contribute to its attainment.

The man who realises that the self in him and all others is one and identical also realises that in injuring others he is actually injuring his own self. The Hindu seers were conscious of the fact that the first and most obvious way of preventing

1. Kathopanisad 1.2.3.
conflicts of interests and desires in a community is, for all its members to have common aims and common regulated way of life conducive to realisation of that aim. As a result, they formulated the concept of 'dharma'.

Conception of Dharma

'Dharma' is a very comprehensive term and has a wide import. It not only includes in its purview the social, economical, moral and biological duties of a man living in society, but goes deeper. Dharma śāstras go so far as to prescribe rules of man's behaviour towards animals, trees and even to a blade of grass. A Hindu is to offer propitiating water (Tarpana) every day even to a blade of grass. The goal of DHARMA, therefore, is to create mental and spiritual fellowship among all men and to regulate its relation with all living entities. To this end it is necessary that the people should subordinate the basic impulses to the higher ones and maintain the balance of mind which are the preconditions of a peaceful but fuller life.

The concept of 'dharma' has a very special significance and position in Hindu Ethics from the earliest times. It is acknowledged that Dharma is that which is enjoined by the Vedas and has to be gathered from those who remember and practise the Vedic precepts. Smṛti and Śīla of those who know the Vedas. Smṛti (memory) i.e. the knowledge acquired through tradition handed down from generation to generation. Śīla means conduct or way of life. So the secondary sources of Dharma are (a) the knowledge
acquired traditionally and (b) the way of life led by persons versed in the Vedas. Further Dharma consists in the imitation of the good (sādhu) and contentment of one's one self. The last two, however, are dependent on the first, i.e., the knowledge of the Vedas. The word Dharma as the very derivation suggests, means that which always keeps the universe in perfect equilibrium. This being their settled notion, the Aryas could not conceive their law to be the product of human origin. Thus Dharma is literally that which holds a thing together and prevents it from breaking up and changing into something else. Dharma, then, would mean a chain of duties essential for the sound organization of human societies. Accordingly though the conception of sharma has been magnified by the Hindu seers as an abstract principle yet in its actual form it came to be described through various duties relative to one's stage of life, class or caste.

According to the Vaisesika School 'Dharma' is knowledge pre-eminently directed to the achievement of desired happiness here in this life and hereafter by means of appropriate actions. In this connection Kane observes - "The writers on Dharma-Sastras meant by dharma not a creed or religion but a mode of life or a code of conduct, which regulated a man's work and activities as a member of society and as an individual, and was intended to bring about the gradual development of a man and to enable him to reach what was deemed to be the goal of human existence".

2. Manu Smrti II. 12.
3. Vaiś. Sūtra. 1.1.2
Dr. Bhagavan Das, defining the concept of Dharma writes, "dharma is that which holds a thing together, makes it what it is, prevents it from breaking up and changing into something else, its characteristic function, its peculiar property, its fundamental attribute, its essential nature in its Dharma, the law of its being, primarily ..... that scheme or code of laws which binds together human beings in the bond of mutual rights and duties, of causes and consequences of actions arising out of their temperamental characters in relation to each other and thus maintaining society, is human law - Manava Dharma". 

Dr. Radhakrishnan, on the other hand writes, "We may define dharma as the whole duty of man in relation to the fourfold purposes of life (Dharma, artha, Kama and moksha) by members of the four groups (caturvarna) and the four stages". Particular acts referred to as dharma in a very broad sense which are accepted by most of the scholars are that Dharma is -

(a) The allotted position of duty and at the same time, the right of doing certain duties.
(b) All religious observances.
(c) The secular laws of community, caste and state.
(d) Conventions and usages.

Manu analyses the contents of Dharma thus, "Contentment, self-control, abstention from unrighteously appropriating anything, purification, control of organs, wisdom, knowledge, truthfulness and abstention from anger. These are the tenfold

6. Radhakrishnan, Religion and Society p. 107
marks of Dharma which must be carefully observed. On the basis of the opinions put forward by different scholars we arrive at the following conclusions:

(a) Any act which is prescribed by the Vedas;
(b) Conduct of virtuous persons. It is the criterion for right or wrong;
(c) Customs which are once found serviceable and have been transmitted from generation to generation;
(d) What is approved, by the society, though it may not be found in the śāstras and may not be supported by any custom;
(e) Actions performed after due reflection and reason, however opposed to the Vedas;
(f) What is conducive to the welfare of all beings; this is the supreme duty. Devotion to the good of humanity is the highest virtue.

Sources

Sources of dharma are (i) the Vedas; (ii) Tradition of practice of those that know it; (iii) The conduct of the virtuous and (iv) individual conscience.

Though the Veda is one of the sources of Dharma we do not find there a systematic account of dharma. They indicate the practices and the ideals connected with them. On the other hand, dharmasastra affirms in accordance with the most ancient tradition, both moral and ritualistic actions.

The way in which the cultured or disciplined (śīsta) behave is also a source of Dharma. The śīstas behave in accordance with

7. Manu Smṛti - VI.92 8. Manu Smṛti II.6.9
scriptural injunctions and are therefore regarded as guides to
conduct. Yājñavalkya observes: "One should not practise that
which, though ordained by the smṛti, is condemned by the people".9
Sista has been variously defined by smṛti works. The Band. d.s.
say "Sistas are those who are free from envy and pride, who keep
only as much corn as is measured by Kumbhi, who are free from
greed and from hypocrisy, arrogance, covetousness, delusions and
anger. Those are sistas who have studied the Veda according to
the prescribed method, together with its appendages (Itiḥāsa and
Purāṇa), who know how to draw inferences from that and who tend
to make people realise the teaching of the Veda".10 The
Mahābhāṣya defines Sistas in almost the same words as Band. d.s.
Vas. d.s. defines Sistas as one whose mind is free from diseases.11

Local customs also play an important role in finalising the
list of the contents of Dharma. Yājñavalkya says "Whatever the
custom, law and usages, those should be observed, and followed
by the king as before".12 But it is also laid down in the same
context that the custom should not be immoral or opposed to public
interest - rather it must be 'Sadācāra' or Sistācāra. The
meaning of sadācāra is that just as the revealed books (Veda and
the Smṛti) authoritatively lay down what Dharma is in the varying
circumstances of life, the practices of those who may be called
Sistas furnish us with the necessary criterion or norm i.e.
Sistacāra which is the touch-stone for judging whether an act is

9. Yāj. Smṛti I.156
10. Bodh. Dharma Sūtras I.1.5-6
in consonance with the injunctions of the Śāstras. Manu, however, restricts the word Sadācāra to the customs handed down from generation to generation among the four varṇas and the mixed castes in the country called by him Brahmāvarta. The word 'Sat' means good and the good are those who are free from (moral) taint; the practices of such people are called Sadācāra.

The general rule about the binding character of customs is set forth as follows by Govila, "the Dharma (customs) of countries castes and families, which are not opposed to the Vedic scriptures, are authoritative and binding".  

In several places Manu provides for the enforceability of customs and usages i.e. Manu Smrītī vii. 203; viii.41, 46.

Further, "good conscience" too has been recognised as a source of Dharma. Opinion differs from scholar to scholar with regard to the denotation of the word. To Yājñavalkya it means that which is agreeable to oneself and also desire born of careful thought (Svasya ca Priyamātmanah). Manu asked us to do whatever appeases the inner self. This juridical principle in the administration of law is variously described as the satisfaction of conscience (ātmanastustih ii.6), agreement with conscience (svasya ca priyamātmanah ii. 12) or what one's heart permits (hridayanabhyanujñāta ii). This principle is almost similar to the Nyāya doctrine of the Arthasastra. Kautilya provides that if the Dharma text is found opposed to judicial

13. Manu Smrītī II. 17-18  
14. Gobhila XI.20  
15. Yāmj. Smrītī I.7  
16. Manu Smrītī IV. 161
equity the dharma text fails (nasyati) and there the authority of reason prevails.\textsuperscript{17} Yājñavalkya accepts Kautilya’s doctrine that nyāya is an independent element by itself, which should be followed in the administration of justice (Nyayena caturtheva). But doubt crops up with regard to the scope of this element i.e. whether it applies to the conscience of each and every common man or is limited only to the conscience of the good or the Sistas. Perhaps the correct opinion here would be the conscience of the good i.e. Sistas. Otherwise great chaos would prevail if we apply it to the conscience of any and every common man. The reasoning power or the conscience of the common man is greatly limited and varies from individual to individual and the conclusion that they would arrive at through resorting to such conscience can never be accepted as the correct one. But the Sistas, who are free from desire and anger, who have no axe to grind are poles apart from the common people and the conscience of the former can never be accepted as the source of Dharma without hesitation.

Hindu seers are against the suppression of any instinct or impulse that has been bestowed on men but only to an extent that they do not create a chaos and havoc in the society. Dharma śāstra affirm in clear terms that for the attainment of liberation a life lived fully in accordance with the precepts of Dharma is the precondition. As these include both moral and ritualistic action the neglect of either of them will lead to an inexcusable

\textsuperscript{17} Artha Śāstra Ch.58.45 (3.1.45)
lapse from dharma and will constitute a sin. Thus what is against Dharma or what violates dharma is negatively expressed as the adharma or when positively put the same is called Pāpa or Pātaka or rather the result of an adharma is pāpa. So when there is any swerving from the right path the person commits a sinful act which runs counter to the established order (RTA) in the widest sense of the term which the Vedic seers were never tired of repeating along with Satya.

The Idea of Sin and its relation to Rta.

Sin (Pātaka) in a general way can be defined as an act disobeying some law supposed to be laid down by God. It is in opposition to the will of God manifested in an authoritative work or failure to abide by the regulations contained therein.

There are various words to connote the meaning of sin such as, enas, āgas, agha, duskrta etc. The most widely but significantly used word in the later smṛtis is Pātaka. The first set of words either mean 'dirt' or 'bad deed'. The last i.e. Pātaka added a new connotation - "The cause of downfall". This idea will be given a detailed treatment while discussing the different synonyms of sin.

The idea of sin in the Rgveda had its origin in the conception of Rta. The principle of Rta governs and controls the universe. It is the sole cause of the clock-like regularity that takes place in the universe such as the uniform succession of day and night, the inexorable appearance of the six seasons, etc. All these facts go to establish the great law of the uniformity of nature.
The word Rta is derived from the Sanskrit root 'r' to go, to change. Rta stands for the inner balance of the cosmos and the things there of, also beyond the cosmic order. Rta has a three fold aspect:

1. With regard to cosmos it means the course of nature of the regular and general order. It is responsible for the clock-like regularity that obtains in the universe.

2. With reference to sacrifice it means the moral - 'the correct and ordered way of the cult of Gods'.

3. It means the moral conduct of man. The conception of Rta as a moral imperative occurs in many passages of the Rk Samhitā.

Rta is almost always associated with Satya. We find even in the Rgveda that the term Rta and Satya are used side by side. Many of the principal Gods of the Vedic Pantheon are described as the guardians, promoters and charioters of Rta.

It is significant that the famous rk beginning with "ṛtanoa Satyaneabhīdchat etc." came to be employed for removal of sin (aghamarsana) in the daily sandhaya performance of the twice-born classes, although the mantra has no reference to sin. It appears that to the Rgvedic seers infringement of the ṛta and satya constitutes sin. The Rgvedic seers employ numerous words such as āgas, akha, durita, dukṛta, drugha, anihās to denote the meaning of sin or guilt. Among these the most frequent words are āgas and enas, both of which appear to signify sin. In the 7th Mandala of the

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18. Rv. IX.113.4
Rgveda there is a hymn addressed to Varuna which contains several verses which embody a deep and sincere consciousness of the idea of guilt. Further, in another hymn the sage says "whatever transgressions (abhidroha) we men have practiced as against the divine hosts and whatever dharmas laid down by you we may have confounded through our ignorance (or heedlessness) do not destroy us on account of that guilt (enas)". Varuna is implored to detach sin (āgas) from the devotee just like a girdle. We find the seers' supplication in "May we do not have to enjoy (suffer for) the enas committed by another".

The word 'agha' also seems to mean sin, for example we meet with such prayers in the Rgveda "O Gods, May your fetters and my sins (aghāni) be far away from us?" The word 'anihas' also means sin as brought out by the following passage - "O Varuna, remove anihas (sin) as one removes the rope from the (neck) of the calf". Again Heaven and Earth the upholders of Rta are prayed to protect the sage from 'amhas'. Another important word is 'vṛjina' which is often placed in opposition to 'sadhu' or 'ṛju' the straight or right.

The word 'amrta' is frequently used in the Rgveda. Varuna is said to mark the 'satya' and 'anrta' of men. "These Gods-Mitra, Āryaman and Varuna mark (or know) many sins (anrta); they flourish in the abode of Rta." The word 'durita' too is often used in the sense of sin. For the waters are invoked as follows: "O Water, carry away from me whatever sin may exist in me, whatever transgressions I may have been guilty of as regards my sensual appetite or whatever falsehood I may have uttered".

19. Ibid VII. 89.5 20. Ibid VI.51.7 21ff.Ibid II.29.5 21a.Ibid 1.23.22
Here all the words 'Durita', 'Droha' and 'Anṛta' are brought together and convey almost the same meaning. The words 'amhati' and 'Rapas' seem to have been employed in the sense of sin. Duskrta (evil deed) is used in the sense of sin. The word 'pāpa' occurs in the sense of sinner, or sinful or evil.

In spite of ample references to the idea of sin and evil found in the Rgveda and to the transgressions of divine laws briefly indicated in the foregoing lines, the European scholars refuse to believe that the Rgvedic people were conscious of the idea of sin. They boldly affirm that the idea of sin was wholly unknown to the Rgvedic sages. But Prof. Max Muller in his 'Sacred Books of the East' refutes this idea when he says that "the gradual growth of the concept of guilt is one of the most interesting lessons which certain passages of the ancient hymns can teach us". 22

**Conception of Sin in the Atharvaveda**

In almost all the hymns concerned in the Rgveda, sin has been magnified as disobedience to the Divine will and transgression against the settled moral order. Reconciliation is attained through supplication by means of gifts and other marks of submissiveness. But in the Atharvaveda sin has been blended with magical formulae - as a sort of magical substance that becomes attached to one. The Atharvaveda believes that sins stick to

22. Max Muller, Sacred Book of the East Vol I, p XXII
the body of a person. Freedom from it is to be attained only through the manipulation of those magical forces that are competent to remove it. It is interesting to note that in the Atharvaveda the conception of sin is always mixed up with the sense of something that is to be expiated. Sin is thus regarded as quasi-physical which is a characteristic feature of Atharvaveda.

So the Atharvavedic conception of sin and evil is primarily based on the charms prescribed for the expiation of sin and defilement. Further in many of the hymns sin is associated with or even sometimes identified with disease and worldly misfortune. Though sin is sometimes regarded as a disease of the soul or evil of the soul, yet this idea is not tenable on the ground that sin is something that is as separable from the individuals as the mantle or cloak from his body. It sticks to the body as a cloak does and can only be removed through sprinkling of water and other devices of expiation.

Unfulfilled promises, offences connected with adultery, failure to return what is borrowed are marked as sins that require expiation. Water is used for the removal of sins as also are plants or herbal remedies. Spells, imprecations, amulets and fire also play important roles in removing sins. With these along with similar methods the stain is believed to be removed or wiped away or thrown far away. The Gods too, are said to have connection in releasing men from sin, though their role is of a

23. A.V. X.2.22; VIII.7.3.
24. Ibid X.3.8;V.30.4
subordinate nature. God Agni, in particular, is prayed to relieve a person from sin. But the obsolving power lies rather in the prayer itself than in the God who is invoked. Prayer, the means to achieve the mercy of the God gets the highest position, whereas the Gods are relegated to a secondary position. Hence the view that sin is indestructible and that release from it is to be attained through the passing of it from one individual to another seems to be baseless as this theory finds no sanction in the revealed texts.

**Sin in the Brāhmaṇas**

In the Brāhmaṇas the conception of a good life is primarily based on the precise carrying out of the rites and utterances of the formulae of the sacrificial rituals. In this period sin acquired an added meaning associated with improper or non-performance of enjoined sacrificial rites. Any failing in the performance of sacrifice amounts to sin and should be expiated by various rites connected with sacrifice. The sense of the importance of the exactitude in the rite can be understood from the famous ritual of confession which is performed at the sacrifice called Varuṇaprāghāṣa. Here the priest asks the wife of the sacrificer (yajamāna) with whom she consorts other than her husband. It is essential that she should speak out the sin. When the sin is confessed, it is diminished; the very confession of sin amounts to its expiation.

Suffering is recognised as the result (phala) of previous sin and when a good man dies he goes to the next world carrying
with him his merit variously termed as Dharma, Apūrba, punya, sukṛta etc. We get repeated reference to the world of pious (sukṛtam lokam). These words are frequently used in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣad texts.

The idea of good, action leading to heaven and evil action bringing in punishment and damnation upon the evil-doer is given more concrete expression in the Brāhmaṇas.

As the precise performance of sacrifice is held to be of supreme importance in this period, so to propitiate and appease them by giving liberal gifts to priests, offering choice articles of one’s liking to gods, constitute good action (sukṛta karma). A person who performs these is a pious man while one who transgresses it is consequently a sinner. Thus it becomes crystal clear that the conception of sin in the Brāhmaṇas is invariably connected with the proper performance of sacrifice. It is believed that the sinner is punished by Varuṇa with a disease like dropsy and is sometimes thrown in to dark waters in the nether world. Varuṇa is the moral governor in the Vedic pantheon; he is the deity who punishes for inaccuracies that occurs in the rituals. His constant vigilance, his cords and his knots are of great help in this regard and the errors in sacrificial offerings are at once detected by him. The concept of torment in the other world or harrowing of the hell is inextricably bound up in the Brāhmaṇas with liturgical bunglings or the failure to follow the correct practice of the ritual.

A more favourable view of the morality embodied in the
Brāhmaṇas is taken by Hopkins who holds that while the rituals form an important part of the religion embodied in the Brāhmaṇas it remains true that there is a real ethical foundation for this religion. The conception of sin is mechanical. The slaying even of demons like Vṛtra brings the taint of bloodshed. Evil repute or censure (aśliṭa vāk) sticks to killer irrespective of the nature of his deed. A false accusation causes a man to be forsaken by the Gods despite his innocence. It is said that the false accusers are the real sinners. But the priests can make his sacrifice acceptable to them.

It is characteristic of this period that the term satya and Anṛta came to form a formal contrast. We find even in the Rgveda, the term ṛta and satya used interchangeably. Oldenburg, however, points to a distinction when he says that ṛta is equivalent to order and satya stands rather for agreement between 'what is said' and 'what actually is'.

With the writers of Brāhmaṇas, the word ṛta did not find much favour and satya has usurped the former's place. Satya - in special is enjoined in many places. One of its instances is when the performer should speak the truth during the period of the 'Dikṣaniyesti'. Truth has a moral value even according to the Brāhmaṇas.

25. ṛtam vāva dīkṣaḥ satyam vāva dīkṣaḥ
Tasmād dikṣhitena satyameva vaidītavyam A.B. 1.6

26. Punarvā etam ṛtвиje garbham teurvani yam dīkṣhayanti. A.B.1.3
Satya in the Brāhmaṇas generally means the right performance or conduct of sacrifice i.e. according to the rules and the right recitation of the mantras. Thus the performance of sacrifices to the Gods is held supreme in the Brāhmaṇas and the sages are thoroughly occupied with sacrifice. Hence failure to perform the sacrifice according to its rules and regulations makes the person liable for expiation.

The conception and import of the term 'Pātaka'

A clear definition with an elaborate list and classification of sin is found in the Dharma Śāstras for the first time. By the time of the Dharma Śāstras a new word had found prominence in the discussion of sin and its consequences. The word pātaka has acquired a definite significance in denoting the effect of sin in a person who commits it. The idea of sin is widely denoted by the term 'pātaka', though as we have mentioned in the foregoing discussion the word sin is denoted by several other terms as well.

Gautama says - "To be a patita means to be deprived of right to follow the lawful occupation of the twice-born men". 27

The Dharma Śāstras lay down that sin may arise in two ways - viz. (i) from the omission of what is enjoyed by Śāstras (mīstasyākriya); (ii) from the commission of what is forbidden (pratisiddha-sevanam) and also due to want of control over the senses (anigrahātchendriyānām).

27. Gaut. dh. Sūtra 21.4
Origin of the word 'Patanīya'

The word 'pataniya' (meaning the cause of patana) has been employed considerably in the Dharmasāstra and the Epics as in Āpastambha Dharma Sūtra I.7.21.7. We meet with this word frequently in the Mahābhārata also. The word 'pātaka' derives its authority from the causal root 'pat' - to fall, to degrade. Visva-rūpā in yaj III.219 explains that 'pātana' (fall or sinfulness) is not used in the technical sense attached to that word by Gautama Dharma Sūtra (21.4) viz. 'to be a patita means to be deprived of the right to follow the lawful occupations of the twice-born men', but is used only in the sense that the man 'not observing what is laid down to be performed and practising what is prohibited and not bringing the senses under control' becomes liable to undergo prayāscittā.28 The words of Gautama according to him (21.4) are restricted only to what are called mahāpātakas. The 'prayāscittā viveka derives from the word from the root 'pat'.29 Meidhātithi while commenting on Manu XI. 54 derives the word from the same root and the word 'pataniya' has also been used in Yājñavalkya, Sankha and other Smritis.

Now a question which naturally arises and complicates the problem is that what acts are to be avoided so as not to become a sinner (pātakin). The authors of the Hindu Śāstras as if expecting this question emphatically lay down "If a man does not do what is

28 Gau dh. s. 21.4
29 Prāyaś viv. p. 35
enjoined, or does what is censured, or becomes addicted to sensual urges without limitation, he becomes liable to expiatory rites". Yājñavalkya also observes "By not performing what has been ordained and by resorting to what is censured as also by a nonrestraint of the sense organs, a man incurs a fall." But the above verses need some clarification as to its meaning. There are some compulsory acts such as the twilight prayer, performing of Agnihotra and so forth which we termed as 'nitya Karma'. All such acts have their compulsory character indicated by such words as 'one shall perform the Agnihotra throughout life'. The nature of the compulsory acts is specially laid down by the Śāstrakāras. They should be performed without any failure. Further there are some acts such as drinking of wine, murder of a brāhmaṇa and so forth which are enumerated as censurable acts. Thus when a person fails to perform these compulsory acts and, on the other hand, performs those which are censurable, he fails in his śastric duties and falls as an impure man — accruing sin both ways. Further, another provision has been incorporated here i.e. also by non-restraint of the organs a man incurs a fall. It is through these organs that people perform actions and fulfil their desire. But overindulgence of any of spiritual these desires may lead to degradation and social confusion. Thus in order to curb these desires people must refrain their sense organs, so as to keep in check any possibility of chaos in the

30. Medhatithi on Manu Smṛti XI.46
31. Yaj. Smṛti III. 219
society. Through non-restraint of the sense organs a person incurs the sin of going astray from the righteous course. It is for this reason that he is tainted with the sin of departure from the right path. On account of practising prohibited deeds he must undergo penances.

A sin, thus, has two-handed operation, so far as it relates to the inner self it leads to hell or ignominious rebirths and in its social aspects it obstructs dealing among people in the form of segregation from society which will act both as a corrective and deterrent measure on the offender. The elaborate rites of the excommunication of the fallen (patita) and of his rehabilitation after he undergoes punishment and expiation are visible signs of his social responsibility. The 'patāka' does not fall in varna. He simply falls out of the structure of varna and when restored he goes back to his own varna.

Sins can broadly be divided into two divisions viz. intentional and unintentional. When a sin is committed through the intention of the doer the offence is of a serious nature. But trouble arises with sins committed unintentionally or unwillingly. According to some scholars acts committed through ignorance or without any intention do not involve sins because when a man commits an act unintentionally he is not the doer of that act. For one is called the 'doer' of an act only when he does it intentionally as we find people making such assertions as, 'This man is not consciously doing such and such act, but he is being led by fate to do it'. Further, it is only when an act is done with a distinct motive.
towards it that the act becomes the subject of prohibition, eg.,
it is only when a man evinces a desire for drinking wine that he
is told not to drink wine. But if a man eager for a drink of water
drinks wine thinking it to be water, he does not incur any guilt.
But Medhātithi is of the opinion that a man can be a 'doer' even
without knowing it and that act committed without any intention
incurs sins. This controversy would be dealt with more elaborately
in the chapter consisting of a general note on prayāscītta while
dealing with the question as to whether prayāscītta can destroy
sins committed both intentionally and unintentionally.

Now this being settled that sin can be incurred without
even intending (अकमता) it, there must be some other elements
which contribute to the origin of sin. The Indian Philosophy
believes that Prakṛti consists of three constituents, which may
be likened to chains or cords. They are termed guṇas and are
three in number: Sattva, the principle of purity; Rajas, the
principle of energy and Tamas, the principle of darkness and igno-
rance. They are at rest or in a state of equilibrium before
creative activity begins. They manifest themselves in the created
being in whom they are found in varying proportions. Sometimes
one or the other guṇa becomes dominant in a being and thereby affec-
ting the nature or outlook of the being. Manu devotes some space
to their elucidation as factors in rebirth. According as
Sattva, rajas or tamas preponderates man becomes Gods, men or
lower animals respectively; Manu again divides each of these three

32. 'King Chasmadeba basantpramāṇākṛto dososti, prayāscīttamiti' -
Medhātithi on Manu XI. 45
33. Manu Smṛti XII. 24-50.
classes into lowest, middling and highest. Manu in some other context prescribes that "he should ponder over the destination of men due to bad deeds, falling in hell, and the tortures of hell, separation from beloved ones, contact with undesirable persons, the ravages of old age and pains of diseases, the departing from body and again lying in the womb and the transmigration of the soul through thousands of crores of births of all sorts." Yājñavalkya enumerates that the soul affected by rajas and tamas qualities, is overtaken by various conditions causing misery, wanders in the world and coming in contact with undesirable objects is subjected to the endless whirlpool of births and deaths. When a person is overpowered with these two qualities his mind is occupied by dirt such as passion and so on, and is unable to perceive the things in their real nature, i.e. in unsuited to the knowledge of the Ātman. The Śāmkhya philosophy believes that it is the rajoguna that is the cause of man's sinfulness. In this context restrain of the organs as enumerated by Yājñavalkya is also of great importance for the origin of sin.

A man must suffer pain for his sin or enjoy pleasure for his merits. Pāpa or Punya are after all effects of human deeds. The soul is tied up to mortal existence by pāpa and punya alike. In the higher stage of spiritual progress the seeker keeps himself away from incurring sins, as well as from earning merit remaining completely indifferent to both. Once, however, committed there

34, Ibid VI. 40-60 35. Yāj. Smrti III. 140-141
is no escape from the effects of human deed except when committed by a person who has realised his identity with the Universal Soul. If so, how does sin and for that matter merit also affect human life of the doer and pursue him thereafter? Other religions make it very simple solving the question on the analogy of justice by a king granting reward or awarding punishment by God after going through the records of good and bad deeds at the end of the creation. The good and the wicked alike have to wait till that day called Doomsday in Christian religion and Rokkeyamat in the Koran:

Hence Hindu seers do not dispose of the question so simply. They have tried to be as rational as possible in this matter and the solution offered by them stands searching analysis and screening, and so to say their view has attracted scientific enquiry in several parts of the world and of course, in India. The doctrine of Karma and so also the theory of transmigration of soul are now engaging the thoughts of western scholars of the universities of long standing reputation.

**Doctrine of Karma**

In the material world every cause has its effect and every action has its consequences. From the spiritual point of view Hindu scholars hold that not only does every cause have an effect, but he who puts the cause into action suffers the effect. The man in this regard is both the doer (karta) and the sufferer of his own doings (bhokta). The effect of the smallest doing or deed
is not lost. It must exhaust itself just as combustible matter when set on fire burns itself out. No one can escape the results of his own action until it is spent up by enjoyment or suffering as the case may be or is multiplied by realising the supreme knowledge of identity with the universal soul.

This enjoyment or suffering may not be instantaneous. The result of action takes its own time to appear, may be in this life or may be after death. Manu likens the operation of karma to seeds sown which grow and give fruits only when the proper time comes. If it is so, the question naturally comes as to when and how the consequences of deeds visit a doer. If it is not during one's life-time it must be after death. How the sins committed in this life through the instrumentality of this body clings on? What is the medium or vehicle which sin, and for that matter of that merit also, adopt for passing from here to hereafter? With answers to these questions as the background of the doctrine of karma and reincarnation can be presented in a clearer perspective.

Now the theory that the results of karma burns itself out by suffering or enjoyment as the case may be naturally presupposes a continuous life here and hereafter. If the results of karma do not appear in this life which is not possible considering the amount of work done by a man it must wait till the appropriate time. This is possible in three ways, firstly, results of karma may visit the doer in this life, secondly the soul may experience heaven or hell as reward or punishment as the case may be, and, thirdly, it may assume new material body and reincarnate either as man or as
other sentiment beings according to the nature of the result of karma. The Dharmasāstras accept all the three possibilities. They think that some of the results of grave sin or extraordinary merits may have fruits on even in this very life - (Manu Aṣṭayuktakasya Pāpasya ihaiva phalamāṣyate According to Manu and Yājnavalkya the souls may after death experience the life in hell for the sins or experience the life of heaven for the merit he earns. But this is only a temporary phase. In case of heaven when the results of his merit is exhausted he has to come back to this world to experience the result of his remaining karma. Similarly, when the tenure of his hell-life is over and his sins are nearly exhausted, his soul comes back to this world and by dint of his previous merit enters a new life. This, however, does not mean that all the sins are destroyed by suffering in the hell. Some grave sins may pursue him throughout. The third possibility to which we have just now narrated works in the same way, soul with its subtle body, 'linga-sārīra', comes back and enters lower life such as animals.

Individual soul is a spand of the universal soul and to that it is identical with universal soul. The soul of Ātman in its original nature is pure and free from any modification. In the ultimate analysis it does not forego its natural purity even when associated with the body. 36

Now the question arises how can this pure soul gather impurity

36. Anādityānāṃsasṛṣṭasyām na karoti na lipyate
Sarīrasthopī Kaunteya na karoti na lipyate
Bh. G. 13.32
in the form of sin around it. How does the Indian philosophy and Dharmasastras reconcile this position? Manu, Yajñavalkya and other seers of the Smṛtis hold that the individual consists of the material body which Manu describes as bhūtatma and literally the soul in the material body and finally paramatma, the universal pure soul as an indifferent witness to what the man does. This Jīv̤atma or the individual soul is in fact is the universal soul associated with senses and associated with and limited by the senses and the inner mind (the antahkaranā). It is this association with the body and innermind that involves the individual soul by superimposition (avidyā) with whatever the man does with the instrumentality of the material body and the senses. The soul is associated at the first instance with the material body and the subtle body within it (Suksma sarīra). The third enveloping body with avidyā as the nucleus of the individual soul which can be described as the inner most body of the soul is called the kāraṇa sarīra. When the body perishes the suksma kāraṇa sarīra (subtle and causal) remain which surround the individual soul. With the destruction of the subtle body (suksma sarīra) the individual soul maintains its individual identity in the association of kāraṇa sarīra alone. Final realisation removes this kāraṇa sarīra and Ātman attains its own nature which is termed mokṣa or mukti. The next question which naturally poses itself is as to which body the sin committed by a person clings.

Apparently the body commits the sin and naturally it is expected that the sin at the first instance attaches to the body.
But when the body dies and is reduced to ashes what happens to the sins attaching to this body?

After death when the body perishes the individual soul passes away with the subtle body associated with it carrying all the impression of sin and merit committed during the life time of the individual and also with whatever remains of his experiences of his previous birth just as the wind carries away the smell of flowers etc. 37 The soul, therefore, in spite of its being pure by nature becomes involved in the results of the deeds of the body through its association with subtle body that persists even after death.

This persistence of karma or deeds around the soul associated with the subtle body causes the vicious cycle of existence and death. This again is the basis on which the doctrine of karma and rebirth has been formulated and developed.

The doctrine of Karma and rebirth

The Scriptures of the Hindus hold that the present birth of man itself represents the cumulative effects of man's past births and action thereof. In other words, our present birth is a symbolic presentation of the sum-total of our all past actions. The doctrine, therefore, admits that man is partially a product of the past deeds and in this way it recognises man's continuity with the past and also his freedom regarding the present and future

37. Grhitvā-etāni samayati vayurgandhānivasyāt
Bh.G. 15.8
destiny. In the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan "While it regards the past as determined, it allows that the future is only conditional".  

From the material point of view this doctrine is merely the law of causation. It is proved in science laboratory that action and reaction are equal and opposite. But from the spiritual point of view karma is the law of moral retribution. In other words not only every cause has an effect, but also that he who puts the cause into action, suffers the effect. Prof. Radhakrishnan has called it "the law of the conservation of moral energy". It is magnificently described in the eighth book of the "Light of Asia" by Edwin Arnold, one stanza of which is quoted below to prove the fact -

That which ye sow ye reap. See younder fields
   The sesame was sesame, the corn
Was corn. The silence and the darkness knew
   So is a man's face born.

Thus these two ideas, viz., a man becomes good by good work and evil by evil work are the fundamental doctrines which express the reason and motive that lie at the root of action (karma). In short, actions and conducts of the present life moulds the future life of that man and that the present birth of a man rests on actions and conducts of his past life or lives. Here it should be noted that the actions done in one life may not fashion the life of the very next birth but it can go on moulding lives of several cycles of birth. The Manu Smrti observes, "an evil deed does not

38. Radhakrishnan, Hindu View of Life p. 75.
produce its retribution immediately like a cow that yields plenty of milk immediately after she is well fed".39 The doctrine as to how man's own action and conduct moulds his future life is beautifully expressed in Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad as follows:

"So truly according as he works and according as he behaves so will he be, a man of good deeds will become (be born) evil; he become holy by holy deeds, evil by evil deeds".40

In its simplest form the law of action (karma) means that all actions whether good or bad, produce their respective consequences in the life of the individual who acts. There is no loss of the effects of work done. This law helps us to explain the differences in the lot of individual beings, which are so striking and unexpected under the common circumstances of their lives. Very often we find that men who are born and brought up under the same and similar circumstances differ widely in respect to their achievements, temperaments and enjoyments in life. Some of them, we find, are obviously due to the different actions performed by us in the present life. But many of them cannot be explained by reference to the deeds of this life and thus necessitates it to be explained by reference to past lives. Now if some good or bad actions are thus found to produce certain good or bad effects in the present life, it is quite reasonable to maintain that all actions - past, present and future will produce their proper effects in this or another life of the doer of the act. This law

39. M.B. IV. 7a
40. Br. Ma. (IV. 4.5-7)
of action is therefore a universal moral law which governs not only the life and destiny of all individuals beings, but even of the physical world.

**Doctrine of Rebirth**

The doctrine of rebirth is a corollary to the law of karma. The differences of disposition found between one individual and another even at birth must be due to their respective past actions and past actions imply past births. Similarly we notice that all our actions do not bear fruit in this life. Hence there must be another birth for enjoying the residual actions. We find an echo of the doctrine of karma and rebirth in some western poets. The following stanza from Wordsworth's Ode on intimations if to Immortality' is an instance in point:

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting
The soul that rises with us, or life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from a far;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home."

Stated in its simplest form, the doctrine of re-birth is a belief that lays down the existence of life prior and posterior to the present life. Before the soul assumes a particular body, the soul has been earlier in another body, rather in a series of incarnations, i.e. assuming earlier bodies. When the body perishes..."
the soul shuffling off the mortal coil may go to heaven and, after
some halt there, returns to be reborn again in another earthly body.
The period of human soul's stay in heaven and its reincarnation is
determined by the amount of good deeds done in his successive
lives on earth.

Thus, some suppositions may be inferred for belief in karma
and transmigration viz. (a) man has a soul which is eternal and
which is separate from the physical body; (b) that the organisms,
animals, plants, and probably the so-called inanimate objects
possess souls, (c) that the souls of men and lower animals can
pass from one kind of physical organism to another; (d) that the
soul is both the doer (kartā) and the sufferer (bhoktā). But it
is to be noted that the transmigration of soul from one gross body
to another is not always immediate, but sometimes delayed by the
contingency of its passing into some invisible world to enjoy or
suffer the consequences of the deeds of its past earthly life.
In such cases, the soul on leaving the gross body takes its
abode in the invisible world like heaven or hell where it remains
until the merits or demerits of its earthly life are completely
exhausted and the time comes again for its rebirth on earth. Thus
finally the concept of hell comes to be accommodated into the
theory of karma.

We must now turn to the ideas of hell contained in the post-
vedic literature, Sūtras, Smṛtis, Purāṇas and digests. To Gautama,
'naraka' is a particular place where a man has to dwell solely in
distress and sorrow. Āpastambiya Dharma Sūtra affirms that 'naraka'
is indeed one's abode when one transgresses one's dharma. Yājñavalkya
lays down that the hells are terrible and frightful in nature by reason of their causing untold agonies which are extremely horrible and which are sole abodes for the suffering of pain.  

A great diversity of opinions is met with in the texts as to the number of hells. The Brahma-Sūtra mention that the 'narakas' are said to be seven. The Viṣṇupurāṇa too agrees to this view. The Mārkheṣeya Purāṇa enumerates seven 'narakas'. Nevertheless most of the texts put forward the view that the 'narakas' are twenty-one in number. The names are almost the same in all these works, the variations being due mostly to the scribes having read certain letters differently. The names of these 'narakas' as set forth by Manu are enumerated below:

1. Tāmisra - The hell where deep gloom prevails.
2. Lohasanku - The hell full of piercing iron-spikes.
3. Mahāniraya - The hell from where there is no escape.
4. Salmafi - The hell where the sinners are tormented with the thorns of Salmati the cotton silk.
5. Raurava - The dreadful hell.
7. Pūtimṛttika - The hell smelling of foul earth.
8. Kālasūtrakā - The hell containing death-halters.
9. Sanighāta - The hell full of mucus.
10. Lohitodam - The hell full of liquid blood.

41. Yaj. Smrti II. 5-6
42. Brahma Sūtra III. 206
43. Viṣṇu Purāṇa I.6.41
44. Manu Smrti IV.88-90; Yaj Smrti III. 222-224
11. Savisam - The hell full of poison
12. Samprapatunam - The hell full of precipitous falls
13. Mahānaraka - Great hell
15. Samjīvana - The hell where the stay is protracted too long.
16. Mahāpatha - The hell with an unending road.
17. Avīcim - The hell full of undisturbed gloom.
18. Andhatamisram - The hell where pitched darkness prevails.
19. Kumbhipaka - The hell where the sinners are baked like earthem pots.
20. Asipatravana - The hell with the forest of sword-blades.
21. Tapana - The hell full of scorching heat.

All the abovementioned twenty one hells are appropriately designated by their names. Apart from these the different Purānas give different number of the hells ranging from twenty one to one hundred and forty. For example Padma Purāṇa enumerates that there are one hundred and forty hells. The craze for multiplying 'narakas' goes so far that the Brahma Purāṇa, the Garuda Purāṇa, the Vishnudharmottara and others declare that there are thousand, lakhs and crores of narakas.

The description of the terrible torments of Hell has been enumerated in several Smṛtis and Purāṇas. Viṣṇu Dharma Sūtra enumerates it in the following lines:

"Sinners guilty of having committed sins have to endure terrible sufferings when they have left this life and reached the path of Yama. Being dragged hither and thither by the fierce servants of

45. Padma Purāṇa Uttara Chap. 227
46. Viṣṇu Dh. S. 43. 32-45."
Yama they are led to hell by them with frightening gestures. In Hell they are devoured by dogs, jackals, crows, herons, cranes and other fierce birds eating raw flesh, by snakes and scorpions with fire blazing from their mouths. They are scorched by fire, pierced by thorns, rent asunder by saws and oppressed by thirst. They are afflicted with hunger and by terrible hordes of tigers; they faint away at every step on account of the stinking smell of pus and blood. Desiring to secure the food and drink of others they are beaten by the servants whose faces resemble those of such horrible animals as crows, herons, and cranes. In some places they are boiled in oil, in others they are pounded with bestles or pulverised in iron or stone vessels. In some places they eat what is vomitted or pus or blood or excrements or hideous meat smelling like pus. In one place they have to stay in pitch darkness and are devoured by horrible worms having flames in their mouth. In some places they are over-whelmed by cold or have to pass through the midst of unclean things; in other places the departed devour each other, thus presenting a most obnoxious and horrible sight. In some places they are beaten up on account of their former deeds and are suspended in other places or are pierced with flocks of arrows or are cut into pieces. In other places they have to tread upon thorns and they are encircled by the hoods of serpents, they are tormented with machines and are dragged by their knees. Their backs, heads and neck are fractured, they become terrible to look at, their throats being reduced to the size fit for a cave shelter and they are unable to bear torments. Sinners are being tormented
in this way and having suffered intense pain undergo various further sufferings in their passage through animal bodies (in which they are thereafter born).

The effects of karma are recognised as leading first to the abode of enjoyment or punishment i.e. Heaven or Hell and subsequently to rebirth in specified form. Thus Garuḍa Purāṇa describes how sinners after a sojourn in hell are born in sinful wombs (pāpayoni). They also become afflicted with various diseases. Manu and Yājñavalkya lay down emphatically that men guilty of grave sins who have not undergone penance are, after undergoing harrowings of hell, born with bodies marked with some condemned signs. One guilty of grave sins bear such signs for seven births and one guilty of upapātaka for five births and one guilty for pātaka for three births. These marks indicate the particular type of sins committed by them and are observed in each life. They disappear only when the sinner repents for his action and performs penances.

The list of these are long and the connecting principle is to provide for a repulsive offence in an equally repulsive form in the next birth. The fierce and horrible description of the hell has perhaps been enumerated to deter people from committing sins which carry such terrible consequences as its effects. The description of multifarious punishments in hell remind us of descriptions of similar harrowings of hell described in Greek literature, in Dante's famous 'Inferno', in Milton's 'Paradise Lost' and such like epics of the West. The enumeration of hells and their harrowings has,

47. Garuḍa Purāṇa 11.29.
indeed, some value as deterrent in the case of a person who is susceptible to fear. The enumeration of the links between offender and their punishment in after-life and rebirth is coupled with description of ways in which by the performance of special religious rites, by the propitiation of various gods or divinities in specific ways and by expiatiations which are described in details, two distinct results can be had from them: firstly, in this world itself a person, who is tormented by diseases, can find alleviation for suffering, or even a cure by fulfilling the prescription and, secondly, he will diminish or retard the evil influences, persistent in the next birth as well. Further, belief in the transmigration of soul arises with the conviction that disease and birth in the pāpa jōnis are the causes of sin.

Although the word 'karman' is ordinarily employed to denote good as well as evil actions still in connection with penances the word always denotes the idea of evil deeds. Hence, 'Karmavipāka' means the ripening of evil deeds or sins. According to it all diseases of the human body are the results of sinful acts committed in previous lives. These are in consequence of a remnant of former misdeeds, subsisting after the inescapable hell-life decreed to the non-repentant. Another consequence of such misdeeds is a rebirth among the lower animals.

The theory of karma-vipāka was perhaps originally put forward to determine the place of Prāyascitta in the process of purging of the sins through various ignominious births and suffering in the hell. The sinful cannot avoid rebirth or hell as he is bound by
the law of karma to suffer the end. He must exhaust the effects of his evil deeds by undergoing torture of hell and suffering numerous births and deaths before he can expect a better birth to renew the upward progress of the soul. This process of redemption naturally leave no place for expiation of sins, of the grave sins at any rate. If this be the state of things how does Prayascitta come in and fit itself in this automatic cycle of purging operation of karma through hell and rebirth. The theory of karmavipāka was advanced to explain the need of expiatory rites in spite of the inexorable law of karma. It seems the theory was originally propounded to justify expiatory penances even for sins which ordinarily were believed to have been beyond retrieval. There are emphatic assertions in the Śrītis themselves that 'There is no atonement for sins committed intentionally, it is only for those who commit sin unintentionally'.

"Prāyaścitamakāmānaṁ kāmāvāptam navidyate
upapātaka eva syāt tathā cāt-mopaghātiṁe"

- (Chāgaleya quoted by Aparārka to Yaj Śrīti.

Such passages had to be interpreted to suit the accepted opinion of the śrītkāras and to explain the importance of expiatory rites the theory of karmavipāka had to be introduced. The sense is that a sinner will have to bin out the effect of his deeds by suffering but if he does not perform prayascītta he is reborn with certain diseases and deformities even if he takes a human body in a good family by dint of some merits earned in his previous births.
These diseases or deformities are the signs of the last remnant of sin that clings to the sinner. Prayāscittta removes this dangerous possibility and therefore it is compulsory for the sinner to perform the prescribed expiatory rites. In fact karmavipāka is only an expansion of the karma theory to explain certain agonies of human life even in good persons born in higher caste and endowed with vedic learning justifying at the same time Prayāscittta for heinous crimes.

According to Manu mind is the spring of all action but he himself divides actions into three categories - mind, body and speech. Coveting another's wealth by unfair means, desiring that evil should befall another and persistence in false ideas - these three are the mental sins. Harshness of speech, falsehood, backbiting and irrelevant prattling - these four are vocal sins. Appropriating to oneself another's wealth without his consent, injury to sentient beings against the injunction of śastra, sexual intercourse with another's wife - these three are bodily sins.

Manu provides that bodily sins reduce a man to the state of a fixed immobile object (tree etc.), vocal sins reduce a man to the state of birds and beasts, and mental sins to the lowest castes (candala and the like). According to Hārita the effects of the evil actions of all the three kinds take place at that very age in which such evil action were committed. Hārita speaks of 18 evil actions that lead to hell, of which six are mental, four vocal

48. Manu Smrti XII 4
49. Ibid XII 5
50. Ibid XII 6
51. Ibid XII 7
52. Hārita quoted by Pra viveka XII
and the rest are bodily sins.

Commenting on Yājñavalkya, Mitāksarā also lays down that under the influence of ignorance, passion etc. people perform a series of actions which are of three kinds - mental, vocal and bodily sins. This becomes the cause of birth among various inferior materials. Yājñavalkya lays down - "Just as the propensities of the souls in the body are innumerable, in exactly the same way the shapes of living beings of all classes in this world are numerous. One is born of inferior wombs as a dog candala etc. on account of mental sins. The man who tells a lie, who is a back-biter, is harsh and talks incoherently is born among beasts and birds. Further one who is given to appropriate what is not given, one who is attached to another's wife or one who kills prohibited victims is born among non-moving beings". The murderer of a brahmāṇa is born in the body of a beast, a dog, a pig or a camel. The drinker of surā is born as an ass, the thief of gold reaches the state of a worm, an insect or a moth and one guilty of incest becomes grass, a bush or a creeper.

It is interesting to note that some of the births assigned to those guilty of thefts of various articles have some logical connection with the sins committed. For example when Manu and Yājñavalkya prescribe that a thief of grains becomes a rat in the next birth. In the same way one who steals a vehicle becomes a

53. Harita quoted by Parās Mādhab II Part 2 p. 212-213
54. Mit. on Yāj. III. 131.
55. Yāj. Smṛti III. 134-136
56. Ibid III. 207-208
a camel; a monkey, one who steals a fruit; one who steals water a water duck etc. etc. Further Manu prescribes that a thief of jewels, pearls and coral is born among the class of goldsmith. Thus one can easily appreciate this retribution as appropriate or reasonable, but the same cannot be said of all varieties of crimes and culprits. Basing on it, Yājñavalkya lays down - "By way of illustrations only have I stated this with reference to the act of theft; as there are varieties of things, so also are there the species of animals."

Yājñavalkya provides that after reaping the consequences of their evil deeds (by falling into hell etc.) and by reaching the state of lower animals, sinners are born as human beings of a low order, poor and with condemned marks on their bodies or afflicted with some kinds of disease. Even medical works like Carvāka Samhitā hold the belief that diseases are the consequences of actions done in past lives. But the Śrauta Sūtras are not in complete agreement about the diseases or bodily deformities that sinners of various grades suffer. However, we give below a short list of it as given in the Prāyaścitta viveka. "The sinners of atipataka suffer from leprosy, the murderer of a brāhmaṇa shall be affected by Tuberculosis or any wasting disease, the drunkard has black teeth, the gold thief has bad nails whereas the violator of the bed of the Guru has an ugly skin. Manu also lays down the same rule.

57. Yāj. Smṛti III 214-215; Manu Smṛti XII. 62
58. Ibid XII. 61
59. Yāj. Smṛti III 216
60. Ibid III 217
61. Prāyaś Viveka p. 14
62. Manu Smṛti XI. 48-52
Yājnavalkya Smṛti further provides that one who steals cooked food shall be as dyspeptic and one who steals without permission is born dumb; one who adulterates corn shall have redundant limbs, the informer will have a stinking nose. One who steals oil shall be born a tailspāyi and a slanderer has a foul stinking mouth. 63 Prāyaścitta Sāra gives a long list of the diseases and deformities suffered by a sinner (vide p.214-231); but due to want of space the full list could not be enumerated.

Mitāksarā points out that the disease or defect mentioned in the text is the last remnant of a sin and by the very fact of their having it they become free from it and therefore they do not stand in need of any further penance, and as their sin is finally removed by suffering the disease or defect their fitness for being allowed to mix among people is established. Though the doctrine is dismal and terrifying yet it gives a ray of hope to the sinner embodying that the soul may in its long passage and evolution be ultimately able to discover its true greatness and realise eternal peace and happiness.

It is believed that a man can redeem himself by his own action and efforts and for that matter freedom is essential for morality and is also given to that extent by the Hindu thinkers. It is only then when a man chooses a course of action out of his own free will, he is ethically responsible for the act. An objection is, however, raised that if freedom of will is the basis

63. Yāj. Smṛti III. 211
of all ethical values and if a man's destiny of the present life is determined by the past life, then a man in the present life is nothing more than a watchman and has no power to do whatever he considers to be best. This objection, however, has no merit inasmuch as, freedom of action is postulated for a man to lead a good moral life during the present existence and perform meritorious acts in order to give a definite shape to his future life.

This discussion also refutes the belief that actions once committed will never disappear until they have produced their effects - "no action is ever lost" (na hi karma kṣīyate). This belief lays down that the man who commits a transgression must experience the tortures of hell.

Thus it can safely be asserted that our deeds - irrespective of past or present or mental or physical affect our lives, and in that sense forms part of the tendencies or forces that direct the shape of our lives. This is basically accepted by the theory of karma. The imposition of particular checks on life and conduct implies further that it is within our power to twist, modify or alter the effects of our previous karma by better and more regulated karmas. This is in fact, according to the Hindus, a rational philosophy of life, which asserts that one can never disown one's own acts, once they are committed. But it is within one's power to counteract their effects if one has the will do to do. Therefore, according to the Hindu's view, each one of us is born to do our part in whatever position we find ourselves.