CHAPTER VI

DETERMINISM, FREEDOM AND THE KARMA DOCTRINE

6.1 Karma Doctrine as Lending Support to Our Thesis

In the previous chapter, we sought to illustrate our thesis by drawing out some implications of the theory of social action. In the present chapter we shall examine the doctrine of karma in Indian philosophy to further illustrate our theory. This ethicometaphysical theory which is accepted by the majority of the schools of Indian philosophy, has been criticised as implying a totally deterministic view of life by several thinkers. Our present endeavour is to point out that this is not the case. By doing this we shall also be strengthening our thesis regarding determinism and freedom. We shall focus our attention only on those aspects of the karma theory which are directly relevant to our discussion.

The karma theory has been propounded in a variety of ways, ranging from the extremely realistic presentation which regards karma as particles of subtle matter (like in the Jaina tradition) to the most extreme idealistic analysis which stresses that the doctrine stands for the idea of causation (like in the Buddhist and Hindu traditions).
6.2 **Significance of the Karma Theory**

The term *karma* has many meanings. Generally *karma* is understood to denote a law. The term 'law' is understood in one way in the physical sciences and in another, in the realm of ethics. While in science the term law denotes the 'behaviour' of physical bodies, in ethics, a 'moral law' is understood to imply an unconditional categorical imperative. All the same, the idea of causation which figures prominently in science is found to be applicable in the realm of human life (and hence in ethics) and is highly suggestive, in our present context, of the doctrine of *karma*.

Some reference to the origin of the *karma* theory in Indian thought seems to be called for here. Scholars (of this doctrine) have traced the earliest beginnings of the idea of *karma* to the Vedic idea of *yajna*. This term stood for the orderly nature of the physical universe. It represented the idea that the universe incorporates a positive law of inner harmony. The term was also used to denote 'sacrifice' or 'rite' and its unalterable

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1 The word *karma* is derived from the root *kr* which literally means 'to do'. Hence any action can be called *karma*. While enumerating the categories in the *VAIśEṢIKA* system, the word *karma* has been used in a wide sense to include not only moral action, but also many physical happenings such as the fall of an unsupported body, the tapering of a candle, etc. See H.D. Bhattacharya, *The Doctrine of Karma*, *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. III, 1927, pp. 227-229; Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. 7, pp. 673-676.
The cosmic order or law prevailing in nature is recognized under the name rta (properly the course of things)... The same word also designates 'Order in the moral world as truth 'right', and in the religious world as sacrifice or 'rite'.

In the early phases of Hinduism it was believed that sacrifices produced certain effects at a distant future. The 'connecting link' however was not perceived. On the basis of these, Surendranath Dasgupta maintains that the idea of karma is ultimately traceable to the ideas of rta and sacrifice. These ideas are also echoed in the Samhitas which speak of the consequences of good and wicked deeds. Dasgupta states that these ideas were probably associated with the conception of rta which was the inviolable order of things. He observes:

These are probably the elements which built up the karma theory which we find pretty well established but not emphasized in the Upanishads where it is said that according to good or bad actions men will have good or bad births.


3 A sacrifice when performed is considered to produce on unseen power called the Purata (the unseen) which is instrumental in bringing the desired object.

From these beginnings, the law of *karma* came to be understood as a counterpart of the law of causation in the moral sphere. It was thus considered as the law of 'the conservation of moral energy'. It was the law that 'ruled' the moral world which meted out the fruits of actions done already.

The kāmic law was considered to function as a regulator of human actions. In doing so, it assumed ethical dimensions. The law of *karma* emphasized the regularity of human actions and their effects in the sense that actions done were considered to lead to appropriate effects. Good actions led to good experiences and bad actions resulted in bad experiences. There was thus the assurance that good actions would never go waste and the 'warning' that one could not escape from the evil consequences of one's bad actions. Thus the law of *karma* was considered to be a reflection of a moral order prevailing in the universe.

The law of *karma* understood as a moral law, had led several critics to describe it as a fatalistic doctrine. This


criticism is unfounded since fatalism implies predestination and the powerful impact of an external agency, whereas the law of *karma* implies no such thing. This can be made clear by pointing to the ambiguous usage of the term *karma* which has perhaps been inevitable. The two meanings of this word are: "action" and "the consequences of action". Hence there is no suggestion of 'determination' by an external agency.  

The schools of Indian philosophy merely emphasize that the fruits reaped are determined by the actions done. Man's life was 'determined'.

7 Writing about the general misunderstanding about the *karma* theory and pointing to the elements of determinism as well as freedom inherent in the doctrine, S. Gopalan (*Hindu Social Philosophy*, New Delhi: Wiley Eastern Ltd., 1979, p. 26) observes:

"One of the important reasons for the misunderstanding is that the term *karma* in the Hindu tradition has two meanings which are not clearly distinguished. *Karma* denotes action as well as fruits of action. *Karma* as action signifies that every action has its after-effects. The after-effect aspect also is referred to as *karma* and gives us the meaning of fruits of action. Thus, while the deterministic aspects of one's *karma* cannot be denied, the aspect of freedom should not be overlooked either. The misunderstanding of the doctrine of *karma*, as a theory of fatalism seems to arise precisely when this caution is not observed."

in the sense that he had bound himself by his
free (although foolish) choice...Nothing was given
to hinder thrust upon him by any alien force or
power.

Thus it would be improper to regard *karma* as a supervening,
external power acting on man. It is emphasized by the advocates
of the *karma* theory that whatever happens to an individual at
present is the effect of the past catching up with him. Thus
the constraint is internal in the sense that the individual
himself is responsible for the situation he finds himself in.
Thus the fatalistic interpretation is unacceptable.

6. 21  *Karma* Understood as Human Action

In a deeper and comprehensive sense the term *karma*
stands not only for the overt physical action, but also for
those factors that prompted the action. Thus *karma* does not
denote only physical motion; it also involves the notion of
will or ability to perform an action or to abstain from it.\(^9\)
The non-material principle behind action is human consciousness.
Human actions become significant because consciousness infuses
meaning into them.

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The University of Madras, 1965, p. 87.
By thus identifying the distinct characteristic of human action, we are also able to get an insight into the fact that before choosing a particular course of action the individual was well aware of the alternatives open to him, and willingly and consciously opted out for one of them.

This aspect of the doctrine of karma (as human actions, as we have referred to above) needs to be reiterated, since the distinct characteristic of man does not consist in the possession of merely consciousness, but of self-reflective consciousness, by the power of reasoning which he possesses, man is able to reflect about the various aspects of a problem, think out a solution and take the appropriate action. Whatever action is 'done' is referred to as the 'cause' and the resulting experience is referred to as the 'effect'. It is in this sense that the doctrine of karma itself is referred to as the causal law governing the 'human world.' The ethical overtones of this analysis of human action have resulted from emphasizing that good actions beget good fruits and bad actions lead to corresponding bad consequences.

Now the question which arises here is "Are these actions (and their effects) determined or not?"
6.3 *Karma* Theory and The Determinism-Freedom Issue

The *karma* doctrine maintains that the actions that are performed lead to appropriate consequences. Hence, the deterministic aspects of the doctrine cannot be denied. But such an analysis of the effects as the necessary outcomes of the acts done previously, is synonymous to the acceptance of the intimate relationship between cause and effect. The assertion that the effects 'enjoyed' are 'determined' by causes does not imply that man has no freedom whatever.

The unambiguous acceptance of deterministic elements in human life by the advocates of the doctrine of *karma* is evident from the concepts of *vīṣṇās* (tendencies) and *śrūṣkōra* (latent dispositions). A *vīṣṇā* is a mental disposition, which is brought about by the performance of an act (*karma*). The performance of certain kinds of actions creates certain types of disposition, and as long as the dispositions continue, repeated performance of the same kinds of actions seems natural and inevitable. Such is the strength of the dispositions. All the same, it is also maintained that though it is difficult to get over the habitual ways of action, it is not impossible

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10 As S. Radhakrishnan says, "conscious actions tend to become habits, not unnaturally, and unconscious tendencies we find in ourselves are regarded as the result of past conscious actions." (Op. Cit., p. 245).
to do so. Though the individual may encounter difficulties in this regard, it is quite possible to overcome the resistance. The disposition itself is due to the fact that when an act is done it leaves behind certain impressions. These impressions which are latent are referred to as *samskāras*. They can be erased and made ineffective by determined human effort. Some writers have pointed out that man's capacity for action in this regard (*kriyamāna*) implies a large element of freedom which enables him to modify his *samskāras*. The process of 'adaptation' which implies elements of freedom, is recognised even by modern thought which holds that heredity too does not work in a strictly mechanical way.

Thus though character often determines volition, volition has still power over character, *kriyamāna* over *prārabdha*, adaptation over heredity. *Prārabdha-vāgānas* can be controlled, modified or transformed by *kriyamāna* — this is the fundamental element of freedom in the *karma* doctrine.

Thus the human power of adaptation suggests the freedom elements in human living.

We have thus highlighted the point that just as bad actions apart from producing bad results, also give rise to a tendency to do the bad, good actions too not merely lead
to 'good fruits' but also 'create' the predisposition to do the 'good'.

12 Man's freedom is again apparent from the fact that due to his own conscious 'doings' the residual impressions can be wiped out of his psyche, be they good or bad.

The deterministic-free elements of human action which are evident from the ideas of vāyāna and saṃskāra may be gathered further by considering the implications of the three types of karma referred to traditionally in/viz., the saṃcitā, the prārabdha and agāni karmas.

6. 31 The Hindu View

We shall discuss these three types of karma in their temporal sequence. When so considered, saṃcitā-karma stands

12 Though from the point of view of the argument of this thesis (which is a general philosophical discussion of the implications of determinism) we do not consider it necessary to discuss all the details; we may mention in passing that we are not overlooking the fact that an exhaustive understanding of the doctrine of karma can be gained by considering the cycle of birth and death (saṃśāra-cakra) as merely occasioning the individual's enjoying (or suffering) the fruits of his own actions. For, the significance of life consists, according to the Hindu tradition, in attaining the spiritual state of perfection referred to as mukta. From this standpoint, the deeper implication of the doctrine of karma may be said to consist in its insistence on escaping from the birth-death cycle itself by overcoming the effects of karma. The Gita doctrine of niskṛta-karma points to the 'sense of agency' in man as the cause of the seemingly unceasing ocean of births and deaths. Accordingly, the suggestion is that mukta can be attained by means of performing disinterested actions, for they would not then chain the individual to taking an endless series of births. A detailed discussion of the karma theory, however, is not necessary for the purpose of illustrating our theory.
first. It refers to past karma which has not been effectuated. It stands for the 'accumulate,' karmas. The after-effects of past actions are still in the offing. They are yet to start 'producing' their results. The unactualized potentialities that the accumulate karmas possess, are suggestive of the aspects of freedom as well as determinism — freedom in the sense that they were accumulated by the individual himself by a deliberate act of choice, and determinism in so far as their having accumulated, the individual has to experience their after-effects. They are also considered to be not totally deterministic by a school of Indian philosophy on the ground that their destructive potential could be annihilated under certain circumstances. 13

The next type of karma to come in the temporal sequence is prārabdha-karma. This is the type of karma which has 13 The Advaita Vedanta system maintains the view that sācita-karma can be 'burnt out' (or annihilated) at the advent of the knowledge of Brahman. The prerequisite for the removal of the past accumulated karma (sācita-karma) is the 'acquisition' of the highest knowledge, viz., the knowledge of Brahman. Such an individual who has attained this absolute knowledge has "no accumulate karma, since that has been burnt up in the flames of Brahman-knowledge." (See T. M. P. Mahadevan, The Philosophy of Advaita, Madras: Gnanach & Co., 1939; p. 277. Vivek Bhāratītīrth-Viṣṇuvrata, Vivaranā-Pradyot-Sangrahā, ed., Ramakrishna Tailangā, Benaras: E. J. Lazarus & Co 1893. pp. 165, 166; and Bhagavad-Gītā, Ch. IV, Verse 37. Hence, unlike prārabdha-karma, sācita-karma cannot be considered as totally deterministic since there is a chance of it being wiped out, even without the individual undergoing its effects or consequences (according to Advaita).
already started yielding results. The Hindu theory is emphatic on the point that man has virtually no control over prārabdha-karma. It may thus be held that since the karmas which have started 'bearing fruits' cannot, by hypothesis, be escaped from, they refer to the acceptance of determinism in human life. Though prārabdha-karma can thus be pointed out as completely excluding elements of freedom, it needs to be reiterated that kārma which have started fructifying were done by the individual himself. Thus, the 'totally deterministic elements' have to be understood as pointing to the causal relationship between 'acts done' and their after-effects. In other words, man is to be considered to have bound himself by his own past actions. Hence even the deterministic interpretation here is to be understood as pointing to the process of being self-determinant.

Let us now examine the third category of kārma, viz., ānubhāmi-karma which refers to future actions. More precisely, this term refers to actions actions which are yet to be performed. Though the 'tendencies' the individual has 'incorporated' in his psyche to influence his future course of actions, they can nevertheless be thwarted and smothered by conscious efforts in the present. 'The choice' is still open to him — open in the present as it was in the past.
What is significant here in respect of kāmi-karma is that it is a clear pointer to the 'future' which holds out a 'world' of actions where freedom can be exercised. The freedom exercised in the right direction is a measure of the individual's strength of will and determined effort. In this connection T.M.P. Mahadevan cites a fitting analogy. He writes about a bowman, with a quiver of bows who is aiming at a target. The bowman has already sent a short arrow is poised to shoot another. The bundle of arrows in the quiver can be compared to sāṅcita-karma; while the prārabdha or kāmi-karma can be compared to the dispatched arrow and the one which is about to be dispatched respectively. Mahadevan goes on to observe:

**it is only the prārabdha that cannot but take effect. Man has the freedom to reform his character and alter his ways. Only the past which has begun to take effect, he has to suffer.**

Thus we can surmise that the doctrine of kāmi does not convey the meaning of total determinism from without. All that it emphasizes is that the effects of man's past actions determine the types of experience he is to have as a 'follow-up'. But this is not to deny human freedom. For, the fact that he did

act in some way in the past indicates that he was aware of the various alternatives that were available to him and that he chose a particular line of action in preference to others which were open to him. So, even if the effects of his actions are to be emphasized, it does not mean that he is himself not responsible for them; for, it was he who chose to act in the way he did.

Karma no doubt determines the 'future' of the individual, but this determination was because of the choice of a particular course of action. We might reiterate the point that if karma 'determines' man he no less 'determines' it. By emphasizing that it is the course of action chosen by the individual which determines the fruits, human freedom as such is not denied. For it is only because of the actions chosen by him that the corresponding fruits accrue to him. As we have mentioned elsewhere in this work, it is this self-determinism which constitutes the essence of freedom. By accepting the idea of self-determinism thus, the doctrine of karma in effect conceives that man is a free moral agent. It may also be stated that this law does not state an unalterable necessity but a model possibility or a conditional relativity. 

15 See Sutra, pp. 146-153.

The idea can also be expressed thus: though the present is determined, the future is only conditional. The individual is free to act in such a way as to mould his future by 'producing' fresh karmas or by 'reducing' the existing ones.

The condition that the law of *karma* involves, is stated in the *Katha Upanisad* thus: "according to deed, according to merit (vathokarma, vathisrutam)." This condition is reflected in the Buddhist law of *karma* as well, which we shall consider now.

6. 32 The Buddhist Perspective

The doctrine of Dependent Origination (*pratityasamutpada*) which provides the foundation for the Buddhist law of *karma* states: 'By the causing of this, is the causing of that'. This incorporates within it a law of necessary succession. For the emergence of the effect, the cause provides the necessary condition. That is, the effect cannot but follow the cause.

The Buddhist theory of *karma* represents an application of the law of necessary succession to human life. The argument

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18 For obvious reasons, we have not gone into the question as to how the Buddhist theory contributed to the *karma* theory even though it repudiated the belief in an enduring or substantial self. We are concerned mainly to show that the deterministic as well as the free elements in human life are accepted and argued for in Buddhism.
to be that if the physical universe could be meaningfully understood in terms of a causal theory, human life too could be comprehended along similar lines. Experiences in man life — good as well as bad — can thus be accounted for by applying the causal principle. The underlying presupposition is that nothing in human life can occur without a preceding cause.

The Buddha adopted this line of enquiry to unravel the mysteries surrounding the human predicament. The Buddha analysed the predicament of man to have a cause. From this it follows that if the latter could be identified (viz., the cause) the former could also be terminated (viz., the human predicament). If the root-cause of suffering could be located, suffering too could be eliminated, maintained the wise. 19

19 This is the sum and substance of the Four Noble Truths. The Four Noble Truths are:

Life is full of suffering. The First Noble Truth describes the human predicament as such.

Ignorance is the source of this suffering. The Second Noble Truth points to the cause of this suffering, which is Ignorance (AVAND). The cause of suffering is analysed in the Second Noble Truth, viz., the Doctrine of Dependent Origination. The Buddha said the first kamma originates from the Second Noble Truth.

Suffering can be ended. The Third Noble Truth points to the possibility of annihilating suffering.

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sequence, relationship, that prevails between the
effect and, more specifically, the element of
which binds the cause with the effect are thus
in the Buddhist theory of karmā). The operation of
dependent origination is succinctly referred to by
the scholar as follows:

Due to the expenditure of will-energy a resultant
event is to be expected to arise sometime after the
karma, even if, in the presence or absence of condi-
tions which make for or, in its fruition. The formula
... is: 'X' being present, 'Y' arises, 'X' not being
present, 'Y' does not arise.

Doctrine of dependent origination thus offers a new insight
in the Buddhist theory of karmā. It might appear at first
that the theory is totally deterministic and offers no scope
for individual initiative or freedom. But, if the present
experiences of man were to be understood as causally related.
three periods. The first two links, avīḍā and saṃskāra can be considered as belonging to the past; the next eight links (viññāna, nāma-rūpa, saṃśaya, sparsa, vedanā, trṣṇā, bhāva, upādāna) as relating to the present (and constituting the second period); and the last two links (jīti, jīrāmarāṇa) as pertaining to the future (and forming the third period).

The Second Noble Truth points out the primary spoke in the wheel of causation, which is avīḍā (the primal cause). On the face of it, the wheel of causation seems to be impregnable and the Buddhist doctrine of karma appears to be completely deterministic on this count too. But on closer analysis we find it is not so. The way to break free from this closely-linked causal wheel is clearly spelt out by the Buddha himself in his Eight-fold Path. 22

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22 The Eight-fold Path which forms the pivot of Buddhist ethics consists in practising and 'developing' right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindedness and right concentration.
By the practice of the Eightfold Path, suffering can be overcome. This is the sum and substance of the Fourth Noble Truth which indicates unambiguously that though human life is gripped by the twelve deterministic spokes, they can be shaken free by human effort.

Thus we find a close interplay of the elements of determinism and freedom even in the Buddhist version of the doctrine of karma. While the doctrine of Dependent Origination does suggest 'determinism' through the idea of necessity, inherent in the cause-effect chain, it does not totally deny human freedom, as we have explained. By preventing the coming together of factors which constitutes the cause, the effect can be 'prevented'. The idea emphasized here is that by the determined will of the individual, the chain can be broken. Hence, freedom is asserted. Thus we find an interplay of both the elements of determinism and freedom in human life, even according to the Buddhist tradition.

Lastly we shall examine the Jaina theory of karmas in the light of our present discussion.

6. 33 The Jaina Approach

The doctrine of karmas is pronounced differently in this system. The substance of the doctrine from the Jaina perspe-
active may be indicated thus: karmā according to this school has not mean work, action or deed, but is considered a form of matter. This kārmic matter is subtle and imperceptible to the senses. When the soul comes under the influence of desires which results in activity (activity of mind, body and speech), the kārmic matter is attracted towards it. The mental state which causes this attraction is called bhūv, while the actual influent of the kārmic matter into the soul is termed

bhūyā. 24 This kārmic matter which influences in the soul forms a subtle body (jātānubhūta) which gives rise to eight kinds of karmā. 25 These eight kinds of karmā are responsible for the various types of experiences of the individual. The mental states and events which make the soul attract kārmic matter may be considered as the psychic aspect of karmā, while

23 See Nathmal Tatia, Studies in Jain Philosophy, Banaras: Jain Cultural Research Society, 1951, pp. 252-254

24 Ibid.

25 The eight kinds of karmā are: 1. jñānandānti karmā (that which obscures the infinite knowledge of the soul) 2. jñānagānaya-karmā (that which obscures the right and wrong) 3. vyahāra-karmā (that which gives rise to pleasure and pain) 4. ahamkāra-karmā (that which determines the life-span of the individual) 5. nemi-karmā (that which gives rise to the body) 6. gopā-karmā (that which determines the family into which the individual is born into) 7. antādātikā karmā (or the power obscuring karmā, is that which obstructs the infinite energy of the self).

the kārmanāṣaṅira as such, may be considered as representing the 'physical' aspect of karma. These two aspects are linked in a cause-effect relation. A soul which is thus 'contaminated' with kārmic matter is subject to the cycle of birth and death.

The binding effect of the kārmic matter, according to Jaina thought, may vary in duration. The variations in duration depend on the 'nature' or the 'type' of the kārmic matter which the soul attracts. The intensity of the karma affecting the soul also varies. The variations in intensity is in direct proportion to the intensity of the passions involved. The influx of kārmic matter also varies in quantity. "The material conception of karma entails ...the quantity of karma affecting the jīva (soul) at a given time". Though the binding effect of karma is strong, it needs to be pointed out here that the binding itself depends


28 For instance, "The minimum length of duration of the comprehensive-obscuring, apprehension-obscuring, deluding, age-determining and power-obscuring karmas is antar-muhūrta (within forty-eight minutes)." (ibid., p. 80.).


30 Ibid., p. 168.
The more intense the activity...more is the quantity of karma attracted by it. Conversely, the less in intensity of the activity...the less is the quantity of the karmic particles attracted by the soul. It is from this point of view that it is said that renunciation of activity helps the soul to get release of karma. Since, however, it is held that there is bondage only because of passions, it is pointed out that actions are performed without passions they do not bind the individual.

Since, though the elements of determinism found in the Jain doctrine of karm are strong, it should be reiterated that they do not totally obliterate the freedom of the individual.

It is important to stress that the individual himself is responsible for the accumulation of the various types of karma in that they are not imposed on him without.

It is thus necessary to emphasize that the karmic matter attaches to the soul only after the performance of actions are not before. Human efforts play a preeminent role in the Jain scheme, since these alone can 'liquidate' the accumulated karmic matter. Jainism chalks out the ways by which man can thwart the influx of karma. The surrender of the inflow of karmic matter (nirvana) is the first step. The first step (nirvana) can be achieved by following the five mahavaranas.
(great vows) and the _triratna_ (three gems or the three precious principles of life), which constitute the mainspring of Jain ethics. Thus Jainism offers positive suggestions both in regard to the blocking of the influx of _karma_ and in regard to the way by which the accumulated _karma_ could be removed. (This process is known as _nirjara_).

There are two ways by which the accumulated _karma_ can be removed. One way is by reaping the results (_akāma-nirjara_) while the other is by active effort, such as performing punes and meditation (_akāma-nirjara_). Thus human effort and will feature predominantly both in the process of stopping the _karmic_ inflow in annihilating the ones already accumulated.

Thus the Jain doctrine of _karma_ also incorporates both the elements of determinism and freedom. Though on the face of it, it appears to be totally deterministic doctrine, it is not really so (as was pointed out above). The need for individual initiative and the possibility of attaining freedom from the shackles of _karma_ are emphasized effectively by the Jain philosophers.

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32 The five _mahāvratas_ are: 1. _ahimsā_ (non-injury), 2. _satya_ (truth-speaking), 3. _asteya_ (non-stealing), 4. _brahma-cārya_ (celibacy), 5. _aparigraha_ (renunciation). These five _vratas_ help towards the practice of right conduct (_samyagdāśā-rittra_). Right conduct along with right faith (_samyagdāśāraṇa_) and right knowledge (_samyagijnāna_) constitute the _triratna_ (three gems) of Jainism.
6.4 Applications of the Karma Theory for the Present Thesis

Though our treatment of the doctrine of karma has been brief, we have nevertheless attempted to throw light on the fact that both elements of determinism and freedom are accepted in all the three Indian traditions. All the three approaches to karma appeared to be thoroughly deterministic at the first glance. This has been due to the emphasis that has been laid on the application of the cause-effect relation to human life. But the application itself meant that the uniqueness of man had to be taken into consideration. This, we have pointed out, resulted in the individual moulding, modifying, and even 'overcoming' this cause-effect chain.

Hence, the systems which espouse the law of karma, accord great importance to the role played by human effort. The degree to which effort is 'exerted', are responsible for the 'production', reduction and even total annihilation of karma. It has been suggested by the philosophers belonging to the three traditions that human effort which is endowed with a self-determining power escapes total determinism, since it has the inherent potential of destroying even the accumulated karma.
From our analysis of the doctrine we find that the exercise of human effort and its relation to karma falls under three categories. Under the first category gets subsumed all those actions (good as well as bad) leading to their appropriate effects (good or bad as the case may be). This may be considered as the commonest explication of the karmic law. The second category comprises those actions that contribute towards annihilating the entire karma accumulated in the past. These actions may be considered to lead directly to the ultimate knowledge (knowledge of brahmā which destroys dharma-karma as in Advaita) or the performance of penance (which, according to Jainism, leads to sukham-nirjara). The third category forms the highest level, viz., the ‘sphere’ of ‘disinterested actions’ (nīkṣikā-karma) in which no effect is reaped. The ‘actions’ of the mānāt and the jīvannukta belong to this category.

The three categories could also be visualised as suggesting a corresponding ‘gradation’ in freedom. While the second and the third categories help one to attain the highest reaches of freedom (which may be referred to as ‘enduring’ freedom), actions belonging to the first category produce merely mundane results only in a way they suggest only a ‘precarious’ kind of freedom. This point can be explicated by dwelling on an important difference among the actions belonging to the first
category. While good actions which yield good effects may lead the individual to the second category of actions, bad actions and their attendant effects take the individual farther away from the goal of freedom (in the ultimate sense). The potentiality that the individual possesses for progressing from one category to another, points to the 'flexibility' of the doctrine.

The 'flexibility' of the doctrine of karma is also due to the fact that actions performed in the present moment offer open-ended possibilities. Since the present actions are vested with the power to either 'destroy' past effects or 'prevent' future ones, the individual is considered to be free to either break away from the past and attain the highest freedom or plunge into a world of his own making — the 'world' of continued rebirth. The deterministic as well as the 'free' elements emphasized by the Indian philosophers is lucidly expressed by Radhakrishnan thus:

The cards in the game of life are given to us, we do not select them. They are traced to our past karma, but we can call as we please, lend what suit we will, and as we play, we gain or lose. And there is freedom.

Though the karma doctrine appears deterministic on the surface, when it is analysed carefully, it reveals its basic purpose which is human freedom. Though the causal principle, when applied to the 'human world' reveals the deterministic elements in human life, freedom itself is not denied. Thus at every stage in human life there is scope for the exercise of free will. But our point of emphasis (throughout this chapter) has been that the doctrine of karma is a clear pointer to the fact that both the element of determinism and freedom are found incorporated in human life. Our submission hence is that the brief review of this theory has helped us to illustrate our thesis explained earlier in this work.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Before concluding this study, we wish to spotlight some of the main ideas that have emerged in the various chapters — ideas which seem to us to contribute, in their own small measure, to the conceptual clarity regarding the difficult issue of determinism and freedom.

The topic under discussion is, inevitably, an all-embracing one, which from the mainstream of philosophy, branches off into innumerable disciplines, ranging from physics to metaphysics. The sphere of discussion too was found to be vast, due to the fact that the realm of human action was found to encompass aspects of several disciplines. We noted that the study of man within the determinism-freedom framework, gives rise to several interesting and intriguing questions. The theme chosen for study comprises of a large and intricately woven network. We submit that we took only a part of it for analysis in our thesis.

In the introductory chapter, we attempted a general discussion of the doctrine, in the light of the basic principles of causality, prediction and explanation. These three foundational principles provided us with a clue to tracing the ramifications and development of the doctrine in
divergent fields of thought.

Brooksly, the doctrine of determinism was visualised as forking off in two main directions: one leading us to the realm of science, and the other taking us to the domain of the humanities, — more specifically, to a consideration of the metaphysical and ethical dimensions of human life.

7.1 The Impact of Scientific Determinism on the Concept of Human Freedom

Though the imagery of 'forking in two main directions' may give the impression that there is no common ground at all between the two fields, such was not our meaning. The imagery was primarily aimed at highlighting the existence of two different fields which incorporate the principle rather than denying outright the applicability of the 'physical-deterministic' principles to the human realm. The starting point for our discussion was provided by the significant fact that the connecting link was suggested by the 'breakdown' of 'total determinism' even in the realm of the physical sciences.

Classical Physics which presents a paradigm case of determinism imparted greater clarity to metaphysical determinism, through its well defined principle of causality.
Hence at the outset we analysed the role played by the
doctrine of determinism in the domain of science, and then
set out to trace its transition to the principles of indeter-
minacy and uncertainty that characterizes the present day
quantum mechanics. This was the reason why in the second
chapter of our thesis we studied scientific determinism and
scientific indeterminism (or quantum indeterminism).

The study of quantum indeterminism gave rise to a host
of interesting speculations and questions. The most important
of them all (according to us) related to the impact of the
breakdown of the principle of causality in the physical sphere
on the concept of human freedom.

Though quantum indeterminism too suffered from certain
'rigidities', it nevertheless offered some useful parallels
to an understanding of human freedom. By opening out new
vistas and pressing for a deeper analysis of physical reality
it seemed to us that it suggestively called for new models
(other than the purely deterministic ones) to gain a better
understanding of the different realms of nature — not exclud-
ing the human. However, though the indeterminacy-principle
that was found useful in our study, we also noted it did not offer
us the complete answer to the problem of human freedom.
This was not surprising since the orientations of the two 'spheres of study' are different, notwithstanding the fact that they both shared the same foundational base, viz., the acceptance of the principle of causality. It should however be reiterated that our study of scientific determinism was extremely valuable for our theme inasmuch as it facilitated the framing of two major questions which in turn led us to specific lines of investigation of the problem of determinism and freedom in human life. For instance, the several answers evoked, revealed clearly the determinism-freedom spectrum. The two major questions which have revealed the splendidous spectrum, respectively countered the rigid approach of determinism and positively suggested the lines on which the case for freedom could be built.

7.2 Determinism and Human Freedom

In this spectrum, one end is occupied by the thesis of 'hard determinism' (or total determinism) under which is subsumed the theory of fatalism. Freedom is considered a myth from this perspective. The other end of the spectrum is occupied by the view that man is totally free, and that his actions are not determined in any way. According to this position any form of determinism is meaningless and vacuous.
Within these two extremes fall the standpoints of libertarianism and compatibilism. The mainstay of the former standpoint is provided by the assertion that man is free only in a contra-causal way, i.e., the expression of human freedom only comes to the fore when man is confronted with a moral situation in which he has to take a decision. The distinguishing feature of the latter theory is that it conceives the 'co-presence' of determinism and freedom in human life.

We have argued for the untenability of the extreme positions, — hard determinism not excluded. We found the libertarian position too to be unsatisfactory on the count that it reveals only a half-hearted attempt at understanding the two seemingly opposed principles which are at work in human life. Our comment in regard to compatibilism was that it does not suffer from serious flaws. In view of the importance we attach to this theory, we devoted a full chapter (Chapter Four) for discussing it.

The major questions which arose within the context of the compatibilistic thesis were the following: (1) Are determinism and freedom compatible with each other? and (ii) if so, can the concept of freedom be meaningfully understood in the light of the determinism-matrix? These questions formed the crux of our analysis of the compatibility theory.
7.3 The Compatibility of Determinism and Human Freedom

In this chapter we pointed out that determinism was held to be incompatible with freedom mainly because the principle of causality was mistakenly equated with the idea of compulsion. The misconception became even more acute when causality was considered as a type of 'necessity'. We pointed out that these grave 'misunderstandings' of causality gave rise to several tangles in the determinism-freedom issue.

Further, the ambiguity associated with the notion of 'necessitation' especially in relation to the human context was responsible for the mist of misunderstanding of the vital issues involved. We attempted to clear the mist by specifically considering how and in what ways the term 'necessity' was understood and misunderstood, and pointed to the need for distinguishing between 'causality' and 'compulsion'.

We maintained that the deterministic and 'free' elements in the realm of human action could still be distinguished from each other by examining the idea of cause. While conceding that human actions have determining causes, the latter may themselves be explained in terms of reasons, motives and intentions, and, as such vouchsafe for the 'freedom aspects' of human action, we have submitted. Thus our argument was that actions which are caused, or which can be 'explained'
also be free, from our earlier actions and
will, in fact, operate in the same way.

3. If we have free determination and
freedom, comprehensive terms as a pointer to human
rationality.

Apart from the 'positive aspects' of free
action, factors such as motives, intentions and reasons have
been as constituting the 'positive aspects' of free actions.

Furthermore, we suggested that these 'causal factors' of
human action could be considered as symptomatic of 'self-
determinism'. We have thus submitted that the power of
self-determination substantiates the meaning of freedom in
human life. We have maintained that since human phenomena
are extremely complex and reveal variegated strands and
strains, rigid positions like complete determinism and total
freedom are not helpful in comprehending them.

The psycho-physical nature of man summarises the
complexities referred to in this regard. Determinism may
be looked upon as drawing the 'boundaries' within which
freedom finds due expression in human life. We have submitted
that the deterministic elements in human life apparent from
hereditary factors (for instance) ought not to be overlooked
or underplayed. Likewise the characteristic feature, — the
uniqueness — of man should not be set aside as unimportant or irrelevant, however difficult it may be to empirically verify or intellectually comprehend.

In chapters five and six, we sought to illustrate our thesis. The concept of social action was the point of reference in chapter five, in which we drew the contrast between the subjective and the objective approaches. We found neither of the approaches acceptable since they project only one side of the picture of human action. The intricate interwovenness of the subjective and the objective aspects present in human life was emphasized by a critical analysis of some theories of social action.

In our second illustration we considered the doctrine of **karma** in Indian philosophy since it also highlights some important aspects of human action. We found the **karma** doctrine to be neither a theory of total determinism nor that of total freedom. We confined our attention to those aspects of the doctrine which were of direct relevance to the issue at hand. We concluded this chapter by suggesting that in spite of determining factors, man's freedom lay in his ability to achieve a break-through by deciding to act in certain ways in the living present. Thus, we vindicated our position by examining the implications of the **karma** theory.
Throughout our present study we were seized with the problem of delineating the deterministic as well as the free elements in human life and more specifically the overarching analysis central round the possibility of co-existence and commingling of the two elements. The problem suggested itself when we noted the breakdown of the principle of determinism even in the sphere of the physical sciences.

An analysis of man, revealed him as an uniquely endowed being — a being who was not merely aware, but also conscious; not merely conscious but also reflectively self-conscious. Hence though man is found to an integral aspect of nature he is also seen to have the ability to 'transcend' it, we have noted.

Through our study of some of the aspects of determinism and freedom, we arrive at the conclusion that man is neither completely subjected to the external forces, nor free in a totally unrestrained manner. Therefore, we find no contradiction involved in maintaining that 'man may be determined and yet be free; free and yet be determined'.