THE THEORY OF KARMA AND REBIRTH
IN BUDDHIST AND JAINA TRADITIONS

AN ABSTRACT
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ABSTRACT

1. General Introduction

Indian philosophy was not only stirred up merely by the speculative demands of the human mind that has a natural inclination for indulging in abstract thought but also a deep craving after the realization of the religious purpose of life. *Karma* and rebirth are the matters which create a lot debates among the different systems of Indian philosophy which were well preserved in Sanskrit, Pāli and Prākṛt literature as well as in world philosophy. Generally, all Indian systems believe that whatever action is done by an individual leaves behind it some sorts of potency which has power to determine his or her suffering or enjoyment in the future according as it is good or bad. And in general day to day sayings “as you sow you reap”. When the fruits of actions are such that they cannot be enjoyed or suffered in the present life, the individual has to take another birth to suffer or enjoy them.

2. Scope and Method of the Research

The present research is based on the *Pāli* Canon, Sanskrit Texts and the Jain Āgama Texts. The present research appraises and introduces important views of the theory of *karma* and rebirth of seed for its action, application and educational aspects to sow the good seed into the field of mind (*cittabhūmi*) for the human life.

This thesis discussed about the theory of the *karma* and rebirth in different systems of Indian thoughts. Collecting data concerned the concept of *karma* and rebirth, and the process of transmigration among different Indian thoughts from various primary sources of *Pāli* Canon, Sanskrit Texts and the Jain
Āgamas. The definitions of the soul, karma, rebirth, liberation were quoted and a
critical analysis was also be made. Each concept was interpreted and made on the
basis of the definitions of each concept in the original text. From interpreting the
data, a comparison is made of the similarities and differences of karma and
rebirth among different systems in Buddhist and Jaina traditions.

The present thesis on “The Theory of Karma and Rebirth on Buddhist
and Jaina Traditions” comprises of five chapters including the introduction
and conclusion.

Chapter I: Introduction
This is a brief plan that serves as an opening to the entire thesis containing the
general introduction and the nature and qualities of the Lord Buddha and Lord
Mahāvīra’s teachings on the theory of karma and rebirth. This part also refers
to the clarification of the topic, including the object of the study and other
previous studies relating to the topic. Scope and method of research are
mentioned. Finally, the plan of study including chapters is also sketched here.

Chapter II: Doctrine of Karma and Rebirth in Hinduism
The karma and doctrine of rebirth in Hinduism of Indian philosophy it is soul
which is bound which is transmigrates in released (in the form of mokṣa). It is
the soul who is associated with all karmas. Hence, it is essential to know in
greater detail about the concept or theory of soul.

In doctrine of soul in Hinduism, the doctrine of soul in the Nyāya,
Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Vedānta and Mīmāṃsā School is presented. Soul
(ātman) in Hinduism refers to the doctrine of an eternal self that is said to be
the life-force found within all beings including the cosmos itself.

For the karma and rebirth in Hinduism explains causality through a
system where beneficial effects are derived from past harmful actions, creating a
system of actions throughout a soul’s reincarnated lives forming a cycle of
rebirth. The three kinds of karma; sanchita (accumulated karma), prarabdha
(fruit bearing \textit{karma}, and \textit{kriyamāṇa karmas} are everything that we produce in
the current life was discussed. According to Hinduism, reincarnation best
describes the concept where the soul or spirit, after the death of the body, is
believed to return to live in a new human body, or in some traditions, either as a
human being, animal or plant. In Hindu religious concepts, man is composed of
two fundamental principles opposed to each other per nature: one spiritual, the
soul (\textit{ātman}), and the other material, the body.

The liberation (\textit{mokṣa}) in Hinduism is the state of the soul was
liberated from bondage or union with the absolute. It also means attainment of
the state of \textit{brahman} and release from the life cycle, release the death, sorrow,
\textit{karma}, desire, fear, change, ignorance, finitude and evil. Liberation is the
ture Knowledge while ignorance is bondage.

\textbf{Chapter III: Doctrine of Karma and Rebirth in Buddhism}

Here, we present the doctrine of \textit{vijñāna} (soul or consciousness) with specially
the \textit{ālayavijñāna}. \textit{Ālayavijñāna} will decide to rebirth in another life. In our mind
exist the eight fold consciousnesses, which is the basic system of the School of
\textit{Vijñānavāda}. The first five are based on the physical senses, that means these
five consciousnesses arise when our eyes see form, our ears hear sound, our nose
smells an odor, our tongue tastes something and our body or our skin touches an
object. The sixth is mind consciousness (\textit{manovijñāna}), which arises when one
of the first five are in contact with the object, at the same time, the connection
between the sixth or eighth consciousnesses will be linked immediately for
arising to perceive the thing. The seventh, \textit{manas}, is the part of consciousnesses
that gives rise to and is the support of mind consciousnesses. It always grasps the
idea of an eternal \textit{ātman}. The eight, store consciousnesses is the \textit{ālayavijñāna}
which is the ground, the base of the other seven consciousnesses. \textit{Ālayavijñāna} is
a place of store all the \textit{bījas}, and these \textit{bījas} will be manifested whenever they
have enough conditions. All \textit{bījas} are created from actions and these actions were
repeated many times until these *bīja* are matured. The repetition of these actions becomes the habits which again give its effect to the actions; hence it can be known as *karma*. The *ālayavijñāna* is as storehouses, which stores the *karma* force, habit energy etc. that will lead the living beings to the wheel of *saṃsāra*.

For the *karma* in Buddhism, the definition, and others also nature, classification of *karma* is presented. According to the Buddhists, the only action (acts of body, acts of speech, and acts of mind) is volition and intentional word and deed is call *karma*. Buddhists lay all the stress on the morality of actions, and this was a marked progress. *Karma* is also classed according to the result it produces. There are four categories of deeds on the basis of their result: Dark with dark result; bright, or pure, with bright result; both dark and bright with mixed results; neither dark nor bright with neither result.

Regarding rebirth in Buddhism, it is the evolving consciousness or stream of which, upon death or “the dissolution of the aggregates”, becomes one of the contributing causes for the arising of a new aggregation (*skandhas*). The consciousness in the new person is neither identical nor entirely different from that in the deceased but the two form a causal continuum or stream. Rebirth is conditioned by the *karmas* of previous lives; good *karmas* will yield a happier rebirth, bad *karmas* will produce one which is unhappy. The basic cause for this is the abiding of consciousness in ignorance. When ignorance is uprooted, rebirth ceases.

The liberation in Buddhism is the state of *nirvāṇa*, which is all forms of craving, is extirpated. And who wants to attain *nirvāṇa* must follow the Eightfold Noble Path: Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.

**Chapter IV: Doctrine of *Karma* and Rebirth in Jainism**
In chapter IV, we present the doctrine of soul, *karma* bondage, rebirth and liberation in Jainism. The soul (*jīva*) in Jainism, there is various on presentations. The soul extends in space like light and it fills the space. The soul itself is formless. But it takes the form of the body, which it illuminates. These souls are countless. They are substances and external. All things in this world such as infernal beings (*Narakya*), animal, human beings, celestial being (*Devas*), earth, water, fire, air, and plaint body, mobile being are possessed souls. All souls are qualitatively different. These souls expand and contract themselves as size of the body where they lie. When the body is big, the soul becomes big. When the body is small the soul is small. They are according to the dimension of the body they occupy at any time. The soul occupies the whole parts of the body in which they live. Therefore wherever there appears the cause of sensation the soul can at once feel it. Every soul possesses consciousness. The consciousness is the soul’s essence and has different degrees. The lowest souls which lie in material atoms appear to be lifeless and unconsciousness. But they have life and consciousness in a dormant state. These souls are of two kinds, liberated and worldly. Liberated souls are dis-embodied souls who have shed all *karmic* matter and have no more births or deaths. Worldly souls are embodied souls and are subject to the cycle of birth and death, and *karmic* bondage and its effects. The soul is a real knower (*jñāta*), a real doer (*ksrita*) and a real one who experienced (*bhokta*). The souls have body, senses and *manas* through which they know. All the souls in *samsāra* have their purity and power covered with a thin veil of *karma* matter, which has been accumulating in them from beginingless time. Opposability of the soul is a non soul (*ājīva*). The *ajīva* is divided into five: *pudgala* (matter), *dharma*, *adharma*, *ākāśa* (space) and *kāla* (time).

With the *karma* bondage, we present the cause of bondage, desire, eighteen sins, thirty nine activities, cause of bondage as for gatis, components of bondage process, *punya* and *pāpa*, relation with bondage and *leśya*, etc.
The nine fundamentals of the Jain doctrine are Jīva, Ajīva, Punya, Pāpa, Āsrava, Saṃvara, Bandha, Nirjarā, and Mokṣa. Karma is the link between the jīva and its empiric outfit, the body. Karma by its association with the jīva soils its nature and this consequent lapse of the jīva from its pure state is called bondage. One of the Ajīva categories thus produces karma which by its influx causes defilement of the jīva. The influx of karmic matter due to good activities of the mind, body, and speech with the potential of producing pleasant sensations is called punya or virtue. The influx of karmic matter due to evil activities of the mind, body, and speech with the potential of producing unpleasant sensations is called pāpa or sin. The influx of karma particles into the soul is called āsrava. The flux of karma can be checked is called saṃvara. Bandha is caused by wrong belief (mithyā ādarśana), non-renunciation (avirati), carelessness (pramāda), passion (kaśāya), and vibrations set up in the soul through mind, body and speech (yoga). Nijāra means freeing the soul or removing the karmasarīra by tapa (self motification). And mokṣa is freed from the all bandage to karma and has passed for ever beyond the possibility of rebirth, it is said to have attained mokṣa (liberation). For rebirth and liberation in Jainism, we examine the debate the transmigration from the body, which after death goes to the other world to reap the fruits of its action. And mokṣa in Jainism is the liberation of soul from the karmic bondage. It is to be attained by cutting off karmic bondage. It is a place where liberated soul remains forever.

Chapter V: Conclusion

After detailed study, we have come to the conclusion that all Indian systems agree in believing that there are three kinds of karma: body (daihika kārya), speech (vācyā) and mind (citta) which can be divided into four classes, viz. ‘those which are bad and produce impurity’, ‘those which are good and productive of purity’, ‘those which are partly good and bad and thus productive of both purity and impurity’, ‘those which are neither good nor
bad and productive neither of purity nor of impurity’. However, when discussing about the effects of *karma* on rebirth and how the process of rebirth takes place, each system has its own point of view to explain them.

*Karma* is the universal principle of cause and effect, action and reaction. So, the Hindus, the Buddhists and the Jainas, each of course in their own way, have accepted the basic principle and explained it in the most unequivocal manner in their spiritual and philosophical works.

*Karma* and rebirth are treated in Indian thought in the manner of scientific theories. *Karma* and rebirth are developed, especially by those systems in India which are not super skeptical, in systematic term, their details fitting with experience constituting their demonstration. For those systems *karma* and rebirth are fundamental features of any world view which it is felt fits experience more closely than any alternative account. There are some similarities and differences between *karma* and rebirth in Buddhist and Jaina traditions which are points out here.

**Similarities**

1. All Hindus, the Buddhists and the Jainas have accepted the basic principle of *karma*. Generally, all Indian systems believe that whatever action is done by an individual leaves behind it some sorts of potency which has power to determine his or her suffering or enjoyment in the future according as it is good or bad. And in general day to day sayings as you sow you reap. When the fruits of actions are such that they cannot be enjoyed or suffered in the present life, the individual has to take another birth to suffer or enjoy them.

2. Like Hindus and Buddhists, Jains see the ultimate good as escape from the cycle of rebirth (*mokṣa*) or liberation from *karmic* bondage, or *nirvāṇa*, as it is also called in all of these traditions, a state of absorption in unending bliss.
3. The Jaina and the Buddhists both believe that no God can give us pleasure or pain, or get us liberation. One can be liberated by one's own efforts.

4. The Jaina and Buddhists both agree that this universe is without beginning and end and that no personal God is its creator.

5. Those who want to arrive at the Truth should study the old scriptures of Jainism and Buddhism. I believe that they will have to conclude that the philosophy of both the systems is one and the same. One who wishes freedom from miseries must follow the Eight-fold path of Buddhism or the Three-fold path of Jainism. The teaching of both is to be dependent on one’s own self, and to practice self-concentration with firm belief and knowledge in order to attain liberation or nirvāṇa.

Differences
1. Jainism believes in existence of soul like all other the Indian systems except Buddhism.

2. Soul in Jainism includes all things in this world such as infernal beings (Naraky), animal, human beings, celestial being (Devas), earth, water, fire, air, and plaint body, mobile being, while Buddhism only talks about the consciousness (vijñāna) which include eight kinds. Buddhism uses the doctrine of Tilakkhaṇa (The Three marks of existence) which are impermanence (anicca); suffering (dukkha); no-self (anatta) to explain everything in the world including the maters of karma, soul, and the process of rebirth. Anatta or “non-Self” is used in Buddhism to describe any and all composite, consubstantial, phenomenal and temporal things, from the macrocosmic to microcosmic, be it matter pertaining to the physical body or the cosmos at large, as well as any and all mental machinations, which are impermanent. According to Buddhism, there is no self, no soul which is permanent.

3. In Jainism, soul is present in every animate and inanimate object of the universe including its elements, earth, water, wind, air. While the eight
consciousness (ālayavijñāna) in Buddhism is an individuality that does exist in plants and animals, but not in non-living or inanimate things.

4. *Karma* in Jainism is *karma* bondage, while *karma* in Buddhism is the *karma* of its nature, *karma* of its function, *karma* to the result, etc.

5. Jainism also believes in the universality of *karma* and its effect in human being. But unlike Buddhism, *karma* according to Jainism is not a mere effect of one’s action, but a real substance that flows in to each individual or jīva. This *karmic* substance remains with a being until good and self purification eliminates them.

6. *Mokṣa* (liberation) in Jainism differs from *nirvāna* in Buddhism. Jainism holding soul theory, expounds *mokṣa*, while Buddhism rejecting the eternal existence of soul, and expounds *nirvāna*.

7. *Mokṣa* (liberation) in Jainism is the liberation of soul from *karmic* bondage, while *nirvāna* in Buddhism is the liberation of suffering.

8. *Mokṣa* (liberation) in Jainism exists in another world, while *nirvāna* in Buddhism exists neither in this world nor in the other world, nor between them.

9. *Mokṣa* (liberation) in Jainism is to be attained after death, while *nirvāna* in Buddhism is to be attained in this life.

10. *Mokṣa* (liberation) in Jainism is to be attained by cutting off *karmic* bondage, while *nirvāna* in Buddhism is to be attained by eradicating mental defilements through attainment of Noble Path.

11. *Mokṣa* (liberation) in Jainism is a place where liberated soul remains forever. However, *nirvāna* in Buddhism is a place, where is there none of conditioned things remains.

In short, the theory of *karma* and rebirth is a capital formation of *dharma* in Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism also. It contains all *dharma* which are lead people to liberation from suffering. The idea that virtues, talents and powers are energetic relatives who can be willingly or unwillingly transferred, often leads priests of all kinds to monopolize such transactions,
and so become part of spiritual, political and financial power games. If people who do bad *karma*, their soul (according to Hinduism and Jainism) or consciousness (in Buddhism) contain worthlessness will be decline. The soul or the eighth consciousness (in Buddhism) contains of sins that lead people to hell. So people who want to attain liberation, they must be to know and practice the Eightfold path or the Three Jewel way which include precept (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*prajñā*).

The Lord Buddha and Lord Mahāvīra taught numerous techniques for liberation. Their teachings on method are profound and effective. The Buddha and Mahāvira always emphasized the theory of *Karma* and Rebirth through by the way to liberation. Following and practising The Eightfold path: Right view, Right thought, Right speech, Right action, Right livelihood, Right effort, Right mindfulness, Right concentration, or The Three Jewel ways: Right faith, Right conduct, and Right knowledge to take people to attain *nirvāṇa*.

Nowadays, People of the modern society are supposed to be more civilized though everybody has become lonelier, more worried, tensed and afraid of uncertainty. The world is full of changes and crises, the morals of humanity must be protected and enhanced; doing good *karma* by practice the Eightfold Path or the Three Jewel ways, the compassion altruism will develop; the terrorism, poverty, violence, etc...will gradually reduce and one day would come to an end. Moreover, ‘*The Theory of Karma and Rebirth in Buddhist and Jaina Traditions*’ as preached by either Buddhist or Jaina or the Hindu must be practised everywhere at all levels at all time in the world. And that is the only way to be happy and lead peaceful life.

Signature of the Supervisor                      Signature of the Research Student

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