

## Doctrine of Law of Karma

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to interpret one's own *Karma* or action by which good or bad actions determine the future modes of individual's existence. Here I have discussed on the concept of rebirth where not only taught to encourage virtuous behavior for the sake of future benefit, but also to reinforce the individual's commitment to moral discipline. In this paper I have also mentioned about "*Samskara*" (disposition or impressions) and the impact of past *Karma* which influence the fate of one's life. Moreover, the virtue of detached action that can be learnt to refuse to act under feelings of attachment, which helps one's to change his possibilities and his own *Karma* instead of being a helpless fatalist within the cruel and unavoidable cycle of *Karma*.

**KEYWORDS:** Karma, Rebirth, Samskara, Detach, Fatalist.

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The doctrine of *Karma* is considered to be one of the most important and fundamental doctrines of classical Indian Philosophy. All classical Indian schools of thought expect Carvaka believe in the doctrine of *Karma* unquestionably. *Karma* is beyond all logic and reasoning. The more you understand it, the more amazed you are. It causes people to be together or separate. It causes some to be weak and some to be strong. *Karma* literally means 'deed' or 'act', and more broadly names the universal principle of cause and effect, action and reaction, which Hindus believe governs all consciousness. *Karma* refers to the totality of our actions and their concomitant reaction in this and previous lives, all of which determine our future. The conquest of *Karma* lies in intelligent action and dispassionate reaction. *Karma* is beyond all logic and reasoning. The more you understand it, the more amazed you are. It causes people to be together or separate. It causes some to be weak and some to be strong. Not all karmas rebound immediately. Some accumulate and return unexpectedly in this or other lifetime.

One of the obvious facts of life is differences and inequalities between men, differences in caste status, and inequalities of natural endowments as well as the amount of suffering and enjoyment that man undergoes. This cannot be a matter of chance or haphazard arrangement. All these are result of one's own karma or action. The assumption is that it is not an accident that men are born into different heredity and environment as a result of which they fare differently in life. The differences are expressions of the functioning of a law-of *Karma*. But actions performed by men in life cannot account for the differences in their heredity and environment, which appears to be given before any action takes place. So, the *Karma* that determines man's *Karma* in this life can only be the *Karma* of a previous life. That is there must be *Rebirth* according to *Karma* to explain different fortunes of men in this life. It may be believed that, belief in *Rebirth* came first and the law of *Karma* was produced as an explanation of this belief rather than that the Hindus came to believe in *Rebirth* because the law of *Karma* required it. "Accordingly as one act, as one behaves, so does he become in the next life. The door

of good becomes good; the door of evil becomes evil. One becomes virtuous by virtuous action, bad by bad action. Others, however, say that a person consists of desires. As is his desires so is his will, as is his will so is the deed he does, whatever deed he does, that he attains”, (*Brihadaranyaka Upanisad*). “The soul being overcome by the bright or dark fruits of action enters a good or an evil womb,” (*Maitri Upanisad*). “Those whose conduct has been good will quickly attain a good birth, the birth of a *Brahmin*, the *Kshatriya* or the birth of a *Vaishya*. But those whose conduct has been evil will quickly attain an evil birth, the birth of a Hog or the birth of a *Chandala*”, (*Chandogya Upanisad*). “The individual soul roams about for reincarnation according to its deeds”, (*Svetasvatara Upanisad*). Actions are normally generated by desires and desires are led by feelings of attraction and repulsion. Performance of actions thus generated feeds back the system of desires out of which they arise in the form of an unconscious drive or tendency (*Samskara*) that takes root in the personality. Indeed desire itself when produced out of instinctive attraction and repulsion, even when not followed by over activity would in this context qualify an action, in as much as this too would strengthen impressions and sow the seeds of future happenings. The law of *Karma* determines what sort of things are going to happen to one, determining the amount of pleasure and pain that will befall him, so that actions done and desires felt in this life can be balanced out by counter happenings in the future.

At this point a doubt arise and that is, if the function of law of *Karma* is to give a deterministic account of how and why things happen as they do there is no such things as freedom of will and man becomes a playing thing in the hands of destiny represented by his past *Karma*. As present *Karma* which is going to build, the seeds of a future life is determined by past *Karma* there is absolutely no way of breaking out of the chain and radically altering matters. This however is not meant to be the case. Man is said to be able to achieve liberation and earn it by working for it, if past *Karma* determined everything no sense could be given to the repeated assertions in Hindu scriptures that liberation can be achieved by effort. Past *Karma* does in fact determine a great deal in man, the tendencies, disposition and capabilities of a man, the amount of pleasure and pain he will suffer in life and so on. There is no doubt that most things most men do are a function of these factors which create feelings of attachment and repulsion. If he learns to refuse to act under feelings of attachment he will elevate to the unique position of man. A detached action does not accumulate *Karma* because it does not involve desire, the prime force involved in life urge and it is by performing detached actions that man can begin to regulate his own possibilities and so his own *Karma*, instead of being regulated by it. The *Karma* theory of rebirth is not a linear development from *Vedic and Upanisadic* period, but a composite structure. In Hinduism, *Karma* is a concept which explains causality through a system where beneficial effects are derived from past beneficial actions and harmful effects from past harmful action, creating a system of actions and reactions throughout a soul’s reincarnated lives forming a cycle of rebirth. The causality is said to be applicable not only to the material world but also to our thoughts, words, actions and actions that others do under our instructions. When the cycle of Rebirth comes to an end, a person is said to have attained *Moksa*, or Salvation from *Samsara*.

According to Hindus, there are three types of *Karma* in a man’s life. They are:

**Sanchita** (accumulated works): *Sanchita* is the accumulated karma-all the good and bad actions-of the past incarnations that have followed through to the next(current) life.*Sanchita* is responsible for the body that you have in the current life, as well as the situations that you find yourself in. The Karma can be modified by good deeds and pure thoughts. It is destroyed when enlightenment is attained.

**Prarabdha** (fructifying works): *Prarabdha* is the part the *Sanchita Karma* that influences a person's life in the present reincarnation. *Prarabdha* is a *karmic template* that cannot be avoided or change. This *Karma* is experienced in the current life to work on. If the allotted *Sanchita* is worked on an dissolved in the current lifetime then more past debts will surface to be worked on.

**Kriyamana/ Agama/ Vartamana** (current works): *Kriyamana* is the instant daily *Karma* that is being created in this lifetime for the future. This way our thoughts and actions in this life will affect our future life and incarnations. *Kriyamana* can be altered by correct attitude, as well as by particular rites.

Thus, it will be a mistake to believe that the Law of *Karma* must make one a *fatalist*, if, by a *fatalist*, we mean someone who says everyone is laid down and nothing can be changed by efforts. The Law of *Karma* when correctly understood is the greatest force of vitality in our philosophy. It makes us the architects of our own future. We are not helpless pawns in the hands of a mighty tyrant, God, who, it is believed, has created us so weak or fearful to live our lives of limitations and pains. If we are weak or sorrowful it is because of our own willful actions. But by carefully developing a positive and virtuous code of conduct for our own lives, we can, for sure, redirect our comportment to a righteous and worthy life.

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