

THEORY OF KARMA

The theory of karma is one of the peculiar characteristics of Jainism, which is elaborately discussed. It is nothing but the law of moral causation. Nothing happens without a cause. Each individual is responsible for his or her own actions. These actions are the cause that produces results. This is the eternal and universal law of Karmas. Other systems also believe in the theory of Karma. According to the theory of Karma, man is dependent upon only himself. He does not depend on the supremacy of God. It is against Akriyavada. It is against Fatalism. There is a glorification of freedom of the individual. 'Purusharth'. A person should make good use of the knowledge of the law that good actions generate good fruits and bad actions generate bad fruits. Then, he will hesitate to perform bad actions and feel elated to perform only good actions. At times, under certain circumstances, for maintaining of life or livelihood, we are constrained to disregard the law of Karma and forced to perform evil actions against our will. In such cases too we do bind Karmas. But the duration of such Karma may be short, and the intensity may be less intense.

The doctrine of Karma occupies a more significant position in Jain Philosophy as compared to another system of philosophy. The supreme importance of the doctrine of Karma lies in providing a rational and satisfactory explanation to the apparently inexplicable phenomena of birth and death, happiness and misery, inequalities in mental and physical attainments and the existence of different species of living beings. Every Jiva or soul is possessed of 'consciousness' and of 'Upayoga' comprising the power of perception and knowledge; it is the doer of all actions; it has the capacity to occupy the full dimensions of the body which embodied it; it is the enjoyer of the fruits; it has the inherent tendency to move upwards and is a Siddha or liberated in its stage of perfections. However, the soul finds itself tangled in 'samsar' the cycle of transmigration, suffering, birth, and death, happiness and misery.

The doctrine of Karma explains the operation of Karmic matter, which draws a veil over the natural qualities of the soul, crippling its powers. The soul is found entangled with Karma since eternity. It is the primary function of religion to stop the influx of Karma and mitigate the presence of Karma with the soul and thereby show the path of liberation and methods through which the soul could achieve perfections.

The literal meaning of the Sanskrit word Karma is deeds, including thoughts and words. Karmas are invisible, fine particles of matter prevailing all around us just like the air particles.

The Jain Dharma considers Karma as an independent and separate entity. It has been calculated in terms of Pudgalas because the body is made up of Pudgals. Hence Karma is also made up of Pudgals.

The impact of Karma and pudgalas on the soul is deep. The relationship between the soul and Karma is without beginning. Though Karma becomes inert, it envelops the soul in the form of energy. It is not correct to think that the soul was pure once and that later it became enveloped in Karmas. The soul and Karma have been bound together always and that has no beginning. Of course, it is possible to prevent new Karmas from entering the soul. Jain darshan believes that Karmic particles are a physical substance that is everywhere in the universe. The Karmic bondage occurs as a result of the two processes, Ashrava and Bandh. Ashrava is the inflow of karma. The karmic influx occurs when the particles are attracted to the soul on account of Yoga. Yoga is the vibration of the soul due to activities of mind, speech, and body. However, yoga alone does not produce bondage. The karmas have effect only when they are bound to the consciousness. This binding of the karma to the consciousness is called Bandh.

But it is also possible to discard and destroy the karmas that have collected to the soul and are clinging to it. Gold is found mixed with rocks. In the mines, they cut the rock, take out the pieces and by various physical and chemical processes, pure gold is separated from these pieces of rocks. In the same manner, even the soul can be made bright and pure by discarding and destroying all karmas. It is possible to discard and destroy the karmas that are seated in it exercising an unnatural sway over it and it is possible to deliver the soul from their power. When terror and impact of all the karmas are discarded, the original radiant form of the soul shows itself.

The whole universe is packed with fine karmic material particles. Only when they get attracted towards the soul through its activity and stick to it, they are designated as karma. The karmic material particles bound with the soul are called Dravya Karma, while the internal mental state of attachment, aversion, etc. are called Bhav Karma. The soul in its impure and perverse state is the doer of Bhava karma as also of Dravya karma. Bhav karma causes Dravya karma and Dravya karma causes Bhav karma. They are mutually related as cause and effect, just as the seed and the sprout are.

Why do some people are successful in life and others are not? Why some are rich and some are poor? Why do some suffer and others enjoy life? Why some children are good in studies and others are not? Why do some live longer while others die at a young age? Why some people are healthy and fit throughout life and others suffer severe disease.

The answer to all of these questions is the effect of our karma. The theory of karma explains the role that karma plays in our lives, how we accumulate karma, and how we get rid of them.

At the time of bondage of karmas to the soul, four characteristics of karmas are decided. They are ;

1. Prakriti bandh(Nature)
2. Sthiti bandh(Duration)
3. Anubhag bandh(Intensity)
4. Pradesh bandh(quantity)