

THE LAW OF KARMA

I think, and you know just as well as I do by observation, that it is common sense knowledge that to run any organisation, community, town council or to govern the affairs of a country, certain laws have to be applied or attached so as to get things to work in an orderly and timely fashion and to flow in a certain direction in an "efficient" manner.

So likewise, there is a Divine law which is cyclical and which governs this entire universe. When we observe nature closely we see the coming and going and changing of the seasons like winter or fall or spring or summer. Also, when we study astronomy closely, then we can see the precise predestined orbits of the planets including the rising of the sun in the east, and its setting in the west, and the movements of the moon, earth and the stars and so on. We are witness to birth and death and, in between them, we experience joy and sorrow, good health and illness, poverty and wealth and so on. We also see rivers rushing from the mountains towards the oceans where they merge and then, by evaporation, become clouds and then again come down as rain. So now we agree that there has to be and is a law. In ancient Vedic scriptures this law, which operates or governs the entire environment (Nature or Prakriti), is known as the Law of **Karma**. Throughout the ages all God's messengers have confirmed that this law was set in motion by a CREATOR and governs all of this UNIVERSE including our Humankind's existence.

The fundamental and universal principle of this law suggests, **"As you sow.....so shall you reap"**.

According to the Bhagavad Gita this eternal law of Karma is perfect, meaning it ensures that every action attracts a corresponding equal and opposite reaction. Consequently it has everything to do with what we call **"Action and Reaction"**, **"Cause and Effect"** and **"Effort and Destiny"**. If you observe closely you will find this to be true in all aspects of life and in the workings of the universal forces.

Lord Krishna has further confirmed that this Law is eternal - meaning that it applies through all ages and to all. Any action, be it so-called "good" or "bad", will invariably rebound on the doer attracting a so-called "POSITIVE" or so-called "NEGATIVE" consequence or result.

In our limited, partial, biased and narrow view somehow this Law of Karma does not seem to be fair or just. To a lot of people reincarnation (transmigration of the soul) is a no no. It simply does not gel!

In reality there is no such thing as birth or death for the soul or Light Divine because it is eternal and everlasting. The soul seemingly adorns a new body which we have termed as "birth", and after some time it seemingly discards the same body in a process we call "death". Having "occupied" the physical body the soul, by its very nature, remains untouched by the characteristic thoughts, words and actions of the body. Here I can give a somewhat crude

example. Soul consciousness as the life force in man can be likened to the electrical energy which occupies or flows through the conductors (wires) to which is connected an electrical appliance, be it a lamp that shines dim or bright, or a fan that runs fast or slow, or a fridge or heater or whatever. All of these appliances express their characteristics only due to the flow of this electrical energy through their systems but the electricity itself is not touched by the characteristics of the appliances.

For lifetime after lifetime we, in the human form, have been given the power to think, to choose, to embrace and to express and to have dominion over our thoughts and desires. This is why we are called the 'crown of creation'. Without this precious gift how would it be possible to have the opportunity to meet one's Master who reveals the steps one has to follow to discover the true Self? It is discoverable because it exists within this human form.

It cannot be denied that many individuals, or groups of individuals, or organisations, or communities or nations exist who are exploiting or harming or causing pain to others yet seem to be enjoying life to the full. We see them able to afford costly travel, housing, clothing and meals and all forms of luxury and so on and so on. Then we also see that others, who are seemingly honest and religious or spiritually minded and who strive sincerely to stay on the path of fairness and are law abiding, are struggling to make ends meet. It is as if they are unable to get away from the grip of poverty and illness or unfavourable situations.

Now in such circumstances it is understandable and not surprising for one to become frustrated and lose faith in the Law of Karma and in a God that does not seem to be fair and just.

I do not know for sure if this law can ever be fully understood because it is huge or larger than we could ever imagine, but that does not mean we should give up the attempt to understand it.

A long, long time ago whilst driving in South Africa I happened to turn into a service road and found the people in cars coming from the opposite direction waving at me as they passed by. I thought to myself, "Wow just look how friendly these people are". Then, as I turned into another road, I was stopped by a police officer who happened to be there and he informed me that I had just driven up a one way street! That is when I realized why all those who passed by me kept waving at me. They were of course warning me of the dangerous situation I was in. The officer proceeded to write a traffic ticket and when I said, "Officer, I am sorry, I did not know that it was a one way street," do you know what he said to me? He said, "Sir, ignorance of law is no excuse and you will have to pay a fine for this infraction!" But when he saw the Botswana number plates on my vehicle, and after looking at my driver's license, he said, "OK Sir, let this be a warning, but please be careful and observant on the roads". Then he allowed me to continue on my way. (Later I did go back on that road and sure enough there was sign clearly marked "NO ENTRY" and yet somehow I had missed it.)

So I am saying here that it is the same with the Law of Karma: Ignorance of this Law is no excuse!!!

You see, you could put a hand in a flame anywhere in this world by accident or knowingly or unknowingly in ignorance and still get burnt or injured.

So now let us look at his Law of Karma more closely and try to define it if we can!

So what is Karma?

I think I would define KARMA simply as *any physical deed done with the help of the mind and intellect including all or any of our senses, sense organs and limbs be it day or night, from the time we get up to the time we fall asleep and from the time we are born up to the time of death.*

I think that would cover just about everything, don't you agree? For example we have our sense of likes and dislikes, we also have a sense of attachment or maybe non attachment directed or governed by our mental and intellectual make up. Then we have eating or not eating, sulking or not sulking, seeing or not seeing, talking or not talking, smelling or not smelling, walking or running or touching or not touching, making love or not making love, inhaling and not inhaling making funny sounds and so on and so on - the list is endless!

TYPES OF KARMA

Realised persons and Saints and Sages and Masters have indicated that KARMA has THREE types or categories and have described them as follows:

1. KRIYAMAN KARMA (Present karma)

Which means an action which is performed spontaneously on the spur of a moment in the present time and which instantaneously bears fruit in the form of a reaction occurring then and there.

2. SANCHIT KARMA (Cumulative Karma)

Which means an action that has already been carried out but is not yet ready to give fruits immediately, or on the spot, but will take some time to mature.

Such Karmas are in suspension, or are pending, or are waiting for the opportune time to become mature, to give appropriate fruits in the future. Till then they remain as a bank balance or in storage and are accumulated (SANCHIT). Until their fructification, these Sanchit Karmas are not generally cancelled or made ineffective.

3. PRARABDHA KARMA (Matured Karma)

Which means those actions, referred to above as cumulative Sanchit Karmas, that have now become mature and are ready to give their fruits. Sometimes

they are commonly referred or known as Naseeb, or taqdeer, or good fortune, or ill luck, or fate, or destiny and so forth.

So now we know that any action will have a reaction, any cause will have its effect, and so too any effort will have its result.

Let us first look at each of these Karma's more closely and I hope the simple examples I give may clear up any misunderstandings.

1. KRIYAMAN KARMA

As I said earlier, any action that you do at any time or moment in the present and that gives its fruit immediately and on the spot is called KRIYAMAN KARMA.

For example, let us say you arrived at your workplace or business and, due to some misunderstanding, you insulted someone by using foul language (ACTION) and that person became so highly provoked and visibly angry that he suddenly punched you in the face (REACTION). Here the Law of Kriyaman Karma was immediately played out by giving its fruit! The business of giving and taking is completed right then and there!

Here is another example I can give you. Let us say you are on the highway and feeling very hungry and thirsty so you pull over at a service center and you order a meal and have something cool to drink. So what has happened? You consumed your meal (ACTION) and immediately your hunger was gone (that was the REACTION). It is the same thing when you drink water (ACTION) and at once your thirst is quenched (that is the REACTION). You got the fruit of your action of drinking water and that karma is cleared. So like that I could give many examples of Kriyaman Karma that we experience on a daily basis. But by now I think you have got the idea of what I am trying to say!!!! The law of ACTION and REACTION, CAUSE and EFFECT came into motion and then stopped. In other words ACTIONS become CLEARED only by REACTIONS after their EFFECTS have happened in the form of the EXPERIENCE you have had.

2. SANCHIT KARMA

As I have pointed out some Karmas do NOT mature right away or deliver their fruits then and there. These Karmas remain in suspension waiting to mature or ripen and deliver their fruits at the right future moment. They are called SANCHIT KARMAS, meaning accumulated Karmas.

For example, let us say you undergo surgery (ACTION) for a knee injury. The healing (REACTION) will not be immediate but will naturally take some weeks. Another example related to the surgery is that you may become constipated because of the painkillers given to you. You are now given other medication (ACTION) so you can have a bowel movement (REACTION) but that will take at least a few hours to happen. Or you go into hospital to give blood samples (ACTION) and are told that the results of those tests

(REACTION) will be available in a few hours; or, how about the young person who appeared for his exams and was told the results would be announced next week.

And how about when you were a very young boy or girl and you were so keen to become a doctor or an engineer or maybe even a pilot, and you put in a lot of effort and worked hard towards that goal (ACTION). Let us say you suddenly passed away before you could qualify in any one of those goals - then what? Well, all your efforts and hard work of the present lifetime will not go to waste! In following births you will certainly have the opportunity to continue your efforts to reach your goal (REACTION)!

Here is another example I can give you: Let us suppose you are running a small grocery business and you have been kind enough to extend credit to a particular person on a monthly basis. Now that person misses his payments to you and you realise that he deliberately keeps giving you sad stories and suddenly you find that you are owed about \$1000.00 (This sort of thing happens all the time). You now hand this matter over to collection people who eventually take him/her to court and the court rules in your favour. Now the clerk of the court goes to recover the money but that person has no money and declares bankruptcy. The court order will be left open/pending and become active once that person acquires cash or property or something equivalent to the value/amount owed. Then the court will recover the money.

It may also be that this very person may die without having settled the debt and may have escaped the worldly court order here....but his/her action will still be pending as Sanchit Karma. So in reality the defaulter has not escaped the Divine law of Karma which will follow from birth to birth and he/she may not pay in monetary terms but will certainly pay in some other way. Maybe that person will come to you as a laborer or as a gardener or professional or whatever but that debt will be cleared.

Here is another example: Let us say you have planted corn seeds, or for that matter it may be ground nuts or seeds of fruit trees, they will only start giving their fruits after some time. We know by observation that, depending on the nature of the seeds or plants, it will take TIME to ripen the fruit – i.e. for the cause to change into effect. So like that we can have so many examples given to us.

I think most people from the Hindu faith maybe familiar with the famous epic of Ramayana.

We come to know from the Ramayana that the Father of Lord Rama was King Dashratha and in his youth as the prince of AYODHIA he loved hunting in the forest and he was well known for his skills as a marksman with the bow and arrow. It is said that on one such hunting trip at night he took aim and shot at the sound of an animal drinking water at the river bank. The arrow hit its target and unfortunately it was not an animal but a Brahmin teenager named Sravana who sustained a life threatening injury and when the king got to him the boy asked if the king would kindly take this container of water to his blind and thirsty parents a short distance away and pointed in their direction. Then

he died right there. So the prince quickly approached the blind parents of Sravana and offered them water to drink and the parents sensed there was something wrong and asked after their son. (here as their son seemingly remained silent???). Finally, after some hesitation, the prince explained what had happened. When the blind parents realized that their son had died they cursed the king and said, "in the future you will also be separated from your son and you will pine for him and die."

When this incident happened prince Dashratha was not even married so this curse did not have any effect at that time. In other words prince Dashratha's action (Karma) was therefore kept pending as Sanchit Karma waiting for the opportune time to come. In due course of time Prince Dashratha got married and had four wives. At that time, as the King, he had promised one of his four queens that he would grant her a wish which could be redeemed anytime in the future. So in time the Queens gave birth to sons and the elder son was named RAMA.

When Rama became an adult and was in line for the throne, the queen who had been granted the wish asked for Rama and his wife Sita to be banished into the forest for 14 years so that her son could take the throne. The past action of King Dashratha and the curse of the blind parents now came into play or presented itself and the King died from the pain of separation from his son Rama.

Even though Lord Rama, the omnipotent God incarnate, could have intervened and minimized the impact of this law of Karma, he chose not to interfere by showing any favouritism to his own father in granting him pardon or extra time until he himself would return from the forest.

Taking one more example from the epic Mahabharata, when King Dhritarashtra lost all his 100 sons in the battle field, he inquired of Lord Krishna as to why he met with such a disastrous loss even though he did not remember having committed any such horrible sin during his present lifetime. Lord Krishna, out of respect and sympathy for him, gracefully bestowed upon him a divine vision so that he could view for himself the heinous acts perpetrated by him in many of his previous births which were responsible for his current misery. Thus, aided by this Divine Grace, King Dhritarashtra discovered that fifty births back when he was a hunter of birds he once threw his burning net on a tree causing a hundred small baby birds to be entrapped and burnt to ashes. The remaining big birds flew away but they became blind due to the scorching heat of the burning net. The effect of this dreadful deed was that King Dhritarashtra became and remained blind all throughout his then present life and also lost his 100 sons in battle.

King Dhritarashtra wondered and further inquired from Lord Krishna as to why that wanton and sinful act did not immediately rebound on him to punish him in the same birth or even during his immediate next birth, and why it remained dormant as SANCHIT KARMA for such a long period of fifty lifetimes. Lord Krishna smiled and replied that his past sinful deed had to wait for an opportune time (50 births) to allow him to earn and accumulate enough pious

deeds to enable him to have a hundred sons in one lifetime so that his previous sinful Sanchit Karma could instantaneously confront him with the effects of his past dreadful action.

Thus, it would seem one cannot avoid the negative or positive consequences of one's actions be it in 50 or five hundred births!! Thus the consequences of negative or positive deeds can remain latent and dormant as Sanchit Karmas waiting for the opportune time to confront the person.

So long as the stock of one's pious, deeds (positive consequences) has not been fully exhausted, the stock of our unpious deeds (negative consequences) cannot attack us and will bide its time; but, in any event, the law will not allow the person to escape. The negative consequences will catch up with him at the most opportune time and will definitely attack him even after hundreds and thousands of births. Thus there is neither delay nor any chaos nor confusion in the realm of the Divine's creation. The Divine is full of both mercy and justice.

There are innumerable such instances and episodes in our scriptures and also in our day-to-day life propounding this doctrine of Karma that "as you sow, so shall you reap", the fruits either ripening immediately or in due course of time as and when they become ripe - either in the present life or in the subsequent birth or births to come.

3. **PRARABDHA KARMA** (also called Destiny, Fate, Good/bad luck, Naseeb etc)

Each person has accrued billions and billions of millions of unripe Sanchit Karmas which have been accumulated by him during his past innumerable births since time immemorial. They do not become ripe to give fruits all at one time in one birth. Only a very a small percentage, say something in the order of about 7000 -15000 Sanchit Karmas out of this whole tremendous stock become ripe and ready to give fruits during one lifetime whereupon they become Prarabdha Karmas.

Strictly speaking, according to these Prarabdha Karmas, a person gets a particular type of body, parents, wife, children, wealth, caste, creed, race, sex, environment, etc. perfectly appropriate to enjoy, suffer and exhaust his Prarabdha Karmas destined during his present lifetime.

It has been observed over and over again that one cannot leave one's present body until one has fully enjoyed, suffered and exhausted a major part of the results of these due Prarabdha Karmas during his present life. Even though a person is totally bed-ridden or suffering due to paralysis or other dreaded diseases and may be desperately craving for freedom from his crippled body, it is only when his Prarabdha Karmas, destined to be enjoyed during his present lifetime, become exhausted that he immediately becomes free from this mortal coil body (death). He again takes on a new body (birth) to 'enjoy'

other new Prarabdha Karmas, say about 20,000 which have become ripe by that time to give him fruits.

Unfortunately, while exhausting his predestined Prarabdha Karmas during one lifetime, he creates and accumulates many more new Karmas during the same lifetime which are again deposited in the stock of his previous Sanchit Karmas and this situation is repeated in every birth. Thus the vicious cycle goes on uninterruptedly increasing instead of decreasing the total balance of Sanchit Karmas at the end of each birth. Thus the stock of Sanchit Karmas is increasing day by day as the new accumulation is much more than the expenditure during each birth and there seems to be no end to this process. Therefore, the cycle of birth and death goes on indefinitely and there does not appear to be any hope or chance of liberation or emancipation.

Swami Shankaracharya, a realised master, is said to have humbly requested God as follows:

"PUNARAPI JANANAM PUNARAPI MARANAM
PUNARAPI JANANI JATHARE SHAYANAM."

IHA SANSARE KHALU DUSTARE
KRUPAYA PARE PAHI MURARE."

Translated here as follows

"Repeated births and repeated deaths and repeatedly sleeping in the womb of mother.

This ocean of samsara (worldly life) is really difficult to cross. OH, GOD! Kindly save me and help me to cross it"

To me personally "Paramatma" or the "Divine" or the "Eternal" or the "Almighty" or the "Lord" is like a huge or massive vessel far beyond imagination and you and I are like narrow wires or conductors through which his energy, "Light Divine", flows... and without that flow there is nothing.

TYPES OF DEATH

Mentioned in the Vedic scriptures are three types of **death**:

The first type known as "**Adhibhautik**" is when the known causes are certain such as negative or harmful stress levels, habits and or vices, serious diseases and finally "death". A specialist or doctor may be able to treat and save the person for a certain time but, through the kind and compassionate intervention of a Saintly person, it may be possible to minimize the KARMIC impact.

The second type called "**Adhidaivik**" is when negative thoughts or polluted thoughts like doubts and mistrust affect the body and cause death. A Saint or

noble person with Divine energy can minimise the impact and may actually save the person from the effect.

The third type “**Adhyatmik**” is a peaceful death which comes at a known time and in which the soul departs seemingly with a joyful expression on their face as if he/she is going to meet his/her lover.

Most people die as a result of the first two types and only a few can reach the third type of death. The third type is usually that of one who has meditated for long hours and constantly practiced and sublimely experienced the Light of the Divine within.

There are people who mistakenly believe death is equal to liberation. That is simply not true. True Liberation is a state of Self-realization which comes about whilst one is ALIVE. In other words, human birth, the body, is required to experience and express this Self-realization as it has to be reached whilst one is in the physical body. Self-realization is a highly spiritual conscious state....and that cannot come without constant and sustained efforts as demonstrated by a living Master. The patient has to be living and the doctor has to be living if there is to be a chance for an effective cure or treatment. There is no point in applying balm on the tip of the nose for the itch on your little toe!!

Our condition should be like that of a lotus flower which sprouted from the mud and remains rooted in the mud and yet is above the water and untouched by the mud itself. It is still beautiful in itself, with its own fragrance and is a pleasure to look at. In other words we have to be living like that Lotus in our own mud (society or worldly life) with an understanding detachment. Living with detachment but also with resentment will not bring liberation. It does not work that way and never has.

It is so pleasing when one can do or perform everything with LOVE. It has been said by a Chinese Saint, "One should make decisions from the Heart and use the head to make it work out". He further pointed out that one should "LOOK" to one's INNER being for guidance".

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