

KARMIC THEORY IN JAINA PHILOSOPHY

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Definition of Karma in Jaina Philosophy and in other Philosophies

India is a country in which religion plays a very dominant role. All the ideologies and religions having faith in God have acknowledged karma or some such entity as affects, covers or blunts the various powers of the soul. Different philosophies have given different names instead of karma to that entity.

In Vedānta philosophy it is known as illusion or ignorance.¹ According to Sāṅkhya philosophy it is nature or tradition.² In Yoga, philosophy the terms 'Karmic purport' or 'tormentation' have been used for it.³ The terms 'providence' and 'tradition' of the Nyāya philosophy stand for karma.⁴ In Buddhism it is known as 'predisposition' and 'non-communicative'.⁵ The term 'religion and non-religion' used in Vaiśeṣika philosophy is the synonym of the word karma used in Jaina philosophy.⁶ The word "trap" used in Śaiva philosophy is also a synonym of the word karma. The word "unprecedented" of Mīmāṃsā philosophy has also been used in the sense of karma.⁷ There are many words like 'destiny', 'fate', 'virtue' and 'vice' that have been commonly used in many scriptures. In Jaina philosophy, we also find the use of terms like 'karmic filth' and 'karmic dust' along with the word karma.⁸

At some places in 'Ṛgveda' the meaning of the word karma has been given as religion rites like yajña, conation etc. Gods accept or like all the karma of the persons who worship and pay homage to them.⁹ In vedic tradition, right from the Vedas upto the scripture Brahmins, the acts like yajña etc. those were performed daily have been described as karma.¹⁰

According to the Smārta scholars, the duties and obligations ascribed to the four classes (Brahmin, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra) of the society and for the four Āśramas (celibacy, household, vāna prastha and renunciation) have been described as karma.¹¹ In the Gītā, the world karma has been used in a very broad sense. In this scripture, this term denotes a deed performed without the expectation of fruit or result, in an absolute detached manner, with whole-hearted devotion combined with knowledge and skill.¹² Defining karma, the famous Jainācārya Devendra Suri¹³ writes, "The cause of a soul's action is karma". According to another famous Jaina scholar Pandit Sukhlal,¹⁴ when a soul intends something with his mind, speech and body, atoms of matter those are fit for action are gathered from all the sides. Anything that is done by the soul because of falsehood and passions etc. is known as karma. The subtle matter particles of the infinite karma, that get synthesized in the vicinity of the spirit, attracted like a magnet, is known as karma.¹⁵ Yuvācārya Mahāprajña (presently Ācārya Mahāprajña) writes, "Spirituality cannot be described without analyzing the doctrine of karma. Therefore it is a great doctrine. For a person who wants to have the warmth of the innermost feeling of spirituality it is important to go into its unfathomable depths."¹⁶

Classification of Karma in Jaina Philosophy

The basic karma in the form of which the atoms of karma hinder the revelation of the different powers of the soul and link the soul with the body and bound with which the living being wanders in the world, are eight in numbers.¹⁷

1. Knowledge-obscuring karma—This karma hinders the appearance of the infinite power of knowledge of the living being.
2. Intuition obscuring karma—this karma does not allow the infinite power of perception of the living being to appear.

3. Deluding karma—This karma prevents the right faith and conduct of the living being.
4. Energy obstructing karma—This karma does not allow the infinite energy and potency of the living being to appear.
5. Feeling producing karma—This karma hinders infinite pleasure.
6. Life span determining karma—This karma does not allow eternal stability to take place.
7. Body-making karma—This karma does not allow the abstract stage of take place.
8. Status determining karma—This karma prevents the property of constancy and individuality.

(a) Destructive and non-destructive karma

(1) Destructive karma

The karma those getting bound with the soul, destroy its natural qualities are known as destructive karma. They are of four kinds—knowledge obscuring, perception-obscuring, deluding and obstructive karma.¹⁸

These destructive karma have further been divided into two parts—

- (i) All-destructive karma :** These karma destroy the natural qualities of soul completely. There are in all 20 sub-type of these karma.
- (ii) Partially destructive karma :** These karma destroy the natural qualities of soul partially. There are in all 25 sub-types of these karma.¹⁹

(2) Non-destructive karma :

The karma that do not harm the main qualities of the soul are known as non-destructive karma. They are four in number—feeling producing

karma, life span determining karma, body-making karma and status-determining karma.²⁰ There are in all 75 sub-type of these karma.²¹

Thus there are a maximum of 120 sub-types of the karma (20 of the all-destructive karma, 25 of the partially-destructive karma and 75 of the non-destructive karma).

(b) Physical and psychological karma

(i) Physical Karma

The substances of karmic variforms, that, attracted by the activity of mind, speech and body, are unified with the soul, are known as physical karma.

(ii) Psychological karma

The passions, attachment, jealousy and aversion that are constantly attached to the soul are known as psychological karma. This is a sort of mental condition. In accordance with the theory of cause and effect, both the physical and the psychological karma are the complements of each other, they are totally connected with each other.²²

(c) Merit and demerit

The four non-destructive karma-life span determining karma, feeling producing karma, body making karma and status determining karma have been divided into two parts :

(i) Meritorious karma

The karma, the results of which yield sensuous, physical and worldly pleasures are known as merits. For example, feeling producing karma, status determining karma, being born as human beings and deities and some of the sub-kinds of body making karma are said to be merits. There are in all 42 sub-types of these merits.

(ii) Demerit karma

The karma, the results of which yield or cause physical pains, worldly sorrows and displeasure to senses are said to be demerits. For example, pain-causing karma, low status of birth, being born as hellish-beings and animals and plants and some of the sub kinds of body making karma are said to be demerits. There are in all 33 kinds of these demerits.

(d) Sub-groups of karma :

There are in all 158 sub-groups of the basic eight karma :

1. Knowledge obscuring karma	5 sub groups
2. Intuition obscuring karma	9 sub groups
3. Feeling producing karma	2 sub groups
4. Deluding karma	28 sub groups
5. Life span determining karma	4 sub groups
6. Body making karma	103 sub groups
7. Status determining karma	2 sub groups
8. Energy obstructing karma	5 sub groups
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	158 sub groups

Cause of karmic bondage according to Jaina Philosophy

(a) Karmic Bondage

Getting one of various substances by uniting is known as bondage. Accordingly, the synthesis of the living being and the karma is said to be bondage.²³ A living being receives fine particles of matter by its disposition. The combination of the particles of matter received and the space points of

the living being is known as bondage.²⁴ Ācārya Abhayadevasuri says, "The bond of fetters is physical bondage and the bond of karma is physical bondage."²⁵ Śrī Nemicandra Siddhānta Cakravartī writes, "The conscious result by which karma is bonded is psychical bondage and the fusion of karma and the space points of the soul, their getting accommodating one and the same region—is physical bondage."²⁶

The question is—how does a living being get bonded to karma? In this connection Gautama Swāmī asked Lord Mahavīra, "O Lord! How does a being get karmic bondage?"

Lord Mahavīra, "Gautama, the intense rise of knowledge obscuring karma gives rise to intuition obscuring karma. The intense rise of intuition obscuring karma gives rise to faith deluding karma. The intense rise of faith deluding karma gives rise to false belief. The rise of false belief causes eight kinds of karmic bondage.²⁷ Passion is the cause of the karmic bondage. There are two kinds of passions—(i) Attachment and (ii) Aversion. If we go into detail, we find that there are four kinds of passion—(i) Anger, (ii) Pride, (iii) Deceit and, (iv) Greed. Attachment gives rise to deceit and greed and aversion gives rise to anger and pride."²⁸

(b) Process of bondage

The soul has infinite energy. This energy is known as dormant energy. This is the capacity of the soul in its purest form. No use of it is made in the external world. Body is the medium of the connection between the soul and the external world. It is an organized accumulation of the atoms of substances. The capacity that is caused by the combination of the soul and body is known as energy or vitality. It always remains there in a living being having body. It causes in a living being a sort of emotional or practical vibrations caused by consciousness. Vibration takes place in unconscious things also; but that is natural; that is not consciously caused. In a conscious

being, the motivating force is the recondite consciousness. It, therefore, creates a particular situation. In the vibration caused by the internal variform of the body, the external streams of matter mutually act and react and cause changes. Soul and karmic particles are combined by the vibration caused by the practical force. This process is known as influx.²⁹

The matter particles fit for karma, combined with the soul, get changed in karma. This process is known as bondage. Soul and karmic particles are then separated. This process is known as dissociation. Bondage is a condition in between influx and dissociation. The condition of the karmic particles coming into and going out of the body is in brief said to be bondage. Auspicious and inauspicious results are the flow of the practical force of the soul. They go on flowing perpetually. The two of them do not remain together; but one of them certainly remains there. In the terminology of karmic philosophy there is unsteadiness at the time of the rise of body making karma.

This causes attraction among the matter particles. There is an attraction of auspicious karmic particles at the time of auspicious culmination and of inauspicious karmic particles at the time of inauspicious culmination.³⁰

(c) Influx—The cause of karmic bondage

Influx is the cause of karmic bondage. That, which causes karma, is known as influx. Causation of karma is influx.³¹ The mental, physical and vocal tendencies or activities of a living being are said to be influx.³² It is the joining together of the activities of mind, speech and action. The entrance of good and evil deeds is influx. The sea is daily filled up with the water of the rivers. Similarly, karma enter the soul through different sources like perverted faith etc.³³ According to Ācārya Kundakunda there are four kinds of influx—(i) false belief, (ii) worldly pleasures, (iii) passion, (iv)

activity.³⁴ Ācārya Vinayavijayaji also agrees with Ācārya Kundakunda. He too has acknowledged four kinds of influx.³⁵ According to the scriptures '*Thāṇāṅga*'³⁶ and '*samavāyāṅga*'³⁷ there are five kinds of influx—(i) false belief, (ii) worldly pleasures, (iii) carelessness, (iv) passion and (v) activity. Umāswāti, the canonical teacher too has acknowledged these five to be the cause of karmic bondage.³⁸

Dissociation of karma in Jaina philosophy

It has been said in the scripture 'Uttarādhyayan'—

**Jahāmahātalāyarasa santiruddhe jalāgame,
Ussicaṇāe tavaṁ ṇāe kameṇaṁ sosaṇā bhave.
Evaṁ tu saṁjayassāvi pāvakammaniesave,
bhavakodisaṁciyaṁ kammaṁ tavasā nijjarijjāi.**³⁹

"As a big pond gets dried up by stopping the way of the coming of water, by drawing out water and by the heat of the sun, the karma of a disciplined person, accumulated in crores of births, get dissociated by his penance, by hindering the way of the coming of the evil deeds.⁴⁰ The shedding of karma is known as dissociation.^{41, 42} That, by which the karma get shedded is known as dissociation.⁴³ As the venom, rendered by the use of a mantra or by some medicine, causes no harm, the karma, rendered ineffective by penance etc. cannot continue the cycle of the world.⁴⁴ Shedding karma, destroying their capacity of yielding fruit with the passage of time or by some particular penance is known as dissociation. Bonded karma coming to rise,⁴⁵ cause hunger, thirst, heat or cold and different kinds of pain to the living being. In the same way, they cause pleasure also. Having given different kinds of fruits as pleasure and pain, karmic substances automatically get dissociated from the regions of soul. This sort of dissociation is known as karmic dissociation.

(a) Kind of dissociation of karma

External Penance :

There are eight kinds of external penance—(i) Fasting completely, (ii) Partial fasting, (iii) Limiting the number of items of food, (iv) Limiting desired tasty food, (v) Bodily endurance, (vi) Controlling of senses.⁴⁶

Internal Penance

There are six kinds of internal penance—(i) Atonement, (ii) Humility, (iii) Serving others, (iv) Spiritual study, (v) Meditation, (vi) Giving away.⁴⁷

Causes of difference in the Living Beings

A question arose in the mind of man—How is it that all the human beings are not alike? They belong to the same species, yet why are they all not alike? We find great difference in their appearance, nature, thoughts and feelings. By whom are all these differences caused? Who is the creator, writing the script of destinies and shaping the living beings in different moulds? Is that not a mould by which all the living beings can be moulded uniformly? Has no one ever made such a mould? If not, why not? A great secret was disclosed when attempts were made to find the causes of this difference.

(i) Heredity—The cause of difference

Let us ponder over the causes of difference. Modern scientists found out that one of the causes of such differences is heredity. This is one cause. This thing had been found out even in the ancient times. Account of hereditary traits is found in Āyurveda. We find in the scriptures Bhagawatī and Sthānaṅga Sūtra⁴⁸ that a child receives three elements each from his

father and mother. He receives bones, bone-marrow, hair and nails from his father and flesh, blood and brain from his mother. Transmission of the traits of mother and father to the child is known as heredity. Its account is found both in Āyurveda and Jaina Āgamas. Now heredity has become a complete branch of science.

We have to comprehend all these things very minutely. We can't do so if we go through them cursorily. Our body is made of innumerable cells. It is the cells that form our body. A cell is extremely tiny. Million of cells can be placed at the point of a pin. These tiny cells contain the fluid of life. This fluid contains nucleus and this nucleus contains chromosomes, having genes the traits of heredity. These genes contain traits not only of the parents but of the remote ancestors also. These genes are the carriers of these traits. A very tiny gene contains sixty million traits. There goes a Rajasthani proverb—

Bāpa jīso beto, chālī jiso theṭo.

Ghañe jisī thīkarī, māñ jisī dīkarī.

The son will be like the father, the chip of clay will be like the pot and the daughter will be like the mother.

How true this proverb is!

(ii) Atmosphere—The cause of difference

It is very important to comprehend karma in a broad perspective. Modern scientists have tried hard to analyze issues like life and personality etc. but they have not yet succeeded in solving their secrets. According to psychology, one factor determining life is atmosphere, environment or circumstances. Atmosphere is the factor responsible for the development of personality.

A child will be shaped according to the conditions in which he is kept. If it is brought up in an undesirable atmosphere, it will acquire undesirable

habits. There goes the popular fable of two parrots. They were the offspring of the same parents. It so happened that one of them remained with a monk. It developed very good habits. The other came to have the company of a thief. It developed evil traits. When the former saw someone coming, it received him with words of welcome. On the other hand, when the latter saw someone coming, it uttered the words, "Someone has come to rob him! kill him!"

(iii) Karma—the cause of difference

Heredity is the cause of difference. It is on the basis of heredity that genetic engineering has developed. Modern scientists are trying to find out whether a change may be caused in a man if his genes are changed in the very beginning. The question arises—if heredity is the cause of difference, how come that two real brothers are different? For the solution of this question, we will have to go beyond the domain of genes; we will have to go to a subtler element. On doing so, we find that the element causing difference is however else, it is within us. It is subtler than a gene and it is the karmic body. We have a gross body. Beyond it we have a subtler body—the luminous body. There is even a subtlest body—the karmic body. We get the answer to the question as to why there is difference in two real brothers when we go to the karmic body. The factor causing this difference, the builder of our destiny is within us. It is the one that is determining our destiny.

The issue of this difference is very old. Gautama once asked Lord Mahavīra, "O Lord! Why is this difference in persons? We find that every person differs from the other. What is the cause of this difference?" Lord Mahavīra replied, "kammaṃ ṇaṃ vibhatībhāva jaṇayaī". The cause of this difference is karma. All the divisions, differences are caused by karma. There are seven divisions in grammar. Innumerable divisions are caused by

karma. Karma or the karmic body is situated nearest to the soul and it is the karma that keeps the soul involved in the worldly affairs. Tarakuototaso had been a famous poet in Italy. He once went to the court of King Charles of France. The king asked him, "O great poet! tell me who the happiest being in the world is?" The poet said, "It is the God." The king said, "God is of no use to us. Tell me who the next happiest one is?" The poet said, "The one who is near to the God. It is the karma that is near to the God. To be near is one thing and to be intimate is quite another. Karma are near to the soul but they never get identical with and intimate to the soul. They always remain isolated from the soul. The first thing surrounding the soul is karma and it is always influencing it.

Social utility of the Jaina karmic theory

Company plays a very important role in making or marrying the character of man. In the ancient time the words 'good company' and 'bad company' were used. In the modern times, the terms 'atmosphere' and 'environment' are used. This is the basis on which life is interpreted. Heredity is the other basis of the interpretation of life. It involves many questions, the answers of which have not yet been found. There are many questions of which there is no answer in psychology. According to physiology, the solution lies in karmic theory. The problem is—people having faith in religion believe in karmic theory; scientists believe in psychology and heredity. Scientists have the quality of presenting their beliefs with great confidence, they have the ability of convincing the people wholly. People having faith in spirituality are a bit slow in this regard. That is why an important principle like the science of karma is beyond people's reach and unacceptable to them.

Psychology stands nowhere in comparison to the depth of the science of karma interpreted in Jaina philosophy, the same applies to ecology. The

only problem is that the science of karma has not been presented as it should have been. It is paradoxical that a dwarf is touching the sky and a giant is just staring at it, standing below. This is the phase through which the science of karma is passing. It is a very important science. We can interpret our whole life with its help. There are many questions before us—why someone is so tall and the other one is so short? What is the factor that determines the height of a person? According to a physiologist, the secretion of the glands is responsible for this. We find that the voice of someone is very sweet and that of someone else is very harsh. There are persons whose words are commands, no one can defy them. They are so influensive, impressive and commanding. On the other hand, there are persons who are not heeded in the least. No one listens to them. Why is it so? Why so much difference in two persons? Neither physiology nor psychology provides a proper answer to these questions. Jaina philosophy of karma provides a proper solution to all these queries. According to this philosophy, a particular karma—body making karma—is responsible for all these differences. In the karmic theory, this karma has been compared to a painter. A painter paints different kinds of pictures, creates innumerable forms. In the same way body making karma presents innumerable forms of personality.

(a) Karma is associated with life

There is a solution of every problem with the Jaina philosophy of karma whether it is the interpretation of body, senses, mind, consciousness or the different emotions that come into mind from time to time. Karma is associated with every activity of life. It is a paradox that it affects our life so much, still we know very little about it. We never take the trouble of thinking how karma are bonded in spite of the fact that they are so closely linked with our lives. It is really surprising. We go on indulging in activities but never think why we are bonding ourselves with karma. It is like this. A spider goes on weaving its web and is caught in it. Silkworm makes a

cocoon that later on proves to be the cause of its death. If it does not so do so, it does not have to suffer in boiling water and meet an untimely death. Musk deer are killed in larger numbers only because of the musk that they produce themselves, thus inviting their end. The same thing happens with man. He goes on preparing the web of karma, without knowing their mysteries. If a man tries to trap and harm someone, the other fellow gets vexed and annoyed. But he prepares a web of karma unknowingly without thinking of their consequences. That is why he never finds a solution to his problems.

(b) Good results obtained by the explanation of the Jaina theory of karma

No other philosophy has been analyzed and thought over so scientifically as the Jaina philosophy of karma. This is a fact that no one can deny. The way the Jainācāryas have revealed the mysteries of life, have tried to solve the complexities of life, is very significant, unique. If we try to understand this theory and to give it a scientific form, this great theory of Jaina philosophy can get wide recognition. Jaina ideology has inherited some great principles—the theory of non-violence, the theory of non-absolutism and the theory of non-possession. There are some other principles too, that are equally significant as the theory of karma and the theory of the soul. We know ourselves, get along well with life only by going into the depth of the doctrine of karma. Understand this theory fully means to pave the way to a bright future.

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- ⁴³ Rajavārtika 1, 4.12.27. Nijjyaṃte nirasyate yathā niraṣanaṃ matraṃ vā nirjarā.
- ⁴⁴ Rajavārtika, 1, 4.19.27, Yathā mantrauṣadha walānnijirṅavīrya vipākaṃ viṣaṃ na doṣpradaṃ tathā tapo viṣeṣeṅaṃ nijirṅaraṣaṃ karma na saṃsāra phalapradam.
- ⁴⁵ Tattvārtha Bhaṣya, 8.22, 8.24 Sarvāsāṃ prakatināṃ phalaṃ vipākodayoṅṅnubhāvo bhawati. Vividha pāko vipākaḥ tataścānu bhātkarma nirjarā bhava vīti.
- ⁴⁶ Sūtra 9.19, Anaśanāvannaudarya vrati paṃsaṃkhyāna rasa parityāya viviktaśayāsana kāyakleṣa bāhyaṃ tapaḥ.
- ⁴⁷ Tattvārtha Sūtra 9.20, Prāyaśita Vinaya Vaiyāvratya--Swādhyāya Vyutsargdhyānāṃmuttaram.
- ⁴⁸ Bhagawatī, Sthānāṅga Sūtra.