

typically sleeping, and in that physically inactive state; his mind is dreaming, and body organs like the heart and respiratory system are functional.

II

The word '*Karma*' originated from the Sanskrit root wherein *Kṛ*¹ means an activity, doing, 'to do' or 'to act'. (Mulla and Krishnan, 2006) All actions performed by a person through words, body and mind are part of *Kṛ* or *Karma*. An individual's behaviour directly reflects his thinking and is linked to their *Karma*. The thoughts on planning to act in a certain way is also a part of *Karma*. It explains the very intentions of an action that would have consequences, and there is part of *Karma*, even if no physical activity. Once executed, thoughts, actions, and desires have effects, and therefore, all of them deserve a well-thought-out plan. The word *karma* appeared in Ṛgveda for the first time. Ṛgveda is the oldest text of ancient Indian philosophy that referred to the word *Karma* forty times. Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣads (BU) is another ancient Indian text of the pre-BCE era that explains *Karma* as a concept and doctrine that helped people decide on their life courses. Sage Yājñavalkya was one of the earliest thinkers of the *Karma* concept who enunciated the concept in BU. In his discourse with King Janak, it is amplified that 'A person is what he does. If he does good, he becomes good; if he acts evil, he begets evil. (BU 4.4.5).

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The meaning of the verse may be summarised as; because of attachment, the transmigrating self, together with its work, attains that result to which its subtle body or mind clings. Having exhausted in the other world the results of whatever work it did in this life, it returns from that world to this world for fresh work. Thus does the man who desires transmigrate. But as to the man who does not desire—who is without desire, who is freed from desire, whose desire is satisfied, whose only object of desire is the Self—his organs do not depart. Being Brahman, he merges with Brahman. (BU 4.4.6). Upaniṣads question how and why the man is born and what happens after death?

Buddhism and Jainism also adopted the doctrine of *Karma*. Lord Buddha, in 500 BC, spread his understanding of the concept of *Karma* and *Karmaphala*.

III

Swami Abhedananda, in his seminal work 'Doctrine of *Karma*', defines 'The Law of Causation as the phenomena of the world are linked together in the chain of the cause of effect. Everything has a definite cause behind it. (Abhedānanda, 1971). One of the most effective and universal laws is 'the law of cause and effect'. Abhedānanda further explains *Karma* through the 'Law of Action and Reaction', 'Law of Compensation' and the Law of Retribution'. The philosophy of *Karma* says that the world is a stage, and everyone living being performs activities for survival, safety and growth. All actions have a reaction, and they are equal and opposite. Einstein has explained these actions through the Laws of Motion. The Third Law of Motion says that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. (Case, 1994). Individual life actions, too, have equal and opposite reactions. Though Einstein explained them in physical and existential forms, Indian Philosophy has a broader and deeper meaning. The concept encompasses actions of past life that impact present and future lives. The impact of past life activities will apply to the quality of present life. Whatever one does in the present life will be enjoyed or suffered by the individuals either in the present life itself or carry them to the next life. The ultimate aim of *Karma* is to achieve *Mokṣa* is an attempt to get out of the cycle of birth and rebirth. The idea of freedom from the life cycle is to connect the soul within the body to ultimately unite with the Brahman, or the superpower that regulates the entire universe. It is the soul of an individual that changes the body or, to say, a living being once dies, the body

¹ *Kṛ* (□□). *Kṛi* is the original word for doing something and it has number of meanings based on how it is used. Main meaning remains to make or do something. Participle meaning says *kr̥ta* (q.v.) make, do, cause or produce anything in or on one's self or others; [absolutely] act, work; bring or help to ([dative]); get or procure for ([genitive]), [Middle] for one's self; make or begin something ([accusative]),

decays, and the soul moves out of the body and takes birth through another young one born in the human species or any other species. Empirically too, it has been proved. ‘Many Lives Many Masters’ by Brian Weiss wrote about his empirical proof and established to the 21st-century world that past life and human beings are connected through the souls. (Weiss, 1994). Seers of the Ancient Indian Sub-continent had established through Vedas, Upaniṣads, and other texts that the soul carries human genomes from one life to another and the doings of one life affect the subsequent lives. Upanishads question how and why a man is born and what happens after death.

Karma doctrine considers individual thoughts and intentions inclusive of the cause-and-effect theory. The phenomenon of an idea resulting in an attitude leading to a specific behaviour is a well-known concept in Western psychology and Oriental philosophy. The initiation of action has its origin in the thoughts, and the resultant action is the output. Vedas further explains:

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meaning that whatever one thinks, speaks and does attract the individual towards those thoughts and so one are the thoughts about constructive subjects. (www.wisdomlib.org, 2019).

IV

The teleology and deontological theories of Kant also allude to the same concept. (Benlahcene et al., 2018) One has to decide whether to operate or act with results in mind or do whatever is right. Both these theories are similar to ancient Indian *Karma* in other religions. The nature of human beings is to work for themselves or others. Philosophers explain this ability of humans across the world in their unique way. All of them agree that work is the primary facet of human life, and they relate to *Karma* in one way or another. The significant difference is whether one should work with an aim in mind or without a specific gain. That is precisely what *Karma* also explains; *Niṣkāma* or *Sakām* methods of working. *Niṣkam* means a moral obligation to work as part of individual duty or Two sets of thoughts of working for an objective or commitment have been discussed in all ages and across the globe. Ancient Indian religions like Buddhism and Jainism have taken basic tenets of *Karma* and have developed how Bhagvāna Buddha or Bhagvāna Mahāvīra thought. Sikhism has accepted it in the most basic form and prefaces God for all.

Karma and *karmaphala* are fundamental concepts explained by Bhagvāna Buddha. (Reichenbach, 1990). *Karma* affects present life and has an outcome as *karmaphala*. He opined that the intention of doing a task is a part of *Karma* for a reason explained in Ṛgveda. Birth and rebirth is a natural form of the life journey of a soul until it achieves *nirvāṇa*. This cycle is related to a person's *Karma* of the present life and influences his next life. Every person is free to act independently and behave as per his chosen thoughts which can be flexible, fluid, and dynamic. One can alter or modify the way one thinks, intends, and acts. Buddhism emphasises that all humans do not act in isolation but have an environment around them, impacting behaviour at individual and organisational levels. In addition to the environment, each individual's personality also impacts decision-making and actions. So, it is prudent to say that an individual behaves based on his individual past life, personality, and environment. Freud has also identified a human personality as a combination of past genetics from parents, individual traits and the environment. (Hopwood et al.). Karmic effects are, therefore, determined by deed, nature of person and circumstances.

Jainism is a contemporary religion alongside Buddhism and believes strongly in the Doctrine of *Karma*. *Karma* is known as karmic dirt, as it consists of very subtle and microscopic particles (puḍgala) that permeate the entire universe. Like Hinduism and Buddhism, Jainism also considers thoughts part of *Karma*. It emphasises that an individual's *Karma* changes with the thoughts and not with the actions alone. Action is the last part of *Karma*. Every action starts with a feeling that brings in associated thoughts. The Psycho-analytical model by Freud explains the mental decision-making process before an attitude and behaviour is visible. It orates that even thinking evil of someone would invite a *karma-bandhana* and incite an incremental action that may result in bad *Karma*. Hence the focus is on avoiding harming any living and non-living being on the planet.

Ratnatraya gives an extreme emphasis to:

- *Samyak Dhyāna* (rationality in thoughts)
- *Samyak Darshana* (rationality in perception)
- *Samyak Charitra* (rationality in conduct)

Sikhism believes in a highly pious life; you do good, good comes to you and vice versa. Past life *karma* impacts present life, and the *Karma* of the present life serves one with equal intensity in both positive and negative sides. Sikhism, like Hinduism, believes in the concept of birth and rebirth and considers that Ātman or soul may take rebirth in any species. The souls of animals can also be reborn as humans if their *Karma* were worthy of human life, and the human soul can be reborn as an animal if the *Karma* were tamasic and not positive. It implies that the soul has further moved away from liberation. Humans can attain liberation if they accept the grace and love of Waheguru and by performing good deeds, including *Kirat*, *Wand Cakhnā* and *Nāma-Japanā*.

Christianity believes that grace by God is more important than *Karma*. While *Karma* bears fruits of what you do, Christianity believes in accepting the grace of God for human follies. The idea of *Karma* is not a Christian or biblical one but has some parallel concepts, e.g. the concept of ‘As you sow, so you reap’. God is considered perfect, and humans are far too below His standards. So it is futile to compare own actions and reactions with that of God, and instead, one should accept that for all mistakes that humans make, God will grace them with Divine mercy and will absolve them of their sins.

V

The present-day social and corporate environment correlates with Western ideas of enjoying this life as there is only one life. Thoughts of ancient Indian Rishi Cārvāka, known as ‘*Lokāyata*’, who believed in pleasures and the materialistic world being the real world (*aṇubhāva*) and did not believe in the past or future life, appears to be the main belief. The concept of past life and its impact on present-day times is not generally visible in public places and business concerns. Though most Hindu families believe in a past life, ancient Indian social norms exist in Indian villages. The belief that an individual will see the consequences of his actions is acceptable social behaviour. The dichotomy is that individuals, especially the youth, behave in a traditional cultural fashion at home, whereas the same youth behave differently at workplaces. The impact of *Kaliyuga* is visible both at the individual and social levels. Most Indians educated in Western countries or Indian educational institutes with Western social and science curricula view human life as one and do not believe in a past life. The majority of India lives in villages and follows ancient Indian culture. Karma theory is one of the core social and professional principles. However, the trend is changing with the youth moving to towns and cities for modern education that brings them in contact with the Western education system. Principles of action and reaction and Christian thoughts of *as you so so you reap* are prevalent. The concept of past life and the impact of activities of present life in the next life is not acceptable to Western philosophy and its influence on Indian society. Though thoughts of past life are generally not brought about in public, they operate at sub-conscious levels.

Businesses, corporates, and public and private jobs in India have an established culture of being paid for what one deserves. Government jobs have fixed incomes, so employees are more morally bound to prove or disprove their sincerity at job salaries. Indirectly they perform more out of their values which directly or indirectly relates to *karma* theory. The employers' focus in private businesses is on getting maximum work done at minimum wages, and at the same time, employees aspire to top salaries for whatever they do. The Kantian theory is close to the doctrine of *Karma* in the contemporary world. Both theories believed in doing what was right and good for themselves and society. Everyone will receive the goods of their deeds in the same proportions as the deeds themselves. They will suffer or enjoy the consequences of their actions in the same life.

Niškāma karma or *sakāma Karma* is part of understanding the concept from the practicality of the world's physicality. One does his duties because he must, as (S)he feels responsibility towards the cosmos and the universe or (S)he does because one has an aim in mind, an objective to be achieved and

dreams to fulfil. (Bronkhorst, 2011). It is similar to the Kantian philosophy of doing an action because it is suitable for society. Life in the contemporary world today follows one of the two principles of *Niškāma karma* or *sakāma karma*. Therefore, the doctrine of *Karma* is applicable to all ages irrespective of the changes in society, individuals, and situations.

The doctrine of *Karma* is effective today, as effective in the 21st century as it was thousands of years ago. It applies to teleological and deontological contexts in the West and the Oriental world. Upaniṣads referred to the concept as the law of causation, which is applicable even in the contemporary world. Ancient scriptures like Ramayana and Mahabharata have had personalities that operated from the stature of *sattva* or *tamas*. *Guṇa* may have differed in individuals, but their consequences were enjoyed or suffered in the same life span. The same behaviour has been observed in contemporary times in one way or another. The ultimate aim of *Karma* to achieve *mokṣa* may not be the result one aspires to today, yet a life well spent is the desire of everyone.

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