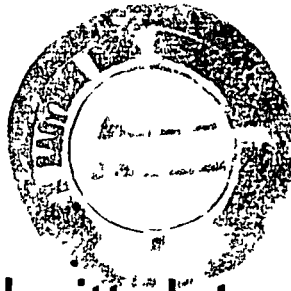


# THE DOCTRINE OF KARMA

—A BRIEF SURVEY



**Dissertation Submitted to Utkal University**

In Partial Fulfilment of the Degree for

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

*BY*

**SADHU CHARAN SAHOO**

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C E R T I F I C A T E .

Certified that the dissertation submitted by Sri S.C. Sahoo, is a record of research work done by the candidate under my guidance during the period of his study for the M. Phil degree and that, to the best of my knowledge, the contents of this dissertation did not form a basis of award of any previous degree to the candidate or to anybody else .

  
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## Preface:

This dissertation is an humble attempt to deal with one of the most perplexing issues in Indian Philosophy . There has been serious deliberations on the problem, that is, the Doctrine of Karma from different angles of vision. Scholars from various walks of life have reflected on the problem, but I am afraid, no serious and pinpointed thought has been given to the problem of personal identity in the context of the Karma Doctrine .

Among the many philosophers of eminence whose philosophical thoughts have influenced me directly or indirectly are John Hick, Professor G.C. Nayak etc. I have been particularly influenced by the book Evil, Karma and Reincarnation written by Professor Nayak . Being influenced by these and other similar contemporary writings . I have ventured an analysis of the logical structure of the Karma Doctrine, particularly its demythologised version, as is suggested by John Hick in his famous book-Philosophy of Religion.

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In my analysis and exploration of the subject matter I have shown that this interpretation is the proper understanding of the Karma Doctrine. To me, the minimum requirement is the principle of the Karma Doctrine itself. The speculations of the metaphysical substance like the soul and the concept of God as the dispenser of justice are unnecessary burdens on the doctrine. I have focussed my attention on a particular area of the problem, i.e. the problem of personal identity in the context of the Buddhistic analysis of Karma which to my mind is the demythologised interpretation. I have brought to the focuss certain crucial problems emerging out of the Buddhistic view on personal identity and have attempted at certain solutions though, I cannot claim finality in this regard .

I express my deep sense of gratitude to Dr. P.K. Mohapatra, Reader P.G. Dept~~t~~ of Philosophy, Utkal University who has not only supervised this dissertation but who has also enriched my philosophical wisdom at every stage of my investigation .

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But for his criticisms and comments this humble work could not have seen the light of the day.

I shall fail in my duties if I don't express my immense gratitude to my teacher Prof. S.R. Mukherji who introduced the problem under discussion to me and discussed with me the complicated issues inherent in it with interest and patience .

I am grateful to my respected teachers of the P.G. Dept. of Philosophy, Utkal University particularly Prof. Sarat Chandra Panigrahi for their invaluable help and suggestions during the preparation of this dissertation.

I must thank the authorities of the Christ College who have granted me the opportunity ~~of~~ <sup>for</sup> studying the M.Phil course and preparing this dissertation.

Sadhu charan sahou  
( S.C. Sahoo )

CHAPTER - I

I N T R O D U C T I O N

## WHY THE LAW OF KARMA ?

There is a problem in humanlife which is unique and at the sametime universal. It is unique in the sense that no satisfactory explanation can be offered to it. It is universal in the sense that it is a familiar fact of everybody's experience. This problem, with which every conscious student of philosophy is concerned, is the problem of human in-equality, particularly the suffering of the virtuous and the prosperity of the wicked. This problem has arrested the attention of great thinkers down through the ages. Medical scientists, sociologists, religious leaders, metaphysicians etc. have laboured on the problem. As against these people, others have thrown the problem in the hands of chance.

The medical scientist or the psychologists, forexample, can only go to the extent of diagnosing the previous conditions of a particular disease or other. He might attribute human suffering to malnutrition, vitamin deficiency or other physical and psychological imbalances that are quite manifested in the human organism it self. Similarly, a sociologist might offer a justification of the human inequality by stating reasons, such as individual's maladjustment in family or with environment.

On the other hand, the problem is completely avoided, so to say, by persons who explain it in terms of chance. But it can be observed through a serious scrutiny that such explanations do not satisfy a serious minded thinker. The important question against all these tentative explanations is, what justification can the medical or social scientist offer to the problem of an agent of action suffering not only mentally or physically but also suffering on account of his family or friends ? What explanation can be offered to a person living amidst all facilities and yet suffering mentally on account of certain dangers to the family which he always apprehends ? How can we explain medically or sociologically why a man is born to a prosperous family with all favourable environmental situations and another man is born to a family of absolute have not ?

The predicament is that we can neither remain as silent spectators to all these problems, nor can we get a satisfactory explanation to this unique phenomenon from the quarters of medical scientist or sociologist or psychologist. Thus we are between the two horns of a dilemma and it is not easy to break any of the horns of a dilemma.

If no explanation to this problem is possible, shall we then leave everything to the decrees of fate ( NITATI or VIDHĀTĀ ), or are we to throw the burden of explanation on our stars only ?

The concept of fate and human effort seem to be in conflict with each other though in the opinion of many fate is nothing but the collected effort of one's own individual actions. People some times take the help of fate to explain phenomena where they fail to explain certain events through the means available to them . These concepts like fate or daiva need deeper analysis. But, the important point to note here is that it is difficult to explain our misery and happiness as a sanction of destiny, or as an outcome of the position of the stars and planets in our horoscopes. The problem in that case would be, why does destiny sanction differently to different persons ? What makes fate to sanction brightness to a particular person at a particular period of his life and failure at another ? Again if this force is taken for granted can we have any freedom at all ? Will not the world in that case be a mere mechanical repetition ? These are some of the questions that one comes across if he accepts fatalism as a solution to the problem of human happiness and suffering. Supposing this is not a solution to the problem,

what can be done ? Shall we then leave everything in the hands of a supreme force ? We can do that. But, it is very difficult to understand this supreme force which is always beyond human comprehension. Again this leads to another problem. The problem is why should God or the Supreme force be so kind towards some in order to make them prosperous in spite of their faults and He be unkind towards others in spite of all their virtues ? Is God arbitrary in his decisions ? Thus, as it appears, the problem of justification of human misery and happiness still remains unexplained. We shall have to take some explanation for it but this explanation should not be dogmatic. It should be based upon reason. This is the minimum requirement of our explanation. Again, the reason we offer must have sufficient strength behind it. As Joseph says:-

" The strength of the reason adduced consists in not only explaining the phenomenon but also guiding our conduct".<sup>1.</sup>

We have to accept a conceptual system. But before we place a conceptual system, the important thing is to pinpoint the problem itself. The problem is not a natural one and therefore it cannot be solved

through natural laws, We can detect the cause of a disease or the root of an event through natural facts or laws. The problem, as it appears, is a moral problem. The question of the persons undergoing suffering and exaltation is not a mere factual issue. It is a moral issue. We have to accept such a conceptual system which must fulfil the moral demands of human life. We then need a moral system. But this system must be intelligible and adequate. If our system is merely intelligible, i.e. , easily understandable by people, it won't do. It must be adequate. That is the hypothesis we offer must be capable of giving satisfactory explanation to the human inequalities. Thus the system which we propose must have the minimum assumption that the world is a moral order or in other words the sufferer is penalised for his action and the virtuous man is rewarded. I am not expected to analyse the concepts like evil or good or suffering etc.. What I propose to consider here is the view of Indian philosophers that our misery or happiness are our own creation. We are our own enemy, we are our own friend. The Bhagavad Gita puts this idea in a befitting manner.<sup>2</sup> It may be asked here, why should we choose this system instead of any other system ? The possible answer is ,

if the scientist explains the natural events with a scientific world-view and a theologian explains with a theological world view, there is no harm in taking a moral world-view . The question now is, does the moral world-view demands that the virtuous should be rewarded and the vicious be punished ? Again why should virtue be uniformly related to happiness ? There are evidences where the virtuous persons work ceaselessly for the benefit of the poor and down-trodden and yet they do not expect any reward. Again our tradition does not recognise those persons as virtuous who work only with the expectation of reward.<sup>3</sup> The solution to this problem is that it is a practical demand of our life. The basis of this practical demand of human life is that each man gets the result of his action. This is the doctrine of Karma or Karmāvada. The doctrine, as we shall see, returns the good or evil, suffering or enjoyment, failure or success, poverty or wealth to the action of the agent. This is the hypothesis with which I propose to work on .

THE DOCTRINE OF KARMA:

Man is a conscious and reflective being. He looks at the world through different eyes at different times, while some one explains the events of the world as 'strange coincidence' others explain it as predestined and rigid. These persons are known as strict determinist. There are still others who see the world as the creation of a supreme designer. It is to be noted in this connection that each explanation is supported by some sort of world-view. The problem with which we started can be best explained through the postulate, 'as we sow so shall we reap'. The question now is what is a postulate? Is karma doctrine to be taken as a postulate? Is it some one's subjective consideration or a result of some sort of generalisation or should it be some sort of generalisation or should it be taken as a casual law like Newton's law of motion?

A postulate is an indemonstrable, indefinite hypothesis that is necessary to explain many issues relating to a particular branch of knowledge in an intelligible manner. The doctrine of Karma, in this sense, is a postulate and it is a postulate of practical life. By practical life, I understand the moral life as a whole. This karma hypothesis runs through most systems of Indian philosophy except the Cārvāka system. It originates from the Rta concept of Rigveda. The doctrine states that man is basically

an aspiring creature. He aspires for many things, strives hard to get them and after one of his desires is fulfilled he desires for another. Thus his thirst for material comforts and other things go on in creating and he exerts all his efforts to achieve these ends. Desire to attain something without necessary effort is a wishful thinking and conversely action without any motive behind it is just like a mechanical or random action. When a desire is translated to effort it yields some result. Thus the postulate is that man gets the result of his own deeds.<sup>4</sup> To put it negatively there is no destruction of one's action. Therefore, our present state of happiness or misery is to be interpreted as reward or punishment of our actions performed previously. It is further believed according to this doctrine that since no action ends in vain, no one else enjoys or suffers on account of an action which he or she has not done by himself ( Krtapranāsa and akṛta karma bhoga )<sup>5</sup> The doctrine has gained such prominence in Indian philosophy that it is taken to be determining the entire situation in which a man is born. That is why it is held that one's own action determines his own birth. Of course, this hypothesis has been interpreted differently by different thinkers. Sometimes, it is held to be a cosmic principle

determining our entire existence as a whole. Some times it is also taken to be a religious doctrine. It is also held to be a naturalistic principle <sup>5</sup>. Even certain thinkers take it to be a convenient fiction <sup>6</sup>. These interpretations contain some truth no doubt as there is every scope for interpreting the doctrine in these ways . But the proper understanding of the doctrine lies in understanding the vital role played in moral life. It has been discussed above that its vital role is that it is a postulate of moral life which helps in regulating our conduct. It is to be noted in this connection that this hypothesis is not a mere adhoc or working hypothesis which is offered in the absence of a legitimate and intelligible hypothesis. Rather, it is itself the basis of all moral explanations though the hypothesis is not either scientific or sociological. Again, it is not a presupposition or a postulate not in the temporal sense. Rather, it is a presupposition in the sense in which categories are the presuppositions of human understanding. It is a presupposition in the sense in which freedom, immortality and God etc. are considered to be the postulate of moral life. In other words, the doctrine of Karma is the apriori postulate of moral life .

The question now is, whether the doctrine is a mere assumption or is it a generalisation from experience ? That is, whether it is the result of the observation of particular instances of actions bearing fruits ? How does the karma doctrine differ from scientific or mathematical assumption ? Again, is it a mere generalisation or an extension of the Law of causation ? I am not going to discuss these problems here at this stage. For the present purpose at least it can be pointed out that while scientific or mathematical assumptions are required to explain particular events or situations and while there is scope for rejecting one assumption in favour of another the Karma doctrine has not been taken in that way. Moreover, a mathematical or Scientific assumption has enough scope of being verified and tested, applied or experimented upon while the karmic postulate has no scope of being experimentally or atleast empirically verified. Similarly while ordinary generalisations like 'matter gravitates' or 'matter expands when heated' etc. are arrived at from particular cases. The karma doctrine cannot be taken in that way as we cannot cite conclusive evidences to establish that a person suffers in the present life due to his activities in the past life. Again the doctrine of Karma cannot be compared with the mechanical law of action and reaction, since these mechanical principles are useful to predict the future course of events,

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while no such predication is possible through the Karmic principle. Actually I am not in a position what result will follow a particular course of any action at present. Thus Karma doctrine is different from other naturalistic principles . The Karmic principles provides an explanation no doubt, but its explanation is different from the explanation of the Natural sciences. The Karmic explanation is a general explanation of the human experience and it is quite unlike the causal explanation which explain events through a law, a fact or a group of laws. However, it must be noted here that Karma explains the moral situation no doubt , but it is not itself a moral law. It is not a prescriptive ethical code of conduct like ' love thy neighbour' or ' respect your parents' etc. Rather it is the basis of moral life. In order to explain things morally one has to rely upon the principle- ' as you sow, so shall you reap' . Some one might ask here- 'what is the harm if Karma doctrine is not accepted at all ? The question needs an answer definitely, but one need not give a catalogue of advantages of accepting the doctrine. However, it goes without saying that there is a tremendous difference between the acceptance and rejection of the doctrine considering its social relevance .

The doctrine plays a vital role in human life as a postulate of practical life. I agree with Dr. Padhi in accepting the Karma doctrine as a postulate of practical reason. But what is a practical law? Dr. Padhi<sup>7</sup> refers to Kant in this context. Just as Kant accepts self, immortality and God as the postulates of practical life, Dr. Padhi accepts the Karma doctrine as the postulate of practical life. So to say, it is a practical law. A law is a form and there is every scope to take the doctrine as a formal law. In that sense it may be taken as a hypothetical law, i.e. what ever you sow, you shall reap its consequences. But, according to Dr. Padhi, it is not a more formal law. On the other hand it is a demand of the practical life. It is an indispensable part of moral life as Kant would hold it to be.

#### AN ANALYSIS OF THE KARMA DOCTRINE :

We have stated the Karma doctrine as the principle, ' as you sow, so shall you reap' or ' a willed action yields result' , we have to analyse the concepts like Karma and Karmaphala , to draw their exact implications. So far as Indian philosophy goes, Karma means either an action or the result of the action itself. But as we have separate terminologies for the ' result of action ' , the word

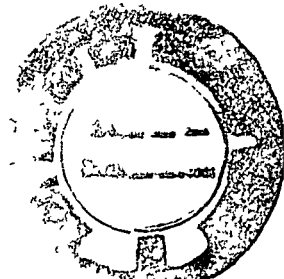
'Karma' exclusively stands here for action performed. But what is an action that yields result ? It is said that man cannot live without action. This action is initiated either at the physical level ( Kāvika ) or at the speech level ( Vācika ) or at the mental level ( Mānasika ) . For example, the actions like killing somebody, burning the houses or rendering social services, doing daily works like brushing teeth, bathing etc. might be included under the concept of bodily actions, but not mere bodily movements.

The speech activity includes praising, planning etc. Thought activity consists in thinking ill or well of others, willing, intending, deciding etc. The problem now is, do all these multifarious activities belonging to different categories yield results and leave some impact on the agent of the action ? The other problem would be, is this classification of actions accurate ? That is, do these sub-classes exclude each other ? The problem that seriously arrests our attention here is the concept of Karma itself, specially in the context of the Karma doctrine . An action bearing some significance , in this context, is one which the agent himself has caused it to happen. Mere raising up arms , cycling, horseriding etc. might be taken as intended actions and might also give some pain or pleasure

but there is doubt if such actions can be called Karma which yield result or Karmaphala . The above catalogued actions result in some consequences no doubt but such results cannot be regarded as Karmaphala . The reason is that we cannot attach any moral significance to those actions or their results . As action to yield result in the sense of the Karma doctrine must have been supported by a sort of desire which is different from desiring a tooth paste or this or that . The desire required to support in the Karmic context is not a mere desire . It is Kāmanā to use the Buddhistic language . A person is said to have a Kāmanā when he desires something out of an involvement with the object . The involvement is such that if the desire is not fulfilled it would result in frustration . It is an action in which the agent has a feeling of involvement and for which the agent is also responsible . The sense of responsibility is logically related to the sense of freedom . A free man alone can be called responsible for his actions. In the context of a free moral agent alone that the question of praise, blame etc. are meaningful .

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The next problem is, can the different kinds of actions enumerated above be strictly distinguished ? Vocal activity, for example, can be grouped under bodily activity as it involves the use of one's vocal cord. The intention of the Indian thinkers to give it a separate status is just to show the importance of the language uttered by the agent . The language (vāk) used is more important than the physical conditions leading to the action . (Thus vācika Karma should be properly understood as an action which originates from language uttered by the agent. This in no way under estimates the physical side of the action itself. Similarly the concept Mānasika Karma or mental acts like decision , deliberation, discrimination etc. are actually speaking the sources of my action . The point I am driving at in drawing out a distinction between physical, vocal and mental action is that the Indian Philosophers have only referred to the origin of action without changing the basic structure of human action which consists in decision, calculation, deliberation, physical movements etc. (Not mere physical movements , but actions performed in this way might bring expected results .



But what is the result of action, more particularly Karmaphala ? The doctrine of Karma state that an intentional action yields a Karmaphala. But what do we mean by this concept ? Does it mean a result, a consequence or an impact ? Take the example of a man involved in a murder case . If he is penalised for his action and sent to Jail the family members also start suffering . They suffer in various ways . As it appears the Karmaphala is to be treated here as a result of action. But where we consider the psychological change that takes place due to war we consider the impact . The Doctrine of Karma as it appears takes Karma phala as the direct result . It is the suffering or happiness or atleast the feeling of suffering and happiness . In other wards , according to Indian Philosophy one's own deeds create a moral situation for him, a situation or where he has the feeling of being rewarded or punished. Such sufferings or enjoyments might not be explicitly expressed in clear physical or materialistic pleasure . Even the company in which he is left might be pleasant or unpleasant for him . That is why Srimad Bhāgabata states that a man's present state is determined by his previous deeds only.

A pertinent question in this context is how are Karma and Karmaphal related ? Is the relation between the two is apriori or aposteriori. Is the relation again invariable or variable ? The question is not so serious here. Certainly, the Karmic principle cannot be taken as an empirical law and on that account the relation is not aposteriori or factual. The relation cannot also be taken as an apriori or necessary relation as the relation can be contradicted also. Such problems are not important so far as this dissertation is concerned as we do not accept Karma doctrine either as a logical principle or as an empirical law. It is taken here, as Dr. Padhi views it, a moral postulate.

Before concluding this section, reference may be made to the three kinds of Karma much discussed in Indian Philosophy. The three kinds of Karma are sancita, prārabdha and Kriyamāna. Sancita or accumulated results of action determine my present birth. This acts like a prārabdha. The Kriyamāna or sanchiyamāna Karma is that which is done in the present life. It is important to note here that no clear line of demarcation can be drawn among these types of action. We do not have any definite criterion

to distinguish between one kind of action and another and to point out the exact prārabdha as different from a Sancita Karma . The purpose of this categorisation only indicates the retrospective and the prospective nature of the doctrine . In other words, the purpose is to explain our present state of affairs through our past actions and it further indicates that we must be cautious of our present actions which play very important role in guiding our future . One thing, however, is to be noted here that the mention of sancita or prārabdha Karma does not logically prompt us to accept the past life hypothesis . The concept of rebirth is not a logical presupposition of the doctrine of Karma . The concept of sancita or prārabdha properly understood , would mean the impression of previous deeds stored for us ( sancita ) prior to the beginning ( prārabdha ) of our present state of suffering or enjoyment . Thus there is no logical necessity of the assumption of a previous life in our Karma hypotheses . However, the theory of rebirth is to be understood as an extension of this life in order to understand the exact implication of the Karma hypothesis.

After having given a broad outline of the conceptual framework of the Karma doctrine, the problem now is, how can reward be expected of the virtuous deeds or punishment against sin if we do not accept a religious view where God is taken as the dispenser of justice ? It must however be seen that all the philosophical systems of India have not agreed upon this point. They have differed on the point of having a dispenser of justice . This leads us to discuss about the nature of a dispenser of justice or Karmādhyaaksha.

KARMA AND DISPENSER OF JUSTICE:

The idea of a dispenser of justice lands us in difficulty . The difficulty is that if we accept God as the dispenser of justice who sanctions every thing then the human beings cannot be considered as free agents. If they are not free agents, they are not to be considered as persons . But God chooseth persons only . This is the belief in Christian faith <sup>8</sup> . Thus if man is free God chooses them. On the other hand if man acts in order to satisfy God only then man becomes a puppet in the hands of God and once man loses the sense of freedom the doctrine of Karma becomes meaningless . This is the crux of the problem .

What are we to do here ? Arguments supporting the sup@rintending principle ( Karmādhyaksa ) have been advanced in some philosophical systems like Nyāya , Vedānta etc. The argument from this side would be that the doctrine of Karma like any other doctrine cannot sanction reward or punishment. There must be a controller of the result . The agent cannot take that position as in that case he could be in a position to check the flow of all evil effects. Thus a supreme intelligent being is to be the dispenser of justice . This idea has been expressed in The Bhagavad Gitā where the Lord says:-

" With Me as the presiding agency  
the entire nature gives birth  
to all that moves and does not  
move and because of this the  
wheel of the universe keeps going".<sup>9</sup>

The question now is-is God a logical requirement for the operation of the Karma doctrine ? As it appears, the philosophers sometimes fail to understand the modus operandi of the Karma doctrine and that is why they have described it as an unconscious principle as a result of which they have invoked a supreme conscious principle to

dispense justice according to the deeds of the agents. It is to be noted however that these philosophers have extrapolated the model of a supreme superintending power from the empirical model of a Judge dispensing justice . But the problem is, how far we are permitted to extrapolate ? In our ordinary idioms such expressions like ' guardian of law ' , 'dispenser of justice' are quite intelligible as we form these expressions from the functioning of the judiciary . This is most probably due to the human weakness to draw the inspiration from a mystical source . To draw solace from the mystical is onething but to explain the functioning of the law through it is quite another . Moreover, the understanding of a law cannot necessiate the postulation of a law giver . The idea of a prescriber may be intelligible in case of a prescriptive law but not in case of a moral postulate and it is to be noted further that the Karmic postulate is self-sufficient to explain the relation between vârtue and happiness as against the Kantian postulate of Immortality of soul, freedom and God . I am ofcourse in agreement with the theistic exponents who advocate that their approach towards the doctrine satisfies the moral and religious or Spiritual demand .<sup>10</sup>

But it is not always necessary to satisfy the religious demand . It might however be argued that without the assumption of this supreme intelligent force the controlling of the operation of the law may be quite arbitrary and whimsical. But for that matter does any law need a controller ? Where I violate certain principles of keeping good health I have to suffer from Physical illness and from this I need not argue about the presence of anybody to decide which pain or suffering I should be inflicted upon . Similarly I do not know swimming and jumped to the middle of river then , in all probability, I shall get drowned . And this is not because a dispensive authority punished me going against the law of nature, but rather simply because of the fact that I do not know swimming. Similarly reward and punishment can be said to follow from the actions done . Making the idea of justice intelligible without an ultimate sanction one can understand that Divine grace (Kṛpā) would loose its traditional import and would rather mean the put come of one's own effort . The role of God in this context becomes redundant . Moreover, even if we accept the benevolence of God, why should there be blemishes for one and glory

for another ? Why should one suffer all along in the Divine scheme and the other man should go on enjoying this life ? (If according to Karma hypothesis all our praise and blame are due to the free and responsible acting of the agent (without which the concepts like punishment will be meaningless) one simply fails to understand the special role of a moral Governor who interferes in the human affairs and curtails his freedom .

The possible objection here might be , how can we explain suffering or happiness of the first human agent without presupposing a Divine agent ( who might have sanctioned them) ? If there was no such Divine person who then inflicted pain or granted pleasure when the man had no action to his credit ? The first cause argument, it may be noted, has become outdated and it can only be taken as a sort of picture-thinking. Again, this problem of the suffering and enjoyment of the first person is not very important for the present purpose and even it demands an explanation, a satisfactory explanation , I think, can be offered by the Karma concept alongwith the concept of endless cycle of birth and rebirth, (Samsāra), or as the Buddhist would say, Dharma Chakra even if this cannot be taken as a logical presupposition of Karma hypothesis .

It might be asked here that since Karma doctrine is a principle of distributive justice should we not take into account the factors like the nature of distribution , the person distributing and the principle of distribution etc. ? But such doubts will be removed altogether once we understand the proper implication of the Karma hypothesis . That is, once we understand that the Karma hypothesis is just an unverifiable metaphysical doctrine in order to explain certain Phenomena of human life such problems will not arise at all.

After having discussed the wide dimensions of the Karmic hypothesis the obvious question arises about the agent of action ; Who is actually the agent of action ? That means we raise a question about the moral agent .

The Agent of action. //

The Karma doctrine, as we have seen earlier, is restricted to human affairs. That means human beings alone can be considered as moral agents . A human agent again is placed in a situation which is called moral situation. Man works in a moral situation where he either fulfils his aspiration or get frustrated . Again the agent is not merely placed in a situation

but he understands the situation . In other words, the moral agent is a self-conscious agent . If he commits a mistake he has to be penalised for that. What we mean here is that praise and blame etc. are meaningful when the agent is free and is conscious that he is free .

The problem now is, how can an agent be called free if the entire course of his action is predetermined by a supernatural force ? If all his actions are predetermined then there is no meaning in the Karma doctrine at all . As against this objection it can be pointed out that Karma doctrine is not a deterministic doctrine . Even if we allow some form of determinism here it is self-determinism, not other determinism . The human agent can alter his own situation through his own actions . In this context we have to consider the logical implication of the concepts like ' daiva ' and ' Bhāgya ' etc. Such concepts do not mean that there is any supernatural agent above man which controls his action. In fact , man is the maker of his own destiny . The Bhagavad Gitā says that man is his own friend or enemy ( Ātmaiva hyātmanobandhu atmeiva ripūratmana).

Another important consideration of the concept of a human agent, especially in the context of the Karma doctrine is that the agent suffering and the agent enjoying must be the same person. That is, the agent ( Kartā ) and the enjoyer ( bhoktā ) must be the same person . In other words,

"Retribution can not make sense unless the sinner and the sufferer are numerically identical, unless the person who reaps the fruit is numerically the same as the person who sowed the seeds " .<sup>1D</sup>

The identity of the persons in the context of the Karma doctrine leads to enormous problems . The problem is how to establish identity in case of reincarnation . A spiritual self substance theory has been usually advanced in this context . Against this hypothesis there has been an antimetaphysical view which claims that the Karma hypothesis can be still meaningful without the stipulation of a spiritual soul-substance . What we need for the operation of the Karma doctrine is that the agent who performs the action and who reaps the consequence must be the same. The problem now is, can Karma doctrine operate at all without the stipulation of a continuing self-substance .

Atleast two opposite and yet very important attempts have been made in Indian Philosophy towards the solution of the problem of personal identity in order to explain the operation of the Karma doctrine . The functioning of the Karma doctrine especially after the death of the person. The Karma doctrine claims that a person is rewarded or punished in any of the lives of a person even though not in this life . The Question now is, how can the agent continue to exist even after his death ? This may be explained if we take for granted the soul-substance theory . But how can we explain it through another and opposite theory ? The theories that are advanced in this area are, quite opposed to each other . The Upanishads conceive of the continuity of an imperceptible and imperishable soul surviving the physical annihilation and the Buddhists explain it through continuity of character of memory and the changes of name and form ( Nāmarupa ). The obvious problem in case of the Soul-substance hypothesis would be how to talk of its relation to body, how to identify it in case of the disembodied existence and how to make the continuity of soul intelligible in case of reincarnation etc..

Similarly with the Buddhist hypothesis the problem would be, how to conceive of the continuity of character or memory with a metaphysics of Universal change and how to conceive of the continuity of character or memory after Physical dissolution which results in the discontinuity of the person . This is a hard nut to break and one finds no way out of it. It is to be admitted of course that Buddhism has ' demythologised ' <sup>12</sup> the Karma doctrine in emphasising upon the human character and memory instead of an enigmatic soul-substance as the originin of Karma , but the problem is how to maintain this position . What continues after physical annihilation, according to Buddhism, is the tendency ( Sankhara ) and the Buddhists explain it through the example of a lamp . Just as from one lamp another lamp is lighted so also from one person another is born . The analogy seems to be quite simple one and yet Buddhists have accepted this as a solution to the great riddle of human existence, through it in a quite unmystical way . No doubt this solution has its obvious difficulties. But since Karma doctrine can be explained without much of

metaphysical stipulations I prefer this explanation to others. Thus in the present dissertation I propose to proceed in the following manner.

In the chapters following I shall first of all give a brief exposition of the Karma doctrine both in the theistic and non-theistic metaphysical model . The purpose of giving an exposition of the <sup>K</sup>arma doctrine is just to show how Indian Philosophers have found a solution to the original problem of human inequality , more particularly the suffering of the virtuous and the prosperity of the wicked . After giving the exposition of the doctrine I shall show how the Buddhistic doctrine appears to be a sound hypothesis on account of the demythological stand point . But this doctrine will have its obvious difficulties, such as the difficulty of making the idea of an agent of action plausible . I shall analyse these problems and shall attempt a solution and in the last analysis I shall show that inspite of these difficulties this hypothesis other systems .



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Karmanya evā dhikaraste mā phalesu Kadācana 1  
Makarma Phala heturbhu māte Sangostav akarmani  
Seek to perform your duty, but lay not claim  
to its fruits . Be you not the producer of  
the fruits of Karma neither shall you lean  
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C H A P T E R - I I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOCTRINE  
IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMS.

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## CHAPTER-II

### The Development of the doctrine in Indian Philosophical Systems.

We have seen previously that Karma doctrine has been taken as the principle to explain the human inequality and specially the suffering of the virtuous and the prosperity of the vicious . This Karmavāda , as is well known, owes its origin to the concept of Rta in the Vedas. But this concept has undergone many changes . Proper understanding of the Karma doctrine is necessary in order to find out the exact logical status of the doctrine . In what follows I shall attempt an exposition of the doctrine as is envisaged by Indian philosophers .

#### The concept of Rta in the Vedas.

The demand of the moral life is that the virtuous should be rewarded and the vicious be penalised. This demand can be fulfilled only when it is based upon an order . This concept of Rta stands for this cosmic order and proper understanding of this concept reveals how significant the concept has been in laying the foundation of the Karma doctrine . Radhakrishnan has justly

remarked ;

"Rta , the law or order of the world-  
literally ' the course of things ' -  
provides the standard of morality  
Here Rta stands for the same  
principle in human conduct . Orderly  
and consistent conduct is the  
essential feature of good life .  
Disorder, often represented in the  
form of falsehood, is the greatest evil".<sup>1</sup>

This view of Radhakrishnan is correct but it does not explicate how the cosmic order constitutes the basis of moral world-view . What exactly does the concept of Rta mean ? One will surely expresse his incompetence to give a proper , evaluation of the concept from the exhavstive uses of the term on various occasions, in Vedas and in Rigveda particularly . In modern times thinkers like Sri Aurobindo considers this principle as truth or truth-consciousness which is the womb of the conscient being . Dr.Radhakrishnan compares it with the platonic universal and maintains its priority to world-order<sup>2</sup>. All these views make one definite point . The point

is that Rta implies orderliness which is significant both in the natural and moral sphere and in this sense it is said to be the basis of the moral order . That it is to be interpreted as truth is evident from its distinction from the concept anrta or falsehood . This can be clearly known when we know the origin of the word . The word Rta comes from ' Ri ', i.e. to move or to act . Understood in this sense one is justified in taking it as an order as it is said to be making all movements or, so to say, the go of the world intelligible .

The impact of this concept is that it is first of all considered to be a presupposition of our understanding of the world at large and of the moral sphere also . This is evident from the different ways in which it is analysed from time to time . It is sometimes interpreted as the course of things, ' straight ' , ' truth ' etc. and also taken as orderly conduct and the essential nature of things . Thus Rta has been taken as the way through which one could look at the external as well as his moral world .

Development of the concept of Karma.

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It has been/above that a belief in the orderliness both in the sphere of morality and in the consmic sphere is the basis of the Karma doctrine . A study of Upanisads, Puranas etc. reveal the development of the Karma doctrine, the doctrine no doubt was present in a rudimentary form in the Vedas. This concept manifolds itself in the form of a fullfledged doctrine with all its ramifications .

One finds in the Upanisads a conspicuous development of this metaphysical principle controlling and guiding human destiny in all its details and his moral situation particularly. Reference may be made to Brahad-Āranyaka, Chhāndogya, Katha etc. where one gets a clear picture of this Karmic principle . The Brahad Āranyaka Upanisad , for exemple says :

" As it does and acts, so it becomes . By doing good it becomes good, and by doing evil it becomes evil. It becomes virtuous through good acts and vicious through evil acts ".<sup>3</sup>

It is to be noted in this connection that the  
idea of the agent being determined by his action  
gained such an importance that the Bhagavad Gitā  
held action as well as the law of Karma to be  
binding one . Man is bound by his actions and  
determined by their results as long as he lives.  
Arjuna has been instructed on this ground not  
to leave Karma but to perform the duties assigned  
to him as a warrior . The uniqueness of the  
Bhagavad Gitā, however , is, as we shall see  
later on, is to point out that one can always  
have control over his own actions though it does  
not imply his control over the result of actions  
and therefore one should develop a dispassionate  
attitude towards it. According to the Upanisads  
and the Gitā one's lot or total situation is  
shaped by his action and nothing else . There  
has however been a confusion in the minds of  
certain people to the extent that <sup>the</sup> Karma doctrine  
or rather the misunderstanding of it has been  
responsible for the caste system in India .  
This argument is misleading and comes to be the  
outcome of ignorance of the scriptures . The  
story of satyakama Jabala in the Chhāndogya Upanisad<sup>4</sup>

clearly reveals that the nature of a Brahmin is determined not by his birth but by his own nature of activity . Brahminism , in this sense, can be taken as an ideal view of life . In later times, i.e. in the Gītā it has been said that classification of human beings is done only on the basis of their nature of activity . To put this idea in a nutshell the entire cycle of existence ( Samsāra) of an individual owes its justification to this principle<sup>5</sup> , the situation to which one is born is his own creation . This is giving emphasis on human effort alone and it is said that one's ardent desire for a particular thing and his effort for it gets Divine sanction or it is as if Gods cooperates with human efforts .

The concept of Transmigration in the Upanisads.

Along with the concept of Karma another important concept that has become important in the Vedas and Upanisads is the concept of transmigration . This idea did not develop so much in the Vedas and Upanisads . However the concept was present in the rudimentary form in the pages of the Upanisads . As Ranade points out,

" The cheerful and joyous attitude of the Indian Aryans made it impossible for them to think too much of the life after death . They believed in the world of Gods and they believed in the world of fathers and they did not care to believe in anything else. It was sufficient for them to know that the godlymen went to a heaven which overflowed with honey".<sup>6</sup>

The idea of transmigration, no doubt, is a very important concept. But, it can be seen that without this also the Karma doctrine could be explained. But the proper understanding of the Karma doctrine and study of its impact upon the human thought makes it necessary to study the idea of transmigration .

In an important verse of the Brahad Aranyaka Upanisad there occurs a dialogere between Yajñāvalkya and Ārtabhaga . It is said,

" When after a man's death his speech enters into the fire, his breath into the wind, his eye into the sun, his manas into the moon, his ear into the pōte, his body into the earth ...

Where then does the man remain ? Yajñāvalkya answered : Take my hand Artabhaga ,my good friend, on this matter we must come to an understanding, alone by ourselves,

not here in the company. Then they went inside, and conferred with one another and what they said that was work and what they commanded that was work. In truth, a man becomes good by good works and evil by evil deeds".<sup>7</sup>

We find conflicting opinions along with the imaginative insights concerning the problem of transmigration in Brahmanas and Upanisads .But in each case, one's action determining his future existence has been insisted upon . What is important is the individual's action and the question of the path of the person after his death becomes secondary. For example, in Brhadaranyaka Upanisad it is said that as the self moves out, life moves after it and as the life moves, the various vital parts depart after it. What follows him is his knowledge and work and his former consciousness . The imagination of the two paths : devāyana ( ways of the gods) and pitriyāna ( path of the fathers ) as depicted in the Brāhmanas<sup>8</sup> clearly reveals that the course of the soul after death is determined by one's nature of activities .

The above reference indicates that the idea of the journey of the soul after death has been introduced on practical grounds of moral life only . This possible state has been imagined for the gratification of the hopes and aspirations of the individual or for issuing a note of warning and this consideration reaches its climax in the Bhagavad Gitā where it is said that a man once dead must be born again .<sup>9</sup>

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An observation of this discussion shows that inspite of a lot of difficulties that one faces in understanding such concepts as the immortality of the soul, transmigration, reincarnation etc. the idea of rebirth as connected with the Karma doctrine explains at least two things. First of all, the introduction of this idea serves a great practical purpose in removing the idea of absolute annihilation in instilling hope in the minds of the evil doers and even the virtuous ones . The unfulfilled disires of the individual has the scope of being rulfilled. The other advantage is that the concept of rebirth helps in explaining certain facts which is quite unexplained by the natural, sociological or psychological laws . In this sense, it may be taken as a corollary of the Karma doctrine.

The idea of rebirth or transmiration of soul etc. have its obvious difficulties . It is difficult to see how we can explain the continuity of the soul after the death of the person . After death, the body is dismantled and dissolved every thing vanishes . The soul or the spiritual substance theory creates more problems than solving them, we are thus placed between the two horns of a dilemma . Either we have to accept the soul hypothesis and to invite all troubles or we have to throw away the hypothesis of rebirth along with the <sup>karma</sup> doctrine. But we cannot arrive a solution at this stage without mentioning the other systems of Indian philosophy where this problem has gained prominence.

Karma and the heterodox systems :

It has been seen previously that the idea of the virtuous being rewarded or the sinner suffering rests on the supposition of the continuity of the moral agent . In the orthodox philosophy the idea of a supreme dispenser of justice has also been emphasised. Thus two very important metaphysical concepts, the concepts of

soul and God have occupied prominent place in the metaphysical systems of Upanisads and the Gita etc. But the question now is, are these two ideas indispensable for the intelligibility of the Karma doctrine ? Can we not conceive of the Karma doctrine without the hypothesis of a spiritual soul-substance and the idea of a supreme dispenser of justice ? Can we not conceive of the relation between virtue and reward etc. in a different conceptual scheme which does not accept God and soul as indispensable ? It seems the doctrine is intelligible without these metaphysical stipulations. I am not going to discuss the Lokāyata or the Cārvāka view here for the obvious reason that Cārvāka takes a negative attitude towards the doctrine of rebirth in general and the Karma doctrine in particular. However, I shall try to give an exposition of some systems which does not accept either God or soul, but which makes the Karma doctrine intelligible without them . At this stage I shall confine myself to the two non-theistic philosophies of India - Buddhism and Jainism .

The Jaina view:

The word ' Jaina ' for which the System is so designated, means the conquerer and it conveys that by conquering oneself one can attain illumination ( Kevalajñāna ). Since liberation means freedom from bondage one must understand the exact significance of bondage and the causes leading to it. According to Jainism the soul is in bondage due to its own deeds ( Karma ) . It believes that human suffering, human differences and even human birth is determined by one's own deeds and the result of action is to be enjoyed by the agent of action alone and non else <sup>10</sup> .

The Jiva is entangled in Karma due to its association with ajiva or the unconscious which consists of space ( ākāśa ), motion ( Dharmā ) , Rest (Adharma), Matter ( Pudgala ), each of which operates according to its law. A situation is created by an act and the enjoyer ( Jiva ) suffers or enjoys according to its own activity . The individual is bound by this Karmic cycle as long as the impact continues due to the further addition of Karma . The result of Karma can also be extinguished by a further Karma . Jainism, as it

appears, unites the two conflicting trends of upanisadic spiritualism and Carvaka materialism and accordingly the world order is not merely a physical order or a psychological order, it is rather a psychophysical order and accordingly human action on account of which the Jiva is said to be bound in the world is initiated either due to psychological reasons or due to certain objective conditions .

Jiva in Jainism is not a mere metaphysical soul substance . Rather it is one which lives or animates. Jiva is distinguished from other material principles in so far as it is conscious . The characteristics of Jiva is ( cetanā) consciousness which is of three kinds :- (a) Jñāna cetanā or Consciousness of pure knowledge (b) Karma Cetanā or consciousness of experience of action and (c) Karmaphala Cetanā or experience of fruition of action . This clearly indicates how the human agent is a Karmic agent, i.e. how he justifies his action through the Karma hypothesis . Other discussions on the nature of the jiva such as its occupying space or having approximate sizes, its expansion

and contraction according to the size of the body it occupies constitutes only a minor point. The essential nature of Jiva is said to be omniscience ( Kevalajñāna ) which transcends over joy and grief, and it is of the nature of religious truth etc. The paradoxical situation is, now is the Jiva entangled if it is considered to be free from any kind of predication whatsoever ? The explanation, as we have seen, lies in human action alone . The results of action which have been taken figuratively to be the material particles and called substantive forces by Radhkrishnan <sup>11</sup> pour into the pure soul as it were. It is held that the Jiva in its constant contact with ajiva creates certain impacts for itself which come to it in the form of Karmic particles and which further disintegrates into a large number of particles and together , they build up a special body ( Karmasarira) which clings to the soul till its final emancipation .

These karmic particles are categorised as virtue and vice by Āsrava . Āsrava is a channel through which the soul is affected by the phenomenal existence . Two kinds of Āsravas have been mentioned.

They are bhāvāsrava and Karmāsrava .Bhāvasrava means the thought activities of the soul through which the Karmic particles enter into the soul and Karmāsrava means the actual entrance of the Karmic matter into the soul . The Bhavasravas are delusion (mithyatva), want of control ( avāvati) inadvertence ( pramāda ) and activities of body mind and speech and the passions. The concept Dravyāsrava, which is almost similar to Karmāsrava means the actual influx of Karma affecting the soul in different ways as pointed out earlier. As it appears, the Jainas speak of two types of entanglements that cause bondage. It is by one's own confused ideas or self-created delusions etc. that one cannot have a clear vision of the things. This is taken to be Bhāvavandā or bondage done to one's own ideas. Similarly one's ideas and actions may be determined by the world outside which captivates the individual so to say . This is known as Dravyāvandha . But the dominating factor are one's own ideas, emotions ( bhāva) passion etc. that determines the choice of the individual .

Along with the Karma, Jainas also subscribe to the idea of transmigration . It is held that after the physical dissolution the soul moves to the place of its new birth and assumes a new form . It is to be noted however that according to this view the future life of the agent is determined by his present course of action as is evident from the description of different types of actions given above. It is also said that by discipline and avoidance of misconduct the agent can avoid the possibility of being born as a bad man and also by being devoted to a preceptor he can be born as a good man . This clearly makes the point that a future life has been spoken of only to guide the individual in proper direction and to regulate his conduct . In uttaradhyana it is said that Vijayghosa learnt the excellent law from Jayaghosa and acted accordingly, entered into the order and destroyed Karma by self control and penance and reached perfection by avoiding rebirth . The Jiva can be emancipated from the cycle of birth and rebirth through his actions alone that cancel the impact of all previous actions . The cessation of the further flow of Karma on

that account has been called samvara that can be practised through selfcontrol, carefulness in walking, speaking, performing the duties like forbearance, humility, reflections etc. The concept of final emancipation of Karmic impact ( nirjāra) has been introduced to point out that one can put a full stop to all his attachments with the world through his own actions .

The above exposition of the Jaina doctrine might appear to be unreal. In fact the introduction of the Karmic matter etc. appear to be figurative descriptions only . However, the fact is that Jaina philosophy accepts the Karma doctrine as the most important presupposition of moral life. It does not state that some one suffers or enjoys on account of any Divine action. The concept of predestination does not work here. This theory does not accept the metaphysical concept of a Divine dispenser of justice. It is to be noted, however, that the idea of soul is accepted here. But we shall mark a departure from this line of thinking in the Buddhistic philosophy which in my estimation is the most rational account of Karma doctrine.

Law of Karma in Buddhism:

In our previous discussions it has been observed that according to the upanisads the Karma doctrine operates with different presuppositions like the permanent soul substance and the supreme dispenser of justice and the Carvaka does not admit any of these presuppositions. Jainism, however, reviews the ' Karma ' idea and gives it the status of an autonomous law . The study of the Buddhist treatment, however, reveals its freshness of approach which is clearly indicated by its unconventional and yet practical way of looking at things in general and in particular the problem with which we started. It is a point of dispute whether Buddha was an anti-metaphysician or not. The significance of the Buddhist approach however, does not consist merely in breaking away from the path of Upanisadic Absolutism or Cārvāka Scepticism, but it surely consists in picking up the problem and providing an unmythical solution to it. In this sense. Buddha has been taken as a prophet of the modern temper.

What then was the problem for Buddha for which he sought a solution ? The problem, as is well known, is human suffering. He saw a problem in it because he saw it every where and at every stage. The very human existense is suffering. But what is the basis of this suffering ? According to Buddha it is transitoriness. Every-thing is suffering and everything is impermanent . Every thing appears in the first part as evolution and in the second part as decay . The problem, however, is , if everything is transient or becoming why should it be painrul ? Why should pain be identified with impermance as G.C. Nayak asks ?<sup>12</sup> What is Buddha's reply to it ? Why not the continuous experience of something that causes boredom or even the continuous existence of things be taken as pain ? The answer is that Buddha does not either accept the persuance of the things, nor does he draw an iron curtain between persuance and impersuance as Upanisads do it. Buddha sees transitoriness everywhere and suffering in everything. He does not satisfy it in invoking a predestined force, nor does he take to be the matter of chance. He does not try to solve the problem like a Physician . The explanation of suffering which

he offers is not a factual explanation like finding out the freezing of water inside as the cause of bursting of the pipe in winter. He unravels the mystery through pratityasamutpada or dependent origination and arrives at the conclusion that it is human ignorance alone which leads to craving which again causes suffering . The under current of this idea is that human beings suffer on account of their own actions. It has to be admitted of course that this cause is neither falsifiable nor demonstrable. Yet Buddhism accepts it as the presupposition of the metaphysics of suffering . The craving for something personel is the actual cause of suffering. In Buddhistic launage this craving is called grasping. But what is the cause of this grasping. In the Buddhistic language the cause of grasping is thirst ( tanhā ). If the question were put " Is grasping dependent on anything ? Then the reply should be; Yes, it is dependent " And if it were asked on what is grasping dependent ? Then the reply should be made ; In dependent upon thirst ( Tenhā) arises grasping"<sup>13</sup>

If there is no thirst of any person for anything i.e. no thirst for views, no thirst for ceremonial, observations, no thirst for speculation about the self there is no chain of events, no becoming. From this follows the Karmic law and the principle is that our actions initiated by our craving determines the course of our becoming i.e. the conditions of our birth growth and decay. Buddhism believes in the principle that by work alone the World exists, by work mankind exists. The idea that Karma sustains the individual is merely the outcome of their firm belief in the moral world-view that rests on the operation of the Karma doctrine. This is quite evident from the mentioning of two kinds of actions :- moral and immoral-which leads to different results . The first one is Sasrava . It is an action which brings good or bad results ( Kusala or akusala karma ) Bad actions are those that bring attachment (rāga) desire ( Kama), malice (dvesa) and delusion (moha) and good actions are those that bring arāga advesa and moha . Apart from this, another kind of action has been mentioned . It is called asasrava, which consists of meditation on four noble truths, which leads to arhant hood According to Buddhism there is no necessary or logical connection between an action performed and the result it yields. The only requirement is that an action

which is initiated by determination or samkalpa gathers momentum and it yields, result . But mere determination without concrete steps taken to fulfil the demands would amount to build castles in the air and it is quite obvious that when all necessary steps have been taken to fulfil the end, the result will follow .

The Buddhistic doctrine, as it appears raises a lot of problems . First of all, there has been serious deliberation on the problem of determination free will controversy . Again there is another problem about the concept of the person who performs the action and reaps the consequence . The first problem is about the determination free will controversy. Apparently there is a dichotomy between the law of dependent origination and the freedom of the agent. The paradoxical situation is that unless the freedom of the individual is accepted the Karma doctrine will loose its implication. Unless the agent is free he cannot be made responsible for his own actions and unless he is responsible for

his own actions the significance of the karma doctrine would be reduced to nothing . On the other hand Buddhism accepts the principle of Pratilyasamutpāda or dependent origination . The problem now is, if according to the doctrine of dependent origination every event is preconditioned where is the freedom of the individual ? Rather the individual is chained by circumstances. Thus Buddhism, as it appears, lands us in a paradoxical situation .

The solution to the problem is that Buddhism does not accept a purely a deterministic system inspite of its acceptance of the doctrine of dependent origination . The problem of determinism-free will controversy is a serious one and it needs serious and separate attention. For the present purpose atleast, it should be enough to point out that the doctrine of dependent origination does not deny human free-dom at all . My present actions may be explained by dependent origination through previous actions but that is no way denies the possibility of changing my course of action through my personal efforts on which Buddha emphasised so much . However, Pratitya Samutpada, rightly

understood is just a general way of looking at things or understanding the phenomenal world in General and the human situation in particular, but acceptance of the doctrine does not close all the doors for human efforts, free choice etc. It may be further remark here that through pratitya samutpada Buddha just gave a model for looking at everything and more particularly at human suffering and finally arrived at the postulate of Karma through it. It is also to be noted further that there is no place for any extreme dogmatic opinion like absolute determinism or accidentalism ( Yadr. ccavada ) and Buddha himself was opposed to such speculations .

The problem now is, how does Buddha explain the sameness of the sinner and sufferer which is a minimum assumption of the Karma hypothesis ? Buddha, as is well known, does not accept the theory of a spiritual soul substance theory as it is advocated in the upanisads and in the Bhagavad Gitā .

Rather, on the other hand, it accepts the doctrine of an impermanent self. How can this ever changing self explain the sinner-suffered sameness ? This is the crux of the problem . This being my important point for consideration I shall devote a complete chapter on the problem. But before doing that I must bring out the development of the Karma doctrine in the Nyaya and Mimamsa systems of Indian philosophy .

The development of the doctrine in Nyāya Philosophy.

It has been observed in Buddhism that Karma doctrine constitute the foundation of moral life and that it does not involve any theistic commitment . But as it appears, Buddhism and other previous philosophical systems did not give much importance to the time taken for fruition of an action . The problem now is assuming that a result follows an action does it follow the action immediately or after an interval ? That the expected result does not follow an action immediately is evidenced by such contrary experiences of a virtuous person suffering immediately after the virtuous deed has been done either due to a heavy expenditure

caused on account of huge sacrifices made for the upliftment of the down trodden or on account of he being taken to task for his noble deeds.

According to Nyaya not all actions bear result immediately. Certain actions like cooking etc. produce immediate result where as such other actions like ploughing land or preparing for the examination or performing rituals donot yield immediate results . It is quite evident therefore that certain actions take time for fruition .<sup>14</sup> According to Nyāya again the performance of such acts like acts of piety or ceremonialism etc. take longer time for fruition.

Two questions seem to be quite pertinent here . What happens to the action if there is no immediate fruition to it ? Does the impact vanish altogether ? The second problem is of lesser importance . The problem is what exactly is the cause of delay in the fruition of an action ?

Nyaya replies to these questions through the concept of Adṛsta. According to Nyaya a determined action leaves certain impressions either in the form of merit ( punya ) or in the form of demerit ( pāpa ) and each one of them resides in the soul in the form of an unseenforce or adṛsta. This Adṛsta is a connecting link between the action performed and its fruition . One thing however, is to be noted that for Nyaya Adṛsta is not fate . The speculation of this unseen force leads to serious problem no doubt , but its significance consists in its explanation of a moral desert which justifies individual differences ,reincarnation etc. The reply to the other question is that, an action does not bear fruit by the individual effort of the agent alone, but along with it, the situational factors also demand consideration . Thus a number of forces are responsible for the fruition of an action. This can be clear from the following sutra of Nyaya which reads :-

" Prior to the actual fulfilment of the fruition there would be something ( in the shape of an intermediary ) , just as there is in the case of the fruit of the trees ".<sup>15</sup>

The course of the delay in the fruition of an action does not lie in the agent alone . The delay can be explained by the presence of certain factors as is ordinarily the case with natural events . The position taken by Nyaya is that the human agent in this system is the sole authority of his action no doubt, but he has no control over the result . This is a unique feature so far as the sphere of morality is concerned . The agent has to await for the approval or sanction of God . This is how Nyaya smuggles the idea of God into the sphere of Karma . To me , it is not a necessary prerequisite for the meaningfulness of the Karma doctrine . But Nyaya not only accept God as the dispenser of justice . It also accepts God also as the efficient cause of the universe . This is where the Mimamsa philosophy differs .

The Mimamsa view:

The important problem before the Purva Mimamsa is the question of righteous living ( dharma ). This is the path to salvation . Thus Mimamsa starts with an inquiry into the nature of ' Dharma ' .

" Dharma is the scheme of righteous living".<sup>16</sup> Dharma consists in issuing commands ( codana ) . According to Sabara Godana denotes utterances that impel men to action .<sup>17</sup> Prabhakara, slightly differing from Sarbarabhasya holds that the injunctive word ( codana ) does not directly prompt the agent to action . It only directly prompts him to do the action and the particular effort follows from this spirit . Mimamsa is a ritualistic system which claims that actions performed with sincerity of purpose must yield result . The performance of the vedic rituals certainly go a long way in bringing virtuous results. An examination of this system leads to the belief that Karma doctrine is the postulate of moral life, without assuming that a determined effort bears result, it is, from the mimamsa standpoint, meaningless to talk of vedic injunctions such as " desiring heaven one should

sacrifice " etc. The entire discourse of Mimamsa including the personal efficiency etc. draw their meaning from the rule of Karma . According to Mimamsa a person is a combination of body and soul . The person suffers or enjoys due to past activities and to reject the ideas of God's mercy being the determinant of one's desiring the goal. The Mimansakas like Nyāya accept the view that result of an action does not follow directly and immediately, nor is it obtained through the favour of a Deity whom sacrifices are offered, nor can it be regarded as leading to the result through a certain potency in the agent himself. What is assumed at the minimum for the purpose of action is the agent. After the performance of an action it leaves a transcendental potency which, however cannot be established through any means of knowledge and thus it is called apurva or something not known before . As fire possesses the power to burn but the power is unseen or water has the potency to quench our thirst and the potency is unknown similarity an action leaves an unseen potency behind it is called apurva.

According to Kumarila apurva is a potency in the principal action or in the agent which did not exist which did not exist prior to the performance of an action and which is a positive force leading to the result . It is established through arthapatti or implication. i.e. it is argued, that without assuming such a potency all our vedic injunctions will be wholly inexplicable . Thus apurva is taken as the connecting link between action done and the result and it is nothing more than a force set in motion by the action of sacrifica etc. According to Prabhākara , on the other hand, the Kriyā or something to be affected to us by its very nature is something brought about by kṛti or operation . This exertion creates a prompting or mandate ( niyoga ) which leads to action and there is no such proof to the extent that apurva remains as a potency either in the principal action or in the agent . However, the potency exist and because it exists the relation between an action and the nature of result is explained . The injunctive passages draw their

justification from this Karma concept . No doubt. the concept of apurva has its own problems . This can be criticised as a picture thinking . The speculation of such a metaphysical entity creates difficulties in understanding it.

The uniqueness of Mimamsa visa-vis Nyaya philosophy is the rejection of the idea of a Karmādhyaksa or dispenser of justice . Mimamsa considers the process of operation to be an autonomous one .

One thing, however, is very important for both Nyaya and Mimamsa and to the orthodox systems . There is difference of opinion regarding the existance of God as the dispenser of justice . But the existence of a soul as the carrier of the results of action has been emphasised upon by the orthodox philosophers. A consideration of the Vedanta philosophy highlights this problem. The stipulation of a soul substance is paradoxical . We cannot explain the possibility of transmigration, etc. without the idea of the continuity of a soul substance . The paradox is that the speculation of a soul puts us to difficulties. We shall consider this problem in a later chapter. But, prior to that the explanation of

this idea, the Vedantic standpoint needs elaboration.

The Vedantic view:

The Vedantic view of Karma is a critical view as Sankara is highly critical of the Mimansa view of autonomous Apurva. It may be noted here that Sankara criticises the Mimansa view from a theoretical standpoint. Both Advaita and visistadvaita systems of vedanta adhere to this view. According to Vedanta God is taken as the creator and sustainer of the universe and the preserver of moral values. The point of difference between the two vedantic views is that while Ramanuja takes this idea whole heartedly, Sankara is of the view that God is understood in this sense in our common use ( Lokuyavahara ). Thus to deny the idea of God as the moral Governor would amount to deviation from the ordinary linguistic convention. In other words, according to Sankara, we are so used the idea of an intelligent dispenser of justice in connection with our ideas of justice, requittal etc. that it almost becomes impossible

to conceive of the latter without the former. Sankara makes his stand clear on the presupposition of the distinction between agent ( Kartā ) and action ( Karma ), enjoyer ( bhoktā ) and enjoyed ( bhoga ), creator ( srastā ) and creation ( srsti ) and supervisor and supervised . Sankara says that such distinction is a regular feature at the level of our ordinary discourse . Thus sankara says-

" All Vedanta texts more over declare that the Lord is the only cause of all creation and as the Lord has regard to the merit and demerit of the souls, the objection raised above as to one uniform cause being inadequate to the production of various efforts and care without any foundation." <sup>18</sup>

This idea of a moral governor has a practical bearing on moral life no doubt, but one cannot say, as has been said against the Nyāya view of Karmādhyaaksha, that this idea is a logical demand of a moral scheme though such

speculation is a minimum requirement for a theistic world view. Sankara takes the Karma doctrine to be an unintelligent one and therefore it needs an intelligent agent to control it and distribute the result of actions to the agents corresponding to the nature of their actions . This view does not seem to be tenable . The working of the law can be called intelligent if it can justifiably be said to be the basis of moral life and that it adequately explicates the notion of retributive justice . If the working of a law can be understood without an intelligent supervisor, why should one be constrained to conceive of such supervisor, i.e. in the sphere of a moral order at all ?

However, Sankara does not have any objection in admitting karma as a postulate of practical reason and in fact he admits its inexorability in the sphere of Samsāra or the cycle of empirical existence as long as a man is not completely free from it. Thus according to him -

" With out merit and demerit, no body can enter into existence and again without a body merit and demerit can be found ".<sup>19</sup>

Before concluding this chapter I must say what I have found through a brief search of the different systems of Indian philosophical systems. I have found karma doctrine to be the essential feature of moral life. It is not a scientific theory of cause and effect. On the other hand, its uniqueness consists in being a postulate of practical reason .

My other finding is a controversy among the systems regarding the role of a moral Governor. It is seen in the course my discussion that when some systems subscribe to the importance of God the moral governor, other systems reject this as a metaphysical burden. The view to which I subscribe is that the Hypothesis of spiritual moral Governor is not at all essential in view of the fact, that the operation of the doctrine is quite intelligent without the assumption of such an infinite and supreme being . It may be argued that the postulation of God as the moral governor satisfied all the demands . But what I intend

to point out here is that this speculation restricts the sphere of the operation of the Karma doctrine which is so widely accepted as constituting the basis of moral life either of a theist or of an atheist or even of an agnostic. Moreover, moral life need not necessarily presuppose a religious foundation on the ground that the sphere of application of these two world views is quite different.

The most important problem for me at this stage is to see the role of a spiritual soul substance which is considered to be an indispensable requirement for almost all the systems of Indian philosophy but for the exceptions of Cārvāka and Buddhism of which the first one does not accept the concept of soul altogether and the second explain the operation of the doctrine through another hypothesis. In the next chapter I shall consider the Buddhistic system, Vis-a-vis. The other traditional metaphysical systems with a special attention to the problem of the continuity of a person, particularly in the state of reincarnation .

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- C H A P T E R - I I I -

THE DEMYTHOLOGIZED VIEW OF KARMA  
AND THE PROBLEM OF SELF-IDENTITY.

CHAPTER-III

The demythologized view of Karma  
and the problem of self-identity.

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In the previous chapter we have considered the various interpretations of the Karma doctrine and considered its different ramifications of the various interpretations. The most cogent approach to my mind is the demythologized interpretation of Buddhism. But an important problem that arrests our attention is the problem of self-identity. Towards the end of the last chapter it has been pointed out that for the proper functioning of the Karma doctrine what is most essential is that the sinner and the sufferer must be identically the same person. The violation of this principle will lead to the collapse of the Karma doctrine along with the evaporation of moral life. The same self who has performed the action must reap the consequence of his action. But who is the carrier of the moral characteristics? Must it be a spiritual soul substance which alters not when alteration alteration finds? Is it the soul which is not destroyed even when the body meets its final decay at the time of death? Is this idea of a perpetuating soul substance amongst all toil and turbulence logically necessary for the Karma doctrine? The law can operate even with the Buddhist idea of

a fluid self. But then the problem in that case would be, if nothing remains permanently on account of the universal doctrine of impermenence, as is depicted in Buddhism, how can the sinner suffer identity be explained at all ? The Vedantic view can easily explain the idea of continuity with the theory of spiritual soul. But how can the demy-theologized view satisfactorily explain the operation of the Karma doctrine ? These are some of the most pertinent questions, that one encounters in the sphere of the Karma doctrine. In what follows, I shall attempt to explicate the demythologized concept of Karma and shall explore the meaningfulness of the Buddhistic theory of soul inthe context of the Karma doctrine .

The demythologized view of Karma:

This expression " demythologized view of Karma " has been used by Hick . According to him the doctrine of Karma, as has been emphasised by Buddhism, is a demythologized interpretation on account of the fact that it

does not accept the transmigration of soul or the existence of God and yet it believes in the moral responsibility and the consequences of all our acts. In this context he quotes the view of J.C. Jennings who says:

" Disbelieving in the permanence of the individual soul he ( the Buddha) could not accept Hindu doctrine of Karma implying the transmigration of the soul at death in a new body, but believing fully in moral responsibility and the consequences of all acts, words and thoughts he fully accepted the doctrine of Karma in another sense, implying the transmission of effects of actions from one generation of men to all succeeding generations".<sup>1</sup>

This view of Jennings which has been accepted by John Hick has enormous significance in our social and moral life. But the point

I want to drive at, here is, how does Buddhism reject the idea of soul substance and yet is able to explain the proper functioning of the doctrine ? I have, to some extent, explored the Buddhistic view in the last chapter. However it is necessary at this stage to focuss our attention on the specific problem of self-identity in the context of Karma .

Buddhism, as is well known, claims to be an antimetaphysical philosophy though in the last analysis it is found to be entrapped by the metaphysical hangover. So far as the Karma doctrine is concerned, the position is some what different. Buddha wanted to make the Karma doctrine free from the metaphysical burden of God and soul. I do not want here to enter into a discourse on the problem of God since it falls beyond the scope of my treatise. I have also shown to some extent how the doctrine has been meaningful in other systems without postulating God. I want to restrict my analysis to the problem of the carrier of the Karmic effect. As long as the person can be shown to be the carrier, the doctrine of Karma can be independly explained and

in order to play this role the concept of the person needs to be clarified, the concept as an individual agent and as the bearer of fruits of (his) actions .

The Person:

Buddha, as it appears, does not subscribe to the metaphysical speculation of a soul substance as he was against any such mental construction ( Kalpna ) . As against the metaphysical soul substance view Buddha resorts to a 'process-view' of the agent in conformity with his general metaphysical view of ' becoming ' . This process-view known as the modal view, is known as the no-soul theory. This following epochmaking dialogue stands as an representative example of his view. The dialogue occurs between king Milinda and Nigasena . Nigasena explains Milinda's enquiry about nature of Self with the example of a chariot.

" And the venerable Nigasena asked the King Milinda .

" How then did you come, on foot or in a chariot " ?

" I did not come on foot, I came in a chariot."

" Then if you come, Sire, in a chariot, explain to me what that is. Is it the pole that is the chariot ?"

" I did not say that "

" Is it the exle, that is the chariot" ?

" Certainly not".

" Is it the wheels, or the framework, or the ropes, or the Yoke, or the spokes of the wheels, or the goad, that are the chariot ?"

And to all these the King still answered, "no".

" Then is it all these parts that are the chariot " ?

" No sire " .

" But is there anything outside them that is the chariot" ?

And still he answered "no" .

" Then thus, ask as I may. I can discover no chariot ".

" Chariot is a mere empty sound ".

" What is chariot then " ?

And Milinda said: I have spoken no untruth reverend Sir. It is on account of having all these things the pole and the exle, the

wheels and the frame work, the ropes and the Yoke..... that it comes under the generally understood term, the designation in the common use of the term chariot " .

" Very good", your Majesty has rightly understood the meaning of chariot".<sup>2</sup>

As a staunch analyst Buddha projected speculations of any sort either of a substance or soul or God and in this respect one can find the similarity of his idea in analysts like David Hume who does not accept anything other than the impressions and ideas through which the concept of mind is understood and in Gilbert Ryle<sup>3</sup> narrating the story of a foreign visitor to Oxford university who being unable to find the university behind the different departments went on enquiring about it.

Is soul to be understood as a living principle which, as Upanisads conceived of it, sees forms through the eye, hears sound through the ear and tastes through the tongue ? or as is depicted in the dialogue where.

" The King said, " Is there Nagasena,  
such a thing as the soul ?"

" What is, this O King, the soul ?"

" The living principle within, which sees  
forms through the eye hears sounds through the ear,  
experiences tastes through the tongue..."

The Elder replied, " I will tell about the  
five doors great King, listen and give heed attentively.  
If the living principle within sees forms through  
the eye, in the manner that you mention, choosing  
its window as it likes, can it not then see  
forms not only through the eye, but also through  
each of the five organs of sence ? And in like  
manner can it not then hear sound and experience  
teste and smel odours and feel touch and discern  
conditions through each of the five other organs  
of sense besides the one you have in each case  
specified ?"

" No Sir ".<sup>4</sup>

This is how Buddha comes to reject the conventioned way of thinking about soul as this line of thinking does not serve the purpose for which his philosophy was meant. Again according to Buddha such type of praying for entities leads one to untold misery. The problem now is, what is the criterion of personal identity ? The self according to Buddhism is a unity or organisation which is always in the process of becoming. But what do we mean by an organisation ? According to Runes an organisation is a structured whole or ' the systematic unity of parts in a purposive whole '.<sup>5</sup> Buddhism also conceives of a person as a systematic unity just as a chariot. The chariot is a unity of parts to serve a final cause ( i.e. the King or the charioteer). An organisation does not serve the purpose of a definite person, but it starts functioning with some definite ends in view. Similarly a person is a purposive unity since its total organisation serves many purposes. A person, therefore, is a unity and according to Buddhism it is a unity of

five skandhas such as, rūpa ( physical characteristics), Vijñāna ( reason) Vedanā ( feeling), Sanjñā (perception) and Sanskāra ( tendency). These components are broadly characterised as Nāma ( psychical) and rūpa ( physical), out of this the nāma alone is reborn. A person, in this sense , is understood not elusively or mystically or as a primary concept in the Strawsonian sense. A person is a case, an occurrence or a becoming. However, it is a matter of dispute whether substituting a 'Modalview' for the 'Substantive view' . Buddha meets the problem of self identity satisfactorily.

As it appears Buddhism breaths a fresh air in to the traditional Brahminical way of understanding the self. But its claim cannot be taken as the absolute view. There are problems in every side the modal view creates a problem even in our understanding of the present life. It creates more problems in the case of reincarnation. The problem one counters is the problem of sinner- sufferer identity. If the person is conceived as a flux, in confirmity with the

concept of eternal flux, then the performer of the action does not continue to be the person when he starts reaping the consequences of his action. Unless the sinner-sufferer identity is granted, the Karmic view would certainly meet a collapse. Of course Buddhism has an answer to this problem to which I shall come later on. The second problem, appearing to be the most important one, is the problem of the criterion of self-identity in the State of reincarnation. These are the two most immediate problems. I shall consider the Buddhistic view on it later on. But before I do so I must consider some important reflections on this problems.

Dr. B. Kar, in a very important and thought provoking paper 'Anātmā and Karma in Buddhist philosophy', reflects on this problem. He considers the various texts on the different schools of Buddhism and arrives at the conclusion that Buddhistic view preaches anātmavāda. However, one of his contentions is that since the Buddhistic philosophy does not accept a permanent soul it cannot explain the Karma doctrine.

He points out ;

" First of all it is not quite clear as to how there can be action without agent. If the two expressions are understood as relative ones ( at least that is how they are interpreted in the convention ) then obviously in the absence of any agent it would be more appropriate to have descriptive term 'motion' than ' action'. However , this is a matter of linguistic preference. The problem is; how to conceive transmigration without transmigrating agent ? The suggestion that it is not the soul but character which transmigrates does not at all become helpful. Because any sort of continuity either in terms of soul or in terms of character cannot be possible on the ground that both have some sort of substantive implication which the Buddhistic frame work cannot accomodate".<sup>6</sup>

His final view is:

"Now from the foregoing discussion it appears that anatma and Karma are logically exclusive insofar as the acceptance of one philosophically amounts the denial of the other."<sup>7</sup>

This view projected by Dr. Kar demands serious consideration. I agree with him in accepting only that it is quite difficult to maintain the Karma doctrine against the doctrine of anātma . I shall locate these difficulties later on . However, I do not agree with him to the extent of saying that anatma and Karma are logically exclusive . The point I want to drive at is that inspite of considerably difficult issues emerging from the Buddhistic position of the doctrine of no-soul and Karma are not mutually exclusive. Ofcourse the meaning-fulness of the Karma doctrine depends upon the reassessment of the concepts like ' no-soul' or transmigration from the Buddhist perspective. Dr. Kar has, in a special case, found problem in accomodating the concept of transmigration in the framework of no-soul. But before I come to consider this view I must see its solution in Buddhistic philosophy itself. Buddha, as it appears, is silent over many crucial issues including the doctrine of soul. As regards the concept of soul he takes resort to the middle path leaving aside the two extremes

of Being and Nothing. It has been discussed above how Buddha talks about the idea of soul. Well and good. But the problem that we encounter here is, if the sufferer is to be understood in terms of corporeal and mental components interlocking together, can the continuation of the person be conceived after death when each one of the components is consumed by death ? The paradox is that without the minimum requirement of a continuing agent one cannot talk of the sufferer reaping the consequences of his past actions, in a reincarnated existence. How is this idea intelligible if the person is ever changing as Buddha conceives it to be ?

Buddhistic view of rebirth:

Buddha, as it appears, talks of rebirth through the past tendencies ( samskāra ) of the agent, but he never chooses to talk of the other world. In this sense the Buddhistic view is the demythologised view. He does not talk of anything beyond the limit of our language. He talks of rebirth, not the transmigration of soul. We must

mark the distinction between the two terms here. Ordinarily these are the two ideas associated with the concept of continuous existence after death. One is the case of personal continuance either in the form of temporary immortality or permanent immortality and the other is the case of regeneration. It is a new birth, a process of reindividuation after the destruction of this physical frame. The endless cycle of samsāra does not make it intelligible to talk of a gap, a break in the incessant flux. Therefore, it is very difficult to accommodate the idea of a soul transmigrating from one body and resting temporarily in heaven or hell and then reincarnating in any other form. It is a continuous series like one flame being lighted by another or one billiard ball in very close contact with another, being rolled by another's rolling. Death is but a major event in this process of continuous rolling. This has never been conceived as an ultimate necessity in the cycle of existence. Rather death is to be conceived as a mere happening only.

Death being an event, occurs to an individual either due to old age or due to some other strong reasons for which this life comes to an end. In this sense rebirth is a change in one's physical and mental conditions corresponding to the tendencies that continue from the present life to the future. It is therefore not strictly a case of transmigration understood in the conventional sense. This is evidenced from the following example where -

" The king said: 'when you speak of transmigration, what does that mean'? 'as being born here, O king, dies here. Having died here it springs up else where. Having been born there, there it dies. Having died there it springs up else where. That is what is meant by transmigration".<sup>9</sup>

This position, it has to be admitted, follows from Buddha's rejection of the idea of a permanent soul.

Dr. Kar, however, does not accept the plausibility, of the Karma doctrine in the context of the Buddhistic view of soul. But as is evident here, Buddha attempts to make the Karma doctrine tenable with a revision of the concepts like soul and rebirth. He replaces attā (soul) by the ideas of continuity of character and memory. This solution has its obvious difficulties no doubt. Much criticisms have been levelled against Buddhism on this ground. Samkara, for example, is of the opinion that without being supported by a permanent entity the temporary states cannot be explained at all. Buddhism, however, considers the continuity of character and memory experiences to be the sufficient condition in case of rebirth. According to Buddha then rebirth means the continuity of character and memory-experiences in some other form to avoid the obvious difficulty arising out of the absence of a spiritual entity

that carries the reminiscences of the past activities . Buddha takes into account two other important considerations : similarity and continuity, to make the idea of rebirth intelligible. The new name and form is similar to the old one in one sense and different in another. This can be understood from the analogy of the adult retaining its similarity with the child in respect of the continuity of character though he is quite dissimilar in respect of his physical and mental change. The idea of regeneration is to be understood in this sense . A dialogue ~~is~~ between Milinda and Nagasena seems to be quite relevant here .

"The King said, ' what is it Nagasena, that is reborn ?"

" Name and form is reborn " .

" What is it this same name and form that is reborn ?"

" No, but by this name and form deeds are done good and evil and by these deeds ( this Karma) and other name and form is reborn".

" If that be so, Sir, would not the new being be released from its evil Karma ?"

The Elder replied: 'yes, if it were not reborn. But just because it is reborn, O king, it is, therefore, not released from its evil Karma."

" Give me an illustration "

" Suppose O King, some men were to steal a mango from another man and the owner of the mango were to seize him and bring him before the king and charge him with the crime. And the thief were to say: ' your majesty, I have not taken away this man's mangoes. These that he put on the ground are different from ones I took. I do not deserve to be punished'. How then would he be guilty ?"

" Certainly, Sir, he deserves to be punished"

" But on what ground "?

" Because, inspite of what ever he may say, he would be guilty in respect of the last mango which resulted from the first one ( the owner put on the ground)".

"Just so great king, deeds good or evil are done by this name and form and another is reborn. But that other is not thereby released from its deeds ( its Karma ).<sup>10</sup>

This continuity of character has been supposed to be the most important condition of personal identity along with memory and similarity of the present with the past. It is to be noted, however, that this similarity, is not talked of in case of ' rūpaskandha' but only of the Sanskāras (tendencies). Recognition and memory are also explained through the criteria of continuity and similarity. But the obvious problem here would be, if in Buddhism the interlocking of the five skandha is admitted to give sense to the concept of a person how can the tendencies alone be said to be continuing after death without the physical characteristics ? Either Buddha has to admit their distinctness and independence like Descartes advocating the independence of body and mind or he has to admit that to understand to a person one has to understand its name or the psychological traits only. The other grave problem is how to explain the idea of the continuity of character and memory, even if they are taken as sufficient criteria, without the continuity of a physical basis, which exhypothesi is not available after the physical annihilation of the present

body ? These are some of the crucial problems needing solution .

The Buddhistic view critically examined:

There are obvious problems relating to the Buddhist view ( the demythologised view ). Buddhism no doubt subscribed to the idea of rebirth, not transmigration of soul as it does not accept the idea of a transmigrating agent. However, the idea of rebirth it self poses stupendous problems for us due to its own metaphysical stigma. In adhering to the ' rebirth' hypothesis one simply jumps from the fire to the frying pan. At the outset, the hypothesis of rebirth has been supposed to be untenable by Antony Flew. He says that the idea of survival after death leads to a self-contradictory position. How can one die and yet survive ? If death means the total physical and psychological annihilation is it not a contradiction to state that one can survive his death ? A person, according to Flew, is to be understood only through certain behaviours or functions. Since

functions cease at the time of death it is  
meaningless to talk of survival after death.

( J. Ducasse, however, raises further issues here.

He, as is seen from his article- ' How stands  
the case for the reality of survival', is of the  
view that even if empirical evidences can be  
adduced in favour of the survival hypothesis still  
they must fulfil the following conditions:

(a) abundance of the cases cited. (b) quality  
of the evidences, (c) diversity of the kinds of  
evidence.<sup>12</sup> Broad has pointed out that most of the  
survival arguments are analogical and arguments  
based on this may be sometimes positively misleading.

G.C. Nayak, however, argues for the possibility  
of survival after death on a different grounds.  
In one of his early writings he maintained that  
survival after death is logically possible and  
this possibility is based upon a dualistic metaphysics  
of the Cartesian type. After a few years he maintained  
the position that in the absence of a substantive  
view the idea of the survival after death can be made  
intelligible on the hypothesis of the continuity of  
some sort of a subtle body or suksma sarira , quite  
different from a gross physical body or an astral body.<sup>13</sup>

It is of course true that the hypothesis of a soul being reborn is loaded with enormous difficulties. For example, we cannot meaningfully talk of its continuity in the absence of a physical body since this idea is based upon a picture thinking . It is as if the soul is somewhere preserved in the body and it changed its location from one body to another after death . More over, the dualistic metaphysics of Descartes itself is a ' my th' as Ryle points out and it leads to a sort of ' category mistake ' . Much has been discussed over this issue and I do not want to ponder over it for/fear of repetition .

The idea of the continuity of a subtle body fails no better on the same ground on which the idea of a spiritual soul-substance theory is defeated. We cannot explain how a subtle body carries the characters and the personal history of the deceased person . Where does the subtle body remain ? How is it different from the gross physical body ? In what sense is it different again ? These are some of the problems for which the idea of a subtle body does not seem to be tenable . What can we do then ? Can the Buddhistic view pose a viable alternative ?

The Buddhist hypothesis is that the present person who is said to be the reincarnation of the past person is similar to the other on the ground of the continuity of memory . But there are obvious difficulties with this hypothesis . The difficulties are : How can we explain with this hypothesis that the present James is the same as John who is dead and who did the action ? The Karma doctrine requires the minimum assumption that the sinner and the sufferer must be numerically identical. Is it possible to conceive in the Buddhistic hypothesis ? Can this identity be maintained with the continuity of character and memory when a drastic change has taken place to the person consequent upon the death of the person ? What meaning can be attached to death so as to make this continuity of memory intelligible ? The most important consideration is even if memory and continuity of character be taken as the criteria of personal identity, can memory be taken as the primary and an infallible criterion ? These are some of the problems that demand serious consideration .

Certain solutions suggested:

(1) The problem of numerical identity:

How can we talk of numerical identity where death has consumed the body of the sinner ? Again, with the Buddhistic hypothesis one cannot talk of a numerically identical person as Buddha subscribes to the process view of reality, not to the substantive view. Shall we then discard the idea of numerical identity altogether ? As it appears, this idea cannot be eliminated at all to make the Karma doctrine intelligible .

We can talk of numerical identity with some conceptual revision. It is ordinarily held that is required in these cases to prove the identity of the person is to see if the person possesses the same body even with the same identification marks. But, is it required in every case ? We also call the person as the same person even when the physique of the person has undergone certain changes. What seems to be most important here is that the person should be able to remember most of the events, surely the important events. He should exhibit the mental dispositions, fads and fancies etc. of the previous person. No doubt, there is every possibility of pretension in this case. In spite of this difficulty the continuity of

character and memory etc. seem to be an important claims for personal identity. But there is obvious difficulty in this hypothesis as has been aptly pointed out by Shoemaker. He points out that the condition of similarity of character etc. " is neither logically necessary nor a logically sufficient condition of personal identity . It is not a logically necessary condition for the character and personality traits of a person can change . It is not a logically sufficient condition, for there is no contradiction involved in supposing that two persons, existing at the same time, might have exactly the same set of personality and character traits " <sup>14</sup>

What is most important, according to Shoemaker, is that to say that the person at time  $t_1$  is the same the person at time  $t_2$  is necessary that one and the same person should be observed over a period of time . Hence similarity of character etc. according to Shoemaker,

" seems clearly to presuppose that bodily identity is a criterion of personal identity" <sup>15</sup>.

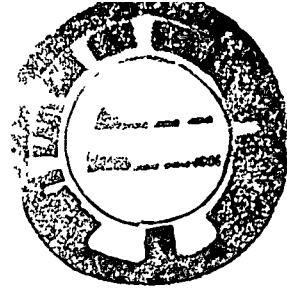
There is much weight in sheemaker's argument no doubt . But to me it appears that this position demands too much for the tenability of the life-extension hypothesis . Even with the continuity of the body in space there will be problems . If a person undergoes a drastic change in his physical features we may be at a fix to say whether the present person is the same as the past. Some sort of spatio-temporal continuity is necessary no doubt as P. K. Mohapatra<sup>16</sup>, holds it to be Mohapatra holds that spatiotemporal continuity is the primary condition for personal identity. So far so good. This may help us to avoid the difficulties arising out of the possibility maintained with the continuity of character and memory when a drastic change has taken place to the person consequent upon the death of the person ? What meaning can be attached to death so as to make this continuity of memory intelligible ? (4) The most important consideration is even if memory and continuity of character be taken as the criteria of personal identity, can memory be taken as the primary and an infallible criterion ? These are some of the problems that demand serious consideration .

(ii) The legitimacy of Memory claims:

The problems here are, how to make sure that the memory claim is a verifiable one, how to deal with the problem of reduplication of personality and how to distinguish between the memory claim of the person allegedly reborn etc.

Suppose the present John claims to have remembered what he says to be his past events when he was supposedly born as James. Can we say that his memory claim is valid? How can it be proved to be valid at all? To say that some one has certain experience is not to say that there is enough reason to believe that he had actually these experiences. As Ayer says, to say that someone had "certain experience is not to give any reason why one's statements should be believed; and the fact that it may in certain cases be accompanied by images or feelings of a special kind does not, on the face of it, make such a statement any more credible"<sup>17</sup>. This statement indicates that some one's statement regarding his memory claim can be doubted. Of course it is clear that one cannot claim deductive certainty in case of memory claim like 'I remember that I did

this' and so on. This cannot also be done on the basis of inductive reasoning. It cannot be generalised that whenever I had there and these experiences I was the same person always ? It seems no such inductive proof is warranted here. How then the memory claim is to be made valid ? Two things are involved here . One must be sure that there is continuity of the memory knowledge and the memory claim of the person is publicly verifiable to establish that I who now recollects such and such experience really had such experience in my past life. The question now is, is any public check of that sort possible ? I think this is not an impossibility. The possible way to meet this objection is to sort out certain characteristics and to see if such characteristics were really found in the person. This can be done by a person narrating the past history of the dead person. If a single case is found where a person successfully describes the characters, personal peculiarities of the deceased person then we cannot have a serious objection against this hypothesis . This can be further verified by the past records if available . Thus, as it appears to me the possibility of verifying the memory claim publicly is not ruled out.



The most serious problem is the possibility of reduplication. B.A.O. Williams<sup>18</sup> has put the problem in a different manner. Let us take an imaginary case. Suppose after the death of John three different persons  $J_1$ ,  $J_2$  and  $J_3$  start recollecting John's experiences of the past life exactly in the same way, they go on manifesting John's personal traits, start talking in the same manner remembering John's important past events. What shall we do then? Shall we say that John survives as all these persons? The problem has been aptly put by, Derek Parfit in discussing Wiggin's example of divided brains. Parfit asks .

" What about our third assertion that I survive as both people ?

It might be said, If survive implies identity this description makes no sense you cannot be two people . If it does not, the description is irrelevant to a problem of identity"<sup>19</sup>. The case of reduplication of persons is of course different from Wiggin's problem . His problem is how to identify a person when the brain of a person is dissected to two different parts and transplanted to two different persons . Our case of life - continuation hypothesis in the demythologised view

is slightly different . We are concerned here with an exact criterion for determining the genuine reincarnated person where the reduplication arises. of course  $J_1$ ,  $J_2$  and  $J_3$  might appear in different bodies or in almost similar bodies . Can we, in this case, take their bodily differences to be the determining factor ? What to do if all of them have similar bodies ?

I think in this case certain practical considerations have to be taken into account for identification of the genuine case of rebirth from amongst other similar cases. What sort of practical consideration is required then ? It seems that more consistent and numerous memory claims by the persons reborn won't be sufficient to take a decision regarding identification in this case as all these persons can make equal claim. But then what practical considerations are required ? We might conceive of certain test cases in the form of certain stimuli given to  $J_1$ ,  $J_2$  and  $J_3$  etc. to study their reactions. It is quite conceivable that to such a situation the three persons might react differently, even if they go on making

similar memory claims. Through another test also it can be seen how the persons behave in case of a moral or spiritual crisis. There might of course be other such considerations . Let us suppose that in a moral crisis , i.e. whether or not to give protection to one's own brother for the offence he has committed,  $J_1$ 's reaction is more akin to James' than John's then  $J_2$  and  $J_3$  then I think that might be a deciding factor in favour of  $J_1$ . But supposing there is such a possibility when in some situation  $J_2$  and in other situations  $J_3$ 's reactions are more akin to James' reactions . How are we to take a decision here ? This I think does not pose a stupendous problem here. In such a situation one might watch their reactions to different situations at different times and if in maximum number of cases  $J_1$ 's behaviours show more similarity to John's then there may not be any difficulty giving our decisions in favour of  $J_1$  . However, the most important criterion upon which even these practical considerations fall back on the public

check . How can  $J_1$ 's reactions be compared to John's. There must be somebody to compare. Thus this awaits some sort of personal or institutional scrutiny ( i.e. through records etc.). Such a check may not be physically possible at times, but this is at least conceivable .

If a single case is found where such a check and scrutiny is possible then we can establish the legitimacy of the memory claim . The hypothesis on which the demythologised view stands is the continuation of memory and character. We have not taken this theory for granted. Nothing has to be taken for granted so far as the philosophical explanation is concerned . To take anything for granted is to fall prey to a sort of essentialism which Wittgenstein rejected . A student of philosophy cannot aspire to solve a problem as philosophy does not aim at solving a problem. In this context the demythogised view is not accepted without scrutiny. We have exposed this doctrine and severe criticisms and problems and it has been seen that inspite of all these problems the hypothesis of the life-continuity hypothesis can be maintained. The credit of this hypothesis lies in salvaging the Karma hypothesis from unnecessary metaphysical burden or cramp.

Thus one of the authors on this problem propounding compatibility of Buddhistic theory of no-soul with the operation of the Karma doctrine remarks:

" Buddhism advocates a moral order and yet does not talk of a moral governor. It talks of the continuity of the human agent but never advocates an unfalsifiable spiritual entity that continues amidst all vicissitudes. He talks of a value-centric ideal oriented religion but never he talks of a God or God-head. He preferred silence where he found it meaningless or useless to talk of many unwanted things and was apprehensive of its leading to useless metaphysical deliberations. He was a practical thinker. Buddha was out and out an analyst instead of being a metaphysician and that was the way to his revolutionary ideas".<sup>20</sup>

The problem of personal identity, particularly in the context of Buddhism is an intricate one. It is very difficult to project an adequate analysis to such a hypothesis,

no doubt . But one thing is quite remarkable here that the Buddhistic doctrine of rebirth, which is squarely responsible for the demythologised view, is quite modern in its outlook. So to say, it makes the person a publicly observable entity, not to the enigmatic occult existence. Ofcourse it would be an overstatement to say that Buddhism like Ryle was advocating logical behaviourism only . But atleast it is certain that in understanding a person through the interlocking of character traits, both mental and physical dispositions Buddha does not invite any mysticism to the realm of philosophy . Thus the demythologised view of the Karma doctrine, is atleast capable of projecting a viable alternative .

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C H A P T E R-4

THE DEMYTHOLOGISED VIEW AND THE  
RECENT PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE.

CHAPTER- 4

The Demythologised view and the recent  
Philosophical perspective:

In the previous chapter we have elaborately discussed the philosophical implications of the demythologised explanation of Karma .We have also considered the intricate problems relating to the question of self-identity. It might however be argued against this standpoint that it cannot adequately explain the problem of continuity of the moral agent which probably could have been better explained with the viewpoint advocated by the traditional metaphysical way of thinking of Advaita vedanta . In our previous discussions we have elaborately considered the Buddhistic standpoint and its various ramifications. We have exposed this doctrine to various crucial tests, but we have not given proper justice to the alternative standpoint of the Bhagavad Gita, Samkhya and Vedanta etc.. In what follows, I shall place the opponent's cards on the table for a close scrutiny and atleast show how our demythologised

view has relevance in the philosophical perspective that has gained ground in the thoughts of the western philosophers.

The Alternative stand point:

(a) The Bhagavad Gitā:

In course of my discussion, particularly in the second chapter I have placed the view point of the opponent to some extent, particularly when I have referred to the official doctrine of the metaphysician as has been ventilated by B. Kar. However, I have not adequately articulated this standpoint. This viewpoint, as it appears, has a clear Upanisadic origin. But the upanishadic idea of a spiritual soul-substance is just like a snowball which has swelled in the pages of the Bhagavad Gitā as it advanced. In a sense the Bhagavad Gita may be regarded as the quintessence of the Upanisads. In fact this has been highlighted by its staunch adherents at a later times. The Gita can be read from various angles no doubt. The problem that engages us seriously here is the problem of self-identity. The concept of a moral action

presupposes a moral agent and the moral agent is one who must bear the sense of responsibility and on this ground he must be a free agent. But who is this agent who carries the moral desert with him after the action is done and before the result has used? Is it the body or the mind or soul? Western philosophers do not draw a line of demarcation between soul and mind though they clearly distinguish body from mind. The Gita postulates a clear dualism between body and mind. When Arjuna, the representative of the moral agents expresses his sense of anguish in the apprehension of the great massacre of the human race he has been consoled that the conscientious person should not be at a loss at this critical juncture. Actually no one is born or dead. 'Death', birth etc. are languages applicable to the human body. The language of the person is quite different from the language of the body. Thus the Gītā says:-

" He is not born, nor does he ever die; after having been, He again ceases not to be; nor the reverse unborn, eternal, unchangeable and primeval, He is not slain, when the body is slain." <sup>1</sup>

From the above discourse it is quite evident that according to the Bhagavad Gitā a person is not what we meet. A person is the soul. This idea of the soul is quite evident in a later chapter when it is claimed that if a person breaths his last at the time of his severe penance for self purification and moral attainment his efforts are not completely lost. In his next birth he starts again in his path of sadhana where he ended in his past life . The Bhāgavad Gita, as it appears, accepts the concept of the transmigration of the soul. The soul, after the dissolution of the physical body, carries the moral desert with it. Obviously it accepts memory as the criterion of personal identity. We have seen previously in our discussion on Buddhism that self identity is based on the criterion of memory and character continuity. The Bhagavad Gitā, however sticks to the continuity of memory only. None of them insist upon the spatial continuity as it is held by some of the modern thinkers on the problem. We shall see later on that the doctrine

of the self raises a lot of problems. It makes the hypothesis completely mystical . But prior to that let me consider other views on the problem; the Sāmkhya view and the view of Advaita vedanta .

(b1) The Sāmkhya:

Sāmkhya Philosophy, as is well known draws a dichotomy between purusa and Prakrti. Purusa is the self, the subject, the soul, the enjoyer of all Fruits of action. This purusa or pure consciousness is independent of the Prakrti which is unconscious, productive and ever active principle. The point for consideration here is the concept of the self. Sāmkhya is not as vociferous about the concept of rebirth etc. as other systems of Indian Philosophy. However, it is quite obvious that Sāmkhya like the other sister-systems maintain a two world theory of body and soul and the idea of the survival after bodily death . The purusa is in bondage due to its wrong association with the physical qualities and it goes on in the cycle of birth and rebirth as long as the sense of discrimination does not dawn upon it .

From the above exposition of the samkhya view the idea of the self-identity becomes crystal clear . To put it in a straightforward manner this idea of self is quite different from the demythologised view of Buddhism. A person according to Sāmkhya is recognisable through its bodily attributes no doubt, but pure consciousness as different from the bodily qualities constitutes the nature of the self. So far as the body is concerned Sāmkhya admits gross physical body and a subtle body. The gross physical body is born of the parents. Even Sāmkhya speculates that the different parts of the body come from father and mother separately. Besides the gross physical body Sāmkhya accepts a subtle body ( Suksma sarira)<sup>2</sup>. When the grossbody dismantles due to death the subtle body carries the characters and dispositions. Samkya conceives of a Suksma Sarira as distinguished from the gross material body. Explaining the nature of Suksma Sarira Isvarakrishna says in Sāmkhya Karika " The emergent body (Suksma Sarira)

formed Prime valley, unconfined, lasting, compared of will and the rest down to rudimentary elements migrates, is devoid of experiences and is invested with dispositions". (Sāmkya Karika, 40).

This concept brings in a number of difficulties because Samkya points out that this Suksma Sarira is evolved out of Prakrti and dissolved at the time of Pralaya . If its originating source is Prakrti (matter) then it is very difficult to account for its association with the soul. The Suksma Sarira claimed to be the carrier of disposition, will, the 'I-principle', is inconsistent because it is very difficult to recognise the 'I-Principle' bereft of bodily continuity as ordinarily understood. If this is so the idea of a non-Physical soul substance, suppose to be the bearer of personal identity or the subject of transmigration, can not stand . And the concept of Suksma Sarira can not improve the situation either. For if as Mohapatra shows Spatio-temporal continuity of the body is the Primary crīterion of personal identity with the non-physical soul but must emerge from the gross matter then the concept of Suksma Sarira will be superfluous, unnecessarily duplicating

the gross material body . On the contrary if the Suksma Sarira has to be distinguished from the gross material body and is not to be considered as spatial then it will be no different from the suppose non-physical Soul substance and as such would lead to unnecessary metaphysical complication. For in that case we would be sifting the problem from the body/soul dualism to the body/Suksma Sarira dualism.

(12.1) The Vedantic position:

If the Bhagavad Gita can be said to be the quintessence of the upanisads. Vedanta, particularly the Advaita Vedanta is said to be the quintessence of all the metaphysical systems. Samkaracharya, the exponent of the Advaita Vedanta admits at the outset that the individual soul and the Brahman are one and the same <sup>3</sup>. Thus from an ultimate stand point he eliminates the purusa-prakrti dichotomy of the Samkhya though he admits the knower-known, subject-object the enjoyer-enjoyed distinction, from a Vyavaharika level . From this practical standpoint the soul is called jiva as the language of living is applied to it.

Ofcourse the conception of ajiva is the result of the limiting adjuncts which is again the outcome of ignorance ( avidya). This soul is nothing but the pure consciousness. " The self is the pure consciousness. The object is unconsciousness. The one is the ultimate 'I'; the other is the non-I' . Neither these two nor their attributes can be identified".<sup>4</sup> The soul transmigrates from one body to another at death. Thus it is clear that both Vedanta Samkhya vindicate the idea of a soul which is beyond the idea of a Physical body. This soul is pure consciousness and hence a spiritual substance. For Sankar self is empirically real but transcendently ideal. It is empirically real in the sense that the soul appears existing as finite limited self because of its association with the body which is a product of ignorance but from the transcendental point of view it is identical with the Absolute. The self is identical with Brahman. It is not the body, the ego, or the mind. It does not have any qualities so it is beyond description and definition. The very essence of self is pure existence, pure consciousness and pure bliss. It is self luminous and transcends the trinity of knower, known and knowledge. The Jiva or the self is Brahman . To say that Jiva

becomes Brahman is only a verbal statement (Upācarmatra) as has been mentioned in the Brahadranaya- Bhasya . After death of the individual the Jiva transmigrates into a new body. The nature of the body is determined by his past thoughts, desires and deeds (Karma). Sankar gives utmost importance to the nature of thought that comes to the mind and the person at the time of his death. According to him the cycle of Samsar is regulated by Karma.<sup>5</sup>

Ramanuja's concept of soul is different from that of Sankar. It is a mode (Prakāra) of God and forms part of His body. Though soul is a spiritual substance yet it is portrayed as the body of God. As a mode, Jiva derives its being from Brahman (Suarupasrita), it is controlled by its will ( Sankalpa Srita) and depends on it absolutely ( atmikā Snayatva). So Jiva derives its substantivity from Brahman, depends on his will. So Jiva is called the Sarira of Brahman

which is called a Saririn. The individual soul though postulated to be body of Soul, it is not to be mistaken as the physical body of the man. It is clearly stated that the soul is different from its body, sense-organs, mind, vital breath and even cognition. It is a self-luminous substance, a self-conscious subject. Although the nature of the self is eternal, real, which is uncreated and therefore imperishable yet it is finite because it is a mode of God.

It appears that Ramanuja's explanation of nature of self is not as logical as that of Sankar because Ramanuja conception of self is a result of picture-thinking of a God whose body is constituted of the individual souls of men. In a way Ramanuja is more metaphysical in his outlook than Sankar .

Again Visistadvaitic view that individual soul is a Prakara (Mode) of Brahman and yet it has its own existence being uncreated as undestroyed appears paradoxical because the same Jiva is discussed as a substance as well as mode .

Ramanuja says that God is the superintendent of the law of Karma . He is also the inner controller (niyanta) of soul. God's superintendence in the domain of Karma does not effect the freedom of will of the individual. God does not interfere with the karmic process. So Ramanuja brings a reconcillation between Divine Sovereignty and freedom of will of the individual.

I shall, at present examine this idea of spiritual substance taken as the carrier of moral desert. This theory needs a special consideration on account of two very important reasons which evoked considerable reflection by the contemporary philosophers. The first idea is the idea of spiritual substance called soul or mind and the second is the idea of survival and disembodied existence . Traditionally it is held that after death the soul takes rest for sometime in the state of disembodied existence and then it is reborn in another body. Thus a person may survive his physical death through another physical (embodied) state or he may continue to survive in an eternal state of disembodied existence. Whatever may be the nature of survival the idea of

disembodied existence, at least for the short time when the soul moves from one body to another, is necessarily implied. Therefore the traditional theorist believes in survival, reincarnation and resurrection etc, when I shall describe as the survival hypothesis, involve not only the belief in non-physical spiritual substance but also the belief of the same undergoing disembodied existence at some stage or other.

An examination of the spiritual  
substance theory:

This idea which hails from the Brahminical tradition in India and Descartes in the West is a much talked of doctrine. It has been attacked by the recent day thinkers on many fronts .

Gilbert Ryle, for example, takes it to be the 'dogma of the ghost in the machine'<sup>6</sup> and A.J. Ayer attack it on the ground of unfalsifiability.<sup>7</sup>

In recent times strawson's criticisms arrest our attention, criticising the cartesian dualism that souls are different from bodies strawson remarks,

" If I were to suggest that when the man , Professor X, speaks, there are a thousand souls simultaneously thinking

the thoughts his words express, having qualitatively indistinguishable experience such as he, the man, would currently claim, how would he persuade me that there was only one such soul ? (How would each indignant soul once the doubt has entered, persuade it self of its unigueness)" <sup>8</sup> ?

This difficulty is inevitable in any theory that takes the person to be purely non-physical without any physical basis . Strawson therefore suggests the ' one body - one person' theory to overcome this difficulty.

The most important point in this context is that if the immaterial soul substance be taken as the real person concept <sup>9</sup> to which mental and physical predicates are ascribed then it must be understood along with the logical geograpy of the concept ' Person' . That is, it must be understood that if the immaterial soul substance is taken as the person then we must have to apply such ideas as ' a person, is born, a person grows', ' a person meets its decay' ' a person establishes interpersonal relation' with others' etc. to the soul ( the spiritual substance ). But the concept of soul, as it stands, cannot be understood in this way either in the Vedantic or in the Cartesian tradition.

We cannot surely say that the pure consciousness thinks or acts or lives and dies or establish contact etc.. Again, where the idea of the soul can never be intelligible without the body there to talk of the soul surviving the physical annihilation is meaningless. It might of course be argued that the concept of immaterial soul is to be understood beyond both ' body' and mind and therefore the idea ' soul survives death ' might also be intelligible. But how can in that case the idea of rebirth be meaningful if it is not held that certain characters or dispositions of the deceased persons continue in the present one ? These characters and dispositions are meaningful in the context of body or body mind complex. If what continues is purely non-physical something then it is probably meaningless to talk of the continuity of characters or dispositions in a re incarnated state. I do not want to level the well known traditional charges against this soul and body dualism which has been the seat-ancher of all metaphysical puzzles. The idea of soul hiding it self some where in the body leads to the problems of very critical character. If again the idea of soul is taken to be synonymous with

mind the further problem would be should we take this idea to be absolutely separate from the brain. There are philosophers identifying mind and brainstates, what to do about them ? These are some of the very critical consideration for which the theory of the spiritual soul substance can not be maintained at all. We come across more serious problems in the context of the survival hypothesis. In what follows I shall ponder a while on the survival hypothesis.

The survival hypothesis examined:

The traditional thinkers both of East and West pindown their faith in the idea of survival after death. It is ordinarily believed that a person survives his bodily annihilation on account of the fact that the soul is immortal. This idea of survival has been held to be self contradictory by Antony Flew, who says:

" because we use the word 'death' and 'survival' and their distinctives in such a way that the classification of the crew of terpedoed ship into dead and survivors is both exclusive and exhaustives every member of the crew, that is to say must (logical 'must') have either died or survived, and no member of the crew could (logical could) have both died and survived" 10

The reason why Flew takes this to be self-contradictory is that the idea of human personality can be understood only through certain behaviour or functions, otherwise, how could it be understood at all ? And if human personality is to be understood in this way it makes no sense to say that human personality survives the dissolution of the body. Thus Flew takes the survival hypothesis to be meaningless on the ground that a person means the body only. Those who accept a metaphysical entity called soul accept a surreptitious existence of another entity which can not stand the test of verification at all.

Another defense to the survival hypothesis has been offered by Professor G.C. Nayak on a different ground. He maintains,

" It is of course true that in death the change that occurs to a person is unique in so far as it involves the total dissolution of his body, but if the continuity of his character, dispositions and memory, that is to say the continuity of his mental life may, without contradiction be conceived as obtaining after the destruction of his body, then there would be no reason why we cannot say that the person concerned may survive the death of his body ".<sup>11</sup>

This is the earlier position of Professor Nayak though at a later stage he conceives of the continuity of some sort of the subtle body after death. This subtle body is the Sukṣmasarira as conceived of by Samkhya. The subtle body is different from the gross physical body or an astral body. It can be conceived as continuing as the Physical basis of the soul in its pre-rebirth state.<sup>12</sup>

P.K. Mohapatra<sup>13</sup> discusses the concept survival and memory in connection with Nayak's view of Survival where he has maintained that though memory can be a sufficient condition of personal identity, it can not stand out as an independent criteria. He argues that memory can be a criteria of personal identity only if the rememberer and dour of action are logically continuous . Otherwise Mohapatra argued, there would be nothing to distinguish genuine memory from mere memory claim or seeming to remember. In other words bodily continuity is the Primary Criteria of personal

identity and memory as a Criteria of identity can only be meaningful by depending on the physical continuity of the person. So also disembodied survival is to be understood in the secondary sense. Without a physical basis , disembodied existence is a misnomer. Referring to Wittgenstein and Shoemaker about the concept of 'general fact of nature ' Mohapatra says that there are connected with what he calls the ' Semantic feature' of language. This semantic Feature of language as he explains, is that a particular statement, if it is to be made and understood as a memory statement, then it must satisfy the certain semantic condition- The condition is that the words ' I remember.....must be uttered by persons and this must be correlated with certain happenings in their past. This correlation is possible where bodily continuity is available . This semantic condition is lacking in the case of disembodied existence or survival. Where bodily continuity is in principle not sufficient for identify the person. Nayak's idea of Suksma Sarira, if it is to be Shaken of from the physical body with its spatio temporal features,

cannot serve our purpose. We have already seen what serious problems the concept *Suksma Sarira*, as the supposed bearer of personal identity, needs to and how it generates unnecessary metaphysical complication ( see page 117 above).

What we have learnt from the above views of ' survival hypothesis' ? We have got three clear views on the subject. According to the first view, the idea of disembodied survival is clearly self-contradictory. According to another the hypothesis of disembodied survival can stand if sufficient empirical evidences can be adduced in support of the hypothesis. The third view is that the hypothesis of such a survival is quite intelligible if it is logically possible to maintain a dualistic hypothesis either of body, mind or of body, soul or of body and suksmasarira. What I want to point out here is that such a hypothesis is loaded with metaphysical burdens and consequently this hypothesis either cannot be maintained or that it does not fare better than the demythologised<sup>4</sup> view we have discussed.

On a casual glance on the above views it can be easily seen that this hypothesis rests on the assumption that what survives the final annihilation of the present physical body is either soul or mind or a subtle body carrying with it certain memory experiences or certain dispositions of the pre-death existence. So far as the idea of person surviving the bodily annihilation as a mental existence is concerned the simple question would be how can the continuity of mental dispositions memory etc. be conceived without the continuity of any physical basis, i.e., the body or more specifically, without the continuity of the brain of that person which is supposed to have been destroyed at the time of death ? Is this position intelligible ? To say that I am at this stage able to remember things, that being irritated at this stage behaving very roughly with my wife or that I am showering all my affections etc. is to presuppose that my brain functions normally. Of course through this argument I am not

going to subscribe to the view that brain and mind are same and identical, nor am I going to propound an internal theatre beyond the mental events. I also do not deny that memory continuity is a very important criterion of personal identity in case of rebirth. What I want to assert here is that the hypothesis of a spiritual substance theory lands us in enormous difficulties. For example, we have to answer a voly of questions regarding the soul hypothesis. If at all this hypothesis is accepted our first question would be, how to account for the fact that from one parents a number of children are born . How to account for the growth of population ? Are we to accept in that case that the souls are divisible ? How can the spiritual substance be divided at all ? There is also another serious difficulty in this connection. According to the survival hypothesis after the death of the body the soul rests

for a while in the preincarnated stage after which it is again reborn with the characters and dispositions of the past person . Now the question is, where does the soul remain ? Since it does not enjoy physical existence it must enjoy a unique existence. Thus we see that our problems multiply and I am afraid, we cannot find a solution to this problem .

Thus what I want simply to show is that without continuity of this present life and its characters either in this form or in a different form the problem of rebirth cannot be intelligible. The soul-survival hypothesis will invite more problems than solving them. We have seen how the demythologised view has been exposed to severe criticism regarding the memory claim etc. It may be observed here that the spiritual-substance theory also can not meet the problem of self-identify and the legitimacy of the memory claim. What follows from the above discussion is that the idea of

mind or soul surviving the bodily extinction seems to be untenable. One thing must also be noticed here that the rejection of the dualistic hypothesis does not force us to accept the physicalistic hypothesis, for example Carvaka, hypothesis . Regarding the hypothesis of the survival at the disembodied state, I can imagine that my body is lying dead on the cremation ground, my family members are arranging for my funeral. So many events are happening and I am witnessing my own funeral. Well, this can be imagined no doubt . But does my imagination bring any coherence to the whole logic of disembodied existence ?

The demythologised hypothesis, however , fares better compared to the soul- substance or the disembodied existence hypothesis . For our hypothesis does not search for a mystical

entity behind the appearance of a person. Actually all metaphysical problems start once we entertain the soul-substance theory. But once we understand person in terms of character and dispositions we are atleast free from the charge of unfalsifiability . I do not make any tall claim regarding my own position as I am quite conscious of my own lapses. But what I have done is an humble attempt to understand the gamut of the problem in a clearer perspective which will present the facts in a less indefinite way .

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C H A P T E R - V

C O N C L U S I O N .

CHAPTER-V

CONCLUSION :

As human beings we come across various problems in our life. Certain problems captivate us so intensely that we need solution to these problems. We ask why questions or how questions in order to seek solutions to our problems. Admitted, science comes to our rescue in our day to day affairs of life. The Philosopher no doubt is interested in these questions but the answer he gives to them are of some what different character. As R.S. Peters points out.

" A scientific question, for instance, is one that can be answered by certain kinds of procedures in which observation and experiment play a crucial part. But the clarification and discussions of the concepts used and of how they have meaning, and of the procedures by means of which these questions are answered, is a philosophical enquiry "<sup>1</sup>. This discussion clearly indicates the line of demarcation between science and philosophy . The role of the scientist and the philosopher being distinguished the

task of a student of philology becomes quite easier. In this work, I have seen a problem in human affairs. The problem with which I have been concerned here is a universal problem in the sense that it concerns everybody . It is the problem of human inequality, particularly the suffering of the virtuous and the prosperity of the wicked. I am quite conscious of the task of a scientist as distinguished from the task of a philosopher. Consequently I came to the conclusion that the applications of the scientific method could not help us in solving this problem as no sufficient evidence could be offered to state pinpointedly as to why there should be a difference in human affairs at all . Ultimately I had to fall back upon a hypothesis which is quite different from a scientific hypothesis . I have also shown here this problem could not have been satisfactorily explained with the help of sociology or Medical sciences as they also being to the realms of physical sciences. Moreover, no scientific solution through cause-effect relation is

possible . This problem has been approached from various angles of vision and even the path in which I have been travelling sofar is not a quite untrodden path . Scholars have sought solution to this problem and they have found the Doctrine of Karma , as it is advocated in Indian Philosophical systems, to be a tenable hypothesis to anser to the problem of human disparity. The Doctrine of Karma or Karmavada as it is popularly known, advocates as you sow so shall you reap, I have chosen this conceptual framework for my problem. Ofcourse the choice from my side was not arbitrary. It was based upon the Criterion of adequacy and satisfactoriness which was not available otherwise .

The purpose of this work is not to give an exposition of the doctrine which any text book on Indian philosophy has done . My intention has been to provide a critical exposition in order to highlight some of the crucial problems that demand serious attention by a student trained in the methods of philosophical

thinking . This prompted me to see the development of the concept in the philosophical traditions of India. I found that germinating as the Rta concept, which was considered in the Vedas to be the principle of orderliness and harmony and proliferating itself in different forms. The Karma doctrine was finally accepted as the basis of moral life or in other words, a presupposition of moral life. My exposition no doubt has been sketchy due to different reasons. First of all the doctrine is so vast and extensive in its dimension that to give an elaborate treatment to the exposition is an arduous task and within the short span of this small work it is very difficult to do justice to the exposition of a topic of this type. The second reason is that I have been concerned with only certain aspects of the problem for this dissertation . However, within the limit of this sketchy exposition I have tried to bring the different streams of thought on the problem. I have shown that the doctrine owes its inception to the Rta concept of the Vedas. After the Vedas the

doctrine takes different shapes in the hands of different metaphysical systems of India. It is definitely a matter for philosophical discussion whether law must have a law giver. Some contemporary thinkers do not accept this argument. They are of the view that the idea of law presupposing a law giver is applicable to prescriptive laws , not the natural laws .<sup>2</sup> Thus one must be careful while presupposing a law giver in any law. Many advocates of the theistic view of Karma have not taken note of this point . They have rather vindicated the belief that there must be a superintendent of Karma . As against this view the adherents of the nontheistic and secular view of Karma have taken it as a law or presupposition without a superintendent. Ofcourse I do not intend to point out that the non-theistic or the demythologised view is the only and absolute approach . I have laboured through this work to provide that the non-theistic approach also satisfactorily explains the phenomenon in question.

While concentrating on this important problem I was also occupied with the problems like the logical status of the doctrine. Well, to many a scholars it has been taken either as a casual law such as Newtonian law of action and reaction. Even some of the recent day thinkers, Potters<sup>3</sup> for example, have interpreted it as a Naturalistic principle. It is very easy to term it as a causal law seeing it from a distance. But a close scrutiny does not reveal it to be so. The reason is obvious. One can think of a causal relation between two events either if they are invariably related or if one invariably succeeds the other. This is the empirical order. But so far as Karma doctrine is concerned it does not claim to have established or atleast does not aim at establishing any such causal relation since it has been our finding that Karma and Karma phala are not related necessarily. We cannot exactly locate the action responsible for the present sin like corruption, murder etc. Thus a close consideration of the relation between Karma and Karmaphala vis-a-vis the logical status of the doctrine of karma reveals that the doctrine is not

empirical in character. One may take it to be a 'trans-  
empirical doctrine'<sup>4</sup>. In other words, it is taken  
as a presupposition of moral life. I do not  
claim finality here, nor do I claim that this  
is the only possible view on the logic that  
falls beyond the scope of any reasonable  
doubt. But, I strongly subscribe to the view  
that Karma doctrine cannot be taken as an  
explanatory hypothesis. Apparently, it might  
look to be an explanatory hypothesis but it  
has been clarified above that for from explaining  
any fact or event it is not an empirical law  
at all.

The hypothesis no doubt raises a  
number of issues. For example, a crucial  
problem in this context is the problem of  
the Karmic agent.

who actually is the agent of action ? Not only that the logical demand of the Karma doctrine is that the agent of the action and the person. The sinner sufferer identity is the minimum demand of the doctrine. For me, this was the crux of the problem, ofcourse I am aware of various crucial issues associated with the problem such as the principle of justice or the principle of individual freedom-vis-a-vis the all encompassing Karma doctrine. The paradox is that if all our present actions and behaviours are determined by the past actions then the obvious problem would be is Karma doctrine a deterministic doctrine ? In that case human freedom becomes a misnomer and once this is allowed to be so the entire moral scheme would fall to the ground. This is a very serious problem which I have not considered in the pages of this dissertation. I have omitted this consciously in view of the short span of the work. Instead, I have attempted at paying

full attention to one of the problems. The problem for me in this treatise is the problem of self-identity in the context of Karma .

The problem arises when we assume the sinner-sufferer identity. The question with which I was deeply concerned was how to deal with the problem of identity in case of survival. Needless to say that the Karma doctrine is associated with the hypothesis of Rebirth , though, to my mind the relation is not a logical one . I am one with those who do not subscribe to the view that Karma doctrine is necessarily related to the Rebirth hypothesis. However, the problem of self-identity cannot be avoided here. So far as the present bodily existence of the person is concerned there appears to be no obvious problem. But the problem needs serious attention when the question of existence in a reincarnated existence appears . At the outset, I have given a brief exposition of the two contending metaphysical models; one traditional and other the demythologised view. By the traditional

view I have specifically meant the Brahminical tradition. This tradition highlights the importance of the concept of soul as against body. A study of the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahminical texts reveal the dichotomy of the mental and physical. Thus the concept of a person in the conceptual system is restricted to a conscious existence. As Descartes in the West had held that the real existence is the mental existence, the Brahminical system also holds the belief that the soul, as distinguished from mind and body is the real person. It is called purusa or that which dwells in the heart of a psychophysical organism. This hypothesis leads to the further conclusion that what carries the reminiscence of the past activities is the soul .

As against this the demythologised view takes a different position. I have stated my own reason for borrowing the expression demythologised view ' from John Hick, a contemporary philosopher of Religion. To my mind, the Karma Doctrine is free from the bondage of the metaphysical myth. By metaphysical myth I mean such concepts like God and soul. I

have shown that Karma hypothesis can stand independently of these metaphysical burdens. The doctrine can still be meaningful without these metaphysical stipulations. Moreover, once it is freed from the metaphysical stigma the actual logical status of the Karma hypothesis can be clearly defined and also its independence.

After having given the exposition of the demythologised view I have attempted to bring to focuss the salient features of the theory including the rejection of the idea of soul. This idea of soul to my mind is the result of a mystic belief. Man is enamoured of the mystic beliefs and ideas since they all transcend his thought and action. One can of course say that mysticism has its own logic as metaphysics has its own logic too. Russell terms this belief as a 'mystic insight'. As he says,

" The mystic insight begins with the sense of mystery unvailed, of a hidden wisdom now suddenly become certainty and revelation comes earlier than any definite belief".<sup>5</sup>

The belief that there is a soul in the body or that the soul survives the annihilation of the body in which it resides is an outcome of this fancy for mysticism. We take it for granted that there is a soul that unites all experiences. Ofcourse Kant accepts it as a principle of transcendental unity of apperception at least on logical grounds.<sup>6</sup> But to seek for the existence of a soul behind the experiences is to seek for a mystic element. That is exactly the reason why I have freed my philosophical pursuit from the metaphysical quest of a mysterious entity and have subscribed to the demythologised view .

In course of my treatment of this hypothesis I found the Buddhistic philosophy to be of immense help to me. Though Buddhism belongs to the Indian Philosophical tradition it is famous for its anti-metaphysical stand on the concept of soul. Buddhism, as is against any metaphysical hairsplitting . According to

Buddhism doctrine of Karma regulated as a whole. In Buddhistic texts it is stated again and again that being is subject to his deeds and inherits its effects either good or evil. Rebirth takes place without a permanent soul transmigrating into a new body, life persists due to Karma and appears in reincarnated forms depending on the deeds of previous existence . The concept of rebirth or reincarnation without posulating a permanent soul substance or transmigration is illustrated by the instance of a lamp. The previous existence transmigration . Just as a lamp is lighted from another and the light which highted ~~sees~~ only the necessary condition for setting light to the other . Rebirth is transmission of characterstics from one body to another . The flame of life continues although there is an apparent break at the time of death. The thought and characterstics of present is conditioned by the past life and conditions the fiture one. Life is determined by and depends upon the nature, characterstics and tendencies created by his thoughts. The whole series of existence is explained by the principle of dependent origination (Paticca samuppada) that being present this becomes, that not being present, this does not become.

About the identity of the reincarnated person Buddhist texts discuss with full detail and seriousness. King Milinda asks Nagasena ' He who is born, Nagasena, does he remain the same become another ?" To this question Nagasena answers that continuity is maintained without complete identity. It is name and form are cause of the reincarnated name and form. Hence the continuity of character is maintained by Buddhists to be the most important condition of personal identity . Whenever similarity is talked of it with regard to tendencies (Sanskaras), never about the rupa Shandha. Recognition and memory are also explained through the criteria of continuity and similarity. In the celebrated dialogue between king Milinda and Nagasena there has been an illuminating discussion on the problem to drive at the point that by a person we do not understand any mystic entity behind the different elements constituting a person . Beyond Nama and Rupa or the mental and physical characters one need not search for any extra-sensory existence since we cannot provide any empirical evidence in search of this quest. This

quest for the substantive existence of the mind or soul has its obvious difficulties . This problem has been exposed in clear terms by A.J. Ayer. As he points out-

" On any dualistic view an account is required of the way in which the mind is lodged in the body. Could there be one mind in a single body ? Could the same mind dwell in more than one body, at the same or different times ? If the relation is one to one, how are its terms Paired off ? How is it be decided which mind goes with which body ?....." <sup>7</sup>

These are some of the important problems that one has to encounter in subscribing to the substantive theory of a person. The difficulty is that one cannot give a satisfactory answer to all these problems . The Buddhistic concept of a person is free from this unnecessary metaphysical problems .

In order to highlight my view point I have devoted a portion of my dissertation in drawing a comparison between the traditional Brahminical idea of self-identity vis-a-vis the idea of no soul. I have Probed, though synoptically in to the idea of soul, in Samkhya, Vedanta and the Bhagavad Gitā . The most crucial problem with which I was occupied was the problem of survival. I have considered this problem from the prevailing analytical standpoint of Antony Flew and P.F. Strawson etc. It has been seen how the idea of soul surviving the dissolution of the physical body leads to self contradiction. The idea of the soul creates enormous problems besides the problems mentioned earlier by A.J. Ayer. Thus an examination of the idea of spiritual substance and the idea of the soul surviving the death of the physical body leads to unnecessary problems. Could it then be explained by the

hypothesis of a subtle body or suksma sarira ? Probably it could be. But then the obvious difficulty was how to account for the idea of a subtle body acting as the seat of the soul and carrying the moral deserts of the previous life to the present state of existence. The obvious problem in that connexion is the locus of the Suksma sarira. Does it reside in the body ? Does it reside in the mind ? How are we going to establish a relation between suksma sarira and also the soul ? Again are we to conceive of this substance as a viscuous substance that absorbs every human dispositions or mental modifications ? Moreover, this stipulation violates the law of parsimony in adding unnecessary burdens to the idea of survival. Thus I had attempted to expose the complete cessation of the present life. It is a break, a jerk for the continued existence. There has been serious objections against this

view and it has been argued that the Karma doctrine cannot stand with the Buddhistic hypothesis of rebirth. I have met these arguments and have pointed out that the doctrine of Karma is quite intelligible with this theory also.

However, I came across the most serious problem of the criterion of personal identity. How to account for the continuity of the person ? The crucial problem in this regard was to make the idea of continuity intelligible. How could any one conceive of the continuity of the same person even after death ? Buddhism has attempted a solution through similarity of the consecutive mental and physical states and their continuity. And when the question of continuity arises one might ask the question what continues ? The reply from Buddhism was that it was the continuity of memory and certain mental dispositions. But then two questions were

considered to be most important. The first question was is memory the sufficient criterion for personal identity ? Again how can we quarrante that the person remembers his past events correctly and that the memory upon which the entire theory rests is veridical in nature ? How can it be said that this memory is the memory of that particular person ? In course of my deliberation I also came across the problem of reduplication of personality etc. Apart from this the important problem was the problem of bodily continuity . It has been seen previously that unless the bodily continuity is accepted as the criterion of personal identity the memory claim of the alleged reincarnated person cannot be said to be veridical. I have referred to the view of Sydney shoemaker who says that to say that one is the same person it is necessary that he should be

observed for a particular or for a long period of time. In reply to this I have argued that if the reincarnated person bears resemblance of character and mental dispositions then one can say without much of difficulties that the reincarnated person is the same person as the previous one. Ofcourse resemblance as a criterion can be questioned but as Waisman points out that the word ' same ' is sometimes confusing and unclear and

" blurred, in the sense that we do not quite know whether or not to use the word. Is a church that has been restored after being destroyed by fire still the same church ? Is a wave that runs across the beach and overturns still the same wave ? Am I still the same person as when I used a toy ? The only answer to this is : say what you will ".<sup>8</sup>

Thus resemblance can be taken as the criterion of personal identity. How much resemblance is

needed to make the person as the same person is a big question . This removes the stigma of the bodily continuity. I do not deny the bodily continuity as a criterion altogether. What I intened to point out that after one body dismantles and reappears in a different form having similarity of character and mental dispositions. Regarding the authenticity of the memory claim I have pointed out that it is logically, though not sometimes empirically, possible to scrutinize the memory claim either through the presence of a particular person who might have observed the preincarnated person and the reincarnated person. This is also possible by investigating the records, if any, to corroborate the memory claim of the person. That is how I have justified the hypothesis I have undertaken for my study of the problem.

After having considered this problem at length through a critical and conceptnal exploration I have devoted a separate chapter

in order to bring out a comparative estimate of the two metaphysical models in order to test the plausibility of my hypothesis in the context of the recent philosophical perspective . I have exposed both the models to critical scrutiny. I have there by pointed out that the demythologised view stands the test of modern analytical development. I am sure that I have not subscribed to the identity theory of the physicalists advocated by D. M. Armstrong, U.T. place etc. or even by Cārvāka in India. I have, to some extent, sided with Gilbert Ryle in rejecting any tandem operation from the concept of person. My pursuit might be a manifestation of logical behaviourism, but I have established the point that persons are not exactly what we meet them to be but they are what they do and in consideration of this view we should not fall prey to any metaphysical stigma. That is how I consider my inquiry to be a fruitful one .

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B I B L I O G R A P H Y.

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