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A Brief Analysis of Jaina Karmavāda

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Abstract

The Jaina concept of Karma offers a distinctive framework for comprehending morality, the cycle of rebirth, and the pursuit of freedom integral to Jainism. Jainism views it as a concrete substance (*puḍgala*) that clings to the soul (*jīva*) and conceals its inherent attributes of infinite knowledge, perception, energy, and happiness. In the *Tattvārtha Sūtra*, Umasvati classifies Karma into eight categories: four destructive (*jñānāvāraṇīya*, *darśanāvāraṇīya*, *antarāya*, and *mohanīya*) and four non-destructive (*vedanīya*, *āyusya*, *nāma*, and *gotra*). The essay examines the karmic process (*asrava*, *bandha*, *saṃvara*, *nirjara*) and delineates ten karmic stages (*bandha*, *utkarṣaṇa*, *apakarṣaṇa*, *sattā*, *udaya*, *udīraṇā*, *saṅkramaṇa*, *upaśama*, *nidhatti*, *nikācanā*). This essay will analyse the significance of karmic stains (*leśyās*) and passions (*kaṣāyas*) as psychological dimensions of Karma. The central claim is that psychological states are not autonomous from karmic bondage; instead, they are deeply intertwined. This debate will juxtapose Jainism's "three jewels" (correct knowledge, faith, and behaviour) with the philosophies of Western intellectuals such as Kant, Green, and James, in contrast to fatalism. The Jains' pragmatic integration of determinism and free will via ethical behaviour and asceticism exemplifies their comprehensive perspective on moral agency and emancipation.

Keywords: Jainism, Karma, Mokṣa, Free Will

The Jaina doctrine of Karma is a fundamental principle of Jainism. It provides the key framework for comprehensive understanding of moral causation, the cycle of birth and reincarnation (*samsāra*), and the route to liberation (*mokṣa*). In contrast to other Indian philosophical systems that regard Karma as an abstract moral force, Jainism uniquely defines Karma as a subtle, material substance-like force (*puḍgala*) that clings to the soul (*jīva*), concealing its inherent attributes of infinite knowledge, perception, energy, and bliss (Jaini, 1979, p. 109; Tatia, 1951, p. 217). This idea emphasises personal responsibility, excluding any external divine interference, Jainism refutes the possibility of a creator god overseeing Karma (Glasenapp, 1999, p. 178).

Likewise in other Jain writings, Umasvati in his *Tattvārtha Sūtra* put Karma into eight main groups. These groups are called *ghatiya* or *Ghātika Karmas* (destructive) and *aghatiya* or *Aghātika Karmas* (non-destructive) (Tatia, 1951, p. 220).

Ghātika Karmas (Hurtful Karmas):

According to Jainism, infinite knowledge, perception, energy, and bliss these are the essential qualities of free soul. The following four type of karmas directly create obstruction for the free souls. These karmas obstruct spiritual advancement until they are eradicated. They are the principal obstacles to freedom (*mokṣa*) (Jain, 2019, p. 200).

1. *Jñānāvaraṇīya-Karma* (Knowledge-Inhibiting Karma): This karma impedes the soul's inherent omniscience (*ananta-jñāna*), limiting access to authentic knowledge. It functions like to clouds obstructing sunshine, obscuring the intelligence of the soul. There are five subtypes, each corresponding to the five kinds of knowledge. • *Mati-jñānāvaraṇīya*: Impedes empirical knowledge obtained from the senses and intellect. • *Śruta-jñānāvaraṇīya*: Obstructs scriptural knowledge derived from books and teachings. • *Avadhi-jñānāvaraṇīya*: this karma creates hindrance to clairvoyant awareness of remote or historical occurrences. • *Manaḥ-paryaya-jñānāvaraṇīya*: Obstructs the cognitive ability to perceive the ideas of others. • *Kevala-jñānāvaraṇīya*: Obstructs ultimate, boundless understanding. This karma originates from activities such as disregarding gurus, stifling information, or exhibiting intellectual hubris, which hinder spiritual enlightenment (Jain, 2019, pp. 201-202).
2. *Darśanāvaraṇīya-Karma* (Karma that inhibits perception or awareness): This karma obscures the soul's intuitive vision (*darśana*), which is essential for knowledge, similar to guards obstructing access to a chamber despite permission. It engenders a "blindness" to essential truths, resulting in illusion. Nine subcategories exist. • *Cakṣu-darśanāvaraṇīya*: Impedes the visual recognition of qualities in things. • *Acakṣu-darśanāvaraṇīya*: Impedes perception via the remaining four senses. • *Avadhi-darśanāvaraṇīya*: Restricts clairvoyant insight. • *Kevala-darśanāvaraṇīya*: Obstructs comprehensive perception. • *Nidrā-sāmānya*: Induces excessive normal sleep, reducing consciousness. • *Nidrā-nidrā*: Facilitates profound slumber, obstructing perception. • *Pracalā*: Induces little lethargy, akin to sleeping when seated. • *Pracalā-pracalā*: Induces profound lethargy, shown by inattentive ambulation. • *Styānagṛddhi*: Profound disillusionment facilitating arduous labour under illusions. The latter five create differing degrees of "sleep" or disillusionment, hindering reality (Jain, 2019, pp. 201-202).
3. *Antarāya-Karma* (Obstructive Karma): This karma engenders impediments to the enjoyment of rewards, notwithstanding one's abilities, functioning as a barrier to charity or acquisition. It depletes willpower and energy, hindering fulfilment. There are five subtypes: • *Dānāntarāya*: Impedes philanthropic contributions (e.g., desiring to contribute but encountering delays). • *Lābhāntarāya*: Hinders the acquisition of profits or advantages (e.g., forfeiting educational possibilities). • *Bhogāntarāya*: Obstructs the pleasure of assets (e.g., obtaining food but then losing it). • *Upabhogāntarāya*: Impedes recurrent use (e.g., constructing a residence but being unable to inhabit it). • *Vīryāntarāya*: Obstructs vitality or strength (e.g., health complications hindering athletic endeavours or ascetic practices). This karma originates from selfishness or jealousy, constraining both spiritual and worldly advancement (Jain, 2019, pp. 202-204).
4. *Mohanīya-Karma* (Karma Inducing Delusion): This powerful karma intoxicates the soul with desires, cultivating attachment (*rāga*) and aversion (*dveṣa*), resulting in erroneous ideas and behaviours. It is the foundation of all other *ghātika karmas* and sustains

samsāra. There are two primary forms, with a total of 28 subtypes. • *Darśana-mohanīya* (Delusion about perception): Impedes correct faith, including three subcategories: *mithyātva* (incorrect belief in false doctrines), *samyag-mithyātva* (mixed beliefs), and *samyaktva* (impure correct belief). • *Cāritra-mohanīya* (Delusion regarding conduct): Impedes ethical behaviour, categorised into *kaṣāya-cāritra-mohanīya* (16 subtypes derived from four passions—anger, ego, deceit, greed—each exhibiting four intensities: *anantānubandhī*, *apratyākhyānāvaraṇa*, *pratyākhyānāvaraṇa*, *saṃjvalana*) and *nau-kaṣāya-cāritra-mohanīya* (9 quasi-passions: *hāsya* [inappropriate laughter], *rati* [sensual pleasure], *arati* [displeasure], *śoka* [grief], *bhaya* [fear], *jugupsā* [disgust], *strīveda* [lust for females], *puruṣaveda* [lust for males], *napuṃsakaveda* [lust for non-binary]). *Mohanīya-karma* provokes detrimental behaviours and is the primary source of pain (Jain, 2019, pp. 204-205).

Aghātika Karmas (Non-Hurtful Karmas):

These four karmas don't change the basic qualities of the soul, but they do affect things like sensations, lifespan, body type, and social status. They go away on their own after they bear fruit, which makes it easier to get free from *ghātika karmas* (Jain, 2019, p. 200).

1. *Vedanīya-Karma* (Karma that causes physical experiences): This karma makes you feel good (*sātā*) or bad (*asātā*), both of which keep the soul in *samsāra*. Good experiences make people want to be with them, which leads to future sadness, while bad experiences come from harm. It is sweet but dangerous, like honey on a sword (Jain, 2019, p. 205).
2. *Āyusya-Karma* (Lifespan-Affecting Karma): This karma decides how long and where you will live (human, heavenly, hellish, or subhuman). It keeps the soul in a body until it is tired, which stops it from becoming immortal until it is shed (Jain, 2019, p. 206).
3. *Nāma-Karma* (Designation of the *Jīva's* Body-Type Karma): This determines the body's shape, species, appearance, and traits (like beauty, strength, and senses). It has 42 main subclasses that cover both physical and biological traits. These traits make the universe diverse, like a painter's different canvases (Jain, 2019, pp. 206-207).
4. *Gotra-Karma* (Clan of Birth Karma): This affects the social status and environment of people who are born into high (*ucca*, prosperous) or low (*nīca*, struggling) lineages (Jain, 2019, p. 207). *Gotra-Karma* decides agents' social position (Jaini, 1979, pp. 112-113). The Karmic process consists of four stages: *asrava* (the inflow of Karmic particles resulting from deeds), *bandha* (the bondage of Karma to the soul), *samvara* (the cessation of influx by ethical conduct), and *nirjara* (the release of bound Karma through austerities) (Tatia, 1951, pp. 223-226).

When all Karmas are gone, the soul can rise to *Siddha-loka*, a place of perpetual happiness (Glaserapp, 1999, p. 205). The Role of Motives and Psychological Factors the Jaina Karma concept is unique in that it focusses on the psychological or subjective side of deeds as well as their physical or objective side. According to Jaina philosophy, the fundamental concept of karma is the acceptance of its motive. Although the karma principle is unchanging, it is not deterministic; the same action might have different karmic consequences depending on the agent's intentions and the intensity of their emotions. (Jaini, 1979, p. 117). Somadeva

Suri's *Upasakadhyayana* talks about the narrative of *Tandulamatsya*, which makes this point very clear. In this story, a little fish (*Tandulamatsya*) lives in the ear (or eyebrow, depending on the version) of a bigger fish and watches as the bigger fish eats certain smaller fish but not others. The *Tandulamatsya*, on the other hand, has very angry thoughts and imagines that it would have eaten all the fishes without mercy if it had the chance. The *Tandulamatsya*'s evil intentions create bad Karma, which sends it to lower hells (possibly the seventh hell). This is a worse fate than that of the bigger fish, which actually committed violence (Somadeva Suri, *Upasakadhyayana*, pp. 141-142; see Jaini, 1979, p. 118). This emphasises that the Jaina ideology comprehensively addresses the psychological dimension of activities, countering assertions that it concentrates exclusively on exterior behaviours.

Karmic Stains (*Leśyās*):

Leśyās in Jain psychology is considered karmic blemishes or subtle auras that reflect the moral and mental condition of the soul (*jīva*), shaped by thoughts, actions, and psycho-physical activities. These stains appear as karmic particles (*karma-pudgalas*) that adhere to the soul, obscuring its inherent purity and influencing its sensory impressions, including colour, fragrance, taste, and tactile sensations. The philosophy describes six distinct *leśyās*, ranging from dark and negative states associated with cruelty and violence to bright and positive states associated with virtue and spiritual purity. This spectrum serves as a guide for anyone seeking to attain liberation (*mokṣa*) by transitioning from adverse to positive mental states. Jain scholars see this as a means to foster peace via ethical consciousness (Dundas, 2002, pp. 95-97).

The classification of *leśyās* is derived from the teachings of Lord Mahāvīra, especially his discourse with *Gautama Svāmī*, which used the metaphor of a group encountering a tree laden with fruit to elucidate behavioural patterns:

1. *Kṛṣṇa Leśyā* (Black Colouration): This is the worst state, with thoughts that are mean, selfish, and cruel. People don't care about being non-violent and act in ways that hurt others. They would take down the entire tree for their personal profit, which would lead to horrific rebirths full of anguish (Dundas, 2002, p. 96).
2. *Nīla Leśyā* (Colour of Blue): A situation that is not as awful as the previous one, where jealousy, falsehoods, and self-interest are the major things that happen, and nice deeds are only done for personal advantage. They would chop off enormous branches, remove too much fruit, and put the tree's life in peril (Jaini, 1979, p. 113).
3. *Kāpota Leśyā* (Grey Colouration): This kind of person is dishonest and conceals their falsehoods behind nice deeds that are designed to help them. They would cut off smaller branches, which would still damage them for no reason (Tiwari, 2000, p. 352).
4. *Tejo Leśyā* (Golden Colouration): This shade stands for purity, humility, compassion, self-control, and kindness. They would only chop off the branches that were necessary for fruit to develop, which would inflict the least amount of damage (Dundas, 2002, p. 97).
5. *Padma Leśyā* (Red or Lotus Colouration): This implies that you are growing spiritually, have self-control, and a positive attitude. They would only harvest the

fruits they required, which would cut down on their karmic buildup (Jaini, 1979, p. 114).

6. *Śukla Leśyā* (White or Colourless Colouration): This is the most pure state, and it stands for peace, meditation, and benevolence. They would only pick up fruits that had already fallen, which would save them from being wounded and set them free (Tiwari, 2000, p. 354).

In Jainism, it is preferable to relinquish the first three negative *leśyās* and concentrate on the latter three positive ones. The finest *leśyā* for achieving *kevala-jñāna* (omniscience) is *śukla leśyā*. The connection between *leśyās* and passions (*kaṣāyas*) is significant because *leśyās* transform mental states into karmic links, whereas *kaṣāyas* initiate these states. Modern psychological studies on colour and meditation correspond with this development, validating Jain views on mental purification (Tiwari, 2000, pp. 355-356).

Passions (*Kaṣāyas*):

Kaṣāyas are said to be feelings or mental blocks that hold karmic particles to the soul, which keeps the cycle of birth and death (*saṃsāra*) going by hiding its true nature. The terms "kaṣa" (karma) and "āya" (attachment) derive from the concept that emotional demands and tendencies contribute to the accumulation of karmic substance. These passions are the fundamental things that impede the soul from being free and are the main factors that keep it from being free. According to Jainism, there are four main *kaṣāyas*: anger (*krodha*), egoism (*māna*), deception (*māyā*), and greed (*lobha*). Each of these has a number of sub-states, for a total of more than 50 different forms. Mahāvīra stated that the way to *mokṣa* is to get over your feelings by being calm and honest (Dundas, 2002, pp. 167–168).

1. Anger (*Krodha-Kaṣāya*) A severe emotional disturbance that distorts logical cognition, appearing as hatred, aggressiveness, or fear. It disturbs physiological balance and decision-making, arising from deluding karma (mohaniya-karma). There are 10 states in it: • *Krodha*: Happy feelings. • *Kopa*: Anger that isn't stable. • *Roṣa*: Open rage. • *Doṣa*: Accusation of self or others. • *Akṣamā*: Nature that doesn't forgive. • *Sañjvalana*: Constant agitation. • *Kalaha*: Speech that causes fights. • *Cāṇḍikya*: Anger that is planned. • *Bhaṇḍana*: Violence against people. • *Vivāda*: Scandalous conversation (Jaini, 1979, pp. 145–146).
2. Egoism (*Māna-Kaṣāya*)^[SEP]Arrogance that comes from being born, having knowledge, or being rich, and a desire to be in charge. It promotes self-aggrandizement and consists of 12 states: • *Māna*: believing in yourself when you shouldn't. • *Mada*: Feeling good about yourself. • *Darpa*: Proudly aggressive. • *Stambha*: Being rude. • *Garva*: Arrogance. • *Atyutkrośa*: Being better than someone else. • *Para-parivāda*: Making fun of other people. • *Utkarṣa*: Showing off your status. • *Apakarṣa*: Pointing out other people's mistakes. • *Unnata*: Making fun of. • *Unnatanaṃa*: showing no regard for the good. • *Durnāma*: Not giving credit to those who deserve it (Dundas, 2002, p. 169).
3. Deception (*Māyā-Kaṣāya*)^[SEP]Includes dishonest or deceitful behaviours, with 15 subtypes: • *Māyā*: Dishonesty. • *Upādhi*: tricking those who are easy to fool. • *Nikṛti*: Fake respect. • *Valaya*: Words that aren't true. *Gahana*: Suspicious intentions. • *Nūma*: Bad cheating. • *Kalka*: Encouraging violence. • *Kurūpa*: Slander. • *Jihmatā*: Putting off to cheat. • *Kilviṣika*: Evil. • *Ādaraṇatā*: Hidden motives. • *Gūhanatā*:

Actions that are hidden. • *Vañcatatā*: cheating. • *Pratikuñcanatā*: Refusing to accept the truth. • *Sātiyoga*: Combining traits (Jaini, 1979, p. 147).

4. Greed (*Lobha-Kaṣāya*)^[17]_[SEP]: A desire to accumulate riches or belongings, based on previous karma, having 16 different types: • *Lobha*: Getting more. • *Ichhā*: Want. • *Mūrchā*: Too much stockpiling. • *Kāṅkṣā*: Looking for profit. • *Grddhi*: Being attached. • *Trṣṇā*: Not wanting to share. • *Mithyā*: Look at the bad things. • *Abhidhyā*: Wrong choices. • *Āśamsanā*: Unending desire. • *Prārthanā*: Asking for money. • *Lālapanatā*: Complimenting someone. • *Kāmāśā*: A strong desire for sex. • *Bhogāśā*: Giving in. • *Jīvitāśā*: Wanting to live a long time. • *Maraṇāśā*: Desire for death. • *Nandirāga*: Love of property (Tiwari, 2000, p. 358).

Karmic States:

Karmas significantly influence an individual's lifetime and spiritual advancement throughout several incarnations, as articulated with clarity and precision in Jain philosophy. Each *jīva*'s internal inclinations, ideas, perspectives, and acts are determined by its karmas. Additionally, an individual's appearance, speech, quality of life, and other attributes are all interconnected with the manifestations of karma.

Upon comprehending the categories of karma, it is essential to grasp their states or situations. There are eight distinct states of karma.

1. *Bandha* (influx and attachment): This refers to the condition in which karmas converge upon the soul, forming layers of attachment. Subsequent to the connection, five characteristics are developed: type, duration, strength, impact, and outcomes.
2. *Utkarṣaṇa* (enhancement and prolongation): This refers to the condition in which connected karmas are prolonged in length or their resultant effects are intensified. This occurs when an unfavourable action is accompanied with commendation or persistent misconduct.
3. *Apakarṣaṇa* (diminution and attenuation): This condition is the antithesis of *utkarṣaṇa*. The length is reduced, and/or the resultant effects are diminished. This occurs when a person acknowledges the error of engaging in an unfavourable activity and then engages in repentance and/or remedial measures.
4. *Sattā* (latent existence): Typically, the repercussions of karmic attachment do not manifest immediately upon their attachment. The repercussions manifest (also referred to as karmic emergence or karma shedding) after the designated period (termed *abādhākāla*). They stay inactive in the strata above the soul from the moment of connection until their emergence or shedding.
5. *Udaya* (timely shedding): This refers to the emergence that may lead to the relinquishment of karmas. When karmas are eradicated after their manifestation, it is referred to as *phalodaya* (emerging fruition). This karmic shedding occurs after the imposition of penalties or rewards based on the consequences suffered by living creatures. When karmas are relinquished due to penance or other virtuous actions, without imposing repercussions on living creatures, it is referred to as *pradeśodaya* (emerging from determination).

6. *Udīraṇā* (premature shedding): This refers to the expulsion of karmas before to their designated period. It resembles hastening a fruit's maturation using heat or chemicals. In karma theory, this occurs via penance and virtuous actions in thought, speech, and behaviour that might diminish the length of karmic attachment.
7. *Saṅkramaṇa* (transformation): This category of karma may manifest in several ways. A gained karma may change its shape while maintaining its kind. This transformation is referred to as *saṅkramaṇa*. Any transition must remain inside its designated class among the eight categories of karmas already addressed. A karma may alter its characteristics within the same category; for instance, a specific kind of *darśanāvāraṇīya-karma* may transform into one of the nine varieties of *darśanāvāraṇīya-karma*, but cannot abruptly convert into *jñānāvāraṇīya-karma* or any of the other eight categories of karma. Furthermore, there are two exceptions: (i) it is inapplicable to longevity (*āyusya-karma*). Once a human lifetime is designated, it cannot be converted to an existence in heaven or altered in duration. Furthermore, (ii) *cāritra-mohanīya-karma* (illusion about behaviour), a kind of deluding *mohanīya-karma*, is not interchangeable with any other variant of *mohanīya-karma*.
8. *Upāsama* (suppression): This entails the suppression of accumulating karmas, resulting in lighter effects upon their emergence than initially designated. It resembles smothering burning charcoal with ashes, so diminishing its intensity. This pertains only to *mohanīya-karma*.
9. *Nidhatti* (fixed): In this state, karmas neither manifest (*udaya*) nor can they be altered (*saṅkramaṇa*).
10. *Nikācanā* (intense): This situation occurs when karmas are so profoundly attached to the soul that they cannot undergo transformation (*saṅkramaṇa*), and the period of their attachment remains immutable (*utkarṣaṇa* or *apakarṣaṇa*).

Concluding Remarks: Reply to the Objection of Fatalism:

A common criticism of the Karma philosophy is its perceived fatalistic inclination, implying that previous Karmas dictate actions, thereby undermining free choice and rendering ethical imperatives insignificant (Sanghvi, 1969, p. 45). In contrast, Jainism asserts that the soul possesses the capacity for self-determination through adequate knowledge, faith, and behaviour, which are referred to as the "three jewels" of Jainism. This is despite the fact that Karmas is necessarily effective in ca people's habits, personalities, and circumstances. (Tatia, 1951, p. 230). As the original question points out, this balancing is a key issue in Jaina ethics. It shows that there are still disagreements among Jain sub-sects (such Digambara and Svetambara) on how to reconcile free will with Karmic determinism.

There are philosophical similarities with Western philosophers. Pringle Pattison contends that determinism could encourage individuals to justify their acts by asserting inevitability rooted in historical circumstances (Pattison, 1997, p. 101). Butler also rejects necessity, saying it weakens moral responsibility, praise, blame, and the possibility of development (Gladstone, 1896, p. 268). Kant's dual perspective is pertinent: empirically, human character is influenced by causes, yet as moral agents, individuals determine their

own objectives, suggesting freedom (Kant, 2015). Here we can cite some other prominent western views. As T.H. Green asserts the necessity of the continuity of self for moral reform, arguing that the absence of a link between past and present renders self-reforming endeavours devoid of motivation (Green, 2003, p. 53). On the other hand, William James takes a novel stand point in this regard. He sees free will as a "doctrine of relief," giving people hope against the burden of previous actions (James, 1975, p. 184).

In Jainism, this reconciliation is pragmatic: Karmas yield results but can be alleviated or depleted through ethical conduct and austerities (*tapas*), thereby confirming moral agency (Glaserapp, 1999, p. 210). The Jaina philosophy of karma effectively counters the shortcomings of fatalism. This viewpoint underscores the soul's capacity to transcend the constraints imposed by Karmic forces by deliberate efforts. Finally, we can say that in Jainism karma is a complex phenomenon based upon both ethical and metaphysical system that combines the physical and mental aspect of actions. It stresses that people are responsible for their own actions and that self-discipline and non-violence (*ahimsa*) can lead to freedom. Jaina karma theory wonderfully offers the resolution to the dilemma of determinism versus moral agency by considering rationales and endorsing free choice within the framework of Karmic causation (Jaini, 1979, p. 121; Sanghvi, 1969, p. 50).

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