

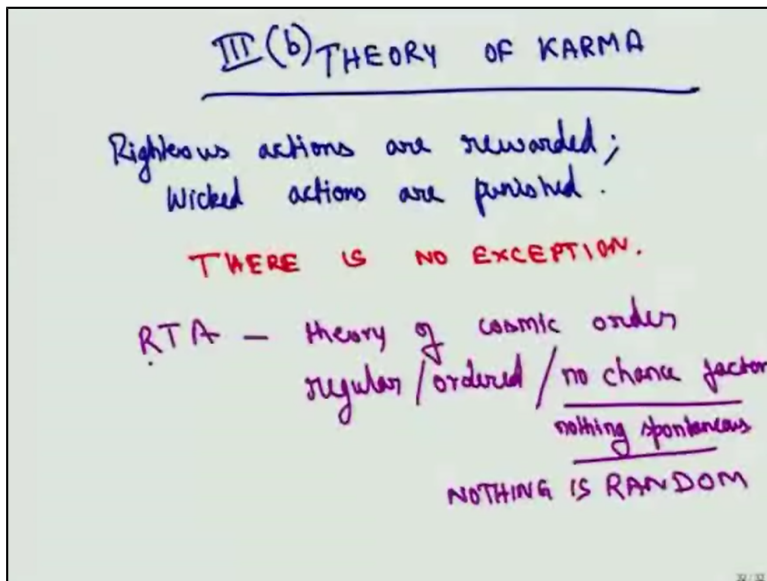
Ethics
Prof. Vineet Sahu
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology-Kanpur

Module No. #01
Lecture No. #22
Theory of Karma Part-1

Hello, everyone. Today, we are going to talk about, the Theory of Karma. Now, we have started talking about, Ethics as a practice in the Indian tradition. And today, we talk about, a very fundamental notion of this Theory of Karma, in the tradition of Indian Ethics. Now, many of us must have already heard of this, Theory of Karma, as variously said.

Now, we perhaps may have an, elementary idea of it. Now, let us look at it, what could be the motivations. And, what is this basically, this Theory of Karma. Well. As most of us would put in, that well, Theory of Karma is about, simply put, is that, as you sow, so shall you reap. That, there is a moral equilibrium, that every action has a dessert

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Now, if you look at the screen, we would talk about this, that well, righteous actions are rewarded, and wicked actions are punished, and that there is no exception. Well, that is essentially, the Theory of Karma, as commonly understood. Let us look at the motivations, for this action. Now, many of us may believe that, every act sticks onto us, and we get a result of these

acts. And, many of us would believe, that well, there is a predominant chance factor, in the entire gamut of moral actions.

Now, let us say, what could be the motivations of, the evolution of this Theory of Karma. Now, Theory of Karma is followed in Jainism, Buddhism, and in various schools of Indian Philosophy. Now, let us say, of, all the children born on the day, you are watching this video. That is today. Will, all of them, have an equal opportunity. Or, do all of them, have equal access. Or, will all of them, be having equal access to facilities, in their future. Or, all of them born equal.

Well. Perhaps, without too much of effort, we can answer, that well, no, definitely not. Some would be advantaged. Some would be disadvantaged. Some will have a lot of advantage. Some will have a lot of disadvantages. And, there will be a variation in the opportunities, that each of the individual born on this day, face. How do we rationalise, this difference, in the start line. Now perhaps, our intuitive idea of fairness, is that well, the start line has to be the same. And, whoever performs better, deserves better.

But, what if the start line is not the same. Now, our entire gamut of public policies, governmental intervention, philanthropy, social activities, are towards getting this, discrepancy in the start line, adjusted. Now, Theory of Karma in this sense, is a derivative of, what an Indian Philosophy is known as Rta, or the Theory of Cosmic Order. That, everything is regular, ordered, and there is no chance factor, or nothing spontaneous.

Rta is a fact, another fundamental claim, of the Indian thinking tradition. That, there is a cosmic order, that nothing is random, nothing is by chance. The keyword, that we would like to perhaps take here is, random. Nothing is random. So well, when we say that, nothing is random, the Rta, or cosmic order says, that well, whatever happens, is a part of a grand design. That, the entire cosmic order is an order, not an accident, not a chaos, not a play of chance.

Now, the Theory of Karma, is a subset, of this claim of Rta, or cosmic order. That well, whatever happens, happens at its cost. And, there is no random or uncaused events, in the moral equilibrium. Now, coming to well, let us say, that well, what does Theory of Karma do. Theory

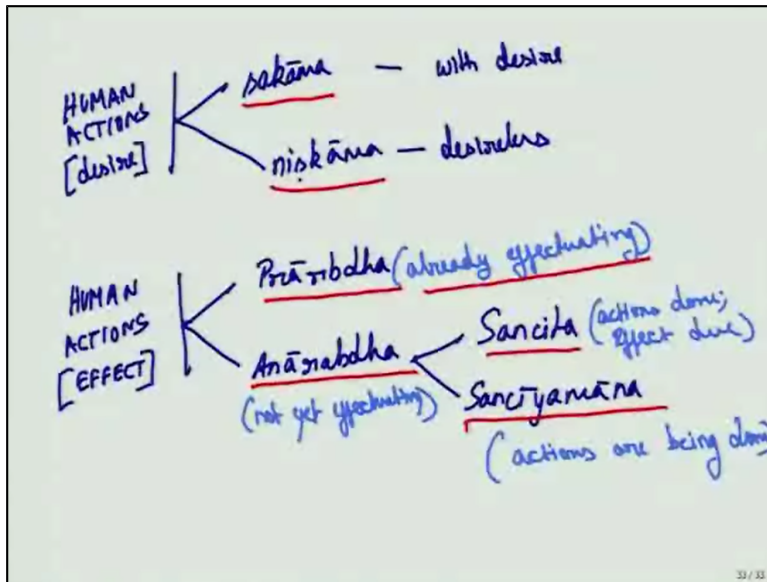
of Karma, now is claiming, that well, this discrepancy, that we talked about in the starting line, is well, not a discrepancy at all. In fact, discrepancy in the starting line is, if analogically compared to that of a group of runners, running a race.

So, each lap, the advantage that you get on, you transfer it to the next runner. And, that is, the starting line is not, when you are born, but the starting line is, way before that. That, where you are born, is a consequence of your past actions. Now, what does this do. This might perhaps seem, illogical or irrational to it. But then, this is just a theoretical model. And, how does this model seem to be better. Because, it attempts to justify differences.

That, there are discrepancies, and these discrepancies are not random. But then, perhaps, many of us would be seeking with the question, that well, what does this mean. That, these differences are okay, that these discrepancies are okay, and that we do nothing about it. Well, we will talk about this in detail. But, let me give you an answer from, what the Karmic Theory would say, is that well, the environment, or the situation that we face, is a result of our past actions.

But, what we do with it, and what others do with it, is where our free will is. So, human actions are not completely determined in that way. If the Theory of Karma is giving an idea, that things are determined. No, well, things are not determined. But, the trajectory incidents are perhaps influenced by, what is your karmic dessert. And thereof, how you tackle them, accumulates fresh dessert or not. But, that will be towards the, later questions of karma. Now, let us classify, human actions.

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Now, let us say, human actions, when taken from the perspective of desire. So, as a classified, there are Sakama and Nishkama karma, which would mean, that well, actions which are done, out of desire, or with desire, and desire-less. Now again, a classification of human actions, from the point of the effect, that it heels, can again be made human actions. Well. The first classification, that is made is, Prarabdha. And, the second classification is, Anarabdha.

Anarabdha, is further classified into, Sanchita, and Sanciyamana. So, what this basically means is, well, Prarabdha means, that the results are already effectuating. Anarabdha is, not yet effectuating. Sanchita is, actions are being done, effect due. And, Sanciyamana is well, actions are being done. Well. Let us say, what is the point of this classification. Now, if you look at human actions, from the point of desire. When we talk about desire, we talk about actions, which are done with a result, or with a goal perceived.

When we talk about Nishkama karma, we will talk about desire-less action is, when an action is performed, without the goal of the action in mind. Now, if you look at the other classification of human actions, that is effects. Now, Prarabdha is when, which we might have heard in common talk before, strictly means that, these are actions which have been done, and their effects are all in process. That is, they are effectuating.

Anarabdha, in contrast to Prarabdha, is when, the effects have not yet begun to unfold. That is, it

is not yet effectuating. That can again be divided into Sanchita. That is, the actions that have been done, but the effects are due. And Sanciyanama, wherein the actions are being done. So, these are basically classifications, again to detail the Theory of Karma, that how do we find, that well, actions yield itself.

Now, if we take a look at, how this scheme of things, is fitting into, the way we lead our lives, is that well, every act that we do, cannot be without a trace. Every moral act that is done, sticks to the agent. Now, this is quite profound understanding. Because, it is perhaps, makes one almost fearful of the result of immoral actions, and expectant of the good results of moral actions.

So, Theory of Karma would, in that sense bring about, a moral order, more out of the fear of punishment, and the greed for reward. But, is that all, that is to Theory of Karma. Well, definitely no. These are deep metaphysical assumptions, in Indian Philosophy, which are said to have, shaped the way, actions in societies take place. Now, with these classifications of karmas that we see, as we see on the projection plate right now, Prarabdha is one action, that is accumulated. Look at it, like a bank account.

Now, Prarabdha is some money, that you have already worked for, saved and accumulated in your account. And, you are beginning to spend it. Whereas, Anarabdha in that way is, that well, these are stored money, which has not yet been spent. But, which will be spent. Sanchita is that, you have just earned it, and it has reached your account. And, Sanciyanama is that, you are in the process of earning it. So, well, while you have the privilege, or the freedom of spending the money, as you wish to spend. In the case of karma, you do not have that privilege.

Now, there are some questions, which do concern, this Theory of Karma. That, let me briefly put forth the questions, right now. That well, number one is, what about free will. Now, if everything depends on your past actions, then where is the scope of free will. That, where do we find that, human actions can be free. Because, if every effect that comes forth, is from a prior cause, where can we have the novelty, in this gap between the cause and effect. That is an easy question to answer, for Karma Theorist. But, let me list down the questions, first.

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- 1] What about free will?
- 2] What happens to the realized?
- 3] Do all actions have a karmic effect?
- 4] Does the LoK limit the autonomy of God?
- 5] Beginning of the karmic chain?
- 6] Benevolence & compassion towards the suffering would be intervening in the LoK?

That well, let us say, what about free will. And second, we talk about well, what happens to the self-realised. Now, this is a question, that we might have heard, that well, the realised soul, destroys their own karmic accumulate, and goes ahead. But now, the Law of Karma, would perhaps not have it so. That well, karma cannot be destroyed.

Is there a conflict, between the claim in Indian Philosophy, that well, Law of Karma, that karma continues, and on the other hand, that karma can be destroyed with knowledge? We will talk about that too. Now, look at the third question, do all actions have a karmic effect. Well, the fact that, I am writing in red, instead of blue, this is having a karmic effect. Well. Again, this is a simple question, to tackle. That is, basically tackling the difference between, moral actions, and amoral actions.

Now, an interesting question that, does the Law of Karma, I abbreviated as LOK for short, limit the autonomy of God. Now, this is a very interesting question, I would like to bring forth. That well, many of us have conceived Indian Philosophy, as very much theistic, with an intervention of God. Now, is Law of Karma, making this notion of God, in personal. That is, well, there have been many Theistic Bhakti Seers, and Proponents, who have claimed, that well, what use, if this God cannot forgive, cannot do favours to us.

Now, Law of Karma, in that way, does not entail us to, favours from god. Well. If you done

something, you will get the result of that act, no matter what. No matter, how much benevolent, God would like to forgive you, or to reward you. So, the discretionary power, so to say, of any God like entity, is taken away by Law of Karma. So, does this limit. So, is this Law of Karma, an alternative to god. Does it critique, or limit the autonomy of god.

Or, can the both go together, both being very significant portions of Indian foundational metaphysical thinking. Then, we have, what is the beginning of this karmic chain. Now, if everything is caused by something prior, where is the beginning. And, sixth question, that perhaps, many of us would be thinking, is that well, benevolence and compassion towards the suffering, would be intervening, in the Law of Karma. What do I mean by this?

Well. I mean by this, is that well, let us say, if Theory of Karma is claiming, that well, that there can be an intervention, in this karmic dessert, that we get. Let us say, that if somebody is suffering. And in fact, does the Law of Karma, lead to Fatalism. Because, that is the crucial question. That well, if somebody is suffering, the Karmic Theory would say, that well, that the suffering is a dessert, or a result of the earlier actions.

And, now as a third party, or as an observer, if I intervene to restrict, or to alleviate the suffering, exhibiting him passion or benevolence, am I interfering with the Law of Karma, am I interfering or intervening, in the play of the Law of Karma. This gives me an interesting analogy. That well, wildlife photographers, analogically speaking, when they enter, or when they are permitted to photograph, or video record a document, wild life and say natural reserves, or forests. Well.

One strong standing instruction, left for them is that, they will in at no point, ever intervene in the functioning of nature. So well, if they see a helpless bird, which has fallen down from its nest. And, a predator being nearby, the photographer or the documenter, has been denied, to get put the bird back into the nest, have prevented from being the food of the predator. This is an analogical example, of benevolence, or karma, or anything, that interferes with the notion of karma.

That well, benevolent action, in fact, this is brought to light, by a very potent debate, taken place

in our pre-independence era, when Mahatma Gandhi declared that, earthquake in Bihar, which caused a lot of suffering, as being the karmic result of, the practice of untouchability. To which, Rabindranath Tagore has very aggressively responded, that well, this is just a factually inaccurate justification.

That, surely the point, that Gandhi would want to say, is not that we should not help those suffering, but that the suffering is perhaps caused by, the karmic influence of practising false policies, or practising unfair policies. Now, this is a question, that we come, when we talk about the sixth question, that benevolence and compassion, as towards the suffering, would be intervening in the Law of Karma.