

Karma

- Pujya Lalaji Maharaj

Why is action (Karma) necessary? Action is the law of manifestation of life. Without action, it is not possible to infer the existence of a being. That is why every being having a body is required to perform action. It was so required before, and will be required in the future. Life cannot exist without manifestation; for this is the speciality of the nature of all existence and beings. No life can be without manifestation. Its natural activity is according to the natural law. But Karma or action does not always exist. After movement comes the state of rest. Action is not eternal. But that which is called peace or bliss, is that not, action too? All the three types of body join together in performing action. There is physical movement in the gross body, mental (ideatic) movement in the subtle body, and resting movement, which is called bliss in the causal body.

The body, the heart or mind, the soul - all these three are bodies. Movement of the organs of sense and of perception is the characteristic of the gross physical body. The heart or mind has the characteristic of mental or ideatic movement, in which are involved the subtle

organs. There is both movement and rest in it. Peace or rest is the action of the soul, which contains all the three kinds of movement in the seed-form. The soul, too, like the body and the heart, is not free from action. But in this article action means the manifest movement of the gross body with flesh and skin, which is called the beginning state of the Veda. This alone is generally called action (Karma). The word Deha in Sanskrit is derived from the root 'Dih' which means 'to collect' or 'to gather' or 'to withdraw'. As this body is formed by the collection or combination of those elements, which are responsible for its organisation and systematisation, the sages called it Deha. In the system of Nature the principle of expansion, the principle of subtraction and the principle of division work respectively with the principle of contraction, addition and multiplication, because this world is a place of dualities. It is a collection of mutually contradictory principles. This body, too, performs two contradictory functions, namely, taking in and expelling out, which is also a kind of natural law.

Sthoola Deha or gross body is formed by the combination of gross elements.

Sookshma Deha or subtle body is formed by the combination of subtle elements.

Karana Deha or causal body or soul is formed by the combination of causal elements.

The following are gross elements:

Ether - Aakasha; air - Vayu; fire - Agni; water - Jal; Earth, - Prithvi. This body is organized and systematized by the atoms of these gross elements.

The following are the subtle elements:

Sound or Sabda; touch or Sparsha; form or Roopa; taste or Rasa; Smell or Gandha. The subtle body is formed by the atoms of these subtle elements.

The causal elements viz., the causal atoms of the above elements in the seed form, are responsible for the formation of the causal body. All the three bodies are organized and systematized by the combination of atoms only. Therefore, the attributes, actions and habits or Svabhava are formed according to those atoms.

What does it matter if none has accepted the soul - Atma - as a compound or divisible substance? Even then reality remains as it is. All have understood it according to the level of their understanding. The Vedantins, the Sankhyas, the Yogins, - nay, even the sages and seers understanding it. Even the Shastra accepts the existence of the three bodies but it could not be known that the causal body is soul itself. Now we shall have to think over the etymology of the word Atman.

The Sanskrit word Atman is formed of 'Ath' and 'Ma(na)n'. 'Ath' means movement and 'Ma(na)n' means thinking. That in which there is movement and thinking is Atman. The soul itself is the causal body which is in seed form, and which is a compound substance. The same thing expresses itself at the physical or gross body and mental or subtle body levels. When it wakes and enters the conscious level, movement sets in, in the sense organs and organs of perception by the movement of its flow; when it comes to the mental level (dream state) it remains thoughtful; and when it withdraws its flow (current) to the state of deep sleep it remains absorbed in its original form and enjoys bliss. So, how can a thing in which there is movement, thinking and absorption be simple and indivisible? It must necessarily be a compound.

Action or Karma is the nature or Dharma of the gross body. Just as the formation of body is natural, its movement also is natural; and so also the law of reward and punishment is natural. Every embodied being is called Jeeva, the characteristic of which is movement. In this movement works the principle of development or growth, and contemplation.

Jiva is soul, because that in which there is movement (Aath) and thinking (Man) is soul. This soul is Brahman. Brahman is developing and thinking creation. In Sanskrit Brahman is derived from 'bruha', to grow or to expand, and 'man' to think. That which moves and thinks is Atman; and that which grows and thinks is Brahman. From this viewpoint, wherever there is Jiva it is all Brahman. Movement and growth are almost synonyms. Agreed that there is growth and diminution in movement; but both of these are said to be the laws of development or evolution. Growth is progressive and diminution is regressive. Both imply development. The one jets upward and pushes forward. The other pulls downward and drags backwards. But in both these falling or diminishing, i.e. creeping or contracting, the sense of development alone is implied without even the slightest sense of diminishing. Just as the wheels of a vehicle

move forward only, in spite of their apparent backward and forward movement, even so is the condition of Jiva, Atman or Brahman. Movement and growth are the characteristics of the gross body; and thinking and understanding (knowing) are the characteristics of the subtle body or Sookshma Deha. Both these combine and function together. So if their direction is in accordance with natural combination and quality, they function properly. But if the thought of personal individuality occurs in the mind or subtle body, the concept of right and wrong intention takes root in the form of thought. The thought of good and evil itself is implied in right and wrong intention. The man with intention knows that right (virtue) is good and wrong (Vice) is bad. And wherever there is this thought the law of good and evil fruit operates and, accordingly, the Jiva automatically gets the good and evil fruit of action. This is good and evil fruit. It is as natural as development and thinking. That individual existence which has no conception of right and wrong, i.e., which has neither good nor bad intention, does not also have either good or bad result thereof. It only grows, thinks and moves just as an infant does.

All the three bodies are found in each and every individual manifestation. But as their characteristics vary in degree in different beings, certain stages have been clearly marked off, accordingly.

(i) In minerals the causal body itself is gross. The other bodies are included in it. Though it is outwardly insensible it draws, combines and absorbs the atoms in the same way as a man in deep sleep is fed milk. In minerals the causal body and the state of deep-sleep or Sushupthi are in a gross condition.

(ii) Plants have gross body, along with the causal body which also includes the subtle body. They draw and combine the atoms - both mobile and static - and absorb them in a way similar to the condition of a new born baby. Both the dream state and deep sleep state or Svapna and Sushupthi are found in them.

(iii) In animals all the three bodies the gross, the subtle and the causal exist. They eat, drink, sleep and wake, and experience joy and sorrow in all these three bodies. The conscious, dream and deep sleep states - all these are found in them.

(iv) In men also there are the three bodies - the gross, the subtle and causal. Their nourishment, growth, progress, thought and happiness get strength in connection with these bodies. Some among them have a kind of fourth

state which will be discussed at the end of this series. Those in whom this condition is started are to be counted among men. Otherwise they are as good as animals. They belong to the category of beasts. If you observe the movements and actions of such men you will find that they do all those things that animals do.

Narapashu, Gurupashu, Striyapashu,

Vedapashu Samsara

Manusha Soyi Janiye jahie Viveka Vichar

"Those who worship or follow man, Guru, woman and the Vedas are all beasts. He alone is man who is capable of thinking and discriminating."

Those who do not know the status of god and their own status, and worship God, not with their own but with God's view point, to them Vishnu becomes Rudra and makes them weep. Those who do not know the status of deities and their own status, and worship the deities not with their own but with the view point of deities, then the deities make beasts of burden. Those who do not

know the status of Guru and their own status, and worship the Guru not with their own but with Guru's view point, to them Guru becomes Satan in the form of Kal. Casting off the form of a Dayalu, (kind person) he swallows whatever earning the worshipper has, making him a beast. Such men have no salvation. They always remain beasts among the beasts until they experience suffering, and claim their rights of humanity by means of heartfelt sentiment. They attain this condition after a very long time. The Sage Yajnavalkya, in the Brahadarnyaka Upanishad, explains to his wife Maitreyi thus:

"Oh! Maitreyi, those who know Brahman, Ishvara, Veda, sons and the Atman not with their own viewpoint but with the viewpoint of Brahman, Ishvara etc., are destroyed by them."

The aim of yoga is concentration of mind and changing its states from point to point. One would gain experience automatically and know the truth by making the mind stay on spiritual centres in the brain. As these Jivas are bound by action or Karma, and religious and ethical codes, their approach is limited up to this only.

We shall now proceed to consider the kinds of action and

their rewards and punishments.

According to the law of Nature there are two kinds of action for which the Jivas are neither rewarded nor punished. Their aim is movement, contemplation, and happiness, which are all related to the three bodies.

Jiva is really Atman and Brahman, and its characteristics are (i) thinking along with movement, and movement along with thinking, and (ii) thinking along with growing and growing along with thinking. The first is the characteristic or definition of Atman, and the second is that of Brahman. The difference is that Atman is limited and Brahman is unlimited. That is why Brahman is called Param-Atma. There is no question of reward or punishment for Brahman, because He is whole. The question arises only with regard to the part. That which has limited knowledge is called part, and that which has omniscience is Brahman. The Omniscient Being is a complete law in itself, and this is a mark of perfection. In the part there is the shortcoming or defect by way of having limited knowledge; and questions and answers arise only in the state of imperfection. Imperfection means shortcoming, which can be made up or filled. Perfection itself is always full. Nobody can fill it anymore. Therefore there is neither reward nor

punishment in the state of perfection.

Atman is called Jiva when there is the desire for life in it. Jiva is that which has a desire for life. The attention of this Jiva is always towards shortcoming or imperfection. It always feels want and dependence which are the cause of sorrow and suffering. That is the reason why the Jiva finds its life full of sorrow, and due to the impression of this sorrow it creates many defects in itself such as wishing its own good and harming others, and so on. This view of duality, its thought and action creates otherness in it. That is, the Jiva begins to think of itself as useless, poor, inferior and; low, and of others' position as superior to its own. It condemns its own position and praises that of others. That is, seeing itself as other than the others (or otherness).

This feeling of otherness throws the Jiva in a state of multiplicity, which it begins to like. It sees all others as different, many and innumerable. This is called love of multiplicity.

The Jiva does not see itself but it sees others. This defect throws it in illusion. It remains extrovert and not introvert. Due to extroversion its position becomes like

that of a person who has stepped out of his home in the rainy season. Then it begins to perform selfish actions which contain wonder, greed, envy, hatred, competition, enmity, selfishness and desire. Wounding others' feelings is the worst among these. In short, punishment is ordained for all these actions. The Jiva begins to think of the right path and right action after undergoing punishment, and experiencing sorrow and suffering. It then desires amelioration and the good of all. In other words good comes out of the womb of evil as it were; and then the Jiva kindles the desire of benefaction, forgiveness, humility, good of others, etc., and experience brings it to the right path. There is reward for all these actions, and then the Jiva knows that virtue is good and vice is bad. It compares both and gives superiority to right action over wrong action. From here are created the mutually opposite states of right and wrong. For sometime it remains in a tug between these; and when it completely gives up the wrong and becomes totally good, it begins to perform actions in conformity with the Law of Nature, i.e., Creative Action. But even then it has the faculty of Knowledge and experience of right and wrong, which is not free from defect. It always concludes that non-violence is the greatest virtue and violence is the biggest sin.

Two kinds of Action:

There are two kinds of action: Legitimate Action and Illegitimate Action. That action, which gives happiness, is legitimate or right action, and that which does not give happiness is illegitimate action.

Now the question arises whether actions like robbery and dacoity really give happiness or not. A man can do anything he likes if gets happiness without the least sorrow thereby. Nobody can forbid anyone from doing so. But, in fact, that which a man thinks as happiness due to his ignorance ultimately results in sorrow. The environment in which we all reside is replete with the ideas of virtue and vice. Firstly, its influence itself is becoming universal. Secondly, everyone engaged in committing theft and murder is influenced by the idea of virtue and sin. That is why his action is not done with courage. The thief hides himself and commits theft. When such is the condition, a man doing the wrong thing takes the bad effect in his heart first, and then does bad things to others.

Wickedness spoils the heart and makes it heavy and unholy, which results in sorrow. Besides this, the person on whom it is inflicted no doubt experiences sorrow. But a current of sorrow flows from his heart and makes the

person inflicting sorrow sorrowful. To take an example, if your neighbour is sorrow-stricken and unhappy, you cannot in any way escape from the influence of his sorrow. This sorrow is just like the smoke of poisonous fuel, so to say. Burn it in any home and its bitterness spreads in the neighbouring homes. The same is the case with goodness or virtue. If you are virtuous, persons around you are bound to be benefited by happiness. This world can be compared to our body. If any organ (part) is diseased the whole body is affected. Therefore, good people always keep themselves away from sin, and engage themselves in right action. This is a simple truth.

Characteristics of Virtue and Sin:

That act is sinful, in performing which there is fear, hesitation and shame, and that action is virtuous, in performing which there is fearlessness, courage and valour. But there is also the influence of education, personal ethics, group-etiquette and individual experience. This influence of education, principles and ethics etc., is generally directed towards virtue. So one should not do anything against these. All those things on which religion, the Guru, the Shastras and one's own conscience agree are legitimate, and those on which they differ are illegitimate.

Religion, the Shastras, the Guru and one's conscience unanimously never agree on bad things. This is the test of right and wrong action. If this is not accepted one should neither do a thing of his own liking nor of others' liking. There are many such acts by doing which there is neither merit nor sin. For example taking the daily bath, washing hands and face, etc. But there is the fear of our health being spoiled by not doing these. If we do not respect elders we do not acquire any merit, but on the other hand we will be committing sin by violating social etiquettes. The same thing holds good with regard to the Vedic and worldly customs. All these are legitimate acts. Performing Sacrifices (Yajna) does not, really speaking, lead to bondage. Bondage lies in the mind, in ideas and in convictions. Yajna - Sacrifice - in fact is worship. One should keep the elders, youngers and subordinates happy by one's actions and manners. One should keep the environment and surroundings beautiful. Fire, air, water, earth and ether should not be polluted as far as possible. All this is Yajna. Following of these rules is quite essential in the primary stages of life. These do not lead to evil. Of course, other kinds of sacrifices, which are performed with a particular motive to harm an individual or class, should be objected to. The purpose of action is only to express life. If life expresses itself in a natural way without harming anyone it is allowed. There is

neither merit nor sin in it. Where right and wrong are involved in a relative state, there merit and sin exist. Thus merit and sin create the fetters of bondage, freedom from which becomes quite essential. Otherwise, even the idea of freedom and bondage does not probably occur in the mind. The remedy to save oneself from this is to convert evil intention into good intention and then act. Serving the fellow-beings of the world in the light of this experience without any selfish motive is the best kind of sacrifice and worship. One who acts in such a way will be free from the bondage of Karma (action). Such action is the nature - dharma - of this gross body.

It is the ignorant who reap the fruit of reward and punishment. Those who know and understand something are called ignorant, and those who do not are not called so. The word Moodha is used for them. Those who are outwardly bereft of the faculty of understanding are called Moodha. They have not yet risen higher than the animal level. All the rest - scholars, kings, laymen, the rich, ministers, intelligent men and logicians are ignorant. They are called ignorant and are fit to be called so. They have their abode over the gross body and carry on the ordinary affairs of life. They restrict themselves to physical and mental activities. They strengthen the impressions of the body and mind, ideas and feelings, rules and regulations. The term 'ignorant' is quite apt for

them. Though they may be called devotees, saints, pious men etc.; all these people are ignorant. They are called body-minded, desire-minded and multiplicity-minded. The world of the bodies is the plane of multiplicity. Their attention is always fixed on this. Even the religious persons do not think of any other thing except the world of bodies and desires. Their heaven is nothing but sense-enjoyment, and enjoyment with the fairies and slaves. Those who aim at attaining heaven think that it is a subtle form of this world, and they are engaged in strengthening this aspiration. Likewise, those who aspire for Vaikunth think it to be a place of enjoyment. Such persons too are unable to see higher than body and senses. That is why persons having some knowledge and understanding are called ignorant. They alone are called ignorant in whom the conviction regarding this world and the other world is strengthened. This world and the other world are one and the same. Both are the worlds of multi-feelings.

Firstly, religious men, saints and devotees of God - none of them have any knowledge of God. Secondly, their God enjoys no better position than that of a great man. Observe the words of prayer of these men. Some have called Him Master, Tyrant, Judge and some others have called Him as Merciful, Kind and Gracious. All these are the qualities of men only. Thirdly, these persons have not

seen God with His eyes, but He has remained for them an object of flattery and an instrument of getting their sensual desire fulfilled. This very flattery is called 'prayer' and 'devotion' by some. It is a matter to be thought over. Here is the prayer of the devotees:

"Oh! Creator! You are the bestower of mercy to the world. Give me work. Give me abode of wealth. Give me pleasure and happiness. Give me honour. Oh Lord of Vaikunth! I shall chant your name. Give me Dharma and Wealth (Dharma-Artha). Give me prosperity in life."

Here is the prayer of Moulvi Roomi:

"The worldly ones are absolute infidels. They are involved in the prattle and babble day and night. If one is caught up in the ideas of selfishness, another is ensnared in Abu Baker and Ali."

These, and persons like these, are ignorant and are immersed in multiplicity: They alone get reward and punishment. For them alone is the law of duty and action (Dharma-Karma).