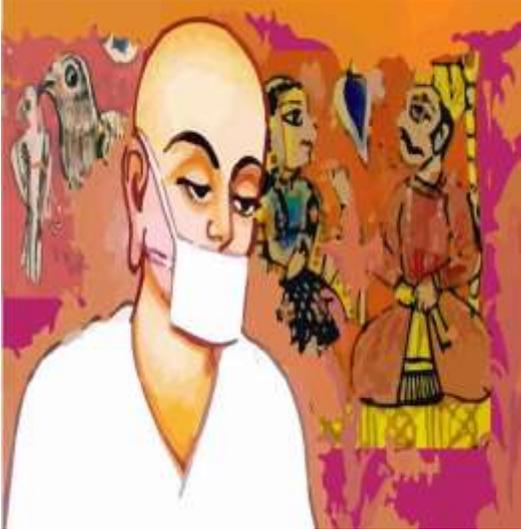


## Jainism - Belief in Karma



Karma is the fruit of one's desire-ridden actions. When actions are performed selfishly and egotistically, one becomes responsible for the consequences of one's actions. The Bhagavad Gita suggests that karma arises not only from the actions we perform but also from our desire for the fruit of such actions. Thus, intention plays an important role.

Belief in karma is common to Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. However, Jainism differs from the other two with regard to the nature and working of the principle of karma. Karma is more a process of self-correction rather than self-punishment. Its purpose is to bring perfection in the doer of actions through a gradual inner transformation.

It is nature's way of keeping each being on the path to liberation. However, Nature intends to accomplish the process in its own time frame, since its primary purpose is not to facilitate liberation but delay it until the end of the time cycle.

Unlike in Hinduism and Buddhism, in Jainism karma is not a mere effect of a particular action but a real substance, a kind of subtle matter or flowing mass of energy that readily enters a living body with each activity of the latter and envelops it in dark gloom.

Karma binds the soul to matter and makes its liberation an increasingly difficult task. The process of the inflow of karma is called *asarva*. Jainism's belief in karma is closely associated with its belief in matter as real and universal. Just as the souls are real, the materiality that we perceive in the world is also real, neither an illusion nor a projection.

### The Effects of Karma

The nature of karmic substance varies according to the actions performed. In case of pious actions, the substance is subtle and lighter, while it is gross and denser with regard to sinful actions. Over time, the karmic substance develops into a casual body or *karma sarira*, which envelops the *jiva* from all sides and prevents its liberation. Denser material makes the body grosser and the liberation more difficult. As long as the karmic substance exists in the body, a soul remains in bondage, its purity and brilliance overshadowed by its darkness and grossness. The karmic matter affects the *jiva* in the following ways.

1. Obscures the inborn knowledge of the soul resulting in varying degrees of ignorance.
2. Obscures the intuitive power of the soul.
3. Obscures the blissful nature of the soul, causing pain and suffering.
4. Disturbs the inner balance of the soul, causing doubt and confusion.
5. Impacts the lifespan of the physical body.
6. Impacts the life and destiny of an individual and his identity and personal name.
7. Impacts his background, inheritance, social and family circumstances.
8. Renders the soul helpless in performing good deeds despite its desire to do so.

## **Liberation and Resolution of Karma**

Liberation is possible only when the entry of the karmic material is blocked by individual efforts, which involve good conduct and non-injury to others. The process of inner purification takes place in progressive stages and demands a high degree of commitment at each stage.

1. Adayika state: The normal state when karmic matters enter the physical body and forms karmana sarira or the karmic body.
2. Kshayopasamika state: Some karmic matter is removed, some are neutralized, and some is still there awaiting elimination.
3. Aupasamika state: By right actions, the effects of karma are either neutralized or reduced. But some substance is still there in latent form and needs some more effort for its complete removal.
4. Ksayika State: The karma is completely removed from the body and the jiva is ready for liberation.
5. Moksh: In this state, the jiva is completely free and remains eternally in a blissful state.

The first two are achieved by right conduct and good actions. The other two are obtained through strict austerities and severe discipline.

Content source: <http://www.hinduwebsite.com/>