

THE WAY OF
KARMA

A NEW AND COMPREHENSIVE
UNDERSTANDING

YOGESH

Copyright © 2024 Yogesh

This is a work of nonfiction. Some events and incidents mentioned in the book are true and many incidents are hypothetical to help understand the concepts. However, some names and characteristics have been changed, some events have been compressed, and some dialogues have been recreated.

All Rights Reserved

First Edition: November 2024

Printed in India

Printed at SAP Print Solutions Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai

Typeset in Adobe Garamond Pro

ISBN: 978-93-6070-384-4

Cover Design: Prajakta Sawant



Publisher: StoryMirror Infotech Pvt. Ltd.
Unit No-F/705, 7th Floor Kailas Corporate Lounge,
Veer Savarkar Road, Vikhroli Park Site, Vikhroli West,
Mumbai-400079, Maharashtra, India.

Web: storymirror.com
Facebook: [@storymirror](https://www.facebook.com/storymirror)
Instagram: [@storymirror](https://www.instagram.com/storymirror)
Twitter: [@story_mirror](https://twitter.com/story_mirror)
Contact Us: marketing@storymirror.com

No part of this book may be reproduced, or stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without express written permission of the publisher.

Dedication

To my parents, who made the effort worth it.

Acknowledgement

The writing of this book has been the culmination of a long process over many years. Even after completing the first draft, it took additional years of living with this understanding to feel convinced enough to publish it formally.

I have been fortunate to receive a good formal education, often referred to as worldly or material education. My technical training at a premier postgraduate institute in the country and interactions with the smartest of engineers in my profession have all contributed to my thinking and analytical approach, which is reflected in this book.

For nearly three decades, I have immersed myself in the teachings of spiritual teachers, listening to many and reading countless books. It's challenging to thank a few and leave out others, so my gratitude extends to all.

I have discussed the progression of this book with close family and friends, who have acted as my sounding boards. Their feedback has been invaluable in refining my understanding.

Lastly, I extend my gratitude to nature, planet Earth, and the Universe—whatever one may call it—which has been a source of endless learning.

To all my teachers, friends, family, the innumerable spiritual books and publishers, scientists, educationists and the Universe at large, who made me possible and without them, this book would not exist.

Thank you.

Preface

My journey

As a child, I was in many ways similar to other children, yet in some ways unique. I have vivid memories of being quite social, having strong attachments to my family, and loving nature, the outdoors, and playing with other children. My time in school, which was a Christian-run convent, is more of a haze in my memory.

One particular incident from my school days stands out. One of my English teachers passed away suddenly from a heart attack, despite being active and healthy up until her last day. It came as a shock to all of us. While attending her funeral, I made a promise to myself that when I grew up, I would solve the problem of heart attacks once and for all. Of course, as I grew older, like many of our childhood resolutions, this one faded into the background. What, however, stayed was this strong undercurrent to solve “problems” that people had.

Life continued on as it does for most families - school, friends, play, and family time. However, as I entered my teenage years, some members of my circle of family and friends began to face some intense psychological issues. Without going into too much detail out of respect for their privacy, these issues had a profound impact on me. Being involved in all the conversations and trying to make sense of the “why” behind it all, I was deeply affected psychologically in ways I didn’t fully realize at the time. These embedded stresses would take me decades to truly overcome.

As life went on, I continued to witness psychological issues and relationship problems up close. Often, I would visit psychiatrists with the affected persons and be part of the discussions. I even visited psychiatrists in the US to seek solutions for the people I cared for so much. Additionally, my father, a teacher of sociology and part of the university department, was extremely well-read in philosophy, religion, and psychology. In his younger days, he was very impressed with psychoanalysis and even underwent it himself for a decade. Once, after attending a transcendental meditation camp, he experienced a transformative shift. For the first time in his life that he could remember, he began sleeping soundly from 9 pm to 5 am. The decade in psychoanalysis had done nothing to improve him. This change lasted for three months, and as a result, his interest in psychology and psychoanalysis completely disappeared. He realized the limitations of sociology as well. He would often say that the social relations in his department were some of the worst he had seen. From then on, he turned his focus entirely to philosophy and spirituality, as encapsulated in the Upanishads and the many allied spiritual traditions.

My father explored various paths and gurus over the years, going past the transcendental meditation which he had even become a teacher of. I came to spirituality much later and independently. The big question of “why” - why these problems happen in the first place beyond the inevitable challenges of old age and death - troubled me greatly. The stresses I had been with and encountered up close had become sufficiently embedded in my psyche and eventually bubbled up to a point where my own living became intolerable. I went through a lot of inner turmoil and hell that I would not wish upon anyone.

Outwardly, my life was good - I excelled at my job, was in high demand, had an active social life, and didn't face issues with money. But my inner world was a living nightmare.

The process of untangling myself psychologically took decades. However, I did learn from this journey, and my writings are a result of the analytical process. I think my strong engineering background and critical thinking skills are at play here, but it is up to the reader to make up their own conclusions.

A couple of decades back, I had a brief encounter with some Christian missionaries who came to proselytize. Unfortunately, the discussion was cut short when I began asking genuine questions that seemed to make them uncomfortable. The idea that my mother and others would go to eternal hell for not accepting their beliefs was hard to swallow and quite disturbing. This led me to do some research online, where I came across stories of both Christian miracles and ex-Christians who had suffered under the church. The inconsistency of the so-called miracles made me feel this is not something that is dependable to solve our problems. Analytically speaking, the more I read and the more I analyzed, the more I realized nobody else was so bothered. None of the Christians I knew took the Bible seriously enough to be worried about eternal hell. There is absolutely no clarity on who actually goes to eternal heaven and who goes to hell, and nobody is even trying to find out, even though it is an eternal thing. Over the years, as I went deeper, the realization dawned that religion is a highly superficial thing; nobody actually believes in their own religion. I used to joke, “No Christian ever reads (to understand) the Bible, no Muslim ever reads (to understand) their holy book, but Hindus don’t even know what they don’t read.”

Many years later, when I attended a Gyan Vidhi session of Dada Bhagwan and started reading the books containing his conversations and explanations, I started finding the answers to my questions and solutions to my problems. He essentially stated that the world is run by Karma, which is real and precise. All the key concepts mentioned here have been developed from his explanations. Have alluded to this in this book as well. (See Reference Section of this book)

In my search for my answers, what I concluded is this-
*Karma, Dharma and Moksha are universally applicable,
as well as hardwired into the DNA of every human being*

The concepts of Karma, Dharma and Moksha are often perceived as complex spiritual principles, but in reality, they're woven into the fabric of our daily lives. We already possess an innate understanding of these concepts, even if we don't always articulate them in those terms.

In the subsequent paragraphs, we will elucidate each of the terms briefly.

Karma: We reap what we sow

The Universal Law of Cause and Effect

Karma is the cosmic law of cause and effect, the belief that our actions have consequences that shape our future. This understanding is ingrained in every human being, regardless of religious affiliation or lack thereof. We inherently know that we reap what we sow.

In our daily lives, we act according to this principle. We encourage our children to study, knowing that their efforts will lead to better opportunities in the future. We work diligently, expecting a paycheck at the end of the month. We understand that our habits, like diet and exercise, have long-term effects on our health. If we consume excess Sugar or excessive calories, over decades we will get diabetes or suffer heart problems. That simply put, is part of the workings of Karma. If you are angry with somebody, chances are the resentment will rebound. That only is Karma.

To understand Karma, we can think of it in terms of seed and fruit. The seed is our causative action or intent, while the fruit is the result. Just like a seed takes time to grow into a fruit-bearing tree, our actions may not have immediate consequences, but they inevitably shape our future.

Karma operates like the law of gravity - it is always at work, regardless of our awareness of it. Every action we take, every thought we think, and even our choices to not act, are seeds that will bear fruit in due time. While we may not always comprehend the complex web of cause and effect that governs our lives, with effort and alertness, we can begin to see Karma at work.

It's important to note that the actual workings of Karma are far more complex than this simple explanation suggests. The intricate web of cause and effect that governs our lives is the subject matter of this book, which delves into the nuances and depths of the way of Karma. While the basic principle of Karma is easy to grasp, its application in the grand scheme of existence is a vast and intricate topic that requires careful study and contemplation.

The key takeaway from the law of Karma is that what we do to the world, we do to our future selves. The world is a mirror, albeit a distorted one, reflecting our past actions. Our present is largely determined by our past, but our future is shaped by our present actions. By living in harmony with others and ourselves, we sow the seeds for a better future. Understanding Karma empowers us to take responsibility for our lives and shape our destinies.

By exploring the complexities of Karma, we gain a deeper understanding of our place in the universe and the power we have to shape our lives and the world around us. This book serves as a guide on that journey, illuminating the path to wisdom, self-awareness, and ultimately total liberation.

Dharma: Doing the Right Thing

Dharma is a Sanskrit term that encompasses the ethical and moral principles that govern a righteous life. It is the path of righteousness, the way of living in harmony with the universal order. Dharma guides us in understanding and fulfilling our

roles and responsibilities in life, whether as individuals, family members, or members of society.

Interestingly, you already know what Dharma is! The understanding of Dharma is intrinsic to human nature. We inherently know our responsibilities in the various roles we play in life. As parents, we know it is our duty to love, nurture, and guide our children. As employees, we understand the importance of being punctual, diligent, and honest in our work. As citizens, we recognize our obligation to follow the laws, pay taxes, and contribute to the betterment of society.

This intrinsic understanding of Dharma is a testament to its universality. The teachings of major religions reflect this universal truth. In Christianity, the Ten Commandments provide a moral framework that includes honouring one's parents, not stealing, not bearing false witness, and not coveting others' possessions. Islam's Five Pillars include charity, prayer, and pilgrimage, emphasizing the importance of compassion, devotion, and spiritual growth. Buddhism's Noble Eightfold Path guides followers towards right speech, right action, and right livelihood, promoting a life of integrity and mindfulness. Jainism's core principle of Ahimsa, meaning "non-violence" or "do not hurt others," is a powerful expression of Dharma, emphasizing the importance of compassion and respect for all living beings. Even the communist maxim "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" resonates with the principles of Dharma, emphasizing the importance of contributing to society based on one's capabilities and taking only what one needs to work to the best of their ability. However, where communism missed the mark is in its attempt to enforce this principle on others, without bothering about whether the enforcer has the caliber in the first place. Dharma, on the other hand, starts and ends with oneself.

The word Dharma recognizes that rules and regulations are highly contextual. For example, your Dharma as a driver in India would imply driving on the left side of the road, whereas

in the United States, it would mean driving on the right side. Dharma encompasses your responsibilities in a specific role at a particular point in time, as well as your conduct of life, principles, moral values, decency, and character. It adapts to the context while maintaining its core essence of righteousness and harmony with the greater good.

However, living according to Dharma is not always easy. It requires us to overcome our selfish desires, greed, and insecurities, to put the larger interest before our own, and to make difficult choices in the face of adversity. It demands courage, and a willingness to stand up for what is right, even when it is unpopular or inconvenient. One also needs to overcome one's personal likes and dislikes and do, simply put, what is right rather than what is convenient. Furthermore, many individuals may harbour subtle personal agendas while outwardly appearing to do good. Recognizing these hidden motivations often requires deep inner reflection and honest self-examination. Only through this process of introspection can one truly align with the principles of Dharma and act with genuine selflessness.

The quality of a society is determined by the extent to which its people are aligned with Dharma - a Dharma coefficient if you will. The more individuals a society live according to Dharma, the more harmonious, just, and prosperous that society becomes. By embracing Dharma on a personal level, we contribute to the collective well-being and elevate the Dharma coefficient of our communities and the world at large.

The book, "What is My Dharma?" will delve into this more in detail.

Moksha: Freedom

The concept of Moksha is not widely known outside of India. Simply put, Moksha means complete freedom. Freedom from

what? Freedom from suffering, of course. Suffering can be of innumerable types, anxiety, depression, frustration, boredom, lack of money, bad relationships, health problems, poor performance, indiscipline, lethargy, lack of fulfilment, old age, grief, and negativity. Isn't this what every human being seeks in some way or the other?

But suffering is intrinsically linked to desire and its fulfilment. When we have a desire, we work to fulfil it. We seek money to be free from the desire for it. We pursue relationships to fulfil the desire for connection, to be loved, to belong, and to be cared for. The entire cycle of desire revolves around our pursuit of fulfilment.

Our very nature drives us to become free from desire and seek fulfilment. It's in our DNA. Every human being, regardless of background or place in history, is built with this inherent drive. It's universal. We strive for money, good food, a harmonious family, seeing a nice movie, or any other desire, ultimately seeking freedom from that very desire.

But here's the catch: even when we achieve Moksha from a particular desire, the fulfilment seems temporary. We fulfill one desire, only to have another arise. It's an endless cycle. And sometimes some desires cannot be fulfilled. Leading to frustration and despair, taking us further away from the peace, happiness and fulfilment we are seeking.

Many times, in pursuit of happiness, we hurt others in many ways that we do not even realize. And as elsewhere stated in this book, that karma finds a way back, further taking us away from the peace and happiness we seek.

And sometimes we have issues not connected to external fulfilment. Like we may be agitated, or states of anxiety, depression, and frustration become part and parcel of you.

The purpose of the preceding writeup is not to create further depression or negativity, but to raise the question, is there a way out? Can we work within so that we can achieve

a state where peace and fulfilment become more permanent aspects, independent of external circumstances while making us efficacious in handling our worldly life?

It's important to note that the gateway to spirituality need not only be through negative conditions. Positive aspirations can also lead us on this path:

- How do I become more compassionate?
- How do I become more responsible?
- How do I become more peaceful?
- How do I become less of a pain to others?

Intellectual curiosity can also be a driving force:

- What is behind all this?
- Who is the existential 'I'?
- If I am the observer, and everything about me can be observed, what is the existential 'I' which is observing?

There can be many gateways to spirituality. However, typically, a person doesn't knock on the doors to Moksha unless they are in some trouble and find no way out. This path, this pursuit of freedom, is the essence of spirituality.

It begins with understanding yourself, managing your emotional/desiring mind and ultimately transcending it. When we transcend it, there is the proverbial pot of gold, bliss and peace. Are there people who have been able to transcend the mind completely and reach the *hakuna-matata* (no problemo) state for good? Yes. It's not just a Mahavir or Buddha or Rama or Krishna who "achieved" it, but literary tens of thousands of people in human history, including hundreds who are alive today. Thus it is not a mythological or historical thing, but something that is very much verifiable and doable for you and me as well.

While we are naturally driven by desires, true spiritual growth begins when we critically examine those desires instead of blindly pursuing them. This involves questioning whether

all our desires will truly lead us to what we seek: peace and lasting happiness. If all you seek is to be happy, then just be happy. Why link it to a hundred other things? It is we who do the linking, not anybody else.

This understanding, while simple, is often overlooked. We get lost in the complexities of religion, ideologies, ego, psychological theories and conflict, missing the fundamental truth. Life, at its core, is very simple. Once we grasp these fundamental truths, life becomes much easier. It's not about chasing one desire after another, but about understanding the workings of our own minds. Moksha is the path to ultimate freedom, not just from external circumstances, but from the very nature of desire itself. We have countless psychologists, psychiatrists, books, and theories, philosophies, religions and yet they often miss this fundamental understanding. It's like the emperor with no clothes.

It must be mentioned here that while the core concepts are simple, we are complex beings, and its internalization and our personal transformation are not that "simple". Reaching the state of peace and bliss, while being fully active and responsible to the world, needs work and the development of spiritual wisdom. There are many nuances which one becomes aware of on the path. The book, "Ishavasya Upanishad: The path to the ultimate liberation through a fulfilling life" will explain the nuances of living life and the path to complete liberation and can serve as a good starting point.

A word of caution: Do not think that because you've read this, you know what it is. This write-up is too brief to cover the multiple perspectives with which different humans approach and interpret it. You need to be at it, till it is crystal clear for you.

Karma, Dharma, and Moksha are things which we all already know. It's hard to teach a person something new, but it's extremely hard to teach a person something they already know.

It sounds cliched, but you have to just look within, and see that you already know these things to be true.

Vedas, Hinduism

The Vedas are considered the core books of Hinduism, much like the Bible is for Christianity and Judaism. It is however important to note that the Vedic culture, from which the concepts of Karma, Dharma, and Moksha originate, is a knowledge-based tradition rather than a belief or personality-based one. These fundamental concepts are found across all Indic spiritual traditions, including Jainism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Yoga, and numerous other philosophical schools, religions, and cultural traditions that emerged in the Indian subcontinent.

The word “Veda” itself means knowledge. The Vedic texts, do not mention the word “Hindu” (a term that was actually coined much much later, ironically by outsiders, to refer to the people living beyond the Indus River, essentially labelling a diverse group they perceived as different from themselves), were never meant to establish a separate religion, as the connotation religion has today. Instead, they provide a platform for sharing and discussing knowledge, including opposing points of view, much like Wikipedia does in the modern era. We don’t consider Wikipedia to be a religion; similarly, Vedic knowledge was not intended to be limited to a specific group of people called “Hindus.” This intrinsically secular approach, shared by many Indic traditions, encourages rational discourse and the exploration of ideas without blind adherence to a single founder or absolute authority. In a knowledge-based system, what makes sense is valued above all else, allowing for the free exchange of thoughts and the evolution of understanding.

Moreover, just like in science, the insights gained from Vedic knowledge should be validated through our own

observations of ourselves and the lives around us. While a lot of what is contained in the core texts may not be easily understandable or reasoned, what can be reasoned should be reasoned. Only when we can confirm these ideas through our personal experiences do they become truths for us? The Upanishadic tradition encourages this kind of experiential validation, rather than simply accepting something as true because it is written in a text or spoken by an authority figure.

By engaging with these concepts from a place of openness, inquiry, and personal observation, we can deepen our understanding of ourselves and the world around us, regardless of our individual beliefs or backgrounds. Thus, Vedic knowledge is an available resource for everybody, transcending religious boundaries and inviting all to participate in the pursuit of wisdom.

Contents

<i>Dedication</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Acknowledgement</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>Preface</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>My journey.....</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Karma: We reap what we sow</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>Dharma: Doing the Right Thing.....</i>	<i>xii</i>
<i>Moksha: Freedom</i>	<i>xiv</i>
<i>Vedas, Hinduism.....</i>	<i>xvii</i>
INTRODUCTION.....	01
SECTION 1: UNDERSTANDING KARMA	03
1. Background.....	03
2. Is Karma real?.....	03
3. Simplistic understanding does not hold.....	04
SECTION 2: DEVELOPING A WORKING MODEL OF KARMA	06
Basic elements of the working of Karma.....	06
Broadening the Perspective.....	12
2.1 Escalation/De-escalation	13
2.2 Sticky Karma's.....	14
2.3 Fruition time	15
2.4 Effect of the Karmic fruit.....	15
2.5 Gross vs Subtle Karma's.....	16

2.6 <i>Passive Karma's</i>	19
2.7 <i>Inner only</i>	22
2.8 <i>Sanchita, Prarabhda and Karma other Karma terms</i>	22
2.9 <i>Karma and Emotions</i>	24
2.10 <i>Karmic Patterns</i>	24
2.11 <i>Karma and Forgiveness</i>	25
Stitching the model together	25
4.1 <i>Fragmented/Accumulated return</i>	25
4.2 <i>Sequencing</i>	25
4.3 <i>Each Karma seed has to be expereinced</i>	26
4.4 <i>Experience behind the event</i>	26
4.5 <i>Individual events vs common events</i>	28
4.6 <i>Fruition of a seed</i>	29
4.7 <i>Derivative Karma's</i>	29
4.8 <i>The Karmic Mosaic/Matrix</i>	31
Where is the justice in the world?	35
The Four Laws of Karma - A Summary	46

SECTION 3: SPECIAL CASES AND APPLICATIONS OF KARMA48

Collective Karma.....	48
<i>Hinduism</i>	49
<i>Islam</i>	51
<i>Christianity</i>	52
<i>Communism and political parties</i>	53
<i>United States of America</i>	53
<i>Humanity</i>	54
Karma Between Lives - Rebirth, Heaven, and Hell	55
2.1 <i>Rebirth</i>	55
2.2 <i>Life to life</i>	60

2.3 After physical death, Heaven & Hell.....	61
SECTION 4: IMPLICATIONS OF KARMA.....	64
Karma and Spirituality/Liberation.....	64
<i>Adhyatma/Spirituality</i>	68
<i>Yoga</i>	68
<i>Moksha/salvation/Liberation</i>	69
Karma and the States of Consciousness	71
<i>Liberated/Enlightened/Self-realised beings</i>	71
<i>Animals</i>	72
<i>Dream State/Heaven and Hell</i>	74
<i>Children</i>	74
God and Karma	75
Dharma - Duty, Responsibility, Morality, and Karma.....	76
It's not my problem	79
Free Will vs. Predestination from a Karmic Lens	81
Personal Responsibility.....	83
Life is Not Arbitrary	84
The Need for Laws and Governance	85
Other frameworks do not hold.....	85
Conclusion.....	89
SECTION 5: METAPHYSICS OF KARMA	91
Speculations on the Origins of Karma	91
Why Karmic Memory is Veiled	94
The Necessity of Balance and why the Universe is not all good	95
CONCLUSION	98
Scope and Limitations of the Karmic Theory	98
Utility and Application of Karmic Understanding	101

Key Takeaways	102
---------------------	-----

APPENDICES 105

How to verify if one had a past life	105
--	-----

1. <i>An undercurrent of patriotism, and attachment to my country India</i>	106
---	-----

2. <i>Sex</i>	110
---------------------	-----

3. <i>Spirituality</i>	113
------------------------------	-----

4. <i>A friendship and coincidences</i>	114
---	-----

5. <i>General personality</i>	116
-------------------------------------	-----

How Understanding Karma Helped the Author	117
---	-----

1. <i>The Mother In Law (MIL) problem</i>	117
---	-----

2. <i>Leisure=Money !</i>	118
---------------------------------	-----

3. <i>The Handbag problem</i>	118
-------------------------------------	-----

4. <i>Anger/Negativity</i>	119
----------------------------------	-----

REFERENCES..... 121

Introduction

In this book, “The Way of Karma,” we embark on a journey to develop a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of Karma, the cosmic law of cause and effect that is central to understanding life, spirituality and religion. To achieve this goal, we have organized the book into five main sections.

Section 1 focuses on understanding the concept of Karma, its common misconceptions, and its role as an intrinsic part of human thinking. We will examine the limitations of simplistic models of Karma and set the stage for developing a more sophisticated approach.

In Section 2, we will construct a detailed working model of Karma, exploring its basic elements, mechanisms, and the four laws that govern its operation. We will broaden our perspective on Karma, delve into the concept of justice, and examine the intricate workings of this universal law.

Section 3 is dedicated to special cases and applications of Karma, such as collective Karma and the concept of rebirth. By exploring these specific instances, we will further expand our understanding of how Karma operates in various contexts.

Section 4 focuses on the profound implications of accepting Karma as a genuine force in our lives. We will investigate the relationship between Karma and spirituality, states of consciousness, and the role of God. We will also examine the connection between Karma and Dharma, the concepts of free will and predestination, personal responsibility, and the necessity of laws and governance in a world governed by Karmic principles.

Finally, in Section 5, we will delve into the metaphysics of Karma, speculating on its origins, the reasons behind veiled Karmic memory, and the impersonal nature of this cosmic law.

By the end of this book, you will have a thorough grasp of Karma as a complex and powerful phenomenon, as well as the tools to apply this understanding to your own life. Whether you are new to the concept of Karma or have a long-standing interest in Eastern spirituality, this book will provide you with a fresh perspective and a deeper appreciation of the subtle workings of this universal law.

SECTION 1

UNDERSTANDING KARMA

1. Background

The Karma that we will discuss here is the cosmic law of cause and effect. It is the belief that if you do good, good happens to you, and if you do bad, bad happens to you. You reap what you sow, meaning that your actions determine your future outcomes. This understanding of Karma as the governing principle of life is either implicit or explicit in all Indian spiritual and religious traditions, including Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Hinduism/Vedic religion. While the word 'Karma' has many other connotations, this article specifically explores and seeks to understand the cosmic/universal law of cause and effect. Understanding the workings of Karma can provide valuable insights into the nature of our reality and our role in shaping our own destinies.

2. Is Karma real?

Is Karma a philosophy? A perspective? Or is it real, as 'real' as you and me, as the mountains and rivers, as gravity and chemistry? If Karma is real, it would have governing principles, similar to the laws of electromagnetism or Newton's laws. We must then ask if the world can be explained through Karma and if this explanation can be validated.

To begin answering these questions, let's start by examining our intuitive understanding of Karma in everyday life. We all have an intrinsic sense of cause and effect.

For example, overeating leads to stomach aches, while not eating results in hunger. We work because we expect a paycheck at the end of the month.

Our intuitive understanding of Karma extends beyond immediate cause and effect, as we also expect long-term consequences for our actions. We tell our children to study, believing that their hard work will lead to better job prospects and social status in the future. We understand that excessive sugar consumption and lack of exercise can result in diabetes or heart problems decades later. We recognize that developing a drinking habit increases the likelihood of becoming an alcoholic.

Thus, Karma is not something ‘out there,’ ‘weird,’ or unnatural. Regardless of religion, nationality, or ethnicity, we all live our lives with an intrinsic expectation of Karma. For instance, even when angry with a spouse, we may refrain from yelling, knowing that it will likely elicit a similar response. In general, when we are pleasant to others, they tend to be pleasant in return. This principle also applies to groups of people—a community where the majority is law-abiding, peaceful, and honest will likely result in a peaceful and orderly society, regardless of how the individuals came to possess these qualities.

3. Simplistic understanding does not hold

If Karma is a real phenomenon which works according to some set of universal governing principles or laws, then the simplistic understanding of it—that if somebody does something to someone else, they will directly experience the same thing in return—cannot be true.

Let’s examine why this basic understanding does not hold up under scrutiny. If person A hits person B, the simplistic view of Karma suggests that B should hit A in return. However, if we take a step back, we realize that for B

to be hit by A in the first place, B must have done something to deserve it; otherwise, it would violate the principle of Karma. Therefore, A can only succeed in hitting B if B had hit A in the past. Taking another step back, we see that A could only have been hit by B if A had previously hit B, and so on, *ad infinitum*. This simplistic understanding of Karma would lead to a world forever stuck in a cyclical equilibrium, with the same actions repeating endlessly, like a perpetually looping tape reel.

Clearly, this model is insufficient to explain the world as we observe it. To gain a true understanding of Karma, we must develop a more comprehensive and nuanced model.

SECTION 2

DEVELOPING A WORKING MODEL OF KARMA

Basic elements of the working of Karma

Before we delve into extreme cases like *‘do you mean that the person who got raped deserved it’* or explain this to the people who were killed during the Holocaust, let us look at normal, routine life. As described in the previous section, we expect things to follow the natural cause-effect flow. We will create a methodology to view it and then see if it can be used to extrapolate everything we see around us.

Let’s start with a simple, everyday example. Our good man, Ramesh, makes tea and drinks it. That’s it. Let’s see this example in more detail from a “Karma” viewpoint.

Beginning at the very start, Ramesh wants to make tea. That is a ‘desire’ seeking fruition. The act of making the tea, culminating in drinking it, is all for the fruition of that one desire. We will call the desire ‘seed karma’ and the fruition ‘fruit karma’—quite obviously a fruit of the seed.

What happens after the fruit karma? Well, the tea is in Ramesh’s stomach. That’s one effect. But there’s more. The taste of tea still lingers in Ramesh’s memory. He is tasting the fruit of his karma. We won’t call it ‘taste karma,’ but since it is the effect the fruit had on Ramesh, we will call it ‘effect Karma.’ The lingering aftertaste is the ‘effect Karma’ of the fruit. Just remove the suffixes: there was a seed, it became a fruit,

and eating the fruit had an effect. Doesn't sound all that bad, right? But what was the response to that effect? The response was that Ramesh 'liked it.' It registered somewhere in Ramesh's consciousness: 'Tea is good,' and 'I will take it again at the same time tomorrow.' He has just sown a new seed, a little dormant right now, but it will no doubt come to fruition at the right time. So Ramesh's response to the effect of the fruit was to sow a new seed. This is where the cycle of Karma comes full circle: Seed karma -> Fruit Karma -> Effect of Fruit Karma -> Response to effect, new seed Karma. This cycle is so very difficult to break out of. Yep, that is what all the scriptures were referring to. And when the conditions are right, the next morning, newspaper in hand, the dormant seed comes to life and becomes a new fruit.

Let's consider another response. Ramesh did not like the tea. How does Karma account for this? Well, Ramesh puts a new seed into his consciousness: 'Tea is bad.' That dormant seed will undoubtedly come to fruition if it gets an opportunity. Someday, somebody will thrust a glass of tea at Ramesh, and he will react, "Nooooo!" That somebody would not know what bit Ramesh. It's all Karma, you know.

So did Ramesh really 'make' the tea? Or did tea 'happen'? That is what I call a defining question: 'to do' or 'let happen'?

I put my bets on 'tea happened,' just like that, on its own. Don't you agree? Let's consider the facts—the hard-nosed, rational, scientific facts—no mumbo jumbo.

Here we go.

Eqn 1: Tea = Milk + Sugar + Tea leaves + vessel + Burner

See, I told you, there is no Ramesh. I won!

You say Ramesh was required to put all this together. Good point. Ramesh was instrumental in making this happen. Let's break these ingredients down into further equations (it's all very scientific).

Eqn 2: Milk = Milkman came on his bike to deliver in the morning = Milkman + bike + Shop where milk is available
 Let's break it down one more level.

Eqn 3: Milkman = Human being who is married and needs the money to run his family. He was introduced to this 'route' for delivering milk by a friend in the neighbourhood.

Formulating the equation:

Eqn 4: Milkman = Human being + married +
 Need of money + knows right friend

Eqn 5: Human being = (Parents) Two more human beings met & all that stuff

Okay, you get the point. An initial chart would look like this (Fig 1), but that would actually be only the tip of the iceberg. It would go on until we reach the first human, and even that would be due to the creation of the universe and the beginnings of creation by God Brahma.

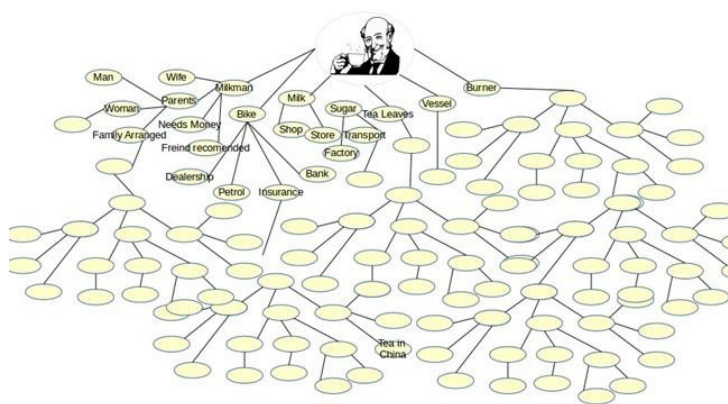


Fig 1: All for a cup of tea

Making tea requires a complex combination of factors, including the availability of milk, sugar, tea leaves, a vessel to prepare it in, and a heat source. Each of these factors depends on a web of other events and actions.

Why all this? Let's take the first two equations (Eqn 1 & 2... ahem).

If the milkman had a headache and had not come, Ramesh would not have had his tea, assuming he does not have time to go to the shop himself in the morning.

Or if his bike developed a puncture.

Or if shops were on strike.

Or if the cows were on strike... nice try.

Each of the elements lends itself to endless possibilities.

Even Ramesh liking of tea can be traced back to the fact that tea was discovered in China 3,000 years ago. So what you view as an 'independent event' is just a minuscule part of an interconnected maze of a zillion things happening and that have happened in this world.

Even if we consider only the human element, we can find the connection or the work of at least 10 humans to that cup of tea. And each of their tasks or ingredients required to get those tasks done would need 10 each, and so on until very soon we have covered the whole globe and its 6 billion people. And Ramesh, in all his bloated ego (ahamkara), thinks, "I made the tea" (puffed chest and all).

This is important. This is central to understanding the model of Karma we are formulating. The whole world is an extremely complex matrix of people and their desires and actions interacting with the material world (things like sugar and metal and stuff) and interacting with each other at multiple levels and in multiple ways (as in wheels within wheels). And the result, somewhere in a particular corner of the world, kaboom babama boom... tea happens. Where is Ramesh in all this? Drinking the tea, ha ha.

So for a seed karma to come to fruition, the circumstances must be favorable for it to happen. By circumstances, we mean each of the elements must be in place—milk, sugar, burner, etc.

To simplify, we will introduce the term ‘circumstantial elements.’ So the first law of Karma becomes (Newton would have been proud):

First Law of Karma:

*When all the circumstantial elements are in place,
the seed Karma comes to fruition.*

But there’s more to explore here beyond just the end result of the tea. Let’s look deeper at the karmic forces at play. We are not done drinking the tea (karmic tea, he he) yet.

The seed Karma within Ramesh (of wanting tea) caused Ramesh to move his butt and do something, aka tea. That makes sense, right? Can we step back a little and say the seed Karma somehow caused the circumstantial elements, i.e., Milk, Sugar, et al., to be there, so that tea ‘could happen’ sometime in the future? Quite obvious, if one looks at it. The stuff didn’t just float through the window so that tea would happen, did it? No, don’t agree. You say all those things were arranged there by Ramesh because of that intrinsic desire. But Ramesh minus the desire to drink tea would mean none of this would be in its place. It is the seed Karma that is driving the stuff. We are so obsessed with Ramesh—he did this, he did that. If you look beyond Ramesh and view it from a Karmic perspective, you’ll see it as seed Karma in action. [From a karmic point of view, Ramesh is just a bunch of seed Karmas awaiting fruition. Not that glamorous, I agree but it’s better than a bunch of neutrons and protons moving aimlessly, one would think!] And what is true for Ramesh is true for all the other guys in the infinite chain of events leading to the tea. Can we then say, that seed Karmas are driving the arrangement of the ‘circumstantial elements’ so that they (the seed Karmas) can come to fruition? Put it another way, that infinite matrix of people and things we call the phenomenal (or observable) universe is arranging itself so that seed Karmas can get fruition. One more time:

Second Law of Karma:

The universe is driven by and drives to set up the circumstantial elements so that seed karmas can get to fruition.

What is the significance of the above statement? Ladies, Gentlemen, and others take a deep breath. We just came up with the defining moment in world history: the second law of karma.

Didn't take your breath away? What a pity. It's all that tea which is making you drowsy. Let us change the example (whew, at last).

Satheesh (not related to Ramesh) develops an interest in horses (which is different from tea). This would mean that whenever there is a mention of horses, he moves towards the group, or if there is an article, he reads it with interest. Subconsciously, he is driven by 'horses.' He perks up at their mention and increasingly finds himself at horse riding events, horse races, etc. Nothing unusual about it. What we are adding here is that the "universe" would also be arranging things in such a way that, if possible, horse-related stuff will intersect his movements in space-time. [Space-time, aha, now Einstein would have been proud.] It's not necessary and will not always happen, depending on all the other karmas and including how deep his desire is, but outside of his conscious effort, things will be happening to move in that direction.

So what do you call this "thing" which is a kind of "force" that tries to let karmas get their fruition and closure? Karmic force? God? There are too many Gods around already in the religion where I come from, and honestly, one more would struggle to find a place. And in my humble opinion, there are too few in some religions out there; one more would create a helluva lot of trouble. Some religions actually have no God, can you believe it? What a pity! So let's focus on Science (which, by the way, is quietly trying to displace the Gods and become one itself, quite undeservingly, of course, but that would be a

loooooong story). Science has four fundamental forces, not too many, not too few, perfect. So let's add it to science. As an analogy, I see this as similar to gravitational force—can't 'see' it, but we know it is there by its effect. Let's call it 'Vyavasthit Shakti'^[1]. The closest literal translation from the original Gujarati would be 'Settle everything properly force'.

*O come ye hither, sit ye down, we invoke thy Gods,
Newton and Einstein*

*o ye Scientists, be ye pleased with these oblations
brought to you*

read of them, hearken to our call

Accept our works with a mighty thought

In conclusion, we have explored the basic elements of how Karma operates through everyday examples like making tea and developing an interest in horses. We have seen how the universe arranges itself to facilitate the fruition of seed Karmas and introduced two fundamental laws of Karma: the First Law, which states that seed Karmas come to fruition when all the circumstantial elements are in place, and the Second Law, which asserts that the universe is driven by and drives to set up these circumstantial elements for the fruition of seed Karmas. We have also introduced the concept of 'Vyavasthit Shakti,' a force that works to let Karmas get their fruition and closure. With this foundation, we are now ready to explore more complex aspects of Karma and its implications in our lives and the world around us.

Broadening the Perspective

By now you must be thoroughly convinced that Karma works. So I will go through many more examples, which will help broaden your understanding.

[1] Vyavasthit Shakti: A term coined by the spiritual teacher, Dada Bhagwan, to describe the force that governs the fruition of Karmas.

2.1 Escalation/De-escalation

Karmic seeds can intensify or diminish over time-based on our actions and thoughts. Engaging in positive deeds and cultivating virtuous qualities can lead to a de-escalation of negative Karmic imprints while indulging in harmful behaviors can escalate the impact of negative Karma. Let us see an example of this.

Ramesh and Satish have a fight. Ramesh and Sateesh both had seeds of resentment awaiting fruition, that they may or may not have been conscious of ... ie they may be friendly but not know that something from their past life was remaining pending:). The fight is the fruition of that karma, the aftertaste is the effect of that fruition, if there is further resentment a new seed has been sown, if there is a longing for a hug and kiss to make up, that would also be a seed. If they hug and make up and there is no pending emotion, then that is that, no further seeds. However, if they are itching for another argument, then that is the seed, an argument will take place and if that further brews resentment then one more seed ad infinitum. If they don't close before they die, it will continue to the next life or maybe a few lives ahead, depending on how the "Vyavasthit Shakti" can get them next to each other.

Let us consider a variation to the above case. After the initial fight, both have Karmic seeds awaiting fruition (another fight). Ramesh does some spiritual practice to cool himself and forget the incident. But the seed remains strong in Satheesh. Would they still fight? It depends on the depth(intensity) of the pending Karma seed. If it is too strong, despite Ramesh not wanting to, he would still end up getting into a fight with Satheesh.

Nevertheless, the intensity of the fight would be lesser than before. And the intensity of the hurt felt, would be proportional to the depth of the grudge one has, ie one will

feel the pain to the extent one wants to give pain. If however, the seed was not too strong to begin with, or Ramesh is evolved enough to remove the traces of the grudge completely within him, then they would not fight. Satheesh will still have the grudge, but it will not have a place to fructify. Now it's up to Satheesh ... if he does not close or burn out his grudge by some spiritual practice, it will be with him and trouble him. If the grudge were not too deep, then just the normal life would be enough to, over a while, gradually erase it. It depends on how 'sticky' the seed Karma is.

The interesting thing here is not only do you have some degree of control over your own future, but that 'control over yourself' can also influence the karma of the other person visavis yourself. It may appear a stretch, but once you reduce your grudge/negativity for the other person, the other person's grudge/negativity for you reduces, even without direct communication.

2.2 Sticky Karma's

In the previous section, we gave an example where Ramesh removed his grudge/cooled off by conscious effort. The question arises, is it possible that we can erase all our seed karma by conscious effort, at least all the negative karma?

The seed Karma's are all inside you, they are not sitting somewhere else. In theory, you have access to them, but practically it is not easy. Some Karmic imprints are more tenacious than others, requiring greater effort and awareness to overcome. These "sticky" Karma's often stem from deeply ingrained patterns or intense emotional experiences. So here is the categorization of Karma by their 'stickiness'

1. Superficial seed karma can be erased completely or sometimes will just dissolve themselves with time. An example could be you ate at somebody's house, you

liked the laddoo and thought you would buy it from the shop but totally forgot about it forever.

2. Some are amendable but not fully, intensity can be reduced. That tiff you had with your wife which you made up partially by offering to do the dishes.
3. Very sticky. Cannot be changed at all. They have to be played out.

2.3 Fruition time

Another way to categorize is the time taken to fructify. The time it takes for a Karmic seed to bear fruit can vary greatly. Some seeds may manifest quickly, while others may take lifetimes to ripen and bear fruit.

If we overeat, we get a stomach ache. The time for fruition is hardly half a day. Or somebody goofs around during classes and when exam time comes, he flunks. In which case fruition time is almost a year. Or Mr Ananda has an affair and his wife finds out 25 years later and walks out on him. Then his affair took 25 yrs to get its fruit. Or if you have heard of a Mr. Spooky who committed a murder and was never found out during his lifetime. A long long time later we hear of a Mr. Nicey who was caught for a murder he did not commit and was hanged. In which case it is blindingly obvious that the seed Karma took more than a lifetime to fructify.

2.4 Effect of the Karmic Fruit

So far we were looking at the seed-fruit perspective and ignoring the ‘effect of the fruit’. Let us look at the ‘effect of the fruit’. The intensity and duration of the Karmic fruit we experience depends on the nature of the original action or thought. More potent seeds will yield stronger and longer-lasting effects, while milder ones may produce more subtle outcomes.

Sanjay slapped Ashish only to get slapped back. For Mr. Sanjay, the effect of the slap from Mr. Ashish lasted only 5 mins. His cheek which was all burning and turned red was back to normal in just 5 minutes. That is all it took for the effect of the Karma to last. However, Mr. Nandesh was not so lucky. Somebody chopped his leg due to previous enmity. The effect of that fruit will be felt by Mr. Nandeesh for his whole lifetime.

2.5 Gross vs Subtle Karma's

Karma operates on gross and subtle levels, much like the difference between a mason's work and a CEO's role. Gross Karma is like the mason's job - they are the visible, tangible, and often physical consequences of our actions, manifesting as external events and circumstances in our lives. Just as the mason's work is easily observable and involves physical labour, gross Karma is readily apparent and often involves concrete experiences.

On the other hand, Subtle Karma is akin to the CEO's role - they are the intangible, internal, and psychological effects of our actions, influencing our thoughts, emotions, mindset, and overall mental well-being. Much like the CEO's work, which may seem less obvious but is crucial and highly valued, subtle Karma is less apparent but has a profound impact on our lives. They shape our character, tendencies, and the way we perceive and interact with the world around us.

Both gross and subtle Karma are interconnected and can influence each other, just as the CEO's decisions and strategies impact the mason's work and vice versa. Our subtle Karmic imprints can lead to gross Karmic experiences, and our gross actions can create subtle Karmic seeds within our consciousness.

Let us understand this through a small story.

A Mafia Don by the name of Gabbar picks up the intercom. Kalia his henchman, picks it up. All Gabbar speaks is “Amit, ha Samje” (ha Samje=understood) and cuts the intercom. In the next scene of our story, Kalia has just gunned down a nice young man named Amit. The story stops here.

If only action were causing Karma, the whole working would be meaningless. For the mafia Don Gabbar, the only action is picking up the phone and making a call. And he does not even say anything about killing somebody. So somebody who observed the proceedings without knowledge of the background would say, the Karmic fruit for Gabbar’s action should get is somebody else picking up the phone and calling him !#@? **What you see is not what it is.** He, as you would agree, should be charged with murder, cold-blooded murder, in the court of Karma.

So how does it play out?

We will start with our nice man – Amit. It looks patently unfair, but from the Karmic perspective, he is just reaping the fruit of something he has sown in the past. If not in this life then his past life or some past life. Nothing can happen and nobody can suffer pain unless he/she has done something to warrant it. I know it leaves us disturbed, but for now, we will let him rest in peace.

Next is the henchman Kalia. He committed the murder, yes, no doubt about it. He is charged with the killing. But of killing Amit? No. Let me explain

As far as Kalia is concerned, he was just carrying out orders. He does not even know Amit. If it were some Samit he would have gone ahead just the same. Same for Amit, he would have no grudge against Kalia, whether it was a Kalia or Taklia, does not matter. The grudge he has, if he could, is against Gabbar. Kalia was just an instrument for Gabbar in the murder of Amit.

So what exactly does Kalia get charged with? It depends on why he did it. Let's assume he does it for money. And maybe he likes the thrill of the job., career prospects – whatever. But the whole thing is impersonal, so if he gets killed, it would be maybe in an encounter and that would be impersonal too. The policeman who kills him does not really care who he is, he just happens to be in his sight during the encounter. In short, what he did was to the 'cloud' (cloud as in cloud computing) and he gets the response back from the cloud. What about the policeman who killed him ... hmmm we will stop here otherwise we can never finish. But we will come back to it later.

Finally, to our man Gabbar. He was the brain behind this ... so it is at that level he gets affected. The immediate effect is the stress (is that all ?) of having to avoid being caught by the police. Or maybe Amit's brother Dharam may be plotting revenge. He has to live with it day in and day out. The trouble for him is at a subtler level. It's not that he will not suffer gross repercussions, but the subtle ones create trouble from inside over an extended period. Maybe would result in paranoia and suspicion of everybody? Or no real people he can trust etc etc. The killing will be with him till death and beyond. The Karma that he is with is a sticky one. And Amit will probably get his revenge in the next life.

In the court of Karma, intent is everything, EVERYTHING. Intent+action (or intent+inaction) matter. Action or inaction by itself has absolutely no importance.

So now here is one more categorisation by which we can look at Karma's. Kalia's act is a gross one, it is a gross Karma and the effect of its fruit will also be gross. Whereas Gabbar's is a subtle one and its effect will also be at a subtler level. In general gross ones get a gross effect and die out quickly whereas the effect of subtler ones is protracted and more sticky, hard to get out of. The more the use of the intellect in

doing the act, the subtler the Karma, the deeper the problem and the stickier it is. Just a physical act is gross, manipulation, and planning to hurt is subtler. A psychological hurt is what registers longer. Spanking a child will probably hurt him but the physical pain will be gone in a few minutes ... it is the psychological hurt that will remain for a longer time. And the more psychological the infliction is, the deeper and longer the hurt. This is why kids who are sexually abused suffer the trauma for a lifetime, though the physical scars will heal in weeks.

The more intellect used, the more psychological the infliction, the subtler the seed Karma, and the deeper and longer-term the effect of the fruit. So for the person who ordered the gas chambers, though he did not actually physically kill people, it is at a subtle level, the effect of the fruits he gets will cause his mental make-up/psyche to be disturbed at a deeper level and it is going to take him far longer to come out of it, as compared to the people who actually implemented his orders.

2.6 Passive Karma's

As we were discussing, a one Mr Suresh was listening. After hearing about all this, Mr Suresh is scared and worried. Being highly intelligent, he decides he wants to eliminate the possibility of negative Karma altogether. He realises Karma happens, when somebody does something 'bad'. What if he didn't do anything at all – no negative Karma, brilliant tactics right? He realises, that going to the office with all the politics and associated pushes and pulls and tensions, he is definitely generating a lot of negative karma. So very promptly, the next day, which happens to be a Wednesday, he does not get up from bed. His wife tries to wake him up, but he refuses. Thinking that he is unwell, she somehow manages to get the kids ready and send them to school – later, when he gets up, his wife figures out there is nothing wrong with him and goes

ballistic. “What the #@!\$ is wrong with you, what image are you setting for the kids, who the ^#\$ is going to get their tuition fees” ..etc etc. Suresh is wondering what went wrong... probably all his past karma is catching up .. surely his karma will improve. He decides to continue with this strategy. The next day his boss calls in .. it’s his turn to go ballistic ..” The customer was asking for the report. The MD is MAD at you.. who the @!!@X# think you are ?” Suresh can’t sleep that night.

The whole office is swimming in front of his eyes .. his children will be out of school .. who will pay the bills? Surely God will take care, after all, he has committed not to harm anybody, isn’t it for the good? The next day, after the children have left for school, the surprise of surprise, who is at the door, it’s his Mother-in-law. His wife did make that all-important call she was threatening. The buck, as they say, stops at the mother-in-law. Mr Suresh, well, to keep things short, is back in the office on Monday. As Mr Suresh has realised, not doing is not ‘no action’ and is also an “action” which will reap its consequences. For a third party, Mr Suresh on his bed, he is not doing anything “bad”, but nevertheless, he is reaping miserable consequences. For this, we will use the term “passive karma”

Mr Sachin’s case is a little more complicated. His wife Sanjana was the emotional type, very attached, scared to the point of being paranoid, clinging to a kind of personality. Since she came from a medical background, her fears were essentially about the medical field. She constantly worried about getting this infection or that. She would avoid eating outside, and washing her hands multiple times etc. etc. Sachin being the nice guy, ‘tolerated’ it. No bad karma, good guy, you know. Soon, despite of everything, they have a kid. Now Sanjana’s insecurities are now transferred to the kid. She is happy of course that she has a kid. But then, she would not let the kid go out, nor get anybody home (what if they transfer germs),

nor did she let the kid play, touch mud or interact with other kids. She will not let the kid away from her even for a minute. This continues as the kid is growing up. Mr Sachin, the nice guy that he is does not interfere, though he is aware that what Sanjana is doing may not be in the best interest of the kid. Any attempt to tell Sanjana that this is not right results in a volcano at home. Being ahimsa premi (loves nonviolence), and not wanting to hurt his wife in any way, he lets things carry on, with no negative karma.

Cut to a few years later. The kid is now going to school. Or rather they want it to go to school. But the kid will not leave Mama. Not even for a minute. It has grown up to be a shrivelled-up, paranoid, insecure kid. And now the mama can't stand it. The kid is irritable, touchy, scared, and does not find joy in doing anything, the only thing is it will want to be with Mama. And when two emotional people lean on each other, the resulting mess, every now and then, needs Sachin's intervention. We can see why Sanjana suffered, she got back what she had sowed. But what about Sachin? Sachin also has to suffer the consequences of passive Karma. He has to see his kid not doing well, though the kid is not clinging to him or directly squabbling with him. He passively observed his wife's actions, and he now passively observed his kid's doing badly. And it will not leave him any happier. Even though it would mean incurring the wife's anger, he should have asserted himself and played his role as a father. Now his problems have only compounded. He has to be with a difficult wife and a difficult kid.

In many cases, not doing action is far worse than doing some action and maybe even worse than doing the wrong action. Apathy, negligence and inaction are passive Karma and will have their own set of consequences. Karma's are registered all the time. Whether it is an action or inaction, karmas are registered.

So what then is the right action? What are the actions to be taken? This we will cover in the section on Dharma.

2.7 Inner only

A suppressed desire also registers karma.... like a guy sees a pretty girl and feels like flirting, but knows it's wrong to flirt with her. If he doesn't flirt with her, on the outside he has done the right thing, so there is no karma with the girl as such, but the suppressed desire is now a seed which is waiting to seek fulfilment. If it becomes very strong, the conditions required for its fulfilment start piling up, if not this life, next life. However, if the Karmic load is heavy and it cannot be fulfilled, then it starts building up frustration and that in itself is a negative consequence.

It is not just what you do. Impressions created in your daily interactions are being registered and changing your preferences and outcomes.

Eg: if you are obsessed with Katrina Kaif's gyrations in 'Sheila ki jawani' ... and wish, aisa koi item life mein ajaye to zindagi zindagi ban jay the thing is "Vyavasthith Shakti" is sympathetic to your cause but there is soooo much distance between you and Katrina, and you see there are so many boys in line, by the time your turn comes, it is going to be many many lifetimes. By that time, she has exhausted all her looking-good karma and is bloated like a pear. Then even if you realise "Whoa, is this for what I spent so many life times " it's too late. Bandhe, dekhta hai tu kya, sambhal ja jara.

2.8 Sanchita, Prarabhda and Karma other Karma terms

These are a few terms which are commonly used in karma talk in India. The karma stock which is yet to be expended is divided into two, Prarabhda and Agami. Prarabhda is the karma stock which is to unfold in the current life. Agami is the remainder balance which is for future lives. Sanchita is the total stock of karma. We will briefly touch on this.

There cannot be a bank somewhere that stores and sends part of your karma. Whatever, it is, it is always with you, inside your karmic shell or impression body. The balance of Karma which did not get exhausted always stays with you. At every point in time, circumstances are being set up to let seed karma unfold. What is true at the micro level is also true at the macro level. A person is born into a particular environment, so that a particular set of karma can fructify ...which one can call Prarabhda karma, but that is about it. There is no compartment within the Karmic body as such. If the circumstances are different, then a different set of Karma that is within will unfold.

Karma is only one of the circumstantial evidences, there need to be all others to be present for an event to happen. When you have a body, it is its normal course for it to grow, stabilize, decay and eventually die. Because of unspent karma, the person has taken a body but beyond that, it is following nature's way. It is like DNA, so you also bring along with your karmic DNA which superimposes on the natural DNA as the person grows.

Just like there is continuity from day to day, it follows that there must be continuity from life to life. Your next life is predominantly being set up by the karma picked up in this life. However, there can be a few who are unable to find fruition which will continue across many lifetimes.

One way to visualise this is to think of this as one giant gear network. Small gears are turning relatively quickly, but are meshing with larger gears which they are a part of. And so are these larger gears which are meshing with each other, as well as the smaller gears and are part of even larger gears which mesh with each other as well as even larger gears. And so on and on. The very small gears are representative of quick karmic cycles, things which take a few minutes or hours to fructify. These are part of karmic cycles which take days, which are further part of cycles which take seasons and

then years. The very large gears represent cycles which take a lifetime. These are part of even larger cycles which take many lifetimes, ie. Multiple generations.

So not everything that you experience, or connections you form are from previous birth. Circumstances get you into positions where new connections are made, new karmic seeds are sown. It is like you move to another city or country because of a job. Once you land up there, the first thing or one of the first things you seek people from your country or region and establish friendship. But over time, new friendships will be formed and old ones might fade away. If you happen to meet somebody from your region, you will perk up. All these things happen in life after life as well. Predominant circumstances are what land you in the new job/ i.e. new family, stronger connections, strong desires or strong karmic influences. But once there, the element of randomness is there in how the future sets itself up, where you can meet newer people, form newer desires or create newer karma.

The ‘seed Karmas’ are tendencies that become part of your Karmic DNA and are what survive physical death.

2.9 Karma and Emotions

Our emotional states play a significant role in the creation and experience of Karmic seeds. Positive emotions like love, compassion, and gratitude generate beneficial Karma, while negative emotions such as anger, jealousy, and fear contribute to the accumulation of challenging Karma.

2.10 Karmic Patterns

Recurring patterns of thought and behaviour can lead to the formation of Karmic cycles. By identifying and consciously working to break free from these patterns, we can liberate ourselves from the bondage of repetitive Karmic experiences.

2.11 Karma and Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a potent tool for mitigating negative Karma and promoting healing. By forgiving ourselves and others, we release the hold of painful Karmic imprints and create space for positive transformation. Cultivating a forgiving heart is an essential aspect of working with Karma.

What is most important here is that Karma is something we can relate to and learn by observing our day-to-day lives. It requires you to become objective and observant, which are the only two prerequisites. In that sense, you need to become a life scientist - your own life scientist. As I mentioned at the beginning of the book, Karma is one of the most obvious aspects of our existence that often gets overlooked.

Stitching the model together

Let us dig deeper to get a better insight into how it actually works instant to instant. We will give a few more examples and towards the end tie them together.

This is getting into the complexity of it. If you don't like complexity, you can skip this section.

4.1 Fragmented/Accumulated Return

Preeti nags her husband daily for a new saree. Her husband, Shri Acchaadmi patiently explains his financial position and why it will have to wait. This does not deter Preeti and she is persistent. Shri Acchaadmi, a gentleman that he is, nicely and humorously deflects it away. But one day he can take it no more. He erupts into a volcano and gives her that kind of verbal bombardment that it is unlikely Preeti will ever forget. This is a case of accumulated return, where many smaller units have been returned as one big unit.

4.2 Sequencing

Mr Sandeep shoved somebody in an argument long back and at a totally different point in time, Sandeep helped a

stranger by lifting him when he was fallen drunk and gave him fare to go home. When it returns, somebody might shove Sandeep and he falls down. Some total stranger who might be passing then can similarly help Sandeep (not even the drunk person, it was an impersonal help, to the cloud, so the cloud is coming back to help Sandeep). The first case is personal, and the second is impersonal, happening at different points in time but Sandeep got the return together.

There is no particular order in which karma comes back. It is only dependent on the circumstantial elements happening which are conducive to those particular karma's unfolding.

4.3 Each Karma seed has to be experienced

Positive and negative karmas do not cancel each other. If a cat is running after a mouse and you hit a stick at a cat to save the mouse from being eaten, you have to experience both the karmas separately, of hitting the cat (paapa negative) and saving the mouse (punya positive).

Each karma has to be separately experienced, otherwise life would be easy :). However, spiritual practices (repentance, penance, awareness) do work in weakening and obliterating seeds and that is a different vector to what is stated above.

4.4 Experience behind the event

So far we have been focussing on action and the intent behind the action as the one which registers the karma. We have not really looked at the other end of the spectrum.

Let's take an event. There is a traffic jam on one of the busy city roads. It's a bad one. In this, we will focus our attention on two individuals. One is a villager, Shri Munniswamy, for whom it is the first visit to the city. He is in awe of the city and sitting in the bus absorbing the sights and sounds around. He is not even aware that this is a traffic jam. He thinks this is business as usual. The other person is a city-bred foreign

returned man, Mr Kandaswamy, who has a meeting to catch. He is experiencing intense irritation and giving out the choicest swear words to the municipality, government – and everybody. Same event, but a very different experience of it. How the event is interpreted is a function of the person's mental makeup which is also a function of karma.

So if the Karma caused is not the action per se, but the “intent” behind the action, the karma fructified is not the “event” per se, but the experience of the event. We have referred to this previously as the “effect of the fruit.”

In the above case, the villager does not experience a “traffic jam”. The event goes right through him because that seed is not there. In the case of the city-bred, because of his much broader experience of roads and traffic, as also expectation at that point of time, there is a seed of wanting smooth traffic, which is why the experience of the “traffic jam” is what it is.

A group of friends are having a friendly conversation over dinner. The conversation turns to one Mr Nogood Mason, who has messed up the construction of one Mr Iam Right, and Mr Iam Right is all animated and gives a good description of Mr Mason's capabilities. Hearing this, there is a Mr Goodman who is a good friend of Mr Mason. He is offended and starts waxing eloquently on the positive aspects of the personality of Mr Mason. For the other friends, the effect of the discussion ranges from bored to curious, but personally not involved. Same event, same person being discussed, but because the two people have Karmic seeds associated with the person being discussed (Mr Mason), there is an effect, quite different on each other and there is none on the other friends.

A newly married couple start on their adventure of family life. The couple, however, as usually happens, is very money-centred and increasing their kitty is their main, one would think, only priority. They have two children. Of which, the

elder, as he grows up, also turns out to be very money-centred, his parents' influence runs deep. The younger, however, turns out to be quite different. He is least interested in money, as long as her daily needs are met. The Arts and a good social life interest him. This is explained as follows – both children were born as their predominant karmas would get fructified in that family or in those circumstances. The elder already had a seed of being interested in money which was nurtured in the environment given by his parents. Whereas the younger, in spite of having an atmosphere where money was discussed day in and day out, as well as the importance of accumulating it, it all goes right through him, as he has no karmic seed for money. There could be other reasons why circumstantial elements resulted in his being born in the family (attachment to a particular family member for eg:)

In everyday life, we pass by innumerable people, who because of a set of circumstances land in a similar place at a similar time as you. But there is no direct karmic seed between you and them and hence you pass each with no recollection of the face or of each other and absolutely no impact on each other's lives. The experience of the event is also a function of seed karmas.

4.5 Individual events vs common events

In the beginning :), the example (Ramesh drinking tea) was

One person, one seed karma, circumstantial elements right for its fruition, results in fruition (an event) which affects the person, his response to the effect is a new seed (Karmic cycle)

Many people, many seeds, and multiple circumstantial elements result in multiple events, in a “common spacetime”, however, effects on individual people correspond to their karmic seeds only, and their response to those events sowing new seeds.

4.6 Fruition of a seed

Now that we understand the level where Karma is operating, (i.e. At the intent/experience level) let us consider how a karmic act is returned. For simplicity and understanding, we will consider only a single cause-effect, though in actuality that does not happen.

So if Ashok has slapped Santosh, how does it come back? Is it necessary that Ashok gets slapped back many years later, assuming that karma fructifies many years later? The answer is no. If Ashok has slapped somebody, it can come back differently. He can get kicked in the butt, for eg: What is being equalized is the “hurt/pain”, ie experience of the event and the intent behind the action, not the actual action itself. So slap = intent to cause pain → returned as pain of equivalent magnitude is how the equation resolves itself.

At the same time, it cannot be of a very different nature. A verbal insult will probably be returned similarly, and unlikely in a physical fashion. The “category” is not very different. So if you make fun of somebody’s religion, when it comes back, it comes back as somebody making fun of your race, ethnicity or nationality. Or if a mother-in-law taunts her daughter-in-law day in and day out, and in the next life she could be troubled by her sister-in-law. The ‘seed’ will find a way to ‘fructify’.

4.7 Derivative Karma’s

In many of the examples given so far, we have given the example as there is an action and due to Karma, there is a result returned because of that action. In the previous example, we had started with, “ If Ashok had slapped Santosh....” But we know that Santosh cannot be slapped without some seed in him which causes him to be slapped. Where is the question of return?

The examples of karma and its fruit are given in simple terms to further understanding. These I will call ‘unit’ cases, which in reality cannot occur entirely independently, nevertheless are ‘correct’ at a unit level. In reality, all that is happening is the fruition of seeds, always, without exception. There is no “independent fresh event”. Resist the temptation of asking when it all began.

OK, to complicate life and karma a little more, we will take a unit case and pursue it a little longer.

Mr Manohar has a tiff with his wife early in the morning. As he steps out of his house into his car, he bumps into his neighbour. His neighbour, unaware of Mr Manohar’s state of mind, tries to remind him of a pending due. What normally would have been a civil conversation goes out of whack and Mr Manohar has damaged his relationship with his neighbour for good. Extremely agitated, Mr Manohar steps into his car and zooms in. A few minutes later, we hear a loud thump, Mr Manohar’s car has just hit an electric pole. A few hours later, we find him at the service station, haggling to reduce the prices. He is now Rs 10,000/ poorer and all that he is thinking of is that the service station manager is a cheat.

In the above story, we will ignore the other linkage, which would have caused these individual fruitions to happen. What is being driven at is this – when one is experiencing the effect of a particular fruit, you do something due to it which in turn has its effect, that effect we will call it 2nd derivate, and then due to which you do something that may have another effect, which we will call 3rd derivate, by the time you are at the 4th derivative, you have lost track of the original.

Even in an ordinary example, if a person goes to his neighbour’s house and the neighbour offers a biscuit, then ‘eating biscuit’ is a second derivative. His seed desire was only to meet his neighbour.

As such, there are so many derivatives to karma before it dies down, or one can say it never dies down but morphs itself to a different route. The birth of an individual itself is an “effect” and all that one experiences in one’s lifetime is already a derivative of that (effect of effect of effect ...)

So, in spacetime, an event happening could be a combination of an n^{th} derivate of i^{th} seed karma plus m^{th} derivative of j^{th} seed karma and many such.

4.8 The Karmic Mosaic/Matrix

We will summarise the different aspects we dealt with respect to the working of karma so far.

1. It need not come back discretely. Karma can return fractionally or in aggregation.
2. It need not come back in the sequence that it happened. It can come back at any time in any sequence.
3. It need not be single, it can and frequently is a combination of multiple seed karma’s fructifying with varying weights of each.
4. It is the intent behind the action and not the action ... it is the experience of the event and not the event.
5. Things that happen in a public zone, ie in common spacetime of many individuals, are the intersection of multiple seed karma resulting in an event, which is interpreted individually. (ie the experience is as per individual seed Karma.)
6. The fruit of karma need not be precise in sensory terms as to how the seed was formed. It is being equalised at the intent/experience level only.
7. There are multiple pulls and pushes, happening at different levels. For eg: seeds with long fruition times result in a general undercurrent and medium fruition

times are riding on top of it and so on, an intersection of multiple such undercurrents giving rise to multiple events. We had alluded to this as a complex gear network in section 2.8.

8. Then there is collective or group karma which gives a collective push and individuals in that group are experiencing those plus their individual karma is riding on top of it. We will talk a little more about it in Part 3, section 1.
9. Whenever an event happens, it is always a fruition of some existing seeds. And then there are derivatives of a fruit and further derivatives thereof. Each of the derivatives is in itself combined with other derivatives in different fractions to produce an event.

Keeping all of the above, we look at any individual, we will find he/she is connected by a zillion threads, each with a zillion possibilities. If we step back and try to take a bird's eye view of the whole thing, the threads will merge and appear like a mosaic, through which individuals are wading through. All in all, it is a very complex system, where it is practically impossible to trace a single karmic event to its seed with a good degree of certainty. However, one can look at trends and discern whether there is an underlying mechanism to it.

What we can say is an event cannot happen without karma, but we cannot predict an event due to karma with certainty.

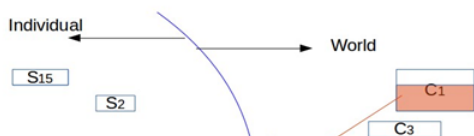
So, to picturise this, an analogy one could think of is a stock trading ring. At any given moment, dozens of trades are happening. Some will be in individual stocks, some will be in mutual funds, some will be in index-based funds, Some will be selling some or all of their stocks in a company, buying some more and so on. So also with karma. At every given moment, several karmic transactions are taking place. Some are w.r.t individuals (individual stocks), some are with respect groups (collective karma), and some are overall (environment

of the place). Some are only being partially sold, some are fully completed. At the same time, new stocks are being bought (new seeds). Each unit is registered, but how they interplay is not deterministic. It is a cumulative weighted exchange. The totality of the trade at any given point is always a fair exchange. Karma is true only in totality, not in the specificity of each experience.

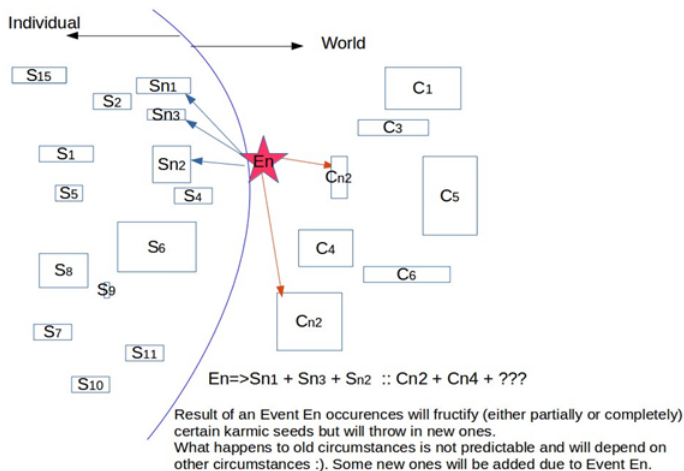
Karma influences the creation of an Event and causes further changes in the person and the environment.

For those who are a little more visually inclined, see the two illustrations (Fig 2) below.

1. Karmic Seeds and Elements in the circumstance of external environment combining to create an Event



2. Changes in the karmic seeds and external circumstances due to an event



Consider a person, Mr Bahumal, who is an expert in stocks. He spends all his office time tracking stocks and the like. A Mr Nomal, an absolute novice, goes to meet him. Let's listen to their conversation.

Mr Nomal: I have been trying to understand this stock market phenomenon Mr Bahumal: Very good. How can I help you?

Mr Nomal: Can you tell me why the stock of this company, BRCM was \$46 on 18th June?

Mr Bahuma: AH, well, it is like this. There are many many factors which influence a stock price. The profits of the company, its vision, market sentiment, future prospects, macroeconomic conditions, and global political considerations, I could go on.

Mr Nomal: So why is it \$46 and not \$47? And why not \$46 on Jun 19th?

Mr Bahumal: Well ...

Mr Nomal: OK, so can you put weightage to each of these and give me the equation Mr Bahumal: It is not like that, it is more complex than that Mr Nomal: I understand maths. Tell me within a margin of error.

Mr Bahumall: Can't be done.

Mr Nomal: Which means it is totally random and there is no rational to it.

Mr Bahumal: It's not totally random... A zillion transactions are happening and you look at one in isolation, it will appear arbitrary, you cannot make sense, but there are underlying trends. In fact, there is a strong rationale for what is happening, and why the price is what it is. If you spend some time and become familiar, you will be able to discern trends.

Mr Nomal: You are just a lot of hot air. It's all gobbledygook. Bye.

Convinced of his understanding, Mr Nomal invests all his money in random stocks. Unfortunately, he does not win this lottery and is left with Nomal (money).

So if a Mr Kandaswamy asks why am I stuck in the traffic jam NOW and why not tomorrow? Show me which Karma I have done to cause this, otherwise it is all gobbledygook. How does one answer? With stocks, there is data in numbers which are visible to everybody and anybody, and we still cannot rationalise, how much more difficult karma is with all of history (literally) hidden in it. Well, all one can say is by buying a car without considering the road conditions, you definitely deserve it :), but one cannot answer a specificity, which does not mean it is gobbledygook.

Just, as a billion neurons are firing in our brains. If you look at one particular neuron, it all appears random. But in totality, there are some undercurrents driving it and something coherent usually comes out from it.

Third law of karma:

*Karma is true only in the totality,
not in the specificity of each event.*

Where is the justice in the world?

Rahul hits Shashi. You see it as patently unfair. Rahul must be punished. You appeal to Vyavasthit Shakti in the court of Karma. Surely Rahul has committed a grave crime. A totally unprovoked crime. You need to punish him severely. And for God's sake none of this next life bs. You need to do it now. NOW! But you know, the court of Karma is like the Indian legal system. It's not that they give the wrong judgements, it is just that they don't give any judgements (inspired by Karma no doubt). Pray pray let there be a judgement, any judgement, just get it over with. No response stoic. Apply apply no reply. Vyavasthit Shakti is a man of few words.

Actually no words. Does not talk at all. Man of action. You see actions speak louder than words. Silence is golden.

So what do you make of the silence ... pssst listen to my 'silent conversation' with VS (Vyavasthit Shakti)

Me: Let me state this, fearlessly and courageously, your system is most unfair. I do not trust you. Are YOU going to punish Rahul or not

VS: Done (told you, a man of very few words, at least spoke one word)

Me: What done? Where done! You mean you are done with the punishment (am totally incredulous, wide-eyed .. that WT ... never mind). When did you do it?

VS: Now

Me: !#@\$#@#@#Q\$ no not enough #!#\$!!@~@\$#@#@#!! WT ... I see nothing happened. Did Shashi hit back Rahul? No, I don't see that. Shashi is in hospital. And Rahul seems to be just fine. Where is the #!@! punishment

VS: Done

Me: *VS: Me:*

VS:

Me: OK. I am DONE. Let me get this. Rahul hit Shashi. Shashi landed in the hospital. Shashi did NOTHING to provoke Rahul. And you say justice has been served. Now Done.

Listen here VS, enough BS. The world is watching, I mean listening ... I mean it is going to read about our conversation ... plain and clear did Shashi get justice *VS:* Done.

Me: Thinking Thinking some moremore thinking

You mean, Shashi is getting punishment for some past karma. Only if he has done something in the past, which may or may not be apparent today, would he suffer today. Right?

VS: Yes

Me: OK. I get this part. An incident seen in isolation does not tell us much. Maybe yesterday, Shashi hit Rahul equally badly. Or maybe a week back. Or it may have been 3 years ago, and Rahul could have been waiting for revenge. Or it could have been a couple of hundred years before. One cannot rush to judgement by seeing one incident. *VS:* Yes

Me: We are finally getting somewhere. So Rahul might actually be a good guy after all.

Can we conclude that, from this incident, Rahul is a good guy, who was just the Rambo putting the bad guys in their place? I base my conclusion on two observations

- i) You yourself said justice has been done for Rahul
- ii) I see that nothing happened to Rahul, neither was he hurt nor have the police picked him up.

(I like myself, and am getting into the groove:)

VS: Good ??

Me: Well I mean, good vs bad you know. The good guys should win in the end, right ... (have started getting a little unsteady here). How does Karma ensure justice gets done? How does the bad get punished and the good eventually succeed? It cannot be all random. If a person does a good act, he must be rewarded and if somebody does a bad act, he must be punished. These are the very basics. You should know this. And be acting on this. Otherwise, where is the justice in this world?

VS: (Taking a deep sigh) ... listen carefully

Me: Shhh, VS is finally talking, listen everybody

VS: Two people with, the same upbringing, one strongly thinks English education is good, and another

might feel equally strongly that English education is bad. Stalin and communism were considered good at that time by many, but the millions who were killed during his regime might have a different opinion. Christians might say Muslims are bad, Muslims might say Hindus are bad, and Hindus might say Christians are bad. And atheists might get tired of all this squabbling and say all religions are bad. Interestingly, there was one smart alec, you know the ultra-rational types, who said – let's do it scientifically, let's put up a mathematical measure > { no: of people killed/ (dominant ideology x number of years it was present)}. The result of his findings > religions have problems but the absence of religion (=atheism) on certain occasions made things worse ! He concluded that religion alone is not the source of problems and things might actually get worse in their absence. For some technology and scientific progress is *The thing*, it is decidedly good. It has made what we call civilisation. So many things, cars, telephones, Facebook, and Twitter, so many people have access too. Somebody else might look around at the humongous plastic, polluted rivers, dried-up lakes, CO in the air, global warming, overpopulation, nuclear weapons, and social and psychological disruptions and say technology is the greatest evil. How do I decide which is good and which is bad?

Me: (Sinking in the complexity of it) Yes, how do you decide?

VS: I don't.

Me: Eh. What do you mean by you don't? What then do you do?

VS: I serve Ramesh his tea

Me: You serve Ramesh his tea ???!

VS: Yes

Me: Cut it. Explain.

VS: (Smiling), Okay ...

You remember the example of Ramesh getting his tea because that was the seed.

Karma in him. Now let me spin a little story around it so that you understand better. *Me:* Sigh: A story within a story within a story. You must be Hindu

VS: I haven't thought about it, I am not sure what it means to be a Hindu.

Me: Oh that's simple. The one who has an innumerable number of stories and keeps making more of them is a Hindu.

VS: OK OK.. listen

Ramesh drinks his tea because he likes it. You are so obsessed with Karma, seed Karma, fruit Karma, this Karma, that Karma, if you could just take your eyes off Karma for a minute and look at for whom it really matters, Ramesh. Ramesh likes his tea. He really likes it. He drinks 4 cups a day. Now, there is heavy project work. Ramesh is drinking 6 cups a day. Too much pressure, Ramesh is at 8 cups a day. Regular. If he doesn't drink his tea, he gets a headache. 8 cups a day minimum. Who am I to stop him? He has earned his merit (aka money) and he can do what he wants with it.

But all that tea is having an effect on him. He is getting acidity, resulting in heartburn. Because of this, he cannot sleep well at night. Feels groggy during the day. But he has got a solution to it, he drinks more tea.

The lack of quality sleep is getting to him. He visits the local doctor. The local doctor listens to him and takes his case history. And tells him, "Boss, you better cut down on your tea. And the sugar. In addition to acidity, you are also having blood sugar. And you got to start exercising regularly."

As he walks out of the doctor's office, Ramesh is upset. He thinks, "What da doctor, only MBBS na, that is why. He could not even prescribe a simple antacid. His job is to give the right medicine, not preach. After all, I am only drinking tea, simple tea, not liquor, na. Besides, if I stop drinking, it will give me a headache. And what solution does he have for that, another preaching session I suppose? That is why there are no people here. Stupid of me" Thus chiding himself, he decides to go to a specialist.

And thus thinking, he finds himself at a specialist. First a gastroenterologist and then a diabetologist. Ramesh is impressed. So quick in service, no wasted discussions, to the point. He has got the pills with him now, he can drink as much tea as he likes. So with a spring in his step and a smile on his lips, he awaits the new day with renewed confidence.

But we all know what happens when we don't take responsibility for our own health. And outsource it to doctors. Or our spiritual understanding of religious preachers. We have to take ownership of ourselves, there is no alternative. It's our body, it's our job to ensure it is doing well. And understand spiritual and religious truths for ourselves. It's our life and afterlife. Some things just cannot be outsourced. But unfortunately, Ramesh does not 'see' that. He thinks I can do all I like, it's the doctor's job to ensure my health. It's almost like, I will sin how much ever I want and it's somebody else job that I land up in heaven. Can it ever be? Anyway, I digress – it's been some years now, and we have been lost in discussion, let's look at what Ramesh is up to.

Hi – there, Ramesh! Whoa! What happened? Ramesh, why are you looking so sick you have had a heart attack. So sorry, it happened some time back, is it? And you have been given statins to reduce cholesterol. They did not agree with you. They are making you feel absolutely miserable. But the doctor says there is no choice.

I have a question for you now, what in this do you consider as Ramesh's karma?

Me: Yes, I see his Karma working here. He should have taken care of himself. It's his own neglect that has landed him in this situation.

VS: Do you consider the fact that he got good treatment and could afford a good hospital as his good Karma? Or the fact that he got a heart attack is his bad Karma? Or that the effect statins are having on him as his bad Karma? Or that he survived the heart attack, so his Karma is good.

Me: Thinkingmore thinking thinking some more I guess that he is here in this state because of the choices he made, decisions he took at crucial points, his priorities, the circumstances around him, and the changing world, everything really is causing him to be where he is. In effect, seed fruit effects are in a way intertwined in a continuum. It's hard to pinpoint and say, this particular thing is seed, this is fruit, effect of fruit, but yes, I understand better with this example.

But overall, since we are focused on health, I would say he started out well. His baseline was good. He allowed it to deteriorate.

VS: Exactly. So also you can view the relationship between Rahul and Shashi. It started at some point in time when Rahul and Shashi were pleasant to each other. Then to have the occasional bickering, and shouting to physically hurt each other is the decline. This is how far they allowed it to deteriorate. As an equivalence, asking what is the effect of Rahul hitting Shashi is like asking what is the effect of statins on Ramesh after his heart attack. It's *Rahul's Karma that he was in the place where he had to hit Shashi*. If you can see this, you have understood the crux of the working of Karma.

Me: Yes, I see it now. It is Rahul's own doing that he finds himself in the position where Shashi gets hit by him. And what will further happen to Rahul, whether he gets arrested or there is revenge by Shashi's friends or he feels remorse or nothing happens is the effect of that Karma playing out, which of course will be a function of many other circumstantial elements, all in some way linked to his own past. The comparison to the heart attack and what effect the medicines have on Ramesh makes it understandable. Stories do help, sometimes.

VS: Yes.

Me: It might not be as precise as the American legal system, and we cannot hire million-dollar lawyers, but it has its own logic.

So tell me, where do Rahul and Shashi go from here? Do they get out of their animosity, does it continue forever, or does it get worse?

VS: It is impossible to look only at the action and make a call remember Gabbar's call. Just three benign words should have gotten zero karma, right ? It all depends on what is going on deep within and it is at the deep within level that Karma is acting. If Rahul is feeling remorse, he is on his way out. If he is feeling he should have hit him harder, it is going to get worse. Similarly, a lot depends on what is going on in Shashi's mind. It takes two to tango.

Me: I have one question that is troubling me. Rahul, Ramesh, and Shashi are all unaware of the consequences of their action. They are not aware of what is good for them and what is not. They act impulsively. Isn't it rather unfair for them, to be punished for something that they do not know the consequences of?

VS: If the result for everything is instantaneous and visible, there cannot be a world. Think about it.

From my perspective, the only real sin is not knowing what is good for oneself. It is worth investing in finding out what is 'decidedly good' for oneself. Something nobody ever does. Most unfortunate.

I will let you on a little secret. A key with which you can unlock the working of karma and easily apply it to your own life.

Me: I am all ears.

VS: Have you ever been angry with somebody, shouted at them.

Me: Yes, of course.

VS: And what did that do to the other person?

Me: Perturbed him. His BP went up.

VS: And what was happening to you.

Me: Well, I was perturbed too. My BP was up too.

VS: What you are saying is generally true as well. If you naturally feel like being nice to somebody, you feel nice about it. If you are being unpleasant, you feel unpleasant at the end of the interaction. It extends to even more subtle aspects. If you are genuinely trying to make somebody understand a particular subject, it improves your understanding of that subject.

Me: Yes, I see what you are saying.

VS: This simple understanding is the basis of Karma's reward system. Whatever you are '*doing*' to the outside world, you are '*putting*' inside yourself. As outside, so inside.

Me: Hold on. That is worth writing in stone.

Looks like we have the making of the third law of Karma, as outside, so inside.

Wait a minute! Aren't there people who actually enjoy painting other people? And God forbid, torturing others. They do not seem to be in pain that they are giving others.

VS: This applies to them as well. Such people have already fallen.

Me: Can you elaborate?

VS: Well, at the highest level of a human being, he or she does not need any external stimulus, is happy in himself, blissful by himself. Such people are called enlightened human beings and they are indeed rare. Next level are people who are captivated by subtle joys, such as just watching nature, or prayer/ satsang, being with a kid etc. Poets break into rapture just by seeing a flower. These are the subtle joys, also referred to as “Sattvic”. They are the more active forms of enjoyment, such as sports, playing and watching, music, dancing, and interaction. These are a little grosser, more perceptible, and action-oriented, also called “Rajasic”. And then are the grossest, such as drinking, drugs, and porn addiction and to these, you can add the one you mentioned of enjoying giving other people pain. These are categorised as “Tamasic”. In the long run, they make you dull, desensitise you, and take the humanness out of you. Of course, there is a wide range and things fall over the map.

So a person who needs such gross things to enjoy is in itself a fallen state. Such a person would be incapable of enjoying the higher, ie subtler joys of life.

Me: Hmm...that he cannot enjoy does not seem bad enough. Is there no punishment, as in PUNISHMENT?

VS: The way I work is if somebody wants something, I will do my best to give it to him. If there is an alcoholic, I will give him more and more opportunities till his money runs out.

Me: So you punish him by giving him more of what he enjoys., even if he enjoys torturing people. No wonder the world is in a mess.

VS: Yes

Me: What's 'Yes'

VS: Yes, that's why it's a mess *Me:* But @#!. You drive me crazy!

VS: Yes?

Me: Never mind. Where were we...

VS: Yes

Me: Please carry on.

VS: I wish you would not interrupt. I thought I mentioned that I do not distinguish between good and bad. I try my best to service your desires, limited only by your own karmic load.

Anyways, as I mentioned, once an alcoholic's money runs out, one finds him addicted, without money, without friends. Hard to pull himself out.

Similarly, the person who enjoys torturing is getting dependent/ addicted to the joy of torturing people. He will get more and more victims. Of course, his victims can only be people who deserve it. But like the alcoholic, once his karmic bank balance runs out, he will find it harder and harder to fulfil his desires of torturing people. And now his karmic debt is also heavy, so under suitable circumstances, it all starts to come back. He will be surrounded by people, who seem to enjoy torturing him. Whatever he does, he cannot get out of it. At that time if you see him in his newer incarnation, you will say, poor guy, why is he suffering so much?

Me: That sounds a little more like it. He is getting back what he put in.

VS: Yes, as was his inside, so eventually will be his outside. In the long run, the outside world will reflect what a person is on the inside.

Me: Aha, that explains something. I always wondered how two groups of people living in close proximity do not

cross each other's paths. Like there will be inner-city gangs who will be blowing each other's brains and university professors who will be only discussing intellectual pursuits, within a few miles of each other. The professor's inner world is filled with intellectual interests and so that is how his outer world is. Even if he has lots of money, the gang member is interested in blowing up the opposing gang member for paltry benefits, because their inner worlds are similar. That anywhere in the world, similar people tend to aggregate, even without conscious effort. So eventually, people who enjoy torturing will be in similar company and they will end up torturing each other. That becomes the 'culture' of the place. I see what you say.

VS: Yes. You may not be able to 'see' everything. Some of these processes are slow, they can happen over many lifetimes.

Let's complete the third law of karma.

The Fourth law of karma:

*As you do outside, so you put inside.
As is one's inside, so will become one's outside.*

Whatever you do today to the world around you, you are doing it to your future self. Whatever you experience and see today is the investment repayment of your past self. This is the most important law.

That indeed is what results in justice in the world.

The Four Laws of Karma - A Summary

First Law:

*When all the circumstantial elements are in place,
the seed Karma fructifies.*

All events and happenings are the fruition of Karma's always. Nothing happens on its own without a karmic requirement to be closed. There is no independent fresh event.

Second Law:

The universe is driven by and drives to set up the circumstantial elements so that seed karmas can get to fruition.

Circumstances are being set up continuously so that Karma's fructify or get closure.

Third law:

*Karma is true only in the totality,
not in the specificity of each event.*

Because events can be shaped by a combination of multiple factors, and also because of the immense complexity involved, it is hard to look at a particular event or a particular portion of an experience and expect to correlate precisely with some other portion of some other event. While observing and validating, we need to check for more general underlying patterns and trends.

Fourth law:

*As you do outside, so you put inside.
As is one's inside, so will become one's outside.*

With whatever attitudes and intent you approach the outer world (of people), it starts crystalizing into your inner world (mental makeup). The way your mental makeup is, it shapes the outer world of people and circumstances in a similar fashion.

SECTION 3

SPECIAL CASES AND APPLICATIONS OF KARMA

Collective Karma

Collective or group karma refers to the karmic bonds that tie a group of people together and shape their shared experiences. A group could be any collection of people, a religion, social group, nation, region, political party, ideological group etc ... Can such a thing exist? Suppose a group of people act in a very similar fashion, will they bind karma together and experience the effects together?

There are two main perspectives on how collective karma operates. First, if a group has a strong shared trait or behaviour, they are more likely to experience similar karmic fruition. The circumstances (VS) are more conducive to aligning in a way that affects the group as a whole. Additionally, individuals within the group are more likely to be reborn into the same group due to their stronger attachments and the karmic bonds that tie them together.

The second perspective relates to consciousness. From a spiritual standpoint, an identity exists because one is conscious of it. Similarly, a group identity, whether based on religion, nation, or other factors, exists because its members are conscious of it. As explained in the third law of karma, whatever we do to the outside world, we are essentially doing to ourselves. This principle becomes more apparent in group behaviours. When a group of people comes together

with a shared objective, the attitude they approach the outside world with will eventually become their attitude towards each other. In other words, whatever they do to the outside world, they will ultimately do to each other.

By studying group patterns over extended periods, even hundreds of years, we can observe indications of karma at work. This long-term perspective, which is not available when examining individual lives, allows us to see the karmic consequences of group behaviours play out on a larger scale. It is important to note, however, that karma accounting ultimately occurs at the individual level. While we may observe general effects on a group, each person's experiences are determined by their own actions and intentions across lifetimes.

Let us examine a few simplified examples of collective karma in action, keeping in mind that reality is often more complex and nuanced:

Hinduism

There has been no other religious culture in the world with the kind of depth, breadth and openness in religious thought. Scratch the surface, and the level of intellectual discourse, spiritual depth, cultural richness, the arts – dance (Bharat Natyam, Kuchipudi, Odissi... and the zillion others), music (Carnatic and others), drama (natya shastra), yoga (hatha yoga is now popular the world over) and health (ayurveda and other systems), temple architecture, sculpture, colourful festivals, poetry, mythology, storytelling, structure of language and grammar is astounding. In its heyday, we find that they were the pioneers in the sciences and mathematics as well (decimal system, algebra, trigonometry and mathematics, general medicine and plastic surgery, grammar structure and rules, chess etc etc), of course, significantly overshadowed by the Europeans in due course. One would expect such a culture to be proud and happy. Yet, what we find is they

struggle with an inferiority complex, lack of self-respect and self-confidence, and a tendency to imitate other cultures, to the extent that one of the revivalist taglines of a pro-Hindu organizations read “Be proud that you are a Hindu” why this apparent contradiction?

Because they did it to their own – pretty much every culture has discriminated against the “others”, whether it is slavery or genocides or apartheid or financial systems.. but in Hinduism, the discrimination that got institutionalized was not physical or violent or financial or even power-based. But to a good number of people, it hit at the very dignity of being a human. It caused an inferiority complex among the discriminated section of society, now they suffer it themselves. They are denied self-respect, and they struggle to get respect and recognition. From a karmic perspective, because you consider somebody lower than you, it gets into you that there must be somebody to look up to, and as a result, you will forever feel inferior.

In the name of social order, they fettered the individual. It was not physical intimidation or violence, but socially restrictive in terms of what certain individuals could do. If you look at the way Indian secularism is structured, in the name of social order, it gives freedom to all other religions except Hinduism, which is ironical, because it is supposedly numerically the dominant religion. They are fettered in the sense that they do not have control over their religious institutions, they cannot freely start their own schools without government regulation, freedom which the secular state bends over backwards to give other religions. But by and large, they do not face any problems of physical intimidation or violence and can practice freely otherwise.

Namaste. With scriptures such as the ones you have, if you are like this, what hope is there for humanity? The universalism that the scriptures preach, you need to practice inside first, so that the values also spread outside. It is not

enough to say that you no longer discriminate. You need to proactively work to help the people regain their dignity, for you to earn respect and understanding. And with that respect, people will value the spiritual understanding that you possess, which is the key to solving the world's problems.

Islam

When it started, it started with the idea of setting the record straight and closing the debate for good. One God, one religion, one way, one set of rules. Never before and never since has so much been centred on one man as the founder of this religion. Poet, philosopher, intellectual, spiritualist, warrior, leader, strategist with a single-minded purpose of establishing and expanding the religion he founded. And it succeeded beyond anybody's wildest imagination. The structure, simplicity, directness, raw courage, and equality among its followers (men at least) were inspiring and attractive to new adherents. However, in the process of expansion, right from wrong, fair means or unfair means was probably not given its due. All is fair as long as the world is won :)

One of the problems with explaining Karma is it sounds too much like common sense. Nevertheless, it needs to be told. If either by the correct interpretation or misinterpretation of the scriptures, one justifies the intimidation/killing of nonMuslims, then it carries forward to intimidation/killing people who are not the right kind(sect) of Muslims, to the people who may be the right sect but are not Muslim enough and so on until we get to the violent orgy which is what the extremist Muslim ideologies are now practising. At some point along the chain, you will be at the receiving end of what you propagate. We see ample evidence of this across the Muslim world. If you kill in the name of Allah, you get killed in the name of Allah. It eventually comes home.

Salamalekum. As you have set the benchmark for brotherhood and equality within, so also you must extend to

‘outsiders’. The outsiders could be non-Muslims/ or Muslims who are not men, or different sects. And it is not enough to say that you at an individual level do not discriminate. By letting Islamic countries and communities institutionalize discrimination/violence, you become a passive accomplice. You need to proactively work within the Ummah to remove all forms of negativity/discrimination/violence against the ‘others’. Then only can it bring peace to itself and humanity at large, which is the stated goal of the religion.

Christianity

How the exemplary sacrifice of one man changed the world! The character and teachings of Jesus Christ and his extraordinary sacrifice changed the course of world history. The emphasis on charity and service did a whole lot of good, contributing immensely to education and health across the world. And here again, we see karma at work. Because they contribute to education and health, because of their emphasis on service ... the Western countries, which have mostly contributed to this, especially have it good. Their people are well educated, the health systems are typically good, and in general, there is greater prosperity.

However, in the process of expansion, to convert, they demean/disturb existing religions and societal structures. At the extreme, the strategising for conversion borders on deception/manipulation and creating faultlines. If you scan under the surface, the western Christian societies are quite disturbed societies. All the material and system improvements have not resulted in equivalent peace and happiness, stable people and families. How can one say so? If you look at the number of wars fought, the holocaust, killings in the name of ideology in the last century, and the number of social problems, family problems, and psychological problems now, it can happen only if the underlying society is itself disturbed and has many faultlines. Can conversion also mean converting

all existing Christians to be people of character and morals and finding their peace. If all kinds of people are going to heaven, it may not remain *the* place to be in.

Hallelulah, if you do not get out of the itch to convert, you stand to lose all the good will that you have earned otherwise. If you disturb people in the name of Jesus, you will get disturbed in the name of Jesus. The stresses that get created, albeit at a subtler level, will find a way back to you.

Communism and political parties

Without getting into the ideology of communism, we can observe that the violence unleashed by the party eventually turns on itself. Initially, it is directed against the “bourgeoisie” and the “enemies of the state” in the first salvo, but once it is settled, it starts targeting elements in the parties themselves. Revolutionaries become counterrevolutionaries. Leaders become traitors. The executors become executed.

We see it especially, in Stalin’s Russia. Eventually, the whole charmed circle around him was purged. We see it to a lesser degree in Mao’s China. Recently we found it in North Korea.

What goes around comes around. You reap what you sow. Same old. Same old.

United States of America

Probably the first time in world history that the victor has actively worked in the economic recovery and development of the vanquished. Am talking about World War 2 and its aftermath. In return, she has achieved unparalleled economic success herself.

However, once there, at the top of the world in terms of military and economic might, has she used her strength and resources to ensure peace and prosperity around the world? At times, economic and political considerations and narrow

self-interest have dominated principles, and frequently military intervention, war and violence have ridden on top of these (economic/short-sighted interests) rather than on principles/universal well-being. Look inside, and it is the most violent and homicide-prone country in the developed world, by a huge margin. The higher level of violence is present in spite of having among the most efficient police forces and legal systems in the world.

Good ol USA, Being principled, making decisions based on principles/Dharma rather than on economic, personal friendships and short-term benefits is always in one's long-term interest. As the world's leader, the way you behave, the rest of the world follows. Your actions and decisions not only impact so much of humanity directly but pretty much all of humanity in terms of direction and influence. It is imperative that your every act and decision is responsible and well thought out and in the true interest of universal good.

Humanity

Mankind has really surpassed itself. What he has achieved in the last few hundred years is absolutely remarkable. He has changed planet Earth beyond recognition. You imagine it and humans are already there. They can see across the world, hear across any distance, can fly anywhere, live in the sky, flatten entire cities in one stroke ...

However, in the process has he thought about where we are going? What is beneficial and what isn't? Can we work with nature, rather than stomping all over it? Whether it is biodiversity, climate change, plastic strewn all over or the pollution of our rivers and oceans and soil and air, we seem to have gotten there in a hurry but don't know how to get these back. Our superior and orderly intelligence which has resulted in scientific progress has been rather unscientific and reckless in the way we have used the technology that science has created.

Hello World. If you mess with nature, nature will mess with you. We are so so intertwined with nature, in extremely complex ways. In fact, it may not be an exaggeration to say that whatever exists in nature, has a reflection in us. And I am not just saying at the abstract level, ie earth, water, fire, air, space, but in terms of every process, every element, we in some way need for our well-being. While we seem to have solved certain problems and cured certain diseases, we in the process have created more problems and newer diseases.

Do what you want to do but in harmony with and consideration of nature.

Otherwise, there would be no humanity left.

Karma Between Lives - Rebirth, Heaven, and Hell

*Skip this entire section if death, rebirth,
heaven & hell concepts do not appeal to you.*

Karma affects our current lives and shapes our experiences between lives and in future rebirths. This chapter explores the karmic implications of the afterlife, including the concepts of rebirth, heaven, and hell.

2.1 Rebirth

Since, typically, the karmic account does not close with physical death, there must be a rebirth of the person, for this theory to consistently hold. Thus, the concept of rebirth is central to the karmic worldview. According to this perspective, the soul or consciousness continues to exist after the death of the physical body and takes on a new form in a subsequent life. The nature of this new birth is determined by the individual's accumulated karma from previous lives.

The process of rebirth is not random but is governed by the laws of karma. The soul is drawn to a particular set of circumstances and experiences that align with its karmic tendencies and provide opportunities for dormant karmic seeds

to fruition. This means that the challenges and opportunities we face in each life are not arbitrary but are a direct result of our past actions and the lessons we need to learn.

The moment I try to explain Karma to my friends, the first thing they say is to prove to me that the person is experiencing something because of something he did in his last life. I don't have that kind of proof. To start with, what I was looking for was something more mundane. Is rebirth true?

When you are faced with questions like this, where to turn, but to Google. Google says it is there, so it must be true:). There are so many stories out there, some solid and detailed, some anecdotal. In my opinion, there has been no proper refutation, no solid cross-questioning which proves them false. Rather the response has been either –

- i) if you are studying this, something is wrong with you –
- ii) it could be that they imagined it. You should not disprove something by not studying it.

However, for an individual like me to be convinced, it would mean tracing one of the stories and trying to get into it, heart and soul, checking all references, cross-verifying, basically beating it to death and even after all that, it is still secondary information, still data that can be debated.

Where else to look? Children? Young children, because they are still relatively uncorrupted by the external environment. Their personality could have traces of a past life if there has been one. I have two daughters, 4 years apart, born in the same month, same hospital, same fashion, same doctor. We have the same parents, similar outlook, similar upbringing.

Being with them and observing them from this perspective, is interesting, to say the least. There are certain

characteristics and certain mannerisms that stand out, and they are quite different, from us parents, as well as each other.

For eg: My elder daughter, when she has a runny nose would pick up any damn cloth next to her and wipe it only to throw it away. My younger daughter, even at 1.5 years was absolutely fastidious, she insisted on going to a cupboard, picking up a new handkerchief and wiping with it. She would get upset if we gave her any clothes lying around.

Similarly, with things, my elder daughter would leave things as they are and expect somebody to clean up after her. At 9 months, my younger daughter had made an unused dryer her “cupboard” and would every now and then keep things there and retrieve them from there. Many times, we would observe, that she would keep things, such as slippers and shoes neatly – on her own accord. In both cases, there has been no instruction from us parents on this account.

One has an uncanny attraction to medicines. She will pretend to be sick so that we give her medicines. She will create a ruckus if she is not given medicines. So much so that when we take medicines, she has to be shown which medicine and she only has to put it in our mouth. The other runs away miles from it ... quite literally ... it’s a battle to give her medicines. We have had to do all kinds of antics to get her to take simple doses of simple medicines.

Personality-wise, one was more reserved, more individualistic, more temperamental, and had a greater ability to do stuff – the other was more friendly and people-oriented but had a lesser orientation to persevere with stuff(toys) and do something on her own. One of them has a very strong inclination to clothes, to look good, and will spend hours in a day changing ‘n’ a set of clothes, the other has to be coaxed even to try to buy new clothes. She on the other hand is interested in new gadgets and stuff.

Even mannerisms, one has a particular way of standing with hands holding each other behind the back and the other

typically paces round and round when doing nothing (or thinking maybe)... I could go on.

Now it's entirely possible, as Freud has intricately observed, that the doctor who was delivering the elder daughter out was wiping his nose with a coloured kerchief. Whereas in the case of my younger daughter, he was using a spotlessly white kerchief. And that was THE defining moment which would impact the rest of their lives Freud is brilliant in his ability to connect things.

Science (a different Science, not the Freudian one, tells us that there is a gene which makes her do these things, I just want to know where the 'use clean kerchief when running nose' gene is. Show me the gene, or particular combination of genes, that all kids at 1.5 years insist on a clean kerchief when wiping their noses. Don't hem and haw, if you know it, show it.

Not cent per cent convinced of rebirth? Neither was I. Indicative at best, but not definitive, but better than explanations today's 'Science' offers.

What about peeping into the scriptures, to see if they give some direction. In the Bhagwad Gita, Lord Krishna famously states to Arjuna, "You and I" have been through many lives, I remember them all, you don't. Unfortunately, he stops at that and does not give us how to figure it out for ourselves. The Patanjali's Yoga sutra goes a step further. In Patanjali's yoga sutras, one of the siddhi's (attainments) that you can gain as you deepen spiritual practice is the ability to know past lives. But you soon realise getting that level of attainment is not so short and sweet as he writes it. As of now, my butt does not keep steady for more than a few minutes, what to say of my mind. It would probably take me 78 lifetimes to get there, and by that time I would have forgotten this 'desire' for sure.

So where else to look? How about popping the question to the one person you know so well? Have I been reborn?

So obviously, like all “normal” people, I do not remember anything. And if I work at getting visions, I would not know if I am hallucinating or if it is real. It simply is another wild goose chase.

Any other way? I asked myself this – is there anything in me, that I cannot account for in this life in any way? If there is nothing, absolutely nothing which is carried forward, then rebirth means nothing, even if true.

So here is what I did – I am in my early 40’s. I went through my life from as early as I could remember, and listed down all my experiences, my motivations, my drivers, behaviour patterns etc etc and tried to see if there was anything significant, which I could not attribute to the environment I grew up in. Here is what I got

Quick answer – Yes, it appears that I have had a past life :) How? When I look within and deconstruct myself, I do find certain dominant attitudes/tendencies/inclinations/desires were not acquired from the external environment or caused due to external circumstances, but have been with me (albeit sometimes latent) from as far back as I can remember. For these, I could not find anything in the external environment which could have put it in. These deeper undercurrents are those that have driven my life from “inside”. It appears very likely that my life as I know it is a continuation/ has a history beyond this known life which accounts for the above.

What I could get to was in my past life, was a spiritual aspirant, living in India, had strong nationalistic feelings, was staying in an ashram and liked the ashram life, nature-oriented. My spiritual progress was not complete, had some misconceptions, and partial progress on some elements. Was searching for answers, keen to do something for India. Strongly family-oriented.

How did I get to that? I have written in a more detailed manner in Appendix 1, the process of analyzing and getting to one’s past life.

2.2 *Life to life*

Now, if my interpretation is ‘true’ and the way I infer rebirth is correct, then what actually happens at death? Actually, a lot of stuff does die. Your body of course, but also your brain dies with you ... with that most of the information content also goes ...what gets transferred is ‘impressions’ / ‘inclinations’. So for eg: if you are a good player of the piano, and you like playing it, you will be drawn to play it in the next life but you have to learn the notes all over again. It’s just a light flavouring of the personality that occurs due to the previous impressions, but that is about it.

As such, just because there is rebirth, one should not trivialize death. Death is a pretty significant event. Most of what you are as you – die. This life is the only life as ‘you’ and for all practical purposes, it will be lost forever. The name-place-form (data) is wiped out for good. For me, I see the bonds which (likely) have resurfaced and I see how they could have links from past life, it is an inference however. I do not “see” the name-place-form of the relationship before. That is how far you can go without having to resort to ‘magic’

To quote my wife, it might not be a shutdown, but it is a reboot. Footnote {She is good, she should write Sutra’s. Sutra’s are terse verses which condense 100’s of lines of blabbering (like I am doing) to a terse verse which gives a condensed or concentrated meaning.}

OK, since she gave the sutra, I am going to give the commentary:) To carry forward the analogy a little further, when you reboot, the first few minutes take to set the operating system up and the OS is the one which you shutdown with. That corresponds to the first 3 to 5 years of life. If there are some processes during the previous session that were not shut down properly, they will exist below the radar and may trouble you.

Your life experiences are like sessions, in which you open and close different processes. The processes which are properly closed are not opened again, but there may be traces in the log files. Otherwise, most sessions are lost forever at reboot. The active sessions, but get suddenly closed during reboot slowly come to life again, after the os is up. But most important the OS(Operating System) remains the same, reboot after reboot. Changes to the OS are permanent and will stay in the next reboot cycle. We, human beings, have the unique ability to go and change our own OS, which we rarely do. We take our OS to be fixed, and unchangeable, which is not the case. We can go in and alter our likes and dislikes, our preferences, and our instinctive response. If you go to the core and erase everything, then on reboot there is no OS to support the coming up and that becomes a shutdown.

Should you care what happens in your next life since it is not you as the person you know yourself to be today? Well in a way it is exactly the same as a dream. In a dream, you have lost awareness of the person you are, your family etc completely. You have taken a totally different role. But if you know something you do before you sleep gives you a nightmare, would you still do it? Or if something you do before you sleep gives you pleasant dreams, how important is it? If you have a nightmare, it is still you who suffer, though it may not be the same as you in the daytime. To that extent, there is a continuity in the you who is experiencing.

If you are the person who says at night, it's not 'me' anyway, I don't care about nightmares or good dreams, then you need not bother about the next life.

2.3 After physical death, Heaven & Hell

This part is intelligent guesswork since I obviously have not 'seen' or 'remembered' anything. In our(Indian) scriptures,

there is heaven and hell, but it is not eternal. Eternal would be boring, at some point it would be unliveable and you would just want it to end. You eventually wind down back to human birth where there is potential for release.

I was hoping that after death, I could sit down and carefully go over with God over what happened in my life, somewhat like the annual performance review in the company. However, unlike the manager in the company, I was hoping that God would be interested in listening to what I have to say, you know go over some of the trickier situations where I can explain my perspective of things. You know, squint with that faraway look in my eyes, as I chew the pencil and discuss the subtler points, absorbing the deep import of what God is trying to say; Unfortunately, the correct view seems to be that you kind of get kicked around like a football, depending on your karma's and you land up at the most appropriate place. God has automated the system so much that he avoids listening to and haggling with each and every human maybe that is how it was initially. After this industrial revolution and the population explosion, God has taken a leaf from humans and learnt how to automate it.

So where is this heaven and hell? What is it like? Now depending on which religion and which scripture and which rendering of that scripture you believe in, there are so many options available. Which one is correct? Are all correct?

Rather than depending on any particular book, let us try to infer from God's direct revelation, which is creation itself. If you observe creation, the microscopic is representative of the macroscopic. The same pattern is visible everywhere. For e.g.: electrons rotate around the nucleus, and planets rotate around the sun. In a day we have morning, noon, evening, and night and so also in a year, we have seasons of spring, summer, autumn & winter only to follow again. Birth, growth, decay and death is a pattern followed by

all, from the smallest organisms to humans to nations, and corporations. Whether an individual, family, children or adults, community, intranational or international, we find the same patterns of behaviour, of justice and injustice, of pulls and pushes, of jealousies and compassion, of friendships and enemies, of desires and aversions, the ego tussles and scramble to be on the top, just the scale is different. Plants and animals are born, grow and die but the background matter which they are made of is preserved and just morphs into different forms. Similarly, we say that the background consciousness or life principle is the same, it just morphs itself into different individualities only to fall back into the vast, universal consciousness.

So also, as night follows day and day follows night, life must follow death, and death, life. Every night, we die to ourselves and live in a dream world (provided we fall asleep) only to be reborn in the morning as ourselves. The last thought that we have when we are falling asleep is the first thought that we have on waking up, and as soon as we wake up the information gushes in to remind us who we are and what is our current 'state of being'. So also as you wake into a new life, directed by the last thoughts you had while leaving the body and in the first few years, the impressions and flavouring of your personality set itself, depending on how you left it in the previous life.

Just as in a dream, you do not need a physical space to 'dream', so also it follows that heaven and hell need not be physical but projections of your own mind.

Heaven and hell are based on your thoughts, karmic impressions, imaginations, projections, desires and fears and are not based on your religion or God. And just like 'dream' time has nothing to do with 'waking' time, so also time spent in heaven and hell has nothing to do with 'life' time. You could spend 1000 yrs in heaven but have spent only a couple of minutes between lives.

SECTION 4

IMPLICATIONS OF KARMA

Karma and Spirituality/Liberation

Let's get to the point. The model of human life in the universe is as follows:

Whatever a person does, or to be more precise, with whatever intent a person does anything, gets stored somewhere only to be returned later. That is Karma. Now if a person does good, ie with the intent to be beneficial to somebody else, it gets returned and this is called Punya (good) karma. If on the other hand, a person does something for selfish reasons, which are harmful to somebody else or not for the common good, it is also stored somewhere and is called Papa (sin) Karma.

The next important thing for human beings is, irrespective of what he/she does, there is a natural cycle, birth, baby steps, kid, teenage, youth (hormones start kicking in), middle age, old age and finally death. This is invariable, no matter what one has done. How much punya karma one does, one still will die, or the physical body will die. Of course, one can die earlier or later. Your karma is superimposed on this biological cycle.

Spirituality is trying to get you out of this karmic juggernaut, this cycle of birth and death, not by focusing on individual threads or karmas but in general lift you up and out.

OK, the Million-dollar question: why would you want to get out of the cycle of Karma? Why not continue in the

cycle forever?. Look deeper into the question, the answer is right there 'Mil'lion = Mother-in-Law.

However good a spouse you get, it will come along with the mother-in-law. It's always a package deal, you see. Why does it happen so?

It's impossible or not practical to have a life doing only positive Karma's. For eg: for all your karma you are rich and have money and a beggar comes along and you give him no money or little money, and you have caused hurt in him, he might hold a grudge, a negative karma right there. So you give him a lot of money and the next day a hundred beggars line up. Your actions cannot be all good all the time.

And this is not even considering our desire for money, sex and related pleasures, recognition, power and its variants which cause most of the crimes and problems in the world.

Hence your outer actions can never by definition be perfect for an extended period of time. Yes, you may be able to say good enough and live along, but there is always that nagging thing that you wish were not there or something you wish you had(it could be health, lack of money, a person at work, your in-laws anything). That is because our outer actions have never been that perfect.

To add to that, any pleasure, however nice it is, once it is freely available, the mind tires of it and looks for something more. No pleasure can satisfy one forever. That is how our mind is designed. So even if you did not get the Mother-in-law, how much ever you fall in love to start with, the relationship can deteriorate for innumerable reasons, as often happens.

Further, even if it is good and in the unlikely event you have not tired of it, it does not last forever., However good your life is, unfortunately, you have to leave it at some point. Old age and death are guaranteed.

And these were really the best-case situations. Things can be much worse, poverty, illness, unnatural deaths, and some things which can make normal life quite miserable.

Of course, life is not all bad and there can be many pleasant moments as well. However, in some way or the other, there is going to be unhappiness/misery in your life. There may be a lot or there may be a little, but you cannot avoid it for sure.

If you don't want to face grief/misery/death again, then you need to get out. As you can see, the design of the universe is to discourage you from recycling forever. At some point, you have to graduate. That way new people can come in, make mistakes, learn and grow wise.

The question comes if you want to come out of this cycle, is there a way? Yes, there is a way. However, leaving this place is not as easy as signing a document. You cannot leave until you clean up the mess you have created. And experience that which you were unable to clean up. There is no other way. You cannot 'just leave'. Now you have to motivate yourself to work really hard to be able to leave.

So God/Nature/Existence in all her infinite wisdom, decided to sweeten the deal. And how! Now that you are planning to be less of a burden to planet earth, and seek nothing from it, you are given a parting gift, and the gift isimmortality itself. You are made to see that you are no different from any part of that immortal God/Being itself. And that your nature is peace, bliss which is much much more than what you have experienced on earth. In fact, you cannot leave until you have taken this gift :)

Now this may sound confusing. On the one hand, one is being asked to bid a final adieu. This sounds like dying for good, but at the same time, we are saying that we are made immortal. To understand this apparent contradiction, we have to dig a little deeper to see what dies and what doesn't.

What dies is not physical death, that anyway happens, so what then has to die and what doesn't?

What dies is the person's sense of a separate individual identity, not the 'knower' of that identity. The individual identity consists of the person's sense of identification with himself as an individual and all that goes along with it, his identity-centric fears, greed, desires, likes and dislikes, emotions et. al. Once this is wiped clean, what is left? The knower/seer behind the individuality is not dead, there remain's 'something' behind all this, and behind that 'something' there exists that 'something'

Once a person starts the process of working on himself, he realises whatever part of him dies (mentally), he still remains. A thought, a desire, if we were to ignore it or remove it, there is still the person behind it. The person realises that whatever was happening, was happening 'in' him, not 'to' him. That he was the ever-present witness of all that was happening. At some point, he realises that 'he' was not really the individual that 'he' was so caught up all his life, but his identity is really of a higher level of consciousness, one realises one's real Self. That is called self-realization or enlightenment. He/she achieves immortality.

This immortality is not physical immortality, but recognising that we are that immortal soul and not the body which has to die anyway (unfortunately :)

So here is the added bonus, which at this point may be a belief. The nature of this higher consciousness is of the nature of peace & joy. This peace/joy is way more than any peace that you experienced on earth. It is the subtlest, most refined joy and now it will always be with you. You now have access to a tap with eternal peace and joy right inside you.

The other way to see this is, to be truly liberated from earthly desires, you have to have a joy which is greater than whatever pleasure you get on earth.

To reiterate, the immortality you get is not the kind where you are young forever and go bang bang, but rather the one wherein you recognise that you are actually the eternal everpresent Being(God/soul/...) and hence the body going bang bang is inconsequential.

This is the eternal salvation or moksha/liberation. Once you have had this gift, your job is done. No fear, no desire, not even the highest heaven or deepest hell can move you. You are truly beyond everything.

If it sounds a little too out there – it is. Few people reach this state. Fortunately, at least some do, and they have documented their path and their experiences quite well (Nisargadatta Maharaj, Ramana Maharshi, Dada Bhagwan, Gary Weber, and Shinzen Young to name a few in the last decades).

If reaching that state was all there is, we can as well ignore it, since the probability of you getting there in this life is very low. However, your effort to get there itself is rewarding (albeit in earthly measures). Before we get into how it helps, an explanation of the terminology.

Adhyatma/Spirituality is the study and contemplation of the soul/intellect/mind etc as well as the study of spiritual literature. It can consist of reading material, listening, understanding, self-analysis and contemplation. Reading this work can also qualify as Adhyatma. Adhyatma literary means the study and contemplation of that which transcends the mind and is part of the inward journey.

Yoga is the path or the methodology you have taken to reach that supreme state.

Internationally what has become known as yoga, ie postures/asanas is but one aspect of the raja yoga path. The other aspects of the raja yoga path culminate in deep meditation. There are other paths also such as Bhakti(devotion

to personal God), Karma (selfless action/service), Gyana (knowledge, study, contemplation, self-enquiry), etc.

Moksha/salvation/Liberation

The idea of salvation is not so much having what you want but not wanting to have anything. In that sense, it defers from the Abrahamic religious concept of heaven, which as I understood it, is a place of pleasure. Here, the idea is whatever pleasure is given, eventually the mind tires of it. It is not getting the pleasures one seeks but freedom from seeking itself. So Moksha is achieved when you transcend the mind and since you no longer identify with the mind, there are no desires to be desired.

In this context, liberation is the more apt word. You are liberated from wanting anything, including heaven, bliss and moksha itself. You are free. Practically it translates to being free of the pulls and pushes and the constant chatter of your own mind.

So how does it help? Effort in that direction typically results in a more balanced, stable person, more refined person, less prone to the vagaries of the mind. He/she would be less sentimental, and emotional but at the same time more helpful/useful. Many of the practices result in calming the mind, less chatter and as a result more concentration and productivity. Since the person has a higher goal, he/she is less likely to be distracted (ie go the wrong way) or get influenced by things which typically derail people's lives – sex, alcohol, drugs, power, greed, jealousy, squabbles etc.

From our point of view, Ashwin has a good life. He must have done lots of good karma. He has got a good wife, nice loving kids, a car, a house and doing well in his job. What more could he want? He should be happy. But you don't know what is going on inside his mind. The secretary in his office has just started showing that much more cleavage and he is quite sure the way she walks up to him, comes just that

much closer, tilts her head and flutters her eyes when she looks at him, she is leading him to something somewhere. Ashwin is in a dilemma to do or not to do, that is the question. And suddenly this whole wife-kid thing starts looking like a big burden, a fettered chain. Oh only if he was unbound, a bachelor again, free. His mind is in agony. He can't take his eyes off but his feet do not allow itand he is literally torn into two.

Actually, your happiness and well-being are a strong function of the state of your being (mind/body) and not only of external circumstances. We are so driven to look on the outside, that we rarely if at all look on the inside. Hardly anybody is formally working to improve their inner condition. Spirituality, at the first level, involves directly working on the state of the mind, before eventually transcending the mind. So whether it is meditation, satsangs, bhajans, prayer, yoga, pranayama, rituals, or whatever, they are all assisting in calming the mind, making it intrinsically pleasant and training it to stop being dependent on the outside for fulfilment. Thus, even if you do not reach the ultimate state of enlightenment by transcending the mind, your baseline state is still better off than not doing it.

From a karmic perspective, the person is less likely to commit bad/paap karma (sin) and more likely to do good/punya karma (virtue), as he is more aware of the consequences, as also he is less motivated by things which usually cause people to sin (money, lust, power, attachments etc). As he proceeds, he/she will start reducing putting new seeds and eventually will not put any seeds. His previous seeds will also start burning out, allowing him to be more and more in charge of himself/herself and his/her destiny. All in all an upward push.

Going into the details of the practices, careabouts, possible negative fallouts, what to expect etc is beyond the scope of this text.

Karma and the States of Consciousness

So far we have been considering the human being in his normal waking state. What about in the other states, dreams and deep sleep, or the other possibilities, such as animals, heaven & hell as for an enlightened person? What kind of karma do they bind? Is liberation possible in these other states? Let us look at liberation first.

Liberated/Enlightened/Self-realised beings

Liberated beings have transcended their “identity” self. They no longer associate the I with the identity. Since there is no identity there is no new Karma that they can bind. However, their original identity- i.e. their body, mind, and intellect complex continues to suffer or enjoy their karmic stock as it expands. However, the karma stock does not affect ‘him’, and affects only the BodyMind-Intellect complex. Also, people who interact with “them”, continue to experience their karmic fruition through them.

Dada Bhagwan uses the terms “charge” karma and “discharge” karma. Whatever we are experiencing in the world is always discharge karma. As we experience, based on our intent and mind interaction we charge more karmas, that is create new karmic seeds. For an enlightened/liberated being, there is no charge karma. Only old karma is getting discharged. That is why you may not see extraordinary changes once a person becomes enlightened.

For an enlightened being, he is beyond karma, since he/she does not identify himself/herself with the body/mind/intellect. So as such, he/she does not “do anything” and hence does not bind any new karma,

To bind ‘new karma’, one has to have a discriminating intellect, an intellect which is capable of making a noninstinctive choice. That is what we mean by ‘intent’.

Now it may appear the way a dog comes and licks your feet, it has an ‘intent’ to love you and hence binds karma.

We will touch upon a desire for spiritually advanced people a little more. VS is actually running just to fulfil your desire. If you have only one desire, the momentum in that direction is greater. If there is not much karmic load, then the momentum is much greater. If there are another 100 people who have a claim on you, and they are pulling you in multiple directions, then VS will hardly be able to give you anything in the direction of your desire. Since a spiritually evolved person has a lesser karmic load, his desires are fulfilled relatively effortlessly. He/she may feel that whatever the desire is, it seems to be getting fulfilled and thinks God/Guru is helping him/her.

Animals

Let us look at the animals’ situation. Let us reiterate what ‘liberation’ is. A person was an alcoholic. He was addicted to drinking. Now, with great effort, after going to a deaddiction camp etc, he has got over his addiction totally. Even if alcohol is offered, he has no interest in it. He has no craving left for it. So we can safely say, he is ‘liberated’ from alcohol.

While this seems normal, it is possible to be ‘liberated’ from various other more subtle weaknesses, such as sex, popularity and attention, for money etc. The total or final liberation is when the person in question is ‘liberated’ from everything in totality, including his/her ‘identity’, that is the final goal, and that is when enlightenment is reached.

How does one get ‘liberated’ from anything, say for the alcoholic? The person who is addicted has to recognize first that he has a weakness for alcohol – then he has to consciously work on it, either by repeatedly telling himself of the negative effects of drinking, or visualising the better life when he is not an alcoholic or the positive impact it will have on his family, moving away from the company of his drunkard friends

and moving to a better company, or meditating and trying to improve self-control, prayer and surrendering to God etc. Etc. There could be many many methods. But the point is

- i) the person has to be aware of the weakness of his 'mind' and
- ii) has to work on himself and his 'mental conditioning'.

The core thing here is the person has to work on himself and there is no way an external person or agency can do anything about it. If somebody from outside were to ensure that no alcohol reaches him, his craving would only increase and in addition, he might get angry at the person. Not drinking alcohol and not being 'interested' in alcohol are two different things. The latter is the case of liberation.

Only a human being can be cognizant of his/her own mind and its conditioning. That self-awareness exists in humans and not in animals, thus animals are not capable of liberation. Now the professor with many degrees sees a monkey prancing in front of a mirror, says look, monkeys have self-awareness, or, see that a Gorilla can see a dot on its forehead and says, Gorillas have self-awareness. So I need to qualify this, when I say self-awareness in humans, it is self "know my own mind" awareness. And what the animals exhibit, we can call self "know my own body" awareness.

Now it may appear the way a dog comes and licks your feet, it has an 'intent' to love you and hence binds karma. This is hence a little more complex. In the case of the dog, it is part of his preprogrammed instinct. As such, this is a derivative of that instinct. All behaviour's that animals exhibit are the multiple derivatives that we have talked about before. So here, though some of the more 'humanlike' animals may appear to be acting intelligently, they are only expending karma.

You can train an animal or program it, for eg: you may be able to train/program a tiger to be docile by putting an

electric deer in front of it and every time it touches the deer it gets a shock.... but can you make a tiger understand that its nature is violent and it should be

- i) aware of its own impulses to jump on a deer when it is nearby and
- ii) retrain itself mentally for those impulses to go away.

Only human beings possess that unique ability where they can retrain themselves to anything, whether money or sex or emotions, they have the unique capability of being aware of their own emotions/impulses/reactions and modifying them. Most human beings are unaware (ahem) of their mind and that they are capable of reprogramming it and continuing to behave like chimpanzees :) Is an altogether different matter. So animals are not capable of liberation.

Because animals cannot be self-aware they are instinctive and hence cannot bind Karma. There is no charge karma for them. Human beings who have been born as animals will discharge their karmas, and then come back to human birth. It is thus only discharge karma for animals.

Dream State/Heaven and Hell

Next, in dreams we are not capable of altering our conditioning. We are passively involved in the dream. The moment one tries to become aware of oneself, one wakes up. A dream is prescribed and one has to run by it, there is no potential for awareness. Similarly, in heaven and hell, it runs a prescribed course and one cannot change it, and hence one is not capable of liberation.

So in these states also, there is only discharge karma.

Children

In all other states, it is only discharge karma. No new Karma gets bound or charged.

We have discussed karma in the regular waking state in detail while explaining in this book. Let us consider the case of children.

For young children, they are mostly instinctive and hence they don't bind karma but it is mainly the exhaustion of previous karma. Even as they grow a little older, the karma that they bind is weak, since the intellect is not fully developed. As mentioned before, the depth of karma bound is proportional to the level of intellect used.

God and Karma

So where does God fit into all this? Does God even exist? Whose God is the right God? We will not attempt to answer such controversial questions through this article. We will limit ourselves to seeing it vis-à-vis Karma.

Though we may not like it, God also fits within the Karmic framework. Praying to God is also karma and will have its fruit. It depends on the intent and depth of the prayer and other circumstances.

Does the type of God matter? Generally, you have a certain image (not necessarily pictorial) of God and whatever impression you have gets reinforced in you, every time you pray. This may sound a bit troubling to some, but reassuring to others. Your concept of God is true, but only for you. It need not be true for all others. In fact, God appears to everyone in the way they want to see him/her. In other words, as with everything in the Karmic sense, the outside God is also a projection of what you have inside you. Hence, it helps to be a little careful in picking up the concept of God, before you go too deep.

Do your prayers get answered? It can. It can definitely modulate the outcome. As explained previously, for any event to occur, there are multiple circumstantial elements in place. The prayer request becomes one more. The nature or

the outcome can be modulated, depending on the sincerity and depth of prayer as well as other circumstances. However, at the same time, you will not receive anything outside the karmic framework.

In general, prayer is good. But you cannot expect things to happen your way every time. At the same time, there is no direct negative for not praying. i.e. you are not incurring sin/paapa karma by not praying. It primarily depends on your deeds and thoughts/desires. Thoughts and desires are nothing but future deeds. Believing in God and being regular in temple visits/prayer can help keep you positive, calm and ego in check, all of which will act as a buffer to one committing sins. God is also a means for self-evolution and eventual salvation. So, belief in God is useful, but lack of one does not directly result in negative Karma.

What about the case if one is believing in God, and is very sincere in his/her prayer but at the same time sinful? Again, he will receive his reward as per the karmic framework. He will suffer for his sins. However, his suffering will be modulated/modified to a certain extent. Also, in such cases usually, they will be repentant and tend to move upwards (ie towards good) as against a person who is sinful and not god believing who can fall further. There are enough examples of these kinds of people in everyday life as well as in Indian epics and mythology.

Dharma - Duty, Responsibility, Morality, and Karma

The Sanskrit pandits are constantly expressing the challenge of explaining Sanskrit words, as it is hard to encompass the breadth and depth of their meanings. Here, we will provide a glimpse into the two most important implications of the word “Dharma” - responsibility in a specific context and the conduct of life. In this particular context, Dharma entails being driven by a sense of responsibility for the role one plays

in a given situation. Now, why is it important from a Karma perspective? There are the following reasons for this:

1. **Personal Karma:** The first reason is that by fulfilling your Dharma, you avoid accruing negative (paapa) karma, even if the action may be unpleasant or disagreeable. For example, professions like nursing, soldiering, executioner, and judging, despite their challenging nature, can be performed without incurring negative karma if they are carried out in accordance with one's Dharma.
2. **Personal purpose and meaning:** Embracing Dharma allows individuals to cultivate a sense of purpose and direction in their lives. By fulfilling their responsibilities, they can develop character, integrity, and a deeper understanding of themselves.
3. **Harmonious Society:** Dharma forms the foundation of a well-functioning society. When individuals understand and fulfil their roles and responsibilities, it leads to a harmonious and balanced community where everyone contributes to the greater good.

For any system or community to run smoothly, each individual must sincerely, honestly, and competently perform their expected duties. In today's world, a smooth-running community would involve unbiased and correct judgments from judges, sincere parental dedication to nurturing children, citizens dutifully fulfilling their responsibilities without selfish interests, voting for the most capable person for the greater common good, and doctors and pharmaceutical companies prioritizing the patients' well-being over monetary gains.

In conclusion, embracing Dharma is not just a philosophical concept but a practical and indispensable principle for personal growth and societal harmony.

We will elaborate on both of these a little more.

Why does doing one's Dharma not accumulate karma? Because it is done with the attitude of "doing because it needs to be done" for the person/community/society to be able to function effectively, there is no personal motivation, me or mine in action. So when a nurse is pricking baby butts, she does not have the motivation to cause pain to the children. No matter how many tiny little butts she pokes with a pointed needle, she does not pick up negative karma. She is not going to get poked back at night, she can sleep easily. No matter how many soldiers he kills, as long as the war is Dharmic (he is fighting for the common good with no personal interest), the soldier picks up no negative Karma. So a judge who passes a death sentence as per the law of the land incurs no paapa Karma (provided he has not compromised in any way) as he is just doing his Dharma.

Now if something is registering, for eg: the nurse likes the job she is doing, then she will be drawn into the same job again and again. Or if she doesn't like it, she will eventually be out and somewhere where her desires take her. Or if she is upset because she has not been given a pay hike, that will also register and be a karmic seed. But the action itself does not register a karmic seed, that needs to be understood.

Thus Karma gets registered only if there is a selfish intent behind the action. Hence, to get out of the shackles of karma, one needs to practice becoming selfless. Dharma, by its very definition, is of the kind where the action is not motivated by personal benefit alone. If Dharma is done with the right attitude, then one is on the way out of sin for good.

Dharma is the role or functions you are supposed to play. For a one-liner, Dharma is *responsibility-driven, principle-centered living*. For eg: as a father Narayan might be very nice, not corrupt, does not shout at his wife or kids, treats everybody kindly, is morally upright, pays his taxes ..etc....so

he is principle-centred. However, he does not take adequate interest in his child's education ... he just sends him to the most convenient school for him (Narayana)does not follow up on his studies, he is not doing his Dharma as a father properly. That is the 'responsibility-driven' part. It is self-apparent that a 'Dharma' centred society would be moral, good and a successful one.

In conclusion, the concept of Dharma is a fundamental principle that guides individuals towards personal growth and contributes to the overall well-being of society. By understanding and embracing one's responsibilities, both in terms of principle-centred living and actively fulfilling specific roles, individuals can avoid accumulating negative karma, find a sense of purpose, and contribute to a harmonious community. Dharma encourages selflessness and detachment from personal motivations, allowing one to break free from the cycle of karma. As we navigate through various roles and situations in life, it is essential to reflect upon our Dharma and strive to fulfil our responsibilities with sincerity and dedication. By doing so, we not only progress on our own spiritual journey but also play a crucial role in creating a society that is built on the foundation of duty, responsibility, morality, and compassion. Ultimately, living a life guided by Dharma is the key to personal growth, inner peace, and the collective well-being of all.

It's not my problem

One of the drawbacks associated with Karma is that it can foster indifference towards the suffering of others. Some may adopt the perspective of "It's their Karma, let them suffer. My focus is on liberating myself from suffering." Undoubtedly, this has an intrinsic selfish ring to it.

This is true. To a degree. But let us see what it emphasizes. It emphasizes on doing one's Dharma. It places importance

on fulfilling one's Dharma, which entails performing one's role with sincerity and honesty. It involves contributing to the community in a manner aligned with one's natural inclinations and inherent talents. By doing so, a harmonious and healthy society can be fostered.

Additionally, it highlights the significance of not causing trouble for others. Being indifferent may be preferable to creating problems for them. It is worth noting that a considerable amount of so-called "help" has inadvertently resulted in significant challenges for people worldwide. Often, religions and ideologies that were touted as saviours of the world have, in reality, made life miserable for many. One of the primary reasons for this is the personal ego, desires, and ambitions for power and control, which ride on top of the professed ideology. Unless individuals are spiritually evolved and emotionally mature, the world may require saving from these supposed "saviours."

If every time a baby tries to walk, you hold it so that it does not fall, it is never going to learn to walk. What is true for children is true for individuals and communities. Time and again one has seen that individuals and communities who have been pushed against the wall have risen to prosper and shine. To what degree do you allow individuals to learn and grow for themselves does not have a simple answer.

If you are truly genuine, the understanding does not stop you from helping others, from going beyond your Dharma. In the worst case, you get rewarded with good Karma. You can simultaneously help others while working towards your own liberation. In fact, selfless service itself can be a pathway to liberation.

Hopefully, this sheds light on the intricate relationship between Karma, personal growth, and the importance of balancing self-development with compassionate actions towards others.

Free Will vs. Predestination from a Karmic Lens

Karma is not predictive, nor is it deterministic. We cannot say with certainty what will happen, because we don't know in what particular combination the seeds and circumstances will come together. At the same time, it is not ungoverned, or random, nothing that has happened has happened outside karma. What has happened in the past cannot happen without karmic justification.

The element of randomness (we don't know how the seeds and circumstances will combine) makes life what it is. The future is not completely solid, at the same time it is not hazy either. The karmic seeds predispose a person in one direction or the other. Similarly, there is a tendency or greater possibility of certain events happening. The closer you are to a particular event, the harder it is to wriggle out. It is solid in the now and the next moment is also almost totally predetermined, but it becomes less and less deterministic as we look further and further ahead.

What about choice? You have a choice in what you want to do, but do you have a choice in the doing? From a karma point of view, any action that is happening is always playing out of older karma, always. Since you cannot alter that happening, you don't have a 'choice to do' in an absolute sense.

The choice you have is the choice to decide. What is going on in your mind/intellect, i.e. the sowing of new seeds? Again, the degree to which you have a 'choice to decide' is dependent on the karmic load. Let us explain this a little further.

Suppose you are sitting with a group of friends or even strangers. Out of the blue, your hand moves and you slap somebody at random. What karma says is the person getting slapped could not have got it unless it was due. Now as you read this, you decide you want to check this out and you are

going to slap the first person you see tomorrow, to disprove karma. As your intent becomes firm, the circumstances start setting themselves up such that the person who needs to get slapped will turn up at the appropriate time. If nobody was deserving of the slap, then however strong your initial intent is, it will either weaken at the time or the event will not happen due to some reason or the other. So you do not have a 'choice to do' in the absolute sense. Though you have a choice to decide to do.

Or for eg: you have a choice to decide to go to a movie or not to go to a movie. It's a choice, there may be many factors affecting the choice, some internal pulls, some external, but the surface-level consciousness is still making it. Now you may not end up going to the movie, and not just because you could not get the tickets or because you fell sick or something. You do not have control over the actual action of your going to the movie, it may 'happen' or it may 'not happen'...by itself. In fact, you may decide not to go to the movie – and end up going because just a minute before your friend lands up in your house and pulls you to the movie.

What you want is also the result of Karmic impressions, your past memories, and your mental make-up. Whether an alcoholic takes the next drink depends on his 'will' not to drink as well as how ingrained his habit is.

Thus, you don't have free will in action. You don't have free will even in thoughts. If we could control our thoughts, we would be Superman ... we all like to control the world, but we have no control over our own thoughts. They come on their own volition.

But you still have free will :) You have free will in intent, but only to a certain degree.

And to what degree do you actually have 'control'? To an extent, you have control over the 'seeding', ie the seeds that are being sown inside you. The seeds (karmic seeds) get

past 'you', where you are the sense of 'you' that you have...I call this the surface consciousness...this surface consciousness has some level of control or influence over the seeding ... but that is about it. You can seed yourself, for eg: I want to have a super physique. There are already many seeds in your deeper consciousness and they all factor in in the 'action' that happens. You have free will to work on the seeding. After that, everything else is 'automatic'.

In conclusion, the interplay between free will, predestination, and Karma is a complex one. While we may have some degree of free will in our intentions and the seeds we sow, the actual manifestation of events is largely governed by our past Karmic impressions. By understanding this dynamic, we can focus on cultivating positive intentions and actions, knowing that they will shape our future experiences, even if we cannot control the precise manner in which they unfold.

Personal Responsibility

The world is like a mirror. What you are on the inside is what is mirrored on the outside. Now, of course, this is not a plain, clear, well-polished mirror. It is a hazy, cracked, frosty, dusty mirror and hence one fails to recognise it as such. The mirror is not only reflecting today's moment but also the past in an arbitrary combination.

What this implies is, at some level, you and only you are responsible for everything you do and experience. You are your own master. Your future is governed by yourself. If you approach the world with kindness and compassion, you are more likely to experience positive interactions and relationships. On the other hand, if you harbour resentment and negativity, you may find yourself facing more challenges and conflicts.

Know that if you are irritated with the traffic, or complaining about the garbage, you are in some way

responsible, even if indirect, and in some way you can impact, even if indirect. This is both very humbling and enabling at the same time. Recognizing our role in shaping our experiences can be humbling, as it requires us to take responsibility for our actions and their consequences. At the same time, it is enabling because it empowers us to make positive changes and create the life we desire.

By understanding that we are ultimately responsible for our own experiences, we can take charge of our lives and work towards creating a more fulfilling and harmonious existence. This realization is a crucial step in personal growth and self-improvement, as it encourages us to look within and make the necessary changes to align our inner world with the outer reality we wish to experience.

Life is Not Arbitrary

The law of Karma and Dharma is both proportional and precise. If you skip a meal or eat too much sugar one day, you will not get diabetes. There are no lottery tickets.

As discussed earlier, a heart attack may appear to be a sudden event, but upon closer examination, it is often the result of factors that have been building up for decades. From a Karmic perspective, this logic can be extended to even seemingly random events such as earthquakes or train accidents. While it may appear that the people affected were simply unfortunate, the entire event, from a Karmic or Vyavashtit Shakti perspective, occurred so that those specific individuals were present at that precise moment. This understanding may provide some solace, as it suggests that nothing is arbitrary and that every occurrence has a Karmic justification at some level.

However, this perspective should not make us cold or unsympathetic towards those who are suffering. We should not fall into the trap of believing that they deserved their

misfortune or that they should be blamed or judged for their circumstances. No person is fully aware of their entire Karmic history or journey, including ourselves. As human beings, we must maintain compassion for our fellow travellers on this journey through the universe.

In essence, while the law of Karma and Dharma is precise and non-arbitrary, it is our responsibility to approach life with understanding, empathy, and kindness towards all beings, recognizing that we are all subject to the same universal principles.

The Need for Laws and Governance

The big issue with karma is the lack of an obvious link between cause and effect in many of the cases, especially in those cases where consequences are longer term. Which is why people do the things they do.

The more successful humans are in creating a system in which reward and punishment are tangibly connected, the quicker and more apparent the karma cycle will work and the more orderly society will be.

In other words, having a good judicial system with well-thought through laws and a well-functioning legal system complements Karma. It ensures that Karma cycle closes more quickly, and people see that actions have immediate consequences, discouraging wrongdoing which causes harm to others.

Other frameworks do not hold

When evaluating religions and ideologies, people often focus on questions of right vs wrong, and truth vs falsehood, without digging deeper to examine the underlying goals and motivations. For example, communists may proclaim a desire for a just and equitable society. Religious adherents may point to historical evidence to justify their beliefs.

However, the ultimate goal driving most people's interest in religion is a desire for inner peace, pleasure, or happiness - in this life and beyond. If you want to find the "right" God, you might think that pleasing this God will grant you access to heaven, and heaven is desirable because it promises eternal pleasure. But the real goal is actually the eternal pleasure and eternal happiness itself.

All this drama over which religion or God is correct is just a means to that end, and people often get lost in the woods, so to speak. If the "true" God, say Jesus, were to decide that all Christians should go to hell, the religion would rapidly lose adherents. This reveals that nobody is really interested in Jesus or heaven per se, but in the happiness they are presumed to bring. There are many assumptions here, starting with the existence of this God as the creator of the world.

So from the perspective of life's ultimate purpose, we can call this the "God-heaven" framework. To cut through the endless debates and analysis around these questions, it's useful to step back and examine the core frameworks that encapsulate how various worldviews address life's meaning and what lies beyond death. This chapter outlines three such paradigms which, taken together, cover virtually all of humanity's beliefs today.

The Three Frameworks

1. God-Heaven Framework (Abrahamic religions like Judaism, Christianity, and Islam)
2. Karma-Moksha Framework (Indian spiritual traditions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism)
3. Atoms-Molecules Framework (Materialism, atheism, current scientific worldview)

Rather than arguing which specific religion or ideology is correct, it's more illuminating to evaluate which of these

three frameworks most sensibly addresses the core questions of human existence and flourishing. More fundamentally, it is even plausible. Let's briefly examine each framework:

1. **God-Heaven Framework:** This view holds that one supreme God created the universe and delivered His message through prophets/messengers and holy books. Followers of the “right” religion go to eternal heaven after death, while non-believers suffer eternally in hell.

Issues with this Framework:

- Contradictions in defining heaven/hell as ultimately desirable endpoints.
 - Lack of clarity on what exactly determines one's eternal fate. On something so fundamental as whether one goes to eternal heaven or hell, there is no consistent answer among adherents.
 - Heavy dependence on historicity and unverifiable scriptural validity.
 - Source of much religious conflict throughout history.
2. **Karma-Moksha Framework:** This model describes a cycle of birth, death and rebirth governed by the law of karma - you reap what you sow, in this life or future ones. The ultimate aim is to attain moksha (liberation) from this cycle by transcending the ego-mind. This is the foundation for many Indian spiritual philosophies. This has been dealt with extensively in this book.

Some key elements:

- Provides an intuitive explanation for apparent inequities of life circumstances
- Is dependent on observation of life as you see it. It is just asking one to become more observant about one's life and nature.

- The ultimate goal is a state of lasting inner peace/happiness, not external pleasures.
- Emphasizes individual effort and transformation over blind faith/obedience.
- Numerous paths, practices and approaches rather than one exclusivist religion.
- Knowledge-based rather than personality or belief-based.
- Develops clarity in understanding; in fact, the hallmark of spiritual progress is the clarity developed.

3. Atoms-Molecules Framework: The materialist view regards humans as nothing more than complex arrangements of atoms, with no “soul” or afterlife. It seeks to understand the world through empirical observation, theoretical models, and applications of scientific knowledge. Associated with secular and humanist ideologies focused on earthly life. While this framework has contributed immensely to scientific and technological development and material progress, it has limitations in addressing existential questions.

However, this Framework fails to address a fundamental question: if everything is just atoms and molecules, why bother with anything at all? Why aspire for happiness, meaning, or purpose if we are nothing more than fleeting arrangements of particles? In reducing human existence to mere physical components, the materialist worldview strips away the basis for the very things that make life worth living. All emotions and challenges are reduced to atoms and molecules. This is probably the underlying reason why materialistic paradigms such as communism have been absolutely ruthless and have resulted in killings on a mass scale.

Some other issues with this view:

- Has no answers to basic existential questions of why we experience what we do, etc.
- Rejects subjective experience of consciousness in favour of a pure materialistic worldview
- Provides little sense of higher meaning, purpose or post-death possibilities
- Fields like psychiatry lack coherent foundations; rely on sketchy statistical models and individual subjective theories
- Overemphasis on material progress; neglects inner/spiritual and social dimensions of wellbeing

In light of these fundamental limitations, the atoms-molecules Framework proves unsatisfactory as a framework for understanding the human condition and our deepest aspirations. It may offer useful tools for scientific inquiry and technological advancement, but it falls short of providing a meaningful basis for individual and collective flourishing.

Conclusion

For those seeking a cogent framework to understand life's deepest questions, the karma-moksha Framework arguably provides the most compelling, consistent, realistic and comprehensive worldview. It aligns our fundamental desire for happiness with a non-materialist understanding of consciousness and a non-exclusivist approach to self-realization.

The Abrahamic paradigm, while offering some merits, exhibits significant flaws and inconsistencies when deeply examined. And the materialist worldview, despite its practical applications, fails to address the most essential question of why anything matters at all if we are mere arrangements of atoms.

Ultimately, rather than identifying with any ideology, it is up to each individual to inquire and uncover their true nature beyond ego and attain unshakable inner freedom. The karma-moksha framework provides a rational and experience-based roadmap for this inward journey. It is only a guide and not a dogma. It encourages one to observe and validate oneself at every step of the journey.

SECTION 5

METAPHYSICS OF KARMA

Speculations on the Origins of Karma

If one observes nature carefully, nature creates forces in opposition which then coexist in some form of dynamic equilibrium. A slight mismatch would result in a disturbance of the equilibrium till a new mean is found. However, a major mismatch would result in an unstable system which cannot exist.

For eg: in the physical world, we see gravitational energy and centrifugal force. That is what keeps the moon revolving around the earth and the earth revolving around the sun. It keeps the entire solar system in its place.

Even chemical reactions are efforts by the substance to find a new equilibrium when the current equilibrium is disturbed.

If we get to life, if we observe nature which is untouched by man, we find a myriad of organisms, ranging from single-celled creatures to the most complex of them, working sometimes on cooperative impulses, and sometimes on competing ones, coexist in a very complex ecosystem which somehow balances itself out. If there is a disturbance in the equilibrium, the ecosystem works to bring itself back to a new balance, a new equilibrium. Every organism is endowed with its own unique survival abilities which help it survive, but at the same time, it has its weaknesses which ensure it cannot dominate. The tiger and the deer are uniquely positioned, so

sometimes the tiger could catch the deer and many times it would not. If it were not if the deer were always much more agile than the tiger, then the tigers would perish and the deer population would grow unchecked... if the tigers were better endowed, then the deer would perish and there would be nothing left for the tigers to eat.

It is also not just 'survival of the fittest' because that presumes there is a vector, 'fitter'. If it were the one who runs fastest, we find that is not true, slower animals also survive. Similarly whether tallest or strongest, we find that the other end of the spectrum are also species which are surviving and thriving. Even within a species, the slowest/weakest doesn't need to die out. It is not necessary that the slowest deer in a lot is caught. It might be just luck, or it could be that they are better at camouflaging themselves or have better sensory perception of the existence of predators nearby, or better strategy and teamwork... there are so many vectors that 'fittest' loses its meaning. The correct way to abstract it out is it is the ecosystem which works to balance itself out.

Now coming to humans. Humans are also born instinctively with a survive and thrive itch. Which is where the strong urge for sex as well as the urge to dominate, to be on the top of the pile. The difference between these instincts and those of animals is in the case of animals, it is limited. Whatever their requirement, it stops at that. Once a lion is full, it does not hunt. Once a man has his fill, he/she is looking to accumulate. Even animals which will accumulate or build nests or store food do so only for the coming season.

Whether it is an individual, nation, religion, ideology, ethnicity, corporation ...whatever the reason for humans to group together, there is the underlying push by the human ego to dominate and subdue all that it sees. Given this, is it possible that Nature created this without a counterbalancing force? The urge to dominate, to remove real or perceived

obstacles to survival is common with animals. But on the other side, since the beginning of recorded history, we don't find it true in the absolute sense. We don't find the weaker humans being eliminated (except for certain spikes in history). It is balanced out by what we typically call higher human nature, consideration, and compassion. Where is all this born out of? On a simple basis, I could be on the other side and experience what the other person is experiencing, and it is not pleasant, so let me not do it to that person. All that is good and noble of human beings is based on the principle of empathy with the other human being, putting oneself in the other human's shoes. If the baser instincts (survival/reproduction) are based on something real survival, this (higher nature) cannot be based on something 'unreal'. This is also coming from the same Nature which puts in us the urge to go and secure ourselves and subdue the 'other'. The 'baser nature' is clearly the same survival instinct of animals. The higher however is based on something subtler, which is Karma. We intuitively feel, when we are in touch with ourselves beyond our baser instinct, that we would suffer what we cause others to suffer. And it has to be based on a 'real' foundation.

Karma is the law that sustains the human world. Without it, the world would have been unstable and it would have disappeared long ago. It is random and not sensory, which is why human beings, by and large, have failed to 'see it'. [Except for Indian spiritual traditions, which have been far more objective and observant about human nature, in general]

If we go to the forest and see a lion attacking a deer with a view to kill it, our immediate response would be, "Get the camera, quick, wow", but the poor deer, if it could observe and think, how heartless, how cold-blooded these humans are, a poor deer is getting killed, its mother will cry when she doesn't reach home, these people have the power to stop it, and yet do nothing, and the sickness of it all, it's 'fun' for them. And if there were a human being able to read the deer's

thoughts, she would be thinking, ‘I understand, dear chap, but I should not interfere, if I interfere, and start protecting all the deers around, the ecosystem would collapse. Poor deer, how are you to understand and perceive the ecosystem, you are just a part of it’.

Similarly, humans are part of the karma ecosystem. We, however, differ from other animals in our unique capacity to perceive it, even as we are within it. And it is a part of the same natural ecosystem, there is no external doer, or person or God who hands you your karma. It just ‘happens’.

Nature wants you to express yourself fully ... that is what gives rise to the colour of life. Spirituality wants you to go within completely, that makes you go beyond the colour of life. In-between the two extremes is where the river of life flows.

Why Karmic Memory is Veiled

One of the drawbacks frequently mentioned about Karma is that the person who gets justice does not know why he is suffering what he is suffering. Especially if it has come from previous lifetimes, there is no way that the person would know why he is being penalized. If he does not know why he is getting penalised, what is the way for reformation? Whereas in courts devised by human beings, the link between the crime and the punishment is absolutely explicit, and the convict knows his crime and what he has been punished for.

As has been mentioned before, the very uncertainty of how the karmic fruit will happen is what makes life ‘life’. If the link between the cause and effect were made explicit and visible to everybody, there would be no ‘life’. The unawareness of the outcome results in the diversity of life and all its manifestations.

At the same time, the general guidelines never change. Don’t do to others what you would not like done to you

always holds good. So if one is suffering, it is time to reiterate and let it sink deep so that mistakes are not repeated. It is time to stick to Dharma or principled living.

Also more importantly, the way out of suffering is always there, it is always open to one and all. This is why all great sages and saints have exhorted you to work for your liberation. To whatever extent one works on one's liberation, to that extent suffering is reduced as well as propensity to commit sin is reduced. Once one is liberated from desires, the very pull which causes one to sin is gone. To the extent, one is liberated from depending on external and transient conditions for one's peace and happiness, to that extent one's suffering is reduced and becomes less dependent on circumstances. So a way out is given and the rest is up to the individual.

The Necessity of Balance and why the Universe is not all good

Why didn't God give us a perfect world? Because without challenge and change, the world wouldn't be what it is. I mean, what would you do? Just watch, watch, watch it like a giant TV show? You'd get bored of any TV program unless you were involved, right?

Everything in the world exists in balance, and so do good and bad, as well as the individual motivation for personal benefit versus the universal good. This balance is ingrained in humanity, in human beings, and some people are on this side while others are on that side. Because without that, just like a bad world is bad, an extremely good world would also create problems. This is hard to digest initially, but if you think about it, even heaven – one of the reasons why in Vedanta they say that people who seek heaven are greater fools – at some stage, it gets boring. The story goes that people in heaven are just waiting for a chance to get back to earth for liberation.

Imagine a world where everything works exactly the way you want, like in AR and VR. Would you like to be in a reality where whatever you visualize or imagine happens, and there are electrodes in your brain to give you the same impulses, so you don't feel tired or challenged? Would you really want that kind of world? The world exists because there has to be a challenge, there has to be change. Challenge and change are the two primary pillars of life.

Once you really think about it, you'll realize there is no other way the universe could be. There has to be clarity, and for there to be clarity, there has to be confusion. At the end of the day, there is no permanent, global answer. There is no permanent solution where everything is perfect. But there is an individual solution – no permanent global solution, though.

Of course, you can work to make society better, but one can only do so much. Individual and collective egos will continue to mess things up. When things become good, people get complacent, and negative influences start creeping in. People may not have the motivation to challenge the status quo since they have gotten used to an easy life, and there is a lot to lose by going against the grain. They become conformists. On the other hand, sometimes people rebel for the sake of rebelling, too, just to “show off.”

Ideologies, including this one, will eventually lose their grip. There will be phases where the world is good, where planet Earth is good and phases where it's bad. Good will be followed by bad, and bad will be followed by good. That is the universal truth.

The universe, as we know it, exists in a delicate balance, and this balance is essential for its very existence. A world that is entirely good or entirely bad would be unsustainable and ultimately unfulfilling. The presence of both good and bad, clarity and confusion, personal and universal motivations,

short-term motivations and long-term interests, is what drives growth, change, and the overall dynamism of the universe. By accepting and embracing this fundamental truth, we can navigate the complexities of life with greater understanding, recognizing that the journey of personal growth and liberation is what truly matters in the grand scheme of things.

Conclusion

Scope and Limitations of the Karmic Theory

First off, let's start with what this theory does not cover. This theory does not cover 'nature' and its interaction with human beings. That is, it does not explain how a cloudburst happens or an earthquake happens which selectively kills and injures people.

It also does not cover interaction with man and machine. How does a bullet leaving a gun know where and whom it has to hit? That is also not covered.

It also hasn't addressed physical health or the causes of sickness.

It also does not get into when it all started and when the universe originated.

What is covered is limited to human behaviour and human-human interaction. Take a snapshot of what we observe around us today and see if there are patterns from which conclusions can be drawn. This is a smaller part of karma overall but nevertheless the most important part.

That we need to 'see' it, that it needs to be something physical or sensory, to be true, is incorrect. We don't see 'hunger'. We cannot see, or at least I do not see some long tentacles coming from the earth every night to hold the moon in its place. We infer gravitation from our observations. Similarly, karma is an inference based on our observation.

That action and effect need a 'material' link, that an embodied soul cannot pop up at a different place without having a 'physical' path, is disbelief not grounded in

contemporary science. We all do everything wirelessly. Am not saying this proves Karma, but the common man's reason for disbelieving Karma is not scientific.

At the same time, unlike in certain religions, it is based on what is observed through the senses and not on the 'unseen'. Life is its observatory. If we have to depend on the unseen, then we are lost, because there can be other unseen, in fact, there can be unlimited 'unseen'... how do you know which 'unseen' is the appropriate 'unseen', since it is all unseen anyway?

How one infers it and its mechanism I have broadly laid out through this book. As long as what we see around us can be explained by the model we create, we have something. And this is what has been attempted.

But the modern human mind cannot rest until it can be 'proved' through experimentation. Mine (mind) is no exception. Now the experiment I set out to do was also rather modest. Does 'intent' get transferred or perceived or does it reach another person minus the sensory interaction? Basically, without blinking my eyelid, or writing anything or saying anything, and keeping my body stone cold, can another person know what you – ahem intend.

Now, this is rather difficult for two reasons,

1. Hard to get a clear consistent sample space. As mentioned, there are a zillion things happening, and so many possible seeds and circumstantial elements, you cannot for sure know if there is something else causing the reaction.
2. Now all of science is based on keeping intent out. In fact, the whole credibility rests on the fact that scientists are objective, they have managed to remove intent (manifestation of intent is called bias, or subjectivity) and become data-based. Here we have

to turn the problem exactly on its head, how do we become objective about 'intent'? Also, we cannot become too objective, since the intent becomes to check intent, and not the original intent and karma would know :(

Nevertheless here are some small things I have tried

1. Like all normal couples, I occasionally used to squabble with my wife. (Unfortunately this now rarely happens, after I have started using my understanding of karma, so this is past data). After the squabble, if I go out to the office, there I encourage repentant thoughts towards my wife, feel sorry about it etc. As against, if I am thinking negative thoughts or encouraging anger and her immediate response on my returning home, many times I have found it correlates with what I had been doing out of sight. If I have been repentant, I find her also in a forgiving mood and more pleasant at the first reaction. It is unlikely to be body language because even if she is cooking and has not seen me, she opens the conversation in a more pleasant tone.
2. Somebody is chatting with you. It is a one-sided monologue, but you are wide-eyed and interested. Then somewhere for the heck of it, you start an inner dialogue, what a bore, when is he going to stop? Moments later, 'Hey, I am not boring you, am I'... but this could be body language.
3. Multiple times, the character of a relationship can be changed by just working on intent without any visible change in the interaction.
4. More detail of how I have used 'Karma' is given in the section on Utility and Appendix 2. This also reinforces the proof to a certain extent.

Now rather than ‘do’ some of these things, it is better to work on past data. Since when you ‘do’, you corrupt it with the larger intent of checking out intent. So if you can recollect instances, see if you can correlate between intent and reaction in the absence of sensory transmission. Alternatively, you should make your intent genuine by repeatedly saying the same things to yourself again and again.

I don’t know if karma and karmic impressions can be explained in neurological and biological terms, or whether they can be ‘verified’ with this frame of reference. Whether this (the way I observe) constitutes scientific validity. In my view, trying to look at these things neurologically is like scanning through the hair styles of players to predict the outcome of a football match. It’s a misplaced focus.

When looking at a particular thing with a particular frame of reference, you stick to that frame of reference and prove it and disprove it in that frame of reference.

Utility and Application of Karmic Understanding

But more than these experiments, where it has helped us in better insight into relationship patterns, and that is where I have seen it to hold ‘true’, not in the sense of a magical hand that is doing things, but in terms of deep underlying attitudes in relationships which invariably cause negative patterns and unpleasantness. These things are not so obviously observable without this framework, and all the individuals I know miss them and feel the ‘fault’ is somewhere else.

Once you understand karma, you see your problems as your fault. It is always your fault. Now that was what everybody around you was saying, but now you ‘realise’ it, and when you realise it, everybody is happy :)

But seriously speaking, when there is something that is going on which is not to your liking, instead of blaming the person, you look within for the reflection of it within you,

and work on that reflection, the original problem also, after a delay resolves.

The other big difference is you constantly look at your intent, not what you said or the person said. You drop the outcome and become conscious of your intent, you will start seeing that the intent was not so 'pure' to begin with. Working on cleansing the intent brings in a number of automatic improvements without having to directly 'say anything' or 'do anything'. It has definitely made my life more peaceful and improved the lives of people around me.

Some of these observations and how they have helped are spelt out in Appendix 2.

Key Takeaways

Thanks to Newton, we now know we must be careful about objects overhead. They might fall on our heads. Similarly, thanks to our understanding of Karma, we now know our actions have consequences, and we must be careful with our intent and our actions. The intent of today is the action of tomorrow.

To reiterate, Karma is something *we all* see and use in our daily life. Studying for an exam is karma. Stealing and being caught is karma. When we abuse somebody, he is going to keep a grudge against us, that is karma. We see it, and expect it to work intuitively. It is our natural conditioning. Everybody sees karma at work maybe 3/10 times. There is nobody who is at zero, ie who presumes the world is entirely random. What this understanding does, is like getting past the surface, so deeper or next-level interconnections are more visible. As and when you get more attuned to this, the number of things that seem to have a karma link and can be reasonably well explained rises to 5/10 and then you tune in to it more, it rises to 7/10. There will still be some things which appear totally random and one cannot make 'sense' out of it.

Probably past life connections. But 7/10 is sufficiently high to make it a guide for your daily life, it is still good enough to live your life by.

This is not an end but an invitation to understand and explore this perspective further. Though we *all* intuitively live presuming it, it is not sufficient. Karma cannot just be a belief, a philosophy, an understanding, a perspective, or a theory. It either is or it isn't. It is worth investigating if it is. It is the key to your life and beyond.

The seed karmas are what is pulling and pushing you as well as the world around you, it is one of those things like gravitation which is working in the background so that the system keeps running. Like gravitation, it is not so apparent unless you are aware of it and it becomes part of the perspective. Unlike gravitation, I am not sure if it can be studied in a mathematical sense or if experiments can be devised to check it since the act of observation will influence the outcome. I have not given it much thought, am sure whoever is interested will.

However, as an individual, check it in your own life, with keen but detached observation. Be with it, observe the life around you, and see if it makes sense to you. Does it appear as true? To me, it does appear to hold true.

What is the take away from all this: Be nice to everybody, all beings, plants, animals, and humans on this planet. Don't hurt anybody unless necessary. And it is only necessary when not hurting is more hurting than hurting. Greed hurts. Immorality hurts. Corruption in any form hurts. Violence hurts. It will find a way to come back. Same old, Same old. Religion does not matter, the individual does – that is somewhat new :)

Remember, you are ultimately responsible for yourself. You cannot hide behind a book or teacher or Guru or prophet

or culture or religion or your version of God or anybody and do the wrong things.

It's not what you say or don't say. It's not what you do or don't do. But it is all about intent. Observe it Keep digging deeper and deeper and check what it really is. Keep checking it, questioning it, purifying it. That is all that needs to be done.

Making this attitude your mantra for life

Sarve Janaaha Sukhinov Bhavantu

Let everybody be happy

Sarve Santu Niramayah

Let everybody be healthy

Sarve Bhadrane Pashyantu

Let everybody see good

Ma kaschit dukh bakh bhavet

Let nobody have sorrow

*Unconditionally apply ... cannot be conditional to certain people or except certain people, like wife/husband and her family except mother-in-law, like all countries in the world except Pakistan.

Appendices

How to verify if one had a past life

As mentioned in the core text (Section 3, Chapter 2), to check if you have been reborn, you can examine your life from your earliest memories and list all your experiences, motivations, drivers, behaviour patterns, etc. Then try to see if there is anything significant that you cannot attribute to the environment you grew up in [1].

Here is the process I followed, which others can use as a template for their own self-analysis:

- 1. Examine deep-rooted inclinations or attachments:**

Look for any strong undercurrents of emotion, passion or attachment towards certain people, places, cultures, causes, etc. that have been with you from a very young age. See if these can be explained by your upbringing and environment. In my case, I had an inexplicable patriotic attachment to my country of birth that was not attributable to my family environment [1].

- 2. Analyze your personality traits:** Reflect on the core aspects of your personality - your worldviews, attitudes, temperament, interests, etc. Consider whether these have been shaped significantly by your external circumstances or if they seem to be an inherent part of you from the beginning. See if you can trace the roots of your persona [1].

- 3. Examine relationship patterns:** Look at significant relationships in your life and any uncanny connections, synchronicities or recurring themes in them that seem

to defy pure chance. Unexplainable instant affinities, bonds that transcend lifetimes, or relationships that keep re-emerging in unlikely ways may point to past life connections [1].

4. Notice inexplicable talents, interests or aversions:

Do you have any prodigious talents that showed up very early in life without much external stimulus? Or strong interests and aversions to certain activities, time periods, and cultures that don't trace back to any experiences in this life? These could be carry-forwards of past life imprints [1].

By examining the major currents and themes of your life, motivations and personality through the above lens, you may find some inexplicable patterns that point to continuity from past lives. Things that don't trace back to this life, but seem to have deeper, older roots. However, keep an open yet discerning mind, without jumping to conclusions. Look for multiple data points that converge, rather than reading too much into isolated incidents [1].

The more objectively and honestly you analyze your life experiences, the clearer the picture will emerge of whether there are indicators of past life carryovers in your current life expression. While not a hard "proof", this process can provide substantial subjective validation of the theory of reincarnation and past life influences in one's own direct experience.

This getting under one's skin can be an involved and time-consuming exercise. The reader needs to use their own objectivity and their own analysis and come to their own conclusions. What I did was for myself.

Here I put the complete details.

1. An undercurrent of patriotism, and attachment to my country India

From my earliest years, there has always been an undercurrent of patriotism and love for the country of my birth. I remember

in early childhood, on Independence Day, I made my own little mud fort, flag and all. And during some sports matches, my heart would go all out (but this is common among many kids) in support. When I first returned from my US trip, tears welled up when I reached Mumbai airport. After a few years in the job, I refused a US offer, though the money was more than 10 times what I was making in India, and I sure needed the money at that time. My plan, as so many people have, was to work for a few years, make a good bank balance, and return. My then boss, sensing my underlying attachment towards my country, convinced me that once in the US, they would not take me back and I would find it difficult to get an equivalent job here. At that time, there were not many good companies in India and it convinced me enough to continue in my India job. But the full force of my attachment came about when I was to get married. My then-girlfriend, now wife, and her family were extremely keen that I settle in the US, for multiple reasons. (again something very common among girls in India). I choked. I could not digest moving away from here. We argued for months and months, to the breaking point and I kept making all kinds of reasons why we should not settle in the US. Getting a job was no big deal, my own company was willing to do a transfer. The intrinsic resistance to moving out was too strong in me. I finally succeeded in convincing her to stay put, though, of course, she wasn't happy about it.

At this point, I will take a detour and look at the environment of my growing up. My parents were like any other parents, and the parenting style was relaxed, almost *laissez-faire*, ie they just let me grow up with friends and schooling without any strong influence or direction. My mother was least bothered about the country and all was religious and ritualistic. My father was pretty much in his world, his office and its politics, his health issues etc, though he had an interest in spirituality (meditation, Bhagavad Gita et. al).

There was no major figure who influenced my life, nothing I read. There was a phase when I was an avid reader of Western fiction stories, and they did not have any influence other than entertainment. As far as I know, none of my school friends had this kind of attachment, and most who could, have settled abroad. None of my first cousins were even remotely concerned about the country and again who could settle in the US. In fact, 99% of the people are very keen and are extremely happy to get out of here. This was even more true in those years when the Indian economy had yet to take off and India was generally considered a third-world dump, corrupt, mismanaged and poor.

As I mentioned, it was an undercurrent. There was nothing explicit I did, like taking part in politics or involvement of any kind, up to then. It is only now, when I look back, that I am more “aware” of my own drivers. Anyway, the story continues in India. When I was in a cosy job with good pay, I moved out to a startup. The idea behind it was I learned the ropes so I could start something on my own – and that starting something involved doing something in rural India and communications which would make their life easier :). Nothing much came out of it, other than some meetings and discussions. I was too busy with the startup I joined. And even after that job, due to multiple complex factors, I found myself in another startup, and then another job. But then, though awfully short of time having a number of family issues, and honestly quite stressed, I found myself joining some NGO’s – non-governmental organisations, which was working in urban governance. I focussed on roads, did quite a lot of theoretical work to understand what causes Indian roads to be so poorly designed and what needs to be done ... with lot of effort actually got involved with the city municipal corporation ... again it did not lead anywhere due to multiple reasons – and then when I had finally landed up in another MNC, cosy job, not too much work, paying very well, well

settled, I found myself moving out again to do something on my own,this time with another hazy idea of training people to be “smart” and improve India’s workforce quality ... using a combination Yoga (ahem !) and to improve their concentration and active learning methodologies... it did not go anywhere again, I had rented quite an expensive place and the business side of making it profitable was something I had not given a proper thought to – it stressed me out, I closed the whole thing, decided to retreat into a shell and discover what was going on ... and in the process went deep into the spiritual aspect and have come to this point where I am writing this.

The undercurrent was definitely a pan-India thing, its concept and culture. India is a very diverse country, with a number of subnationalities, and distinctive subcultures and languages and I was appreciative of the diversity and liked everything about it, whether it was Punjabi to Bengali to Tamil to Marathi(where I was brought up) to Kannada (which is my native language and culture). So it was a strong streak, which was not “my” language/my culture. I very much disliked the interregional fights and I wanted all cultures to shine. The reason I bring this up is if there is a ‘patriotic gene’, there should be a good chance that it attaches itself to the subnationality. Indeed many-many people are quite strong about “their culture/language” and this does cause friction between cultures, within the Indian nation. My feeling has been and is that I would rather learn Bengali or Tamil than French for eg:

The idea behind this is not to brag or show off how much I love my country but rather to present facts as they are. A very significant driver of my life, which influenced the most significant decisions, and there is not a trace of it I can find in the environment which could have put it inside me.

Another thing, though it may be hard to convince the reader, is only now, when I am trying to deconstruct myself,

that I have become aware of this underlying push. For eg: when I was joining the NGO, I was not thinking, “Oh I am so patriotic and I should do something for my country, this is the field I will work in” It just happened that I wanted to do something and this happened to be around, so I joined it.

2. Sex

This is a tough one and interesting too:)

Well, I was ‘normal’, as normal as a guy is, regarding this. In high school, I used to be teased about a girl in the neighbourhood, whom I never even talked to, but it made me blush/angry/mad which provided unlimited entertainment to my friends. Another incident, I remember when I was 16 or so, there was the school certificate exam. A couple of girls from the neighbourhood came to solve some difficulties, short skirts and all. My heart was racing super fast, imagine my plight when they sat on either side of me. I could not get my attention to what they were asking, but somehow managed to solve their difficulty. It took me many hours for me to cool down .. or maybe I still haven’t fully recovered from it :)

Moving to college, I was much less shy and more comfortable with girls. I would like to chat up, we used to call it ‘batting’ and though there were many guys far better at it, let’s say I was not at the bottom of the class. I don’t know what the culture is now, but in those days the thought of sex never crossed our minds—of the near total freedom to interact. There was a gentle charm to that life, which I think that youth in today’s oversexualized culture are losing out on, but that is another story. By the time I was in the last year of college, we had girls in our project team, I was the one teasing girls, and with all the chatting, sometimes mildly flirtatious, we generally had a good time.

There was one incident that I remember around this time. A group of friends (boys) had got some porn videos and

I was invited too. I just found them too ugh, I could not sit there and watch, though some of them did enjoy it. A few of us who could not stand it went next room and played chess, throughout the session.

As I graduated from college and into a job, while the friendliness continued, the inner thoughts were occasionally sexual. Many times I fantasised, was aroused with the scantily clad female around and also did the thing guys do themselves (ie masturbation), many times. But I never liked myself doing it, and would say to myself, never again, but invariably the next time would happen. That battle continued for pretty much all my adult life. A mild addiction of sorts, if one may use the phrase. Bollywood songs were also getting more sexualized and were accessories to it.

So a nice friendly guy outside, inner occasional sexual thoughts. Pretty normal, I think for most guys. Again, in those days, forget sex, even physical contact (no kiss for eg:) was a strict nono and I think it was better that way :). There was zero interest in guys, in case you were wondering, not that I am passing any judgement on it.

So what was unusual? I loved the Bollywood songs and all the gyrations and shakes. But there was a limit beyond which I could not 'see'. I could not see 'Sex' ... I found it dirty and yucky. In fact, I could not get myself to see the lower section of the female body. I was totally into the subtle sensual songs, but the moment they became too gross or direct, it put me off. Again, may not be too unusual.

As I moved to have a girlfriend and got married, I realized that sex as dirty was not something superficial, it was deeply ingrained. I struggled with it all the time.

This inner battle between my hormones and the "sex as dirty" has absolutely nothing, zilch, nada to do with the external environment. Nobody ever told me anything about sex, whether it is good or bad, should do, or should not do.

In fact, the issue, if it is one, is in India nobody ever talked about it to the kids, zilch. We didn't discuss this among friends, other than the jokes (and the one time in my college days when we had got the porn videos). Most of this was before the days of the internet, so it is not something I got by seeing. And it was a deep conflict, not a superficial one that can be resolved by talking to a psychoanalyst:)

Where does this lead to? After I crossed 40, in my deepening spiritual quest, I stumbled upon the “Dada Bhagwan” movement. That is also an independent and interesting story. Anyway as I began reading the material, there was a small booklet, called Brahmacharya (celibacy). In the book, the Gnani (self-realized one) gives techniques to get rid of the sexual impulse. Some quotes from the book “The sexual act of gratification is nothing but eating garbage. It is the refusal of the whole world. How can this be food for the soul?” ... “I see so much filth and impurity in sex, that I never have any thoughts about it” ... “When you analyze sex, it is like scratching an eczematous lesion. I often wonder, is this all we have done in endless lifecycles? All the things that we do not like are in sex. It is full of stench. Eyes do not like to see. My nose does not like the smell of it. Have you ever smelt it? You should have. Then you would lose all passion. The ears do not like it either. Only the skin likes it “... I think the reader gets the idea.

And so now as I plunged into the path of spirituality, by repeatedly training myself to see “sex as dirty”, I am at this stage 95% free from the attraction towards sex. It has been a relief, I no longer get pulled into watching all those videos, and even if I turn on an item song out of an old habit, I get bored in a couple of minutes. It's a myth that one needs an active sex life to be happy in marriage. One can be happier without it.

To me, it almost appears that I picked up the threads where I had left them last time, last life. The practice of

Brahmacharya(Celibacy) is very fundamental to most Indian spiritual traditions, and to see “Sex as dirty” comes with it. Also, somewhere deep inside me was that ‘sex’ should be only for children... that is how it mostly materialised though nobody ever told me as such. The way I analyze it, hormones kicked in as per nature’s life process and hence this inner conflict. Hopefully, I will be thoroughly done with any residual attraction towards Sex, this time around, if not complete liberation :)

3. Spirituality

In my early 30’s, I found myself drawn towards spirituality. One fine day, I walked into a talk by a master, based on an advert I had seen. I enjoyed it and over the years I was now and then attending various talks. But it was a light background stuff without any serious intent until much later. There was absolutely no push, nothing, it came totally from within.

Now this is a little different story from the previous ones. My father was big-time into spirituality, Guru’s and various movements. I was constantly exposed to it. My father was also an avid reader and there were a lot of books in my house. He also put me into yoga and at that time, there was a transcendental meditation for kids, and he put me in that as well. I liked yoga because it was for kids but disliked the transcendental meditation. There was a school friend of mine, who gently tried to entice me into his spiritual movement, which is the Dada Bhagavan movement. At that time, I would consider all this junk and a waste of time.

So the trigger came from within at a much later age, and not because of the exposure in childhood. But this one is debatable since I had much exposure to it in childhood. Anyways, it was a casual interest until a few years ago when a crisis pushed me to jump whole and sole into spirituality and into this enlightenment business.

There are other minor supporting things which indicate that spirituality is also a continuation

- i. As a kid, used to have moments of feeling very in the moment, feeling pleasant (bliss would be too strong a word), when I was by myself in the sun, or with nature, or sometimes just like that. Unknowingly, this was something I was running after in my life, not so much money or career, but was always looking to be in places with this feeling. This may be common in general, but I have not seen other people around me enjoy 'being' as such – I realize now that they were spontaneous "being in the present moment pleasures" a recreation of the spiritual experience of the previous lifetime?
- ii. There was a phase when I was in high school when I had the same kind of dream for months at an end, and in those dreams, I used to ask my mother, whether this was a dream. Signs of an Advaita overload? Advaita Vedanta kind of says the world is an illusion/like a dream. This is a concept I dislike and struggle with to this day.

4. A friendship and coincidences:

As a kid, I used to go to a convent (catholic run school), which was common in those days. I was quite a dull student, near the bottom of my class. One day, when I was in 6th grade or so, a new kid joined the school. Up to then, he was studying in another covenant school, and he was very good. He was pretty much at the top of his class. But we bonded, we bonded like nobody's business. We were best friends in school and outside. We went on innumerable treks together.

One day, he invited me to his home. There was a Satsang (spiritual meeting) going on. They were propagating a particular method/way/guru which was Dada Bhagwan.

My friend and his family were quite into it. The moment's leader who had come asked that opening 'salvo' – who am I? I distinctly remember it today.... anyway, that day I was far from impressed and eventually it slipped out of my mind.

He too did not push it more and it was forgotten. We graduated from school and went to different colleges, and different disciplines and our interaction became less and less. By the time he graduated, we had moved out of each other's circle. He went to the US, and I lost contact completely. I eventually took a job in India.

Then, once at work, I had a chance for a US visit. I knew he was somewhere there, but I could not locate him. His surname is an overwhelmingly common Indian surname (even in the US:) and in those days, the internet was just beginning to take hold. A few of my school friends whom I was still in touch with were also unaware of his whereabouts, and even though I visited the US many times eventually, I gave up on trying to locate him.

A statistical improbability. I had visited Seoul on a business visit (the one and only time in my life, I had visited that country). On the job, going to the US was common, but Europe never happened. In those days, South Korea was a neverland, exotic place. It was a highly unlikely probability, but a series of events had landed me in a particular job, in which another series of events had resulted in me having to travel to Seoul. On my way back, at the airport, on the waiting lounge, I bumped into this friend of mind. He was travelling from the US to India and that was the only ever time he had travelled through Seoul (an unlikely route) because some issue with his regular route forced him to do it. To add to that, his flight was on a completely different floor. I was reading a book and he walked by in a hurry to find his flight, and well he saw me. He could not believe himself. The statistical probability that we would meet in this practically unknown country would be 1 in a million.

Cut to a few years later. A series of events led me to some inner crises, and I went deep into spirituality. While jumping from movement to movement, technique to technique, I remembered this Dada Bhagwan movement of my friend and decided to try it out, with its promise of self-realization in 2 hrs. So I called him up, attended one such event (called gyanvidhi) and slowly I started getting more into it. As I started reading about Dada Bhagwan, his understanding of the world, and his explanation of karma, I was inspired to get into it. This article is the result of that. A full 25 years after he first introduced it to me, and declined it multiple times, I finally find myself joining my friend in this spiritual path.

I see it as – In our past lives, me and this friend of mine were core spiritual practitioners somewhere both pursuing enlightenment. We bonded well together last life and hence now, without our conscious effort (VS/existence) kept bumping us together again and again. Initially, unknown to each other, each had a deep spiritual interest, which only became apparent now much later in our lives.

5. General personality

Core persona: My worldview, the way I perceived women (a high opinion of women – considered it a privilege to get the attention of a woman ..have since matured :), family-centred, a receptive personality ... ie would mould myself to the other person rather than drive the relationship pattern, and many more such things, all have been with me since the time I can remember and not moulded much from external circumstances.

What does this drive to– each of the above may have an independent explanation, but taken together, the dots join up well. It fits into the karma theology., that my personality and certain connections are a carry forward. If I were to draw up a likely scenario of my past life, based on whatever I see today, it would be =

I was a Hindu, in India, who was doing spiritual practice with the idea of Moksha/enlightenment (obviously not successful, otherwise I wouldn't be here he he!). And a certain copractioner has connected again.

There are a few more things, along the lines above, which also add up, but this much is sufficient for the reader to understand my approach.

How Understanding Karma Helped the Author

These are some of the examples where I found understanding Karma useful in day-to-day life.

1. The Mother In Law (MIL) problem

As happens in many Indian families, the in-law relationships are rarely smooth. I made it a point to ensure my mother-in-law was always free to interact with my wife and kids – which meant there could be unannounced visits and regular calls. Mentally I kept myself always alert to this because I considered it not right to block somebody who has been so central to my wife's life. However, I found that it was not being reciprocated. And that upset me quite a bit. I tried discussing it many times but it did not change. This was an underlying issue for years.

With this understanding of Karma, I tried looking at what I could be doing wrong. I found that when my MIL came, while I let her interact, I used to make myself scarce. I did not like her being around, and while it was a silent subtle retreat, the intrinsic attitude was the same dislike. I hadn't really noticed myself doing that – so now instead of pushing my wife to become more welcoming to her MIL, I started working on this avoidance. I made it a point to overcome my intrinsic dislike and to interact, become more friendly etc. After a time lag, it showed results ... on the other side as well without having to tell my wife to change.

So before I was trying to equalise at outcome level, not at the ‘attitude/intent’ level. My response was the other side of the same coin, though it looked different. With this change, the issue is almost completely resolved.

2. Leisure=Money !

Another issue which nagged me for years was also family (yes this is where the understanding has been most useful:) I found myself squeezed for leisure time. I typically would love being with friends or maybe going to a sports game etc. But my wife would consider this a ‘waste’ and wonder why I should not be spending the extra time with family instead. This was like a stranglehold, and many times resulted in stressful situations and angry outbursts.

Now instead of getting into arguments and stressful reactions, I went into myself and tried to see if I was doing something similar. And I found I indeed was – I was squeezing her for money. She likes shopping and would consider it a stress buster. But I would consider it a total ‘waste’ and would hold a tight grip on it. In retrospect, it was totally uncalled for. She was quite responsible, her expenditures were less and definitely well within the range of what I could afford. It was just that I saw it as ‘unimportant’ and used my rational skills to discourage it. The whole problem with the world is when we ‘do’ it, we don’t ‘see’ it, but when others ‘do’ it, we create a ruckus.

I did not even have to say anything. Just being a little bit more easy going has resulted in a similar response. She and neither I would have made this connection though, it looked totally unrelated, and there was not so much clarity. This understanding and introspection helped in the attitude shift. Now can breathe easily.

3. The Handbag problem

This is also a family problem outside my immediate family. A particular lady whom I know once went into tears describing

what she considered as her bad treatment at the hands of her daughter-in-law. Without going into the incidences, the crux of the matter was while her daughter-in-law gave a lot of importance to her parents and took good care, she totally neglected her (her mother-in-law). I use the 'handbag' terminology to describe it ... i.e. you are treated as a handbag, an accessory to the primary person of interest, in this case, would be her husband.

In this case, I took her step by step to see her own attitude with her son and daughter-in-law. I showed her how, to herself, her son meant everything to her and her daughter-in-law too was a 'handbag' ... it was a similar underlying attitude but with very different manifestations. It is not so much what 'she' did and what 'I' did, but the way you approach it is very similar.

When she 'saw' that she needed to look at her daughter-in-law at par with her son to justify her expectation of a similar response, she said she would never do it. Her antagonism towards her daughter-in-law was so much. But nevertheless it at least partially opened her up to how she may be causing that attitude in others.

4. Anger/Negativity

There are many times we get angry or irritated with people around us. A lot of times it is with family members, and sometimes people with whom we interact on a regular basis. Sometimes knowingly and sometimes unknowingly, we stress other people in different ways.

What I have observed is, that after you have an incident that throws up some negativity between the parties concerned, when you are by yourself, you run it through your mind and internally apologize or dissipate your anger/negativity towards the other person, even without conveying anything verbally, when you meet the person again, the person's attitude towards

you also has undergone a positive change. I have tried this many times and seen that this is fairly consistent.

This above methodology has been fine-tuned into a technique by Dada Bhagwan (www.dadabhagwan.org) and is part of the core strategy employed to achieve liberation. It is called pratikraman and involves internally apologizing to the “pure soul” of the other person, by mentally repeating a set of given sentences to that effect.

There are of course many cases where connections cannot be made. You may be cheated by a stranger and there can be no way to link it to anything you have done in your conscious memory or maybe some traumatic incidents you experienced in childhood, where you are clueless as to why it happened. The cases I have been able to resolve may not be earth-shattering, and it did not necessarily need this approach to solve them. But at the same time, a lot of connections can be made and issues resolved and to that extent, this has been directly useful.

References

1. Dada Bhagwan

Dada Bhagwan is the name given to a spiritual master from Gujarat, India who had a spontaneous realization experience in the 1950s. Following this profound experience, he gained deep insights into how karma works and shared these understandings in his numerous interactions with people. An organization was established to promote his teachings, which focus on fostering more harmonious relationships and spiritual evolution through a deeper understanding of karma. The website www.dadabhagwan.org provides information about his life and teachings. I had the opportunity to attend one of their sessions, and the key concepts presented in this book are derived from Dada Bhagwan's explanations. Without his insights, the idea of exploring this topic in depth may not have occurred to me. However, while I have based my work on his core concepts, I have structured and developed the ideas further in my own unique way. Throughout the process, I have always validated the concepts with my own observations and experiences.

2. Vedanta

This is for the spiritual understanding. If everybody reads and understands Upanishads, it will definitely make the world a better place. Please start with the Ishavasya Upanishad elucidated and explained by the same author.

1. Assorted internet
2. Observation of oneself and life around

This is the most important aspect. Become a keen observer of life, that is the only qualification required.