

KARMA & GRACE

"There is a destiny, That makes us brothers :
None goes his way alone;
All that we send into the lives of others,
Comes back into our own".

Edwin Markham

In Sanskrit "Karma" simply means action. It is frequently said to be the Divine Law of Action and Reaction and of Cause and Effect meaning, "like begets like" or "Akaim — Akai" in Zoroastrianism. The word "Karma" is used philosophically to indicate conditions in the present, stemming from thought and actions in the past. . . a sort of "meeting self."

Each soul enters the material plane for the fulfilling of a purpose, for learning lessons and correcting past mistakes, for drawing closer to God, for awakening, the dormant, buried or forgotten impetus, to experience growth in consciousness. . . and the universal Law of Karma provides the soul with opportunities for the fulfillment of these purposes.

Every incarnation is an opportunity; so is really good karma, whether we are having difficulty in learning our lesson or not. We are attracted to the environment which gives the needed lesson.

Acts of kindness beget more acts of kindness, acts of anger beget more act of anger. This is a LAW, a natural phenomenon, in the sense that it is the way things work. "Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap." An important point to remember is that this law works **without respect to time**. Whatever we sow, we need not reap immediately — the fruition of the seeds sown, may come out much later — in another lifetime, some incarnation later! Another important factor is that an attitude or a pattern of behavior — (say an attribute of a person), may be brought into manifestation in a subsequent incarnation a physical quality of the body. Thus our present conditions or diseases may be the consequents of such negative attitudes and actions in the past. Edgar

Cayce teaches us that neither God nor the law are punitive or retributive. There is no question of a revengeful God asking for penalty or compensation — rather, that which we encounter and suffer, are the natural results of that which WE OURSELVES HAVE PREVIOUSLY BUILT FOR US. The parable of the good shepherd ends with Jesus saying". . . it is not the will of your Father . . . that one of these little ones to perish." God does not think of mankind as debtors who must pay; but rather as His children who need to learn the lesson.

We need to learn universal laws in order to understand how a loving God may permit His children to make choices (good or bad) and meet their consequences **even when they involve pain and suffering**. However, one of the most important things to learn is that God does not record our karmic debts and hold against us. It is rather that **we ourselves choose** to go through the lesson. Hence debts incurred in the flesh must be met in the flesh-an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

Thus man is the sum total of what he has been and done, what he has hated and loved. His emotional and nervous structures, his mental abilities, his preferences, his fears, follies, ambitions, character, are the sum of what he has done with his will since it was given to him. If Man chooses to misuse the great gift of god — (the Free Will), can God be blamed? Will is the force given to man over and above all creation — with WILL he can adhere to or contradict the Divine Law. A very simple and common example — If a terribly rich miserly man disregards the pleas for help, turns a deaf ear to the cries of his relatives — does not help the needy at all and thus commits a sin of omission, who would he blame, if in his next or subsequent incarnation he comes as a pauper? "Karma is then that which has been built in the past as indifference to that known to be right."

"Thus will and predestination co-exist in a person. His past experiences limit him in proba-

bility and incline him in certain directions, but will can always 'draw the sword from the stone.'

One question which most of us ask about karma is : What about heredity? From which side of the family do you inherit most? The answer is : From yourself. "The family is only a river through which the soul flows!" We therefore according to Edgar Cayce choose our parents, our family, our circumstances — before birth. All these which help our soul to learn that which needs to be learned. It is evident that most of us do not learn through wisdom, but through pain and suffering. We thus enter this earth not by **chance**, but by **choice** !

So much then for **Karma**. What then is **Grace**? On one hand, we are told that no wrong or sin ever gets cancelled to obliterated in Nature. The immutable law of 'like begets like' operates inexorably and the consequences have to be experienced sooner or later. On the other hand, we are told of grace and forgiveness and redemptive atonement. What does God forgive? and to who all does He extend His grace? Here we are talking of a Just, Loving, Unfair God not a whimsical, partial one. The answer to this dilemma is that just as there is a **Nature of Law** which some call **Law of Karma**, there is also the **Nature of Love** which some refer as the **Law of Grace** !

"For the law of the Lord is perfect, and whatsoever an entity, an individual sows, that must he reap. That as law, cannot be changed. "As to whether one meets it in the letter of the law or in mercy, in grace, becomes the choice of the entity." . . . so long as we feel there is karma, it is cause and effect. But righteousness we may be justified before the throne, thus we may pass from cause and effect or karma, to that of grace."

(Edgar Cayce)

What Edgar Cayce means is that if we have built a karma for ourself, we have to meet it, but, by the spirit in which we meet it, we may experience an entirely different outcome. Grace is a gift of God freely yet lawfully bestowed for "If we would have grace, we must be gracious." Mr. Cayce feels that by acting righteously, for-

giving our enemies, by praying and resigning to His will, by not complaining, in short, doing all what He wants us to do, we may be able to ward off the full effect of the bad karma. **Our constant prayer then is to be forgiven to the extent that we forgive.**

Attitudes and emotions of the present life which are of karmic origin and that reside as a pattern in the mind, one day, will be brought into manifestation in the physical, that is say will give way to impulse. An impulse is an immediate response. But as we work deeply with our ideals, spirit and motivation, then the **purpose** for which a pattern is awakened or energized, leads the expression of that pattern into a different form in manifestation. If for the gratification of senses or self-aggrandizement, it will manifest in one form; if it is energized for higher purpose of helping others, it will manifest in another. (An example will be given later, to explain clearly).

The same karma is met, but the outcome is different because the purpose is different. Thus we may **change stumbling blocks into stepping stones** and see every experience, which might be called as 'karmic', as an opportunity to learn our lessons as to where our thoughts words and deeds are out of tune with the universe, the Nature of God, and God's will, or not thus we invite and attract His Grace into our lives for the betterment of ourselves and others. **To illustrate the law of Grace in action** : Anthony Hollis had fallen in love with a girl who jilted him for his own best friend in college. Edgar Cayce gave him his life reading the summary of which was :— Twice before in earlier incarnations, he had been married to the same girl and twice before she had been unfaithful to him.

Once she had run off with the same friend ! In one incarnation, Hollis, in his usual quick temper, had strangled her to death. **This was the karma he had to face-Murder of his wife !** As a result, in this life, he would repeatedly choke on food. The choking would be so severe and serious that he would be hospitalized. Once when he was eating, a bone got stuck in his throat; he lost all conscious-

ness and had to be operated upon. While he was in a state of coma he saw the face of this woman (which he recognized as his previous wife), beside her, and then he saw himself, mad with grief and rage. Edgar Cayce's readings had tactfully mentioned that karmic debts had still to be paid, and had suggested a more enlightened method of evening-up his 'karma' by forgiveness and prayer. He had been following Mr. Cayce's advice. Hollis in this life, had also been trying to control his bad temper, led a moral life and had forgiven and forgotten his college infatuation with this woman. When he saw all this as if in a trance, he understood why he was choking repeatedly. He began to pray with all the intensity and faith he could muster. He prayed for the spiritual strength to forgive the woman he was strangling, he prayed for her to be forgiven for adultery, he prayed for himself to be forgiven for having strangled her to death.

When he awoke next morning, he felt that a burden had been lifted off his head, but still, he had not freed himself from the karmic yoke, till his phone rang one day and he heard the voice of the woman (who had jilted him in college days) asking him if he had forgiven her. With his reply that he most assuredly had, a **thousand times over**, Hollis (Law of) Karma turned into (Law of) Grace! If he had not, forgiven the girl his choking fits would have eventually killed him because he did commit a murder, and the law demanded that it be accounted for. But his outward decency toward the girl in the present life, his forgiveness, the 'letting go' of his pride and outraged vanity, were what changed the outcome of his karma.

Many of us wonder why we do not and cannot remember our past lives. We do not, because God is merciful, **that is His Grace**. Suppose you were allowed voluntary access to your previous lives and if you happened to be the greatest

monster in history in one life, or that all your lives were blackened with evil deeds. How would you in such a case, deal with the horror, the belated remorse? How would you deal with the idea and fear of the many lives of bitter compensation to be lived, to atone for all the harm caused by you? What hope would be left for you? There would be no end to the torment you will experience while you wait for the clouds of calamity to break over you **Hence it is God's kindness that a veil is drawn over our conscious mind and we are spared of the knowledge of what happens in future.** No soul will ever be permitted such calamitous knowledge of its own past blunders. Whatever the debt a soul owes to its fellow—souls, it will never be called upon to settle it until the soul has progressed to a sufficiently mature level. "For the Lord does not tempt any soul beyond that which it is able to bear." said Edgar Cayce.

There is yet another aspect of 'grace' in meeting our bad karma. A husband may have to put up with a constantly nagging and harrasing wife; a wife may be burdened with an alcoholic for a husband; a mother may be tortured by a demanding no-good son all of these victims may be meeting their own punishment's which cannot be so severe because they are conditioned by the love these victims have for their oppressors. If the mother did not love his son so much, or the husband did not care enough for the wife, the punishment would become unbearable! (If they had severed their ties, they would have encountered similar situations in the next or later incarnation).

In additional to the remedies the great seer Edgar Cayce had advised in his readings and cases, we **Zoroastrians** have a special tool available, which enables us to tackle our sinful karmas. That tool is the prayer of **PATET**. "The Christian concept of 'Confesion' in its original form was virtually lifted from the Zoroastrian rationale of **Patet**. In ancient Iran, particularly in Sassanian times, if a true Yaozdathregar (priest) slipped up occasionally and committed an offense, he would at once resolve never to repeat it and then would go to a very holy Dastur or Ustad, or even to an Anjuman, and make a confession. "Thus Patet in

its original sense means 'repentance with an urgent desire to return.' (meaning not to repeat the sin) It does not mean give forgiveness, as we understand it. **Practising Truthfulness (Meher) plus a sincere Repentance-cum-Resolve never to repeat the sin again."**

Our beloved prophet Zarathushtra has gifted us with a special prayer, for our sins and karma, and that is the prayer of Patet.

"Thus a full and unconditional admission of one's guilt, a firm resolve that the sin be not repeated, an earnest appeal for wisdom and strength to bear the retribution and an unshakable belief that there is solace in suffering and learning so to say, a genuine penitence coupled with bearing the penalty with equanimity and even cheerfulness, constitute Patet".

The first step is to be aware of what sins are, according to Nature (not according to us as individuals). We have to take the trouble of finding these out, for there is no excuse for ignorance of law. We also have to remember, as Edgar Cayce said, to accept our trials and misfortunes in a resigned, uncomplaining manner and consider these as outcomes of our own doing; and continue to do our duties ungrudgingly no matter how difficult; and of course recite **PATET** as often as possible.

We are also supposed to inculcate **HUMILITY** in ourselves. Humility not only towards our fellow being but towards the species of the lower kingdom too!

At every step, we have to be careful not to commit sins, or raise new karma. "Our actions must be such that they do not cause any damage or destruction in nature. Man is supreme of all the creations of Nature on Earth : His deeds and their results, his actions and their reactions and revolution of the planets, the Sun and the Moon."

If, however, man himself succumbs to passions and false sentiments, he keeps throwing a spanner in the works of Nature, whereby he hinders the functioning of the Sun, Moon, Planets, etc. which are the various agencies of Nature operating her Machinery.

(Continued on page 13)

(Contd. from page 4)

When we understand and become aware of how offenses and sins arise in Nature, how at times instead of obliterating our bad karma, we add on new ones, how on the other hand, as a matter of choice and an exercise of free will, to some extent, we can change the design of our destiny..... we try to live up to our ideals and then God guides our steps in the right direction.

To sum it up all, each soul shall give an account for every idle word spoken, for every selfish thought, for every unkind deed, in the Court of Divine Justice. Yet we know or should know that there is an advocate-Him ! If you will reach out for His hand allow Him to guide you, in joy and in sorrow, through the corridors of Time, you will walk on firm ground. If you turn away from Him and get ensnared in the Whirlpool of 'karma', you may take very long but eventually will also come out because the pattern of the Divine is imprinted on every soul and when the lessons are learned, He will pull you out.

“Yet through all,

We know this tangled skien

Is in the hands of one

Who sees the end

from the begining

He shall unravel all.”

Alexander Smith

Silloo F. Mehta