

Jain Karma Philosophy - Punya (Meritorious) and Pāp (Sinful) Karma_V10

Dear Readers,

It seems that this is a very hot subject within the Jain community. This article has been re-circulated by many readers that within two weeks I have received more than 100 e-mails of appreciations and comments. More than 85% e-mails carry the following theme:

"This is spiritual, enthusiastic, religious article" and "Very well written – an excellent simple explanation".

However I have received few constructive criticisms which motivated me to update the article periodically during this time. Finally I have decided to re-send the revised article so everyone will have the latest revision of this article, which is now expanded to 4 pages. I request website owners if they have posted this article in their websites, please replace it with this latest revision.

Among all appreciative e-mails I have received, the following e-mail written by a Jain Youth of North America on February 17, 2011, which touched my heart

Dear Pravin Uncle

Jai Jinendra

Thank you for sharing this article with the Jain community. My father forwarded me this article earlier this week.

As of the last two years, I have been mentally struggling with the conflict of good karma. It seemed so contradictory to me - having learned in youth that all karma - good and bad - are bad in the end.

There seemed to be no value or reason for being a good human being in society. Apathy, it seemed was better than either good or bad. However, your discussion of the types of karma and the distribution of effect each has on the soul has given my mind some peace.

Often, the strictness of the ideals in Jainism have caused me to question the place of its ideas in a society like ours. I often think that to even consider being a TRUE Jain, one must leave society completely.

However, based on your explanations of punya and pap, there is much reason behind being a virtuous human within the constraints of society while concurrently seeking the ultimate path to nirvana.

While I have yet to begin to apply the names and types of karmas you have delineated in the article to my own life, your discussion has strengthened my belief that Jainism may be followed not only spiritually, but rationally.

Please continue to share such ideas with the community! Thank you!

Sincerely,

Payal

The article is also available on Jain eLibrary website at the following link. At present this website contains more than one million pages of Jain literature information which you can freely download into your computer.

http://www.jainlibrary.org/elib_master/article/200001_article_jaina_edu/Jain_Karma_Philosophy_Punya_and_Pap_Karma.pdf

<http://www.jainlibrary.org>

Please continue to provide any comment you may after reviewing the latest revision. Now onwards I will replace the future updated version in the eLibrary website.

Pravin K Shah
JAINA Education Committee
Raleigh NC USA
+1-919-859-4994

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Introduction

In Jain philosophy, karma are classified in many different ways. They are classified as Ghāti or Aghāti karma depending upon whether they subdue the qualities or innate nature of the soul or create the physical environment of a living being. The same karma are also classified in a different way into Punya and Pāp karma categories. Also, in Jain literature we come across other types of Karma like Dravya Karma, Bhava Karma, and Nokarma. However this article does not discuss these three types of karma.

Acquiring Karma and their Consequences

Jain philosophy explains that Karma is a matter which is made up of very fine and subtle particles that one cannot see or feel by any physical means. The entire universe is filled with such particles (we need to believe this by faith only).

When these karma particles attach (bond) to the soul it is called the bondage of karma. In general the bondage of karma occurs due to the soul's Mithyātva (illusion or ignorance), Avirati (vowlessness), Pramāda (spiritual laziness), Kashāya (anger, ego, deceit, greed etc.) and Yoga (activities of the mind, body, and speech). In other words bondage occurs only due to the presence of Mohaniya karma.

Such bondage occurs for a certain duration only. We do not have any karma attached to us forever. When the time of the attachment of karma is over then these karma will create an environment surrounding the soul and they will immediately separate from the soul. The soul that is surrounded by such an environment may feel pleasure or pain based on the surroundings created by these various types of karma and hence we acquire new karma. This process occurs at every moment in our life. This way under normal circumstances we will never be free of karma because at every moment we remove some old karma and acquire some new karma.

Jain philosophy states that the following karma related events occur in the life of every living being:

- At every moment all 8 categories of karma (4 Ghāti karma and 4 Aghāti karma) together produce results and then they get separated from the soul.
- At every moment 7 of 8 categories of new karma are attached to the soul and only once in a life time a soul acquires all 8 categories of karma. Āyu karma of the next life is acquired only once in a current life time.
- Only the Mohaniya karma (Mithyātva and Kashāya together) is responsible for the bondage of new karma of all 8 categories.
- In the absence of Mohaniya karma, no new karma are attached to the soul even though the other karma; Jnānāvaraniya, Darshanāvaraniya, Antarāya, Vedaniya, nāma, Gotra, and Āyu Karma are present.

Types of Karma

Ghāti Karma

Ghāti karma subdue the innate qualities of a soul namely; infinite happiness (rational faith and conduct), infinite knowledge, infinite perception or vision, and infinite power or energy. They are divided into four categories.

Mohaniya Karma	Deluding Karma obscures blissful nature or
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	happiness (faith and conduct) of the soul
Jnänāvaraniya Karma	Obscures infinite Knowledge of the soul
Darshanāvaraniya Karma	Obscures infinite Perception of the soul
Antarāya karma	Obstructs infinite Power and Energy of the soul

Aghāti karma

Aghāti karma are non-destructive to the innate qualities of the soul but are responsible for the creation of the physical body, physical mind, social environment, and life span for the soul. They are also divided into four categories.

Vedaniya Karma	Creates Favorable or Unfavorable Physical Environment for the Soul (healthy body or unhealthy body)
Nām karma	Physical Body and Physique Determining Karma
Gotra karma	Status Determining Karma
Āyu karma	Life Span Determining Karma

The above 8 categories of karma are divided into many (around from 96 to 158 depending upon author and sect) sub-categories. The same sub-categories are also categorized differently into Punya and Pap karma categories.

Punya or Pious Karma

We acquire Punya or pious karma when we perform or reflect upon virtuous activity with or without a feeling of self-satisfaction and accomplishment. When Punya karma matures they produce a favorable environment conducive to spiritual life such as human life, healthy body, comfort, moral family etc.

A person may use such circumstances to progress himself spiritually or a person may use it to increase his power, fame, luxury, and/or comfort. This depends upon the person's free will or self determination (Purushārtha). However, if a person decides to progress further spiritually his Punya karma have created a proper environment for him to do so. All Tirthankars fall into this category. In contrast however a few Chakravarti kings used this type of environment to increase their power throughout their life and went to hell to suffer.

Pap Karma

We acquire Pap or sinful karma when we perform or reflect on any non-virtuous work associated with violence, dishonesty, stealing, not behaving chastely, attachment to worldly objects, anger, conceit, deceit, lust, revenge, and having impure thoughts. When the Pāp karma mature and the results come to fruition, they will create an unfavorable environment which may bring misery, discomfort, unhappiness, and dissatisfaction to the living being. Under such an environment, one rarely progresses spiritually.

Muni Kuragudu's life is one example that comes close to this situation. Due to Punya karma, he attained human life and became monk. However due to some Pap karma he could not fast (Upavās) even on Samvatsari day. Yet he attained Keval-Jnān and liberation because he remained equanimous under very adverse circumstances.

Relationship among Ghāti, Aghāti, Punya and Pap karma

All Ghāti karma subdue the innate qualities of the soul and hence all four categories of Ghāti karma and all their sub-categories are classified as Pāp or sinful karma.

Only Aghāti karma that are responsible for the physical environment of a living being are classified as the result of Punya karma or Pap karma.

- Certain sub-categories of Aghāti karma that produce a human life, a healthy body, high social status, and a longer life span are considered the result of Punya or virtuous karma.

- Certain sub-categories of Aghāti karma produce an unhealthy body, a shorter life span, low social status, poverty, birth in hell, or as an animal, insect, or in a vegetative state or similar categories. These are considered the result of Pāp or sinful karma.

In summary all Punya Karma are Aghāti karma while Pap karma belongs to both Ghāti and Aghāti karma.

Discussion on Ghāti, Aghāti, Punya and Pap karma

Under normal circumstances, the environment created by Pāp or sinful karma are not conducive to the spiritual progress of a soul because it produces an unhealthy body, a shorter life span, low social status, poverty, birth in hell, or as insects, animals etc.

Only the environment created by Punya karma are conducive to attain a higher spiritual state because they can result in human birth, healthy body, spiritual education, a longer life span and so on. Without a human life and spiritual environment one cannot attain a Vitarāga state (a spiritual state beyond attachment and aversion) and hence Keval jñān (infinite knowledge).

Also Jain philosophy states that all worldly souls (except very high spiritual state souls - Vitarāga state and Keval-Jñāni) are under the influence of Mohaniya karma meaning under Mithyātva and Kashāya. Since we are under this influence at every moment, we always acquire some Pap karma at every moment.

Now if we think in terms of Punya and Pap karma, we can conclude that at every moment a person, who is always under the influence of Mohaniya karma, may acquire either all Pap karma or both Punya and Pap karma by reflecting and doing non-virtuous or virtuous activities. Under no circumstances, will a person acquire only Punya karma and no Pap karma.

This process occurs at every moment until one attains a very high spiritual state known as Vitarāga state and higher (Spiritual state of 12th Gunasthānak).

Therefore; at every moment, we should be very alert and try our best to acquire maximum Punya karma and minimum Pap karma. Under such effort a net reduction in Ghāti karma will occur because all Ghāti karma are Pap karma only.

This can be accomplished by continuously reflecting on to the reduction of our Mithyātva and Kashāya (reduce Karta Bhava or ego) while continuously reflecting and doing pious and virtuous activities of body, speech and mind.

The highest pious activities of body, speech and mind are the six Abhyantar Tapa (internal austerities): Prāyashchitta (repentance for bad deeds), Vinay (humility towards all living beings), Vaiāvṛutya (rendering selfless service to all living beings), Swādhyāy (study of the spiritual literature), Dhyāna (meditation on the nature of the soul), and Kāyotsarga or Vyutsarga (remain in a complete state of equanimity).

In practicing these activities one eliminates all Ghāti karma and attains Vitarāga state and Keval-jñān. After the attainment of Keval-jñān, a person will have only Aghāti Punya karma and Aghāti Pap karma left to shed. This will happen at the end of current life and results in the person attaining liberation.

A Word of Caution with Regards to Punya Karma

While doing virtuous activities, many times, due to our ignorance of reality (Mithyātva) and ego (Kashāya), a person feels (reflects) that because of his good effort or action people are being helped or that because he is a big donor, a temple or hospital was able to be built. In doing such deeds, he receives a high social status and he takes great pride of this status.

But in acquiring these valid Punya or virtuous karma for his good deeds, he at the same time acquires maximum Pap karma because he has done the good work under the very high influence of Mohaniya karma to gain power and fame (Karta Bhava).

Hence Jainism warns that any virtuous activity done under Mithyātva and Kashāya state ultimately results in a sinful activity to that person even though other people and animals, and environment are being helped.

Only Ghāti karma and in particular Mohaniya karma hinders the soul in acquiring the Vitarāga State. Once one attains a state of Vitarāga by removing all Mohaniya karma, the other three

Ghāti karma become powerless and they are destroyed within 48 minutes without any effort and a person attains Keval-jnān. A Keval-Jnāni person attains liberation at the end of the current life and no fallback occurs during this time.

In the absence of Mohaniya karma, all other karma become totally powerless even though their presence exist. None of them can provide any obstacle in the attainment of the soul's liberation. Now theoretically one can say that any karma is a hindrance to the attainment of liberation, but it has no spiritual value.

Are We Capable of Removing Aghāti Karma before their Maturity?

Human being is capable of removing only Ghāti Karma before their maturity by performing Nirjarā. No human being is capable of removing any Aghāti karma before their maturity. At the most we can modify them from one sub-category to another sub-category within the same major category. Hence everyone has to complete these karma. Even after the attainment of Keval-jnān, a person is not capable of removing such karma. They all have to wait until the completion of Āyu karma, because Āyu karma is the only karma cannot be even modified in the last life.

In case of a kevali person (which is his last life), if his time of Āyu karma is less than the maturity time of the remaining three Aghāti karma, then the kevali performs Samudghat near the end of his life. He expands his soul and spreads it across the entire universe (spreads throughout the 14 Rajlok area). This way he forces the remaining three Aghāti karma to mature earlier and produce their result in a very short time. After the completion of the three Aghāti karma, he withdraws his soul into his body. Then he withdraws his activities of body, speech, and mind. Now his spiritual state is considered 14th Gunasthānak. He stays in this state for a few seconds and attains Nirvana.

In conclusion, we can say that we have to complete the maturity cycle of all Aghāti karma. Only Kevali can force the Aghati karma to mature earlier to coincide with the maturity time of the Ayu karma. However no one can force Ayu Karma of the last life to mature earlier.

Discussion of Two Important Questions

1. Sometimes people argue that "pap karma is an iron chain and punya karma is a golden chain for the soul". Since both are 'matter', neither can liberate the soul. The soul is liberated by becoming free of 'matter'; both punya and pap.

Spiritually the above logic is not correct because when a person removes all his Ghāti Pap Karma he attains Keval-jnān. All his Punya Aghāti karma and Aghāti Pap karma are still attached to him, but those karma cannot stop him in the attainment of liberation.

However, the above logic has created an incorrect perception in our community's mind that Jainism is a selfish religion and hinders the people from doing virtuous work.

2. In my teaching of Jain religion, I generally ask the following question:

Mahāvīr swāmi attained Keval-jnān at the age of 42 and then he travelled for 30 years to preach the truth he had realized to the people. At the age of 72 he attained nirvana or liberation.

Why did he travel for 30 years to preach? He could have stayed at one of the caves in meditation and still attained liberation.

I get only one answer - **Because of Tirthankar Nāma Karma**

In my opinion this is an incorrect statement, and here is my logical explanation:

Keval-Jnāni possesses "Yathākhyāta Chāritra"; meaning his conduct is natural and according to the innate nature of the soul. In this state no karma can influence him. Karma has maximum influence on the people who are at Mithyātva state (1st Gunasthānak) and have no influence on those who are in a Keval-Jnāni state (13th Gunasthānak). So the answer does not fit the Jain philosophy of logic at all.

The correct answer is that the Tirthankar possesses unconditional compassion towards every living being of the entire universe. This unconditional compassion is the innate nature of the soul and hence Mahāvīr Swami preached two or three times a day every day and travelled for

30 years. To indicate that "because of nāma karma" he traveled and preached does not fit into the definition of what is natural conduct for a Keval-Jnāni.

Summary

Spiritually Jainism is a very simple religion to understand and practice.

The Mohaniya karma is the single most dangerous karma because due to this karma we acquire all 8 types of karma and hence we cannot attain Vitarāga state and in result, Keval-jnān.

Hence in order to reduce/eliminate Mohaniya karma, initially we need to attain the followings:

1. Human life, spiritual education, and healthy body. (These are the fruits of Punya karma)
2. Continuous effort and awareness to reduce Mithyātva (illusionary knowledge of soul and its association with matter) and Kashāya (vices such as anger, ego, deceit, and greed) from our human life. Which will ultimately remove Mohaniya karma.

In other words, in order to attain liberation we continuously need to do virtuous activities like helping others, showing compassion to all beings, following a strict vegetarian (Vegan) diet, studying and discussing of religion (Svādhyāya), and protecting the environment. Such activities will assure us a human life in next birth.

However, while doing virtuous activities, we should remain very alert and should not get trapped by fame, power, high social status or frustration of not accomplishing the result. In other words, do not expect any fruits of our virtuous work. Such reflection will reduce and at the end will eliminate our Mohaniya karma.

Without the presence of Mohaniya karma, all other karma become powerless and person attains liberation at the end of current life.

Never think that Jainism teaches that Punya is a karma that hinders the soul in attaining liberation. Punya is a good Aghāti karma and no Aghāti karma hinders any innate qualities of the soul and hence Vitarāga state and Keval-jnāna. On the contrary Punya karma provide a human life and spiritual education for the soul in the next life to attain Keval-jnān. It is our free will or determination (Purushārtha) that determines our use of the favorable environment created by Punya karma.

Pravin K Shah

Jaina Education Committee

education@jaina.org

Raleigh, NC USA

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