

*Jain Concept Of Reality And Determinism (NIYATIVAAD)*¹
(‘Free Will’ or Destiny)

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Introduction

Ashok Kumar Tiwari writes,² “A major debate in Western philosophical discourse about the nature of man has to do with whether man has free will or whether his behavior is determined. ... An older thread in Western philosophy and the dominant thread in Eastern philosophy deals with the issue of cosmic forces such as ‘fate,’ ‘karma’, etc.” Determinism is an aspect of this debate.

The Sanskrit word ‘NIYATI’ means destiny. Thus NIYATIVAAD (determinism) implies that whatsoever is destined to happen, to whomsoever, will most certainly happen. Despite severe injury by a weapon, if a person is destined to live, he will. And if a person is destined to die, he will without any apparent reason.

The ancient Jain scripture, SUTRAKRITAANG, in the first book, first lecture, couplet 30, describes destiny in the following words:³

Some hold that whatever pain and pleasure individuals beget are neither the results of their own acts or volition nor due to others, but it is due to destiny.

This implies that all worldly beings, which are in the bondage of their karmas, have no recourse but to bear their consequences. Man does not have any freedom of will. In reality, it is not so. The next couplet of SUTRAKRITAANG states:

Those who brag about destiny are unwise declaring themselves as learned; because they do not know that all pleasures or pains (or whatever happens) are not only due to destiny but they are due to destiny and also due to factors other than destiny.

¹ Based on the English translation by Manish Y. Modi, Mumbai of the section NIYATIVAAD of the celebrated work ‘JAIN DARSHAN’ of Dr. Mahendra Kumar Jain Nyayacharya, published by Shri Varni Granthamala, 1974

² Freedom and Determinism by Ashok Kumar Tiwari, posted on <http://www.geocities.com/ashokktiwari/fad.html>

³ Jaina Sutras, translated from Prakrit by Hermann Jacobi, Part Two, Dover Publications, 1968, pages 239-240.

Various Indian schools of thought have shed light on karma and determinism. Makkhali Goshaalak did not believe in self-endeavor. He believed in the wheel of destiny (NIYATICHAKRA). Buddhist works MAJJHIMANIKAAAY and BUDDHACHARYA describe Makkhali Goshaalak’s philosophy as: There is no antecedent or determinant for the distress or relief of living beings. Neither soul nor matter is of any avail. Power, energy or audacity is ineffective. All that exists - living beings, souls, matter and the like, are powerless. Constrained by destiny, they undergo transformations and experience pleasure and pain. All religious ascetic practices such as penance, celibacy and mores are unavailing in mutating the situation. Ripening and shedding one's own karmas by self-endeavor is not an option.

In recent times, Shri Kanjivami has extended a spiritual twist of determinism. According to him and his followers, each and every modification of an entity (DRAVYA) is predestined. What is going to happen will happen owing to its intrinsic nature; any attempt to change it is bound to be fruitless. The innate nature is the substantive cause (UPAADAAN KAARAN) for the modification and the instrumental causes (NIMITTA KAARAN) appear automatically.⁴ The justification for this claim is that one entity cannot interfere in the modifications of another. Accordingly, the modifications of each entity of the universe are predestined/predetermined for all times to come. Consequently, the future of all living beings, including man, has been predetermined by destiny. All efforts /endeavors are futile. These concepts are akin to determinism.

Jain Concept of Reality

On a critical examination of the intrinsic nature of an entity coupled with the relationship between substantive cause and instrumental cause, the above argument does not seem to hold water, because it implies that consequences of ‘karma’ cannot be altered. **Dr. S. Radhakrishnan argues,⁵ “The same rule of law and scientific principles recognized in nature must also be recognized in mind and morals. He argues further that the theory of Karma, properly**

⁴ For a discussion of substantive and instrumental causes, please see Jain Study Circular, ‘Quotations From Scriptures’, October 2000.

⁵ Freedom and Determinism by Ashok Kumar Tiwari, posted on <http://www.geocities.com/ashokktiwari/fad.html>

understood, is not a theory of predestination, but rather a theory that is completely consistent with the causal laws of the universe.” These assertions conform to the Jain concept of universe and aspects of reality (TATTVAs).

According to Jainism, there are six entities (DRAVYAS) in the universe. Their interactions lead to the seven aspects of reality. The attributes of the entities of the universe are:⁶

1. The six entities are innumerable souls (JEEVS), innumerable aggregates of matter (including energy, PUDGAL), space (AAKAASH), principle of motion (DHARM), principle of rest (ADHARM) and infinite instants of time (KAAL). The sum total of each entity is eternally constant. No entity can be created or destroyed.
2. Each entity, whether pure or impure,⁷ continually undergoes transformation according to its intrinsic nature. In this process, the old form ceases to exist and a new form appears. However, its essence remains invariable. These modifications cannot be stopped or manipulated.
3. One entity cannot be converted into another entity. Sentient entity remains sentient and insentient entity remains insentient.
4. Two aggregates of matter can combine with each other but two souls cannot be joined together. Each soul enjoys its existence and undergoes modifications independently.
5. The basic potentials and capacities of each entity are invariable. No new potential can be developed. Also no characteristic can vanish.
6. Certain qualities of entities, such as undergoing transformations according to their intrinsic attributes, are common to all entities. Additionally, each entity, animate as well as inanimate, possesses certain characteristics that are unique to it.
7. An entity possesses capacity for a variety of different modifications. However, that particular modification takes place for which adequate

⁶ For details, please see ‘Quotations From Scriptures’, Jain Study Circular of January 2008, April 2008 and the present issue.

⁷ Worldly souls are impure because of their association with matter.

instrumental causes are present. The capacities for other modifications remain in abeyance.

8. The sequence of modifications is effected by the circumstances (environment) just as a chemical reaction follows different routes depending on the catalyst. Likewise, the interactions between worldly souls and matter are influenced by the environment (NOKARMAS).

Conclusion

In view of the above realities, the modifications of each entity, including those of a worldly soul, depend upon its intrinsic attributes coupled with its animate and inanimate surroundings. In the case of an individual, the inner self - his/her thoughts and feelings, constitute the substantive causes (UPAADAAN KAARAN) for the transformation, while the karmas associated with his/her soul and the presence of other living beings coupled with various material surroundings constitute the instrumental causes (NIMITTA KAARAN). In many instances, these happen to be beyond the control of the individual. Nevertheless, ***one can modify one's thoughts and feelings and thereby alter the consequences of one's karmas. This is the role played by 'free will'. It is extremely consequential. It has a significant impact on our lives. Evidently, it acts like a catalyst and gives rise to initiative to modify one's frame of mind as well as one's animate and inanimate environment. In sum, according to the Jain concept of reality, there is no place for destiny or determinism in the scheme of things.***

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. . . the economic factor is an essential element in human life. There is no sin in wealth, just as there is no virtue in poverty. The efforts of anyone to increase his wealth cannot be condemned, but if the pursuit of wealth means loss to others, monetary or moral, then the question arises whether the acquisition of wealth by such methods and with such results is right. The Hindu code insists on the motive of social service, not personal gain.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan