

Karma and Rebirth in Indian Philosophy

Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, in all their branches, also accept the underlying doctrines of *karma* and rebirth. All of these schools believe that man must be morally and spiritually perfected before he can attain salvation. They also believe that justice is the law of the moral life exactly as cause-and-effect is the law of the natural world. What one sows one must reap. Since justice and moral and spiritual perfection are not achievable in one life, all these systems believe in rebirth, so as to provide the opportunity for moral progress and eventual perfection. Throughout Indian philosophy, from the earliest Vedas to the latest developments, the moral order of the universe has been an accepted doctrine of all Indian thinkers except the Carvakas. *Karma* and rebirth are the instrumentalities by which the moral order of the universe is worked out in the life of man.

-Radhakrishnan & Moore, "General Introduction" in *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*, 1957, p. xxix.

From *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*

7. He, however, who has not understanding,
Who is unmindful and ever impure,
Reaches not the goal,
But goes on to transmigration [rebirth].
 8. He, however, who has understanding,
Who is mindful and ever pure,
Reaches the goal
From which he is born no more...
 10. Higher than the senses are the objects of sense.
Higher than the objects of sense is the mind;
And higher than the mind is the intellect [*buddhi*].
Higher than the intellect is the Great Self [*Ātman*].
 11. Higher than the Great is the Unmanifest [*avyakta*].
Higher than the Unmanifest is the Person.
Higher than the Person there is nothing at all.
That is the goal. That is the highest course.
- (III.7-8, 10-11)

From *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*

1. ...They who, being without desire, worship the Person
And are wise, pass beyond the seed [of rebirth] here.

2. He who in fancy forms desires,
Because of his desires is born [again] here and there.
But of him whose desire is satisfied, who is a perfected self,
All desires even here on earth vanish away...

5. Attaining Him, the seers who are satisfied with knowledge,
Who are perfected selves, from passion free, tranquil—
Attaining Him who is the universally omnipresent, those wise,
Devout selves into the All itself do enter...

7. Gone are the fifteen parts according to their station,
Even all the sense-organs in their corresponding divinities!
One's deeds and the self that consists of understanding—
All become unified in the supreme Imperishable.

8. As the flowing rivers in the ocean
Disappear, quitting name and form,
So the knower, being liberated from name and form,
Goes unto the Heavenly Person, higher than the high.

9. He, verily, who knows that supreme *Brahman*, becomes very *Brahman*...
(III. ii.1-2, 5, 7-9)