

LESSON 10

DESTINY OF LIFE AFTER DEATH

If we look around us, we see not only people, but also see cats, dogs, birds, bugs, plants, etc. This tells us that there are various forms of living beings in this universe. Every second someone dies or someone is born in this world. Therefore it could be said that nothing is permanent. This makes us wonder what happens to those who die, and who decides what one should be born as. Jainism explains that in a very simple and sound logical way based on the karma theory. Due to the karmas associated with souls, living beings have been going through the cycles of birth and death in various forms since times immemorial. Unless the soul gets rid of its karmas, it will never be free from the cycles of birth and death in different forms. When a living being dies, it will be reborn into one of the four destinies (gatis). These four destinies are as follows:

- 1) **Human (Manushya) beings.**
- 2) **Dev (Celestial) beings.**
- 3) **Tiryancha (Animal) beings.**
- 4) **Naraki (Infernal) beings.**

Present science is inconclusive about the life after death or rebirth or reincarnation. But Jinās who were omniscience (had kevalgnan) have explained that there is life after death and it is our own actions, and no one else decides what will happen to us after our death. No God or super power decides our future. Our past and current deeds accumulate the karmas, which govern what we will be reborn as. Let us now try to understand what leads a soul to the different destinies.

Those living beings who do excessive violence, lying, stealing, and enjoy sensual pleasure or are too possessive, angry, egoistic, greedy, deceptive, or intensely attached to the worldly life are likely to be re-born as infernal beings in the hell.

Those living beings that are selfish, cause troubles, or wish evil for the others are likely to be re-born as the tiryancha.

Those living beings who are simple and disciplined, observe vows, behave well, have a good character, and follow a good moral life are generally re-born as the heavenly beings.

Those living beings who are also simple, straightforward, observe vow and restraints, have faith in true teachers, attempt to gain true knowledge, have only a slight attachment, have a control over the anger, ego, greed, or deception, and try to follow the teachings of the religious teachers are generally re-born as the humans.

Let us discuss the different destinies and their potential to different things.

1. **Human Beings:**

As the human beings we have been endowed with the ability to think. We can differentiate between rights from the wrong. We can decide what is good for us, and what is not. We also have the capacity to control our minds and activities. We can learn about the wholesome religious principles of the Jainism and put them to practice

by adopting the appropriate vows and restraints. We can also renounce worldly life (samsar) for the monkshood which can lead us ultimately to the liberation or salvation

2. **Heavenly Beings:**

As a heavenly being one has superior physical capabilities, numerous supernatural powers, considerable longer life and access to all the luxuries. As life comes to end the heavenly beings feel very unhappy. As heavenly beings, they can not adopt restraints or renounce their lives to become monks or nuns. Therefore, there is no salvation in the heavenly life and they will have to be reborn as the human beings in order to attain liberation. The soul is born as heavenly being due to accumulation of good karmas (punya).

3. **Tiryanch Beings:**

As a tiryanch (being born as an animal like a lion, an elephant, a bird, a plant, a bug, etc.) one is considered to be a lower form of life. Animals, birds, sea creatures and reptiles have mind but rest of tiryanch do not have a mind. Therefore, most of tiryanches suffer passively. Even animals and birds, etc., who has mind can not think or restrain as much as humans and therefore their spiritual progress is compromised. Overall there is a great degree of passive suffering and dependency in their life. The cruel animals accumulate more bad karmas. In short, their life is not conducive to attain salvation.

4. **Infernal Beings:**

As an infernal being (living beings of the hell), one has to continuously suffer in harsh environment. Most of the time infernal beings fight among themselves and cause suffering to each other and accumulating even more bad karmas. They can not do the spiritual pursuit.

Thus, it is clear that out of these four destinies only the human life is most desirable and suitable for spiritual pursuit and freedom from the cycles of birth and death.

In conclusion, we (the souls) are and no one else is the master of our own destiny and we should not blame anyone or anything else for our own destiny. Let us inspire to lead a spiritual life without any delay, so that we may be reborn as the human beings till we attain the liberation.