

## Introductory Study Paper 4; UNIVERSAL LAW



**Before beginning and without an end,  
As space eternal and as surety sure,  
Is fixed a Power divine which moves to good:  
Only its laws endure.**

Sir Edwin Arnold, *The Light of Asia*

The concept of LAW is central to the understanding of the theosophical system. The whole universe, in all its parts and in all its aspects and activities, proceeds according to law. In simple terms, this law may be explained as: the way things are, the way things *behave*, the way things happen, the way things *become*. It is the law of KARMA.

KARMA, from a Sanskrit root *kri* (to do, to make, action, deed, work) is recognized as the law of Causation, Balance, Compensation and Retribution. It is the law by which every action carries within itself an equivalent reaction or consequence.

The comprehensive nature of karmic law is summed up in *The Key to Theosophy*:

**We consider it is as the Ultimate Law of the Universe, the source, origin and fount of all other laws which exist throughout Nature. Karma is the unerring law which adjusts effect to cause, in the physical, mental and spiritual planes of being.**

## LAW UNIVERSAL

In the physical world, law can be observed in the formation of crystals and in chemical reactions in the mineral kingdom, in the growth of plants and their adaptation to particular environments, in the instincts and patterned behaviour of insects, birds and animals, and in man in his development and the emergence of his personal characteristics and faculties.

All modern science and technology, in every department of human activity - agriculture, medicine, navigation, space-travel and the manufacture of weapons of war - everything is based on the discovery of Nature's laws and the application of the knowledge thus obtained, in the certainty that, given the same conditions, Nature will always give the same results.

This same uniformity and reliability prevail in the moral order. Just as physical acts produce physical results, so also thoughts and desires, acting in a different plane, produce results in that plane.

"Be not deceived", writes St. Paul. "God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (*Gal. vi. 7*)

## ONE LAW - MANY ASPECTS

Today the word karma has passed into our language. However, it is popularly understood to mean the connection between a person's present character and circumstances and his conduct and experiences in a previous incarnation. It is indeed all this, but it is also very much more, for it is in truth the modus operandi of the universe itself.

The LAW is ONE, but it shows itself under many aspects. If we speak of laws, and for convenience consider each aspect separately, we must not lose from view the ONE LAW in which all aspects inhere.

*For example:*

### 1. The Law of Universal Life and Motion.

Life is omnipresent: there is no thing, no place, where Life is not. There is no dead matter, no empty space. Wherever there is life, there is motion, and as life is everywhere, there can be no rest or cessation of motion in Nature.

### 2. The Law of Cause and Effect.

In every department of Nature, what was determines what is, and what is determines what shall be. There is no cause without its due effect, no effect that did not have its due cause. This chain of causation has no perceivable beginning or imaginable end.

### 3. The Law of Alternation or Periodicity.

Everything that is, from atom to man, from man to universe, passes through alternating phases of activity and rest. These phases follow a universal pattern: birth or becoming, growth or maturing, decay or waning, and death or the disintegration of form. Life itself is indestructible.

#### **4. The Law of Progressive Development.**

All things, organisms or beings, are set upon a course of perfectibility, the attainment of a goal appropriate to their place in the total scheme.

The whole order of Nature evinces a progressive march towards a higher life.

The Secret Doctrine.

#### **5. The Law Of Evolution.**

Evolution is a comprehensive term for all the processes of Nature by which latent possibilities - qualities or powers - become expressed in act or form. It is at work throughout all the kingdoms of Nature, for Nature is the Ever-Becoming.

#### **6. The Law of Harmony.**

Nature is ever seeking to establish and maintain a state of equilibrium or balance. Where harmony is disturbed, there comes inevitably a reaction to restore the lost equilibrium. Thus a cause set in motion seeks equilibrium in the effect: hence the description of karma as the Law of Adjustment.

#### **7. The Septenary Law.**

The occult tradition shows a septenary principle throughout Nature, from the vastness of the seven planes of the Cosmos, each with its seven sub-divisions, to the individual man with his seven principles or aspects. In common experience we recognize the seven colours of the rainbow and the seven notes of the musical scale.

### **LAWS OF NATURE, LAWS OF MAN**

How different are the laws of Nature from human laws! The laws current in human societies are imposed from without; they are arbitrary, variable, and may be evaded: not so the laws of Nature, for they are inherent in the cosmos, inseparable from it; they are universal, unerring and inescapable. Karma, or Law, is indeed the nature of Nature.

What wetness is to water, so is law to the very being of the universe. It operates uniformly throughout the kingdoms of Nature, in atom and organism, in the invisible and subjective spheres of being as in the visible and objective.

### **KARMA IN HUMAN AFFAIRS**

It may seem that the law of karma implies an imprisoning fatalism from which there is no escape, but it is not so. Among the various terms that describe it, we must include one more: Karma is the Law of Creative Opportunity. It is recognized in the occult maxim: Nature is conquered by obedience.

Our freedom lies in the very law which only our own ignorance sees as restrictive. We reap what we sow, but we may choose the seed: then Nature will unerringly give us the harvest of our own choosing.

Says *The Voice of the Silence*: "Thou canst create this day thy chances for thy morrow." Was this not the lesson learned by old Scrooge when he was shown the terrible future that awaited him?

But the things he saw were possibilities only - things that might be, not things that must be. In his perception of this truth we have a remarkable enunciation of karma as the liberating power in human life:

**Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends,  
to which, if persevered in, they must lead;  
but if the courses be departed from,  
the ends will change.**

Charles Dickens: *A Christmas Carol*

In this selection of verses from the *Light of Asia*, Sir Edwin Arnold presents us with some facets of the Law of Karma:

**Before beginning and without an end,  
As space eternal and as surety sure,  
Is fixed a Power divine which moves to good:  
Only its laws endure.**

**This is its touch upon the blossomed rose,  
The fashion of its hand shaped lotus-leaves;  
In dark soil and the silence of the seeds  
The robe of Spring it weaves.**

**Ever and ever fetching secrets forth,  
It sitteth in the green of forest-glades  
Nursing strange seedlings at the cedar's root,  
Devising leaves, blooms, blades.**

**It maketh and unmaketh, mending all;  
What it hath wrought is better than had been;  
Slow grows the splendid pattern that it plans  
Its wistful hand between.**

**It knows not wrath nor pardon; utter-true  
Its measures mete, its faultless balance weighs;  
Times are as nought, tomorrow it will judge  
Or after many days.**

**That which ye sow ye reap. See yonder fields!  
The sesamum was sesamum, the corn  
Was corn. The Silence and the Darkness knew:  
So is a man's fate born.**

**Ye are not bound! The Soul of Things is sweet,  
The Heart of Being is celestial rest;  
Stronger than woe is will: that which was Good  
Doth pass to Better - Best!**

## **READING LIST**

*Aspects of Divine Law* - Geoffrey A. Farthing Online  
*The Key to Theosophy* - H. P. Blavatsky  
*The Divine Plan* - Geoffrey Barborka  
*Theosophy: What's it all about?* - Geoffrey A. Farthing  
*Deity, Cosmos and Man* - Geoffrey A. Farthing  
*The Light of Asia* - Sir Edwin Arnold  
*A Christmas Carol* - Charles Dickens